

Classical Syriac

Estrangela Script

Chapter 10

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10.1. Introduction to Weak Verbs

In chapter 5 we learned the paradigm for regular verbs in the P^{es}al perfect. The verb that was used to learn this paradigm was the verb ܡܕܝܬ. This verb was used for two main reasons. First, none of the root letters of the verb ܡܕܝܬ are BeGaDKePhaT letters. This means that learning this paradigm was not made more complicated by the pronunciation of any of the root letters shifting at various points in the paradigm. Second, and more importantly, none of the root letters of the verb ܡܕܝܬ change or disappear when the verb is conjugated. In other words, the verb ܡܕܝܬ is completely regular. Verbs that are completely regular are referred to as **strong verbs**.

Weak verbs, on the other hand, are verbs where (a) one or more of its root letters can change or disappear when the verb is conjugated or (b) the vowels used with one or more of these root letters do not follow the pattern used in strong verbs due to the weak nature of the consonant. In Classical Syriac, there are seven main types of weak verbs: (1) original third-yôḏ verbs, (2) third-yôḏ verbs, (3) second-wāw/yôḏ verbs, (4) first-yôḏ verbs, (5) first-nûn verbs, (6) first-ālap verbs, and (7) verbs whose second and third root letters are identical, which are referred to as *geminate verbs*. The numbers used in these names (i.e. first, second, and third) refer to which root letter changes or causes changes to the expected vowel pattern reading from right to left. For example, in the verb ܡܕܝܬ the ܡ is the first root letter, the ܕ is the second root letter, and the ܝ is the third root letter. The letter used in the name refers to the letter that occupies this position in the root of the verb. For example, first-nûn verbs are verbs whose first root letter is a nûn (e.g. ܢܝܬ, “to watch, protect”).

Weak verbs can be learned in three possible ways. First, the paradigms for these verbs can simply be memorized. This can be done using a paradigm chart or a song. Second, the paradigms for these verbs can be learned by trying to use the various forms in speech. Finally, the paradigms can be learned by taking the paradigm used for strong verbs and simply memorizing how and

why the paradigms of the weak verbs differ. In this textbook, we will focus on the third option. While the paradigms for these verbs may seem intimidating at first, most of these forms are quite easy to memorize if you have mastered the paradigm for the strong verb.

10.2. The P^{er}al Perfect of Original Third-Yôḏ Verbs¹

The focus of this chapter is on original third-yôḏ verbs. Original third-yôḏ verbs are verbs whose third root letter is ܝ but, in a much earlier stage of Aramaic, the third root letter was ܝ,² In the perfect, original third-yôḏ verbs end in ܝ in the third masculine singular. However, for the rest of the paradigm, the third root letter either reverts to ܝ, or completely disappears.³

The following rules can be used to produce the forms of most third-yôḏ verbs in the P^{er}al perfect:

1. The third letter is only ܝ in the 3msg. Since short vowels can only be used in closed syllables and since ܝ cannot close a syllable, the p̄tāḥāʾ is lengthened to zqāpāʾ.
2. In the vast majority of cases, the third root letter reverts to ܝ. This rule applies to the 2msg, the 2fsg, the 1csg, the 3fpl, the 2mpl, the 2fpl, and the 1cpl. In most cases, the vowels remain the same as the vowels that are used for regular verbs. There are two exceptions. For the 1csg, the vowel that should have been written with the third root letter is transferred to the second root letter. This causes the vowel that normally would have been written with the first root letter to disappear. For the 3mpl, the vowel written with the second root letter is zqāpāʾ instead of p̄tāḥāʾ since diphthongs that should be spelled ܝܝ are always spelled ܝܝ in East Syriac (see §2.6).
3. The third root letter drops out in the 3fsg and the 3mpl. For the 3mpl, the suffix takes the place of the third root letter and it is no longer silent. For the 3fsg, the vowel written with the first root letter in the regular paradigm disappears while the vowel written with the second root letter lengthens to zqāpāʾ.

Since the 3msg is the form you will memorize in your vocabulary lists, the only forms that you need to focus on when memorizing the paradigm are the 3fsg, the 1csg, and the 3mpl. The remaining forms in the paradigm follow the same paradigm as regular verbs apart from the fact that the final root letter has reverted to ܝ.

¹ Cf. Nöldeke §176; Muraoka §64; Duval §§104, 213; Mingana §§157–58; Brockelmann §192.

² Note that some verbs in Classical Syriac that end in ܝ are original third-ālap verbs. Note also that some verbs in Classical Syriac end in ܝ, in the P^{er}al perfect 3msg. In this textbook, verbs that end in ܝ, in the P^{er}al perfect 3msg will simply be referred to as third-yôḏ verbs. Third-yôḏ verbs are relatively rare and are identical to original third-yôḏ verbs in every pattern except for the P^{er}al. Third-yôḏ verbs will be discussed in a later chapter.

³ Note that Sokoloff's lexicon lists original third-yôḏ verbs with the third consonant as ܝ, rather than ܝ. Payne Smith lists them with the third consonant as ܝ.

The following chart provides the forms of original third-yōd verbs in the P^{er}al perfect along with an explanation for why each form takes the form that it does:

Table 10.1 – P ^{er} al Perfect of Original Third-Yōd Verbs			
	Form	Translation	Explanation
3msg	ܚܠܐ	he revealed	Since the verb has no suffix, the third root letter remains ܚ. The vowel written with the second root letter is zqāpā' since it is in an open syllable.
3fsg	ܚܠܐ	she revealed	The third root letter has disappeared through contraction (*ܚܠܐ → ܚܠܐ). The p̄tāhā' that should have been written with the second root letter has combined with the p̄tāhā' of the feminine suffix ܐܐ to become a zqāpā'.
2msg	ܚܠܝܬܐ	you revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ. The form here is identical to the regular verb.
2fsg	ܚܠܝܬܐ	you revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ. The form here is identical to the regular verb.
1csg	ܚܠܝܬܐ	I revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ, but has become silent. The vowel that normally would have been written with the third root letter has been transferred to the second root letter. This has caused the vowel that would normally have been written with the first root letter in the regular verb (zlāmā' p̄šīqā') to disappear.
3mpl	ܚܠܐ	they revealed	The third root letter has disappeared through contraction (*ܚܠܐ → ܚܠܐ). The form used here is quite similar to the one used with regular verbs, but with two differences. First, the p̄tāhā' has changed to zqāpā' since diphthongs that should be spelled ܐܐ are always spelled ܐܐ in East Syriac (see §2.6). Second, the 3mpl suffix has taken the place of the third root letter.
3fpl	ܚܠܝܬܐ	they revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ. The form here is identical to the regular verb.
2mpl	ܚܠܝܬܐ	you revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ. The form here is identical to the regular verb.
2fpl	ܚܠܝܬܐ	you revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ. The form here is identical to the regular verb.
1cpl	ܚܠܝܬܐ	we revealed	The third root letter has reverted to ܚ. The form here is identical to the regular verb.

10.3. The Perfect of Third-Yôd Perfect Verbs in the Derived Patterns⁴

The following chart provides the forms of original third-yôd verbs in the most common derived patterns. The P^{es}al perfect paradigm has been included for the sake of comparison.

Table 10.2 – Original Third-Yôd Perfect Verbs in the Derived Patterns					
	P ^{es} al	Pa ^{es} el	ʔAp ^{es} el	ʔEtp ^{es} el	ʔEtpa ^{es} al
3msg	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
3fsg	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
2msg	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
2fsg	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
1csg	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
3mpl	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
3fpl	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
2mpl	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
2fpl	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ
1cpl	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ	ܚܠܐ

Several observations can be made:

- The original third yôd of the root is present throughout the paradigms of the derived patterns.
- The 3fsg of the derived patterns is completely regular.
- Apart from the 3fsg, the third yôd of the derived patterns is written with a ḥbāšāʔ.
- The ܐ of the 2msg, 2fsg, 2mpl, and 2fpl suffixes is pronounced with the hard pronunciation even if it is immediately preceded by a vowel sound.
- The suffix for the 3mpl is pronounced in each of the patterns given above.

If these observations are kept in mind, the paradigms of the derived patterns can be reproduced and recognized with little difficulty.

10.4. Prepositive Conjunctions (Part 1)

Prepositive conjunctions are conjunctions that normally stand immediately before the word, phrase, or clause it is connecting. This is in contrast to postpositive conjunctions, which cannot stand in the initial position of a clause (see §9.3). In this section we will begin to look at some of the most common prepositive conjunctions in Classical Syriac. We will deal with more prepositive conjunctions in the following chapter.

⁴ Cf. Nöldeke §176; Muraoka §64; Duval §§104, 213; Mingana §§157–58; Brockelmann §192.

The conjunction **or** is used to link options, possibilities, or alternatives (“or”). When introducing a set of two alternatives, it can be translated with the word “either.” Note the following examples:

10.4.2. $\kappa\kappa^6$

Examples	
Syriac	English
ܠܐ ܝܬܝܬܝܠܐ ܠܕܥܝܢܐ ܠܕܝܩܝܐ. ܝܬܐ ܠܠܥܝܢܐܝܝܬܐ.	I have not come to call the righteous <u>but</u> sinners. (Mark 2:17)
ܠܐ ܝܬܝܬܝܠܐ ܠܝܬܝܬܐ ܝܬܐ ܠܝܬܝܬܐ ܠܝܬܝܬܐ.	But he did not permit him <u>but</u> said to him.... (Mark 5:19)

⁶ Nöldeke §§155, 374; Duval §§110, 296; 411; Mingana §566; Brockelmann §175.

Examples	
Syriac	English
ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ: ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ. ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ.	Then a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved son.” (Mk. 1:11)
ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ:	And Jesus said to them.... (Mk. 1:17)

c) ܐ can also be used to introduce a new section in a narrative. When ܐ has this function, it can be translated with the words “and” or “now” or it can simply be left untranslated:

Examples	
Syriac	English
ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ. ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ.	And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee.... (Mark 1:9)
ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ. ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ.	And again Jesus went up to Capernaum after some time (Mark 2:1)

d) When used with another occurrence of ܐ, ܐ can indicate inclusion (both...and):

Examples	
Syriac	English
ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ. ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ.	You know both me and you know where I come from. (John 7:28) ¹²
ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ. ܡܩܠܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ.	Both on my male servants and on my female servants I will pour out my spirit in those days and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:18)

10.5. Vocabulary

Verbs	
ܡܩܠܐ	(P ^{es} al) to come (opposite of ܡܩܠܐ), follow (with ܡܩܠܐ).
ܡܩܠܐ ¹³	(?Ap ^{el}) to bring, cause to come
ܡܩܠܐ	(P ^{es} al) to build; (?Etp ^{es} el) to be built.

¹² A more literal translation would be, “Both me you know and from where I come you know.”

¹³ In the ?Ap^{el}, the first root letter is replaced by ܡ. Apart from this, the forms of this verb follow the expected forms.

كشّر	(P ^{cc} al) to uncover, reveal, make known; (?Etp ^{cc} el) to be uncovered, revealed, made known.
سأّر	(P ^{cc} al) to see; (?Etp ^{cc} el) to be seen, be visible, appear, think.
سكّر	(P ^{cc} al) to live, recover.
أبّسّر	(?Ap ^{cc} el) to give life, save, keep alive.
حشّر	(P ^{cc} al) to strike, beat; (?Etp ^{cc} el) to be wounded.
حسّر	(Pa ^{cc} el) to wound many, wound severely; (?Etpa ^{cc} al) to be struck down, be beaten down.
حشّر	(P ^{cc} al) to arrive at, reach, come, happen, befall.
حسّر	(Pa ^{cc} el) to bring, arrive, reach, meet; (?Etpa ^{cc} al) to arrive, reach, be brought.
نصّر	(Pa ^{cc} el) to tempt, test; (?Etpa ^{cc} al) to be tempted, tested.
حشّر	(P ^{cc} al) to answer; (?Etp ^{cc} el) be heard (prayer), be occupied, be busy, be engaged in.
فكّر	(P ^{cc} al) to turn, return, repent; (?Etp ^{cc} el) to turn, turn towards, return, be converted.
فبّر	(Pa ^{cc} el) to return, restore, answer (with فبّر or فبّر); (?Etpa ^{cc} al) to be restored, given back.
أفبّر	(?Ap ^{cc} el) to cause to return, bring back, restore, cause to turn.
سوّّر	(P ^{cc} al) to want, desire, be pleased with (with سوّّر), have pleasure in (with سوّّر); (?Etp ^{cc} el) to be well pleased (with سوّّر), choose (with سوّّر).
سوّّر	(P ^{cc} al) to turn aside, towards.
سوّّر	(Pa ^{cc} el) to pray (with سوّّر or سوّّر), pray for (with سوّّر); (?Etpa ^{cc} al) to be offered (prayer)
مكّر	(P ^{cc} al) to cry out, shout
مكّر	(P ^{cc} al) to call, proclaim, read; (?Etp ^{cc} el) to be called, be named, be read
عكّر	(P ^{cc} al) to throw, expel (with عكّر), lay hands on (with عكّر)
عكّر	(P ^{cc} al) to loosen, untie; (?Etp ^{cc} el) to be loosed, loosened, let loose.
عكّر	(Pa ^{cc} el) to begin (with imperfect tense, infinitive, or participle as complement); (?Etpa ^{cc} al) to be begun.
أعكّر	(?Ap ^{cc} el) to command to encamp, cause to dwell.

Prepositive Conjunctions	
أو	or
لكن	but, except

ܐܬܝܐ	also, even
ܐܬܝܐܠܝܐ	not even
ܐܬܝܐܢ	and, then, now

Proper Nouns	
ܩܬܠܝܐ	Babylonians
ܥܪܒܝܐ	Arabs
ܡܨܝܪܝܐ	Jews, Judeans
ܡܝܫܝܐ	Egyptians
ܦܪܫܝܐ	Persians

10.6. Homework

- Using practice sheet 10.1, memorize the paradigm for the P^{ca}l perfect of the verb ܬܠܝܐ.
- Using practice sheet 10.2, memorize the paradigms for ܬܠܝܐ in the derived patterns.
- Memorize the vocabulary in 10.4 above. Ideally, you should learn seven words per day until they are all memorized. Make sure you can translate the words from Syriac to English as well as English to Syriac. The following link on Quizlet can be used to help you learn the vocabulary: https://quizlet.com/_c45ir4?x=1qqt&i=2z26w0.
- Using practice sheet 10.3, translate the sentences from Syriac to English.