Components of the Hebrew Language

The content and subject matter of this Hebrew Language is taken from the rough teaching notes of the instructor of a beginning Hebrew class. The greatest benefit that these can be to someone not in the class is to use them with a Hebrew grammar, to guide you in your study of the Hebrew language. Due to the nature of these factors, much explanation will be missing. The reader should take this into consideration in using this material.

Sounds and Symbols:

The 22 consonantal sounds:

1. Aleph   א   aw-lef
2. Beth   ב   bayth
3. Gimel   ג   ghee-mel
4. Daleth   ד   daw-leth
5. He   ה   hay
6. Waw   ו   wow
7. Zayin   ז   zahyin
8. Cheth   ח   khayth
9. Teth   ט   tayth
10. Yod   י   yod
11. Kaph   כ   caf
12. Lamed   ל   law-med
13. Mem   מ   mame
14. Nu   נ   noon
15. Camek   ס   saw-mek
16. Ayin   ע   ahyin
17. Phe   פ   fay
18. Tsade   צ   tsaw-day
19. Qoph   ק   cofe
20. Resh   ר   raysh
21. sin, shin   שׂ שׁ   siyn, shen
22. Tau   ת   tau

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<u>The vowel sounds:</u>

ָ As a in father

ַ As a in fat

ֵ As ey in they

ֶ As e in met

ִ As i in hit

ֻ As u in put

ָ As o in gone

וֹ As o in note

ֹ As o in note

וּ As u in sure

ְ Half sound short e

ֲ Half sound short a

ֱ Half sound short e

ֳ Half sound short o

<u>Categories of the Hebrew alphabet:</u>

Regular alphabet:

Dages Lene: ב ג ד כ פ ת

Silent letters: א ע

Letters having two forms: כך סמ ףפ ץצ ןנ

Guttural letters: ע א ח ה ר

Vowel letters: א ה י ו

Parts of Speech of the Hebrew Language

<u>Verbs:</u>

Tense: means quality of action in the Hebrew.

Perfect tense: completed action. Time is indicated by the context. It has many variations of usages. An advanced grammar will clarify all the usages of the perfect tense. The simple narration of past events, even in relating repeating actions. Corresponds to the Greek aorist.

To represent actions, events, or states, which were terminated in the past and finally concluded.

To represent actions which were already completed in the past at the time when other actions or conditions took place. This is the pluperfect concept.

To represent actions, events, or states, which, although completed in the past, nevertheless extend their influence into the present.

To represent in a direct narration, reactions which, although really only in process of accomplishment, are meant to be represented as already accomplished in the mind of the writer.

To represent facts which have formerly taken place, and are still of constant recurrence, and therefore matters of common experience.

To represent future actions, when the speaker intends by an express assurance to represent them as finished, or accomplished facts.

To express facts that are undoubtedly imminent, and therefore, in the imagination and mind of the writer, they are already accomplished.

To express actions or facts which are meant to be indicated as existing in the future in a completed state.

To express actions and facts, whose accomplishment in the past is to be represented not as actual, but only as possible. This is the imperfect idea in Latin.

Imperfect tense: incomplete action. Time is indicated by the context. Also has many variations.

The imperfect tense represents actions, events, or states which are regarded by the speaker at any moment as still continuing, or in process of accomplishment or even as just taking place.

Conceived in the mind of the speaker, or simply desired by the speaker.

The imperfect tense used with past time in context: Expresses actions which continued throughout a longer or shorter period. Expresses actions which were repeated in the past, either at fixed intervals or occasionally. Job 1:5 "Thus did sob continually."

The imperfect tense in the present time: Expresses actions which continued throughout a longer or shorter period. Expresses actions which were repeated in the past, either at fixed intervals or occasionally. To express actions which although, strictly speaking, are already finished, are regarded as still lasting on into the present time, or continuing to operate in the present time.

The imperfect tense and future time: Actions seen as future from the standpoint of the speaker's present time. Represent actions which from some point of time in the past are to be represented as future. To represent actions, yet future, that are "willed, or not willed," therefore, conditional, and only contingent. This could be a simple desire, an imperative, a definite expectation that something will not happen.

To represent actions, yet future, as possibly taking place or not taking place. Maybe it will, maybe it won't. Actions referred to in a permissive sense: Gen. 2:16 "Of every tree in the garden, thou mayest freely eat." This is a permissive imperfect. In negative sentences to express actions which cannot or should not happen. In conditional clauses "yea, though I walk, or might walk."

Stem: this indicates two things - first, how the subject is related to the action of the verb or action word, and secondly, the specific nature of the action as to degree; simple, intensive, or causative. Using the verb "to kill," the following Hebrew stems are standard.

Qal stem: Active voice, indicative mood, Declarative: "kills."

Niphil stem: Passive voice and reflexive, declarative: "was killed."

Piel stem: Intensive, active: "he kills violently."

Pual stem: Intensive, passive: "was killed violently."

Hithpael stem: Intensive reflexive middle (like the Greek) declarative: "suicide" or "he killed himself."

Hiphil stem: Intensive, causative, active: "to cause to kill."

Hophal stem: Intensive, causative, passive: "caused to be killed."

Conjugations: Strong: root having three radicals none of which are gutterals or "n." Weak: with three basic varieties and many other small categories. Stative verb conjugations.

Identification: By prefix, by radicals, by vowel pattern, by suffix, and by pronominal suffix.

Characteristics: A verb will have tense characteristics. The imperfect has the prefix in the strong verb. A verb will have stem characteristics which identify a certain stem. A verb may have conjugation characteristics. A verb will have suffix characteristics.

Nouns:

There are four main classes of nouns and also other groupings with special types.

The noun has two basic functions called "states." The absolute state and the construct state which is the genitive idea, "of" such as "the man of."

As to gender: it is masculine or feminine. No neuter in Hebrew.

As to number: it is singular, plural, or dual. Dual is the concept of the "pair." It is not used for the ordinary idea of two things, unless they are like, two eyes, etc.

Declining a noun requires the identification of the suffix endings to determine the person, gender, and number as well as the absolute or construct state of the noun.

Vowel pattern in nouns as well as verbs is altered by the addition of suffixes. This is usually a vowel reduction.

The position: the construct occurs first in word order, and the absolute follows.

The definiteness: for either the absolute or construct noun, the definiteness depends on the definite article used with the absolute, or the noun being of such nature that it is definite without the article, such as proper names.

The Infinitive:

Definition: it is a verbal noun, noun of action.

State: it is either absolute or construct.

Function: strengthen the verb or indicate purpose.

As to form: in all the stems of the strong verb except the niphil, it has only two forms per stem.

As to limitations: the absolute can have nothing prefixed or added to it. The construct cannot stand alone in a sentence but must be a part of an absolute construct relationship.

The infinitive as a part of the Hebrew sentence:

It is a verbal noun.

It has two forms: קָטֹל and יִקְטֹל

It has two functions: Absolute and Construct.

The Absolute and the Construct Infinitive have specifics related to each of them.

The infinitive is timeless, it may express past, present, or future concepts.

The infinitive may function as a noun or as a verb.

The infinitive absolute; verbal substantive:

As to form: absolute and construct. In all the stems of the strong verb, the infinitive has only two forms except in the Niphil. This is true for Greek as there is only one form for the Greek infinitive per tense, so there is one form for Absolute and one for Construct per stem.

As to function: The Infinitive Absolute normally serves to strengthen the verb. It may stand independently as a finite verb and take an object. It may be used as the object of a finite verb: "I love eating."

When used with a verb of the same root, it occurs before the verb to strengthen it. It precedes to strengthen and follows to show continuation.

When used with a verb of a different root it is used to define the verbal idea more clearly.

It may be used as the subject or predicate nominative of a sentence.

Its limitations: Nothing can be prefixed or added. It stands alone, and throws up the bare idea of the verb. It usually is accompanied by a finite verb.

The infinitive construct:

As to function: It may serve as the subject of a sentence, the object of a verb, or the object of a preposition, commonly the preposition "to." The killing of the man was hidden. (subject). He went to kill the bear. (object of verb). I went to the killing of the criminals (object of preposition). It may appear as the first member of a construct relation. To kill the man.

Main thrust is to indicate purpose.

Prepositions:

Purpose of the prepositions is to show: Direction, Position, and Extent.

Classifications of prepositions: Inseparable, Optional, and Separable.

The Participle:

The participle is a verbal adjective and descriptive in nature.

The participle has a voice concept: active or passive. The one killing or killed.

The participle is timeless, may refer to the present, past or future time.

With the exception of the qal participle, the other stem participles have a prefix מ.

The participle may take an object.

The participle in its distinctiveness:

The participle emphasizes an action or condition in unbroken continuity.

The participle emphasizes continuity, the imperfect emphasizes succession.

The participle is a line _____ and the imperfect is a succession of points ....

The participle in general would emphasize the continuity of action while the infinitive would emphasize the purpose in the action or the action as a purpose.

The participle as to form: it has two.

Active: קֹטֵל

Passive: קָטוּל or prefix מ

The qal stem is the only one having the active and passive. In all stems but the qal, the participle is active, only.

The translations of the various uses of the participles.

	Adjective:	Substantive:	Verb:
Emphasizes:	Quality or character of the root.	The fixed character of the root.	The uninterrupted action of the root.
Active:	The one who is killing.	Killing is fun.	The man is killing.
Passive:	The one who was killed. Emphasis on state or condition.	The killed were buried.	The man was killed.

The verb tense indicates quality of action. The infinitive emphasizes the purpose in the action. The participles emphasize the continuity of the action.

The Imperative:

Function: it is a positive command and cannot be used with negative commands.

Form: based on the forms of the imperfect and omitting the prefix.

The Hebrew Sentences:

The nominal sentence: both subject and predicate are substantives, usually connected by copula or implied copula.

The verbal sentence: subject is a noun or pronoun and predicate is a finite verb.

The compound sentence: sentence in which either the subject or predicate is a complete clause in itself.

The incomplete sentence: Incomplete sentences are those where either the subject or the predicate or both, have to be supplied by the context.

The exclamation sentence: Sentences introduced by מָה are often exclamations of wonder or

indignation or ridicule or astonishment.

The interrogative sentence: As a rule the simple question is introduced by the interrogative הֲ .

The promise or threat sentence: Often introduced by אִם to indicate certainly or certainly not.

The desiderative sentence: A sentence expressing a wish by use of the simple imperfect, cohortative, jussive, imperative, perfect consecutive or by simple noun clause.

The negative sentence: Independent sentences made negative by the use of adverbs, conjunctions, particles, certain suffixes, etc.

Sentences connected by Waw: Thus two sentences are joined together that form a syntactical unit. Possibly in a coordinating way, possibly the antithesis, or circumstantial relationship, or casual significance.

Conditional sentences: Sentences usually of two varieties. Conditional sentences which are capable of fulfillment, and those incapable of fulfillment. They appear in two basic ways: with and without an introductory particle.

Conditional sentences capable of fulfillment: The fundamental rule is that this type of sentence is expressed by the imperfect with its equivalents, the jussive, cohortative, imperative, perfect consecutive and participle.

Conditional sentences incapable of fulfillment: The fundamental rule is that this type of sentence is expressed by the introduction with לוּ followed by the perfect.

Hebrew Constructions:

In Hebrew as well as Greek, individual words are used in sentences within the framework of constructions. Some of these constructions are grammatical, some relate to word order, or position, others relate to constructions with emphasis on the components of that construction. The following are some of the basic constructions that may occur in the Hebrew text.

The adjective and noun construction: (attributive or predicate). Each construction usually has a word order or position of words within that construction which must be noticed. It has certain components.

The absolute-construct relationship: Construction of nouns, infinitives, adjectives, etc.

Infinitive and verb constructions: Position is important, infinitive before the verb or after it.

Nominal sentence construction: Components more of a factor than word position. Here the subject and predicate are both substantives. Noun or noun equivalents such as participles.

Verbal sentence construction: Position of the verb and the subject of the sentence is the issue here.

Waw consecutive structure: This is a narrative sentence structure. If this is ignored one could arrive at strange conclusions about the text.

Demonstrative pronoun constructions: This is important as to the position and word order of the pronoun and the word it is related to. Attributive or predicate.

Pronominal suffix constructions: position and nature of that to which it is attached.

Compound sentence construction: Primary subject, as a clause, occurring first, sometimes appearing as

floating in the air but, however, not.

Negative sentence construction: Important factor in this construction is the choice of the negative particle doing the negating.

Paragraph construction - sentences connected by waw:

Relative clause construction:

Circumstantial clause construction:

Conditional sentence construction:

Comparative clause construction:

Construction related to particles: position, use and attachment within sentences.

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