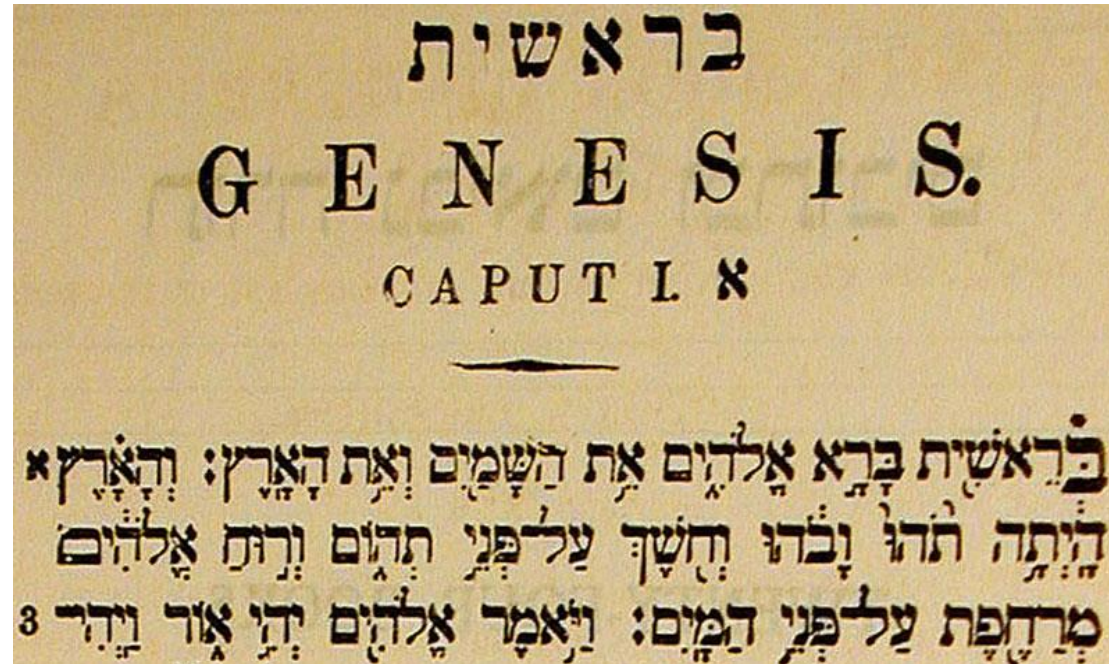


A Very Brief Introduction to Biblical Hebrew

WEEK 8



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The Alphabet – Practice

שְׁלוֹם

אַבְרָהָם

יִשְׂרָאֵל

יַעֲקֹב

יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

Inseparable Prefixes – Genesis 1:1

- The first word in Genesis has a bet tacked on to the beginning:

בְּרֵאשִׁית

- This is a preposition. Several prepositions in Hebrew appear as single letters attached directly to the word they govern.
- The preposition בְּ can mean “in”, “with”, or “by”.

The Hebrew Verb – Genesis 1:1

- Each Hebrew verb is based on a root consisting of three consonants.
- There are two main tenses:
 - Imperfect, which is mainly a future tense
 - Perfect of completed, which usually past or completed
- Tenses use prefixes, suffixes, and vowel changes.
- **בָּרָא** is a 3rd person masculine singular perfect: “he created.”
- Verbs convey number, gender, person (etc.)
- This conjugation is also the “dictionary form” because in nearly all verbs it displays all three root consonants.

The Masculine/Mixed Plural – Genesis 1:1

אֱלֹהִים

- The name of God is has the ׀ ending that marks all masculine and mixed plurals.
- Despite the plural ending, this word (and others) are treated as if they were singular.

Hebrew Word Order – Genesis 1:1

- Since Hebrew does not use cases, the parts of speech are mainly designated by word order.
- For most main clauses, the order is:

Verb → Subject → Object

- For continuing narrative clauses, the order changes to:

Noun → Verb → etc.

The Direct Object – Genesis 1:1

The word אֶת is not translated. It is a marker indicating that the next word is an object of the main verb.

The Definite Article – Genesis 1:1

- The word **הַשָּׁמַיִם** is prefixed by a **הַ**. This is the definite article.
- The definite article is directly attached to the noun it governs.

The Dual Plural – Genesis 1:1

The word **הַשָּׁמַיִם** is a dual. You can distinguish it by the vowel points:

יַיִם

- The dual usually appears in plural nouns that naturally come in pairs: ears, eyes, hands, feet, and so on.
- In this case **הַשָּׁמַיִם** refers to the heavens above and below the earth.

The Conjunction, “and” – Genesis 1:1

- The copulative conjunction is marked by a ׀
- Usually it appears as an inseparable prefix attached to the word it governs.
- In addition to “and”, other possible meanings are “but” and “or.”
- Usually it takes a shewa.

Verse 2!!

Onward...



MS 206

Hebrew square book script. Iraq, 1st half of 11th c.

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The Verb “to be” – Genesis 1:2

- The verb **וַיְהִי** is a perfect, 3rd person, feminine singular.
- Nouns in Hebrew are either masculine or feminine. Most feminine nouns have a final **ה** pointed with a kamatz.
 - The subject of this verb—the earth—does *not* have a typical feminine ending.

Independent Prepositions – Genesis 1:2

- **עַל-פְּנֵי** means “upon the face”.
- **עַל** is a preposition that means “on”, “upon”, or “above”.
- The “hyphen” serves a function similar to the hyphen in English, linking two words.

- The noun for *face* is:

פְּנֵי

- This is another noun that is plural in form, but treated as singular.
- (But what happened to the final mim?)

Grouping Nouns (Construct State) – Genesis 1:2

- Hebrew will indicate relationships between nouns by grouping them together in chains. When this happens, it's called a “construct state.”
- It helps to show association or possession.
- One feature of the construct state is that nouns in the masculine or mixed plural lose the final ם, unless the noun comes at the end of the chain.

עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם

The Hebrew Participle – Genesis 1:2

- מְרַחֶפֶת is a feminine singular participle.
- Hebrew participles show gender and number, but not “person”.
- This participle is based on the triliteral root of מְרַחֵף. The mim prefix and tav suffix are part of the participle form.
- The meaning is much like an English participle; it refers to someone or something doing the action of the verb.

Verse 3!!

It's about to get strange...



The Imperfect Tense – Genesis 1:3

The Perfect

- Adds *suffixes* to the 3-consonant root (except for 3rd person masculine)
- Usually refers to past or completed actions.

The Imperfect

- Adds *prefixes* to the 3-consonant root:

יֹאמֵר

- (3rd person masculine singular)
- Usually refers to incomplete or future actions.

The Vav Consecutive – Genesis 1:3

- This is a verbal construction used in narrative passages.
- A vav (ו) is added to an imperfect that changes it from future to past tense.
- A vav consecutive usually has a patah (וַ) and a dagesh in the prefix.
- A vav conjunction meaning “and” or “but” takes a shwa (וְ).
- Usually a narrative section starts with a verb in the perfect, followed by a chain of verbs in the vav-consecutive that denote consecutive actions.
- Extra note: a vav consecutive can also change a perfect to a future tense.

The Vav Consecutive – continued

יֵאמֵר

He will say (Regular imperfect)

וַיֹּאמֶר

And he said (וַיֹּ vav with a patach, וַי prefix with a dagesh)

וַיֹּאמֶר־

And he will say (וַיֹּ shwa under vav)

Vocabulary Note – Genesis 1:3

יְהִי

Verb “to be” or “to become” (Root: הִיָּהוּ)

- 3rd person masculine singular
- “There shall be” or “let there be”
- (Notice that the last root consonant has dropped. This happens sometimes with verbs with a final ה in the root.)

Verse 4

It's all good.



Weak Verbs – Genesis 1:4

- And he saw: **וַיִּרְאֶה**
- The root of this verb is **רָאָה**
- What happened to the final **הּ**?

Certain root consonants disappear or change when the verb is conjugated. We call these “weak” or “defective” verbs.

Roots that end in **הּ**- lose the final **הּ** in the vav-consecutive.

(We’ll see this again.)

Missing Vocabulary – Genesis 1:4

-כִּי A separable preposition meaning “that”, “because”, or “when”.

וַיִּבְדֵּל The root is בָּדַל. The general meaning is “to divide”, “to separate”.

Changes in וְ (“and”) – Genesis 1:4

- The word וּבֵינָם (“and between”) changes the conjunction from וְ to וּ.
- This change takes place in the conjunction happens before all words that start with בּ, מּ, פּ (“labials”).

Verse 5

All in a day's work.



The Preposition לְ – Genesis 1:5

- לְ – “to”, “for”, “from”

Where is the אֵת?

- לְ can point to an object, so אֵת isn't needed.
- When לְ is used with the definite article, הַ, the הַ drops out, but the long “a” vowel replaces the shwa:

לְ = “to/for the...”

Verse 6

The bigger picture.



Other Verb Constructions – Genesis 1:6

- The verb **מִבְּדִיל** is based on the same root as the word **וַיִּבְדֵּל** we encountered in verse 4 (**בִּדְלָה**).
- **מִבְּדִיל** is a *causative* participle; “a dividing”.
- Each verb can be structured seven general forms.
- Each form has its own perfect, imperfect, participle, etc.

The Hebrew Verb *Binyanim*:

Simple Active

“He has broken”, “He breaks”

Simple Passive

“He was broken”

Intensive Active

“He smashed”, “He shattered”

Intensive Passive

“He was smashed”

Causative Active

“He made great”

Causative Passive

“He was magnified”

Reflexive

“He made himself great”

- NO FORM -

Verse 7

A place for everything...



Hebrew Verb Nomenclature

- As we mentioned earlier, every Hebrew verb is based on a root consisting of three consonants.
- Some “weak” consonants exhibit unusual behavior; they disappear, merge with neighboring consonants, or change to different consonants. Verbs with weak consonants are called “weak verbs.”
- We’ve already seen this with verbs that end with הוּ , in which the הוּ disappears in the imperfect.

For example: וַיִּרְאֵהוּ from the root רִאָה

Hebrew Verb Nomenclature, continued.

Hebrew grammar refers to consonants in verbs based on their position in the root. Each position is numbered, I, II, or III.

So, our verb with a final ם would be called a “III- ם” or a “3rd ם” or “Final ם” verb.

Example: The verb הִלֵּךְ "to walk", is a I-ם verb.

Hebrew Verb Nomenclature, continued.

- Other grammarians refer to consonants in a verb by mapping them to the consonants of the verb **פִּעַל**, which means “to do”, or “to act.”
- For example, our “III- הַ” verb could be called a “ל-הַ” verb, because the הַ is in the ל place.

III	II	I
ל	ע	פ

Verse 8

Time to fly solo...



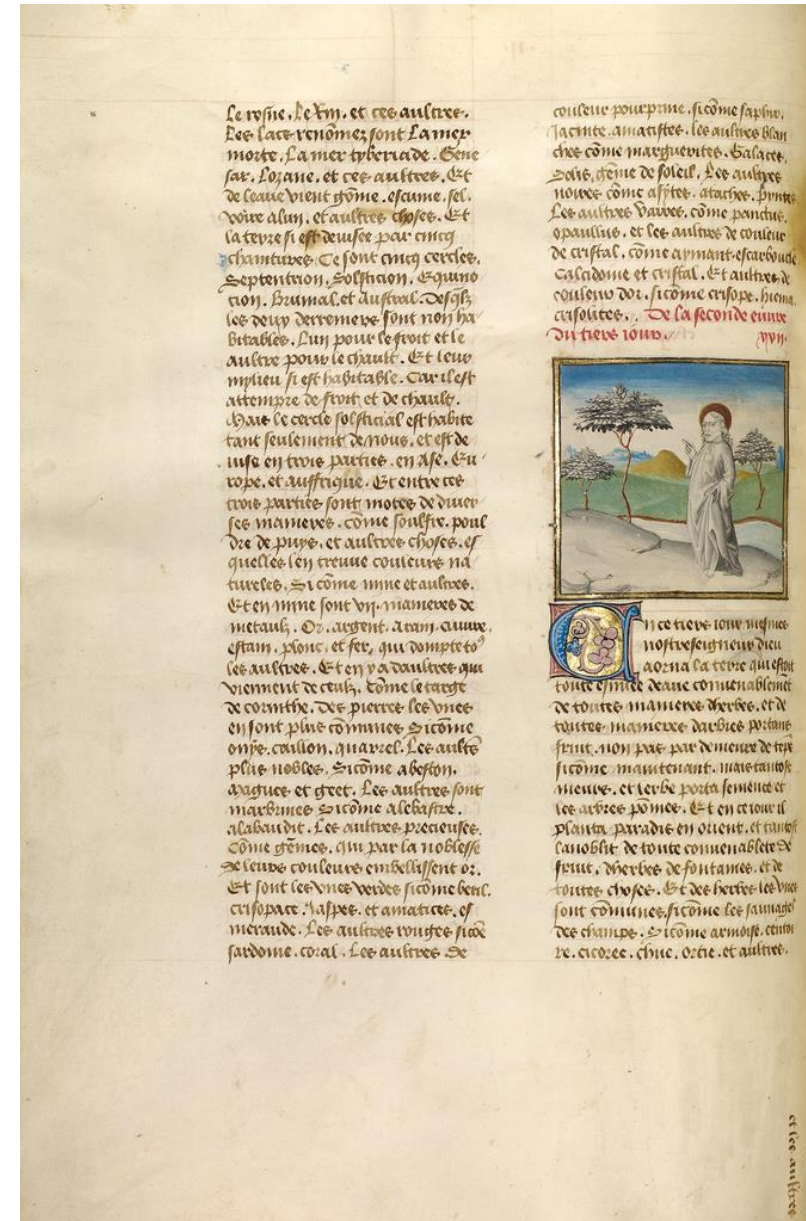
Verses 9-10

Really weak verbs...



Verses 11-12

In which we get pronominal



Pronominal Suffixes – Genesis 1:11

- We've seen how Hebrew uses inseparable prefixes as prepositions. These prepositions are attached directly to the words they govern.
- In a similar way, Hebrew will use suffixes to represent possessive pronouns ("his seed") or as objects of verb, which we will see later.

זֶרְעוֹ-בּוֹ

The final vavs are pronominal suffixes, literally "his seed in him." In English we would use "it" rather than "his" or "him."

The Causative – Genesis 1:12

- We saw the causative as one of the structures in the Hebrew verbal system. The Hebrew word for this form is “Hiphil” (הִפְעִיל).
- It’s an active form that implies both causation and continuance of a state of being.
- Form the basic causative by adding a ה to the beginning, and a י after the middle consonant. This example uses the verb, זָכַר “to remember”.

הִזְכִּיר

The Causative, continued

- In the imperfect, the added ה drops, and the prefix of the imperfect gets a patach. So:
- הִזְכִּיר (‘‘he caused to remember’’) becomes יִזְכֵּיר (‘‘he will cause to remember’’).

Hint: the י between the 2nd and 3rd root consonants suggests you may be dealing with a Hiphil construction. Usually.


The Causative, continued

- Turn back for a moment to verse 6 and that word מִבְּדִיל, “a separation.”
- This is a causative participle. Like some other participles we’ve seen, it adds a –מ prefix, which causes the –ו to drop out.
- The ך is the giveaway that this is a Hiphil.

One Last Thing on the Hiphil (for now)

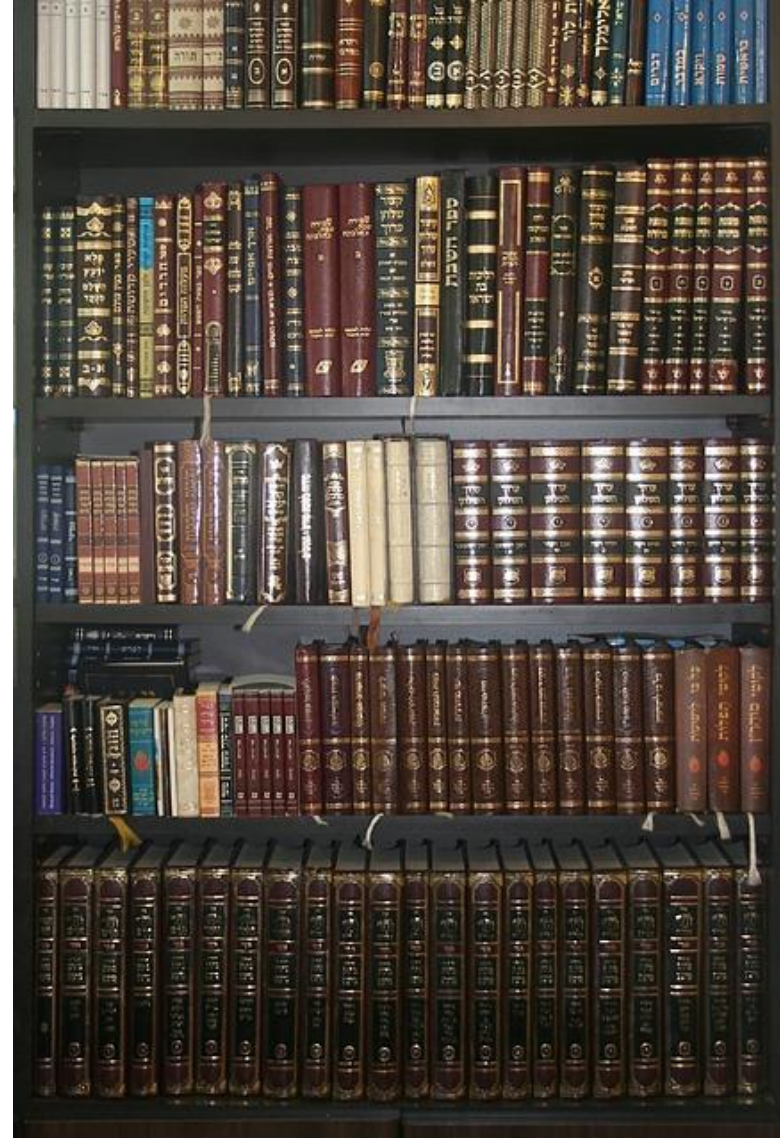
- While the ׀ is the giveaway that this is a Hiphil, there are some instances, like in verse 12, where it drops.

וַתֵּצֵא

- “And she brought forth” from a verb root meaning “to go out”
- The  underneath the צ signals that missing ׀.

Verses 13-15

On to infinity...



A Plurality of Plurals – Genesis 1:14

- With the appearance of **מְאֲרֹת** in verse 14, we now have seen all three of the plurals in Hebrew. This word can also be spelled **מְאָרוֹת**.
- Here are the three plurals with their endings:

Example

אֱלֹהִים

מְאֲרֹת

שְׁמַיִם

Form

Masculine/mixed plural, marked by **ים-**

Feminine plural, marked by **ות-**

Dual, marked by **יםִי-**

The Infinitive – Genesis 1:15

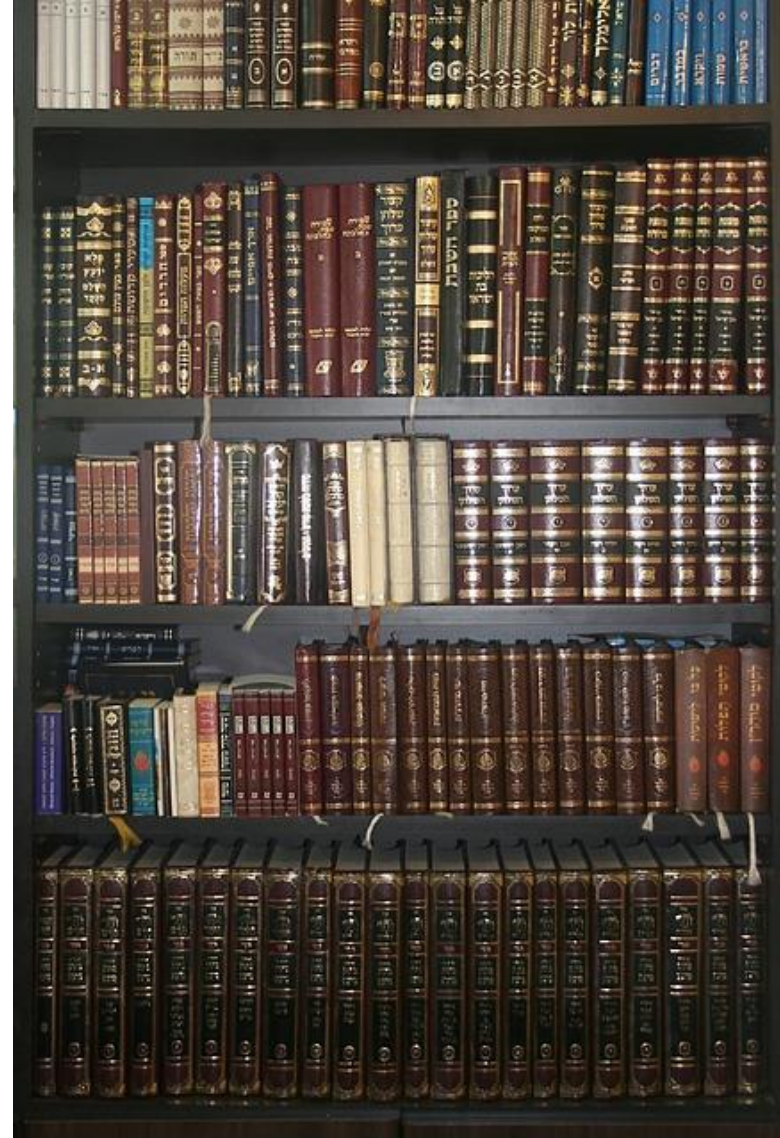
- There are two kinds of infinitives. The kind here is called the “infinitive construct.”
- The word לְהֵאָרֵר is an infinitive of a hiphiel form.
- The infinitive in Hebrew expresses the same meaning as the English infinitive; “to go”, “to say”, etc.
- The key marker is to watch for the – לְ at the beginning of a hiphiel verb. A regular verb in the infinitive will have a לְ.

The Infinitive, continued

- Remember, there is also the preposition, - לְ which appears as a prefix and means “to”, “towards”, “for”, etc.
- The infinitive prefix – לֶ is marked with a hirik (“ee”) vowel.
- The preposition – לְ is marked by a shwa.

Verses 16-19

More lights



Nouns and Adjectives – Genesis 1:16

- Adjectives agree with the nouns they modify in number, gender, and *definiteness*.
- In other words, if a noun carries a definite article, the associated adjective will also have a definite article.

אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים

Adjective Noun

- Remember, adjectives *follow* the nouns they modify.

I-נ Verbs, (נתן) – Genesis 1:17

- One common, annoying, and frequent consonantal change happens in verbs that start with נ. The consonant is assimilated into the following consonant, which is then doubled.
- We have something similar in English. The prefix “in-” meaning “not” shows up in words like “infrequent” or “insoluble”, but when the n comes up against other consonants, it assimilates to the next consonant, which doubles, e.g., “immortal” or “illegal.”
- Note in our word וַיִּתֵּן “and he gave”, the נ assimilates to the ת that follows. The dot in the middle (dagesh) indicates that the consonant is doubled.

More Pronoun Suffixes – Genesis 1:17

- We've already seen the 3rd person possessive pronominal suffix with זֶרְעוֹ, “it's/his seed”, where the final ם represents the pronoun.
- Here is another: אֹתָם, meaning, “them.” This time the suffix is ם ׁ but it's attached to our old friend the direct object marker אֶת, but with an “o” vowel.
- This is a common way of stating a pronoun as the direct object. For example, “him” can be written this way as אֹתוֹ.

Can You Find the Infinitives? – Genesis 1:18

וְלִמְשַׁל, בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה, וְלִהְבֵּדֵיל

Verses 20-25

Life abundant



Review: the Imperfect So Far... the forms

Singular

- 1st person common singular
- 2nd pers. singular, masculine
- 2nd person singular, feminine
- 3rd person singular, masculine
- 3rd person singular, feminine

Plural

- 1st person common plural
- 2nd person plural, masculine
- 2nd person plural, feminine
- 3rd person plural, masculine
- 3rd person plural, feminine

The Imperfect So Far... What We've Seen

Singular

- 3rd person masc.

XXXיְ

- 3rd person fem.

XXXתְּ

Plural

- 3rd person masc.

יְXXXוּ

(Usually with the vav consecutive)

The Imperative and Jussive – Genesis 1:22

- The imperative is a command in the 2nd person. The key marker is the root (final ה- drops) with the suffix ו-.

פָּרֹוּ וְרַבּוּ, וּמְלֹאוּ

- Hebrew also has a command form directed to a 3rd person called the *Jussive*.

יִרְבּ

More on the Jussive

- In form, the jussive looks just like an imperfect in the strong verb. Differences only start to appear in certain weak verbs.
- In most cases, context is your best guide to identifying a jussive

Hebrew command forms are only used for positive commands, (i.e., “Thou shalt...), but *not* negative commands.

Negative commands use the imperfect plus a special particle לֹא or לֹא־.

Again, the Construct State – Genesis 1:25

- Review from Genesis 1:2...
Hebrew will indicate relationships between nouns by grouping them together in chains. When this happens, it's called a “construct state.”
- Another feature is that nouns inside the construct have final ם change to a final ת.
- Note how חַיָּהּ (“animal”) changes in the phrase below:

אֶת-חַיֵּי הַאָּרֶץ

(“wild animal”)

Verses 26-28

Imago dei...



Another Imperfect Form

- This is the 1st person common plural imperfect. The marker is the נ prefix.

נַעֲשֶׂה

- This comes from the root עשה and means “make/do”, so this word means, “We shall make” or “Let us make”.

More Pronominal Suffixes – Genesis 1:26

- In Genesis 1:11, we saw a suffix standing in for a pronoun:

זָרְעוֹ (“his/its seed”)

In this verse we see another example of this with

בְּצִלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ

The suffixes here both mean “our” or “ours”

- Note the preposition בְּ in” and כְּ “like” or “according to”.

More Pronominal Suffixes – continued

- In verse 27 we saw the direct object marker אֶת with a הּ pronominal suffix (masculine singular); אֶתּוֹ, “him”.
- In verse 28 we see it again with אֶתְּם , a mixed plural pronominal ending אֶתְּם, meaning “them.”

The direct object marker can take these suffixes to indicate a pronoun as the object of a verb.

Pronominal Suffixes on Prepositions

Hebrew also adds pronominal suffixes to prepositions:

לוֹ

“to/for him”

בוֹ

“in him”

לוֹנוֹ

“to/for us”

לוֹהָ

“to/for her”

Verses 29

The menu



The Perfect – Genesis 1:29

- The perfect form is a conjugation that shows past and/or completed actions. We've seen one example so far, which is **בָּרָא** meaning, “he created”.
- Most perfects use a suffix, although the 3rd person masculine singular is an exception. It has neither prefix nor suffix.
- The verb in vs. 29 is a 1st person common singular:

נָתַתִּי “I gave”

The marker for the 1st common singular in the perfect is the suffix **־תִּי**–

The Perfect, continued

- The verb “give” has the root of נתן . In our text, you may notice that נתתי is missing the final נ just before the suffix.
- The reason for this is because, like verbs ending in ה, final-נ verbs often drop the last נ before a suffix.
- Note: this particular verb is difficult because it also starts with a נ and thus behaves oddly with prefixes. נתן is one of those verbs that requires some extra attention.

New Pronominal Suffix!

- We meet the preposition לְ with the 2nd person masculine/mixed plural suffix ׀כֶּם-

לְכֶם “to you (all)”