



About Hebrew Nouns and Verbs

By Jeff A. Benner

Hebrew Nouns

The most common noun form is the use of the two-letter or three-letter roots. The parent root אב (AB, **Strong's #1**) is a noun and means "**father**." The child root אור (A.W.R), can be a verb meaning to "enlighten" (**Strong's #215**), but is also used as a noun meaning "light" (**Strong's #216**). The adopted root פתח (P.T.Hh), can be a verb meaning to "open" (**Strong's #6605**) but is also used as a noun meaning a "door," or opening (**Strong's #6607**).

Noun Derivatives

Additional nouns are formed out of the root by adding specific letters in specific places within the root. The noun derivative מפתח (*maph'tach*), meaning a key, is formed by adding the letter מ (*m*) to the front of the root פתח (P.T.Hh). The most common noun derivatives are formed by placing a מ (*m*) or ת (*t*) in front of the root or by placing a י (*i*) or ו (*o* or *u*) inside the root.

Feminine Derivatives

In Hebrew all nouns are either masculine or feminine. In most cases a feminine noun is formed by adding ה (*ah*), ת (*et*) or ית (*iyt*) to the end of a noun.

Plural Nouns

Masculine nouns are made plural by adding the suffix ים (*ym*) and Feminine nouns are made by adding the suffix ות (*ot*). In some cases, masculine words, usually very ancient words, will use the ות (*ot*) suffix. For example, the Hebrew words אב (*av* - father) and אור (*or* - light) are masculine words but are written as אבות (*avot*) and אורות (*'orot*) in the plural.

Grammatical Tools

Hebrew uses nouns for other functions within the sentence. They can be used as adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, etc. The noun עקב (*eqev*) is a noun meaning the "heel" of the foot, but it can also be used as a particle and is translated as "because," in the sense of "what has been said" is on the "heel" of what is "about to be said."

Hebrew Verbs

Because the Hebrew language is an **action oriented language** rather than descriptive, it is prolific with verbs. When a Hebrew verb is conjugated in a sentence it identifies person, number, gender, tense, mood and voice. Understanding these different aspects of a verb, while not essential for proper Biblical interpretation, it is very helpful when learning how to translate the Hebrew text.

Person

Each verb identifies the subject of the verb as first (I), second (you) or third (he/she) person.

Number

Each verb also indicates the subject of the verb as singular or plural (we, you or they).

Gender

Each verb also indicates the subject of the verb as masculine or feminine.

Tense

There are four tenses in Hebrew verbs, perfect, imperfect, participle and imperative. In the English language the verb tenses are related to time; past, present and future, while the Hebrew verbs are all related to action. The perfect tense is a completed action and in most cases is related to the English past tense (he cut). The imperfect tense is an incomplete action and is closely related to the English present and future tenses (he cuts or he will cut).

When a Hebrew verb is prefixed with the letter *vav* it means "and," but it also reverses the tense of the verb. For example, the verb **אמר** (*amar*) means "he said," and is in the perfect tense, but when it is written as **ואמר** (*v'amar*) it means "and he will say."

Voice

Each verb also includes voice of which there are three; active, passive or reflexive. The active voice identifies the action of the verb as coming from the subject (he cut). The passive voice does not identify the origin of action placed on the subject of the verb (he was cut). The reflexive voice places the action of the verb onto the subject (he cut himself).

Mood

Each verb also includes mood of which there are three; simple, intensive or causative. The simple mood is simple action of the verb (he cut). The intensive mood implies force or emphasis on the verb (he slashed or hacked). The causative mood expresses causation to the verb (he caused a cut).

The voice and mood of a verb are identified by seven different names as shown in the table below.

Form	Mood	Voice	Example
Paal (Qal)	Simple	Active	He cut
Niphal	Simple	Passive	He was cut
Piel	Intensive	Active	He slashed
Pual	Intensive	Passive	He was slashed
Hiphil	Causative	Active	He made cut
Hophal	Causative	Passive	He was made cut
Hitpael	Intensive	Reflexive	He slashed himself

Here are a few examples of the conjugated verb אָבַד (ABD), meaning "to perish."

Verse	Exodus 10:7
Hebrew	אָבַדָּהּ
Transliteration	<i>av'dah</i>
Person	3rd
Number	Singular
Gender	Feminine
Tense	Perfect

Voice	Simple
Mood	Active
Translation	she perished

Verse Leviticus 23:30

Hebrew וְהָאֲבֹדְתִי

Transliteration *v'ha'vad'tiy*

Person 1st

Number Singular

Gender Common

Tense Perfect

Voice Causative

Mood Active

Translation and he I will cause to
perish (I will destroy)

Verse Numbers 16:33

Hebrew וַיֹּאבְדוּ

Transliteration *vai'yov'du*

Person 3rd

Number	Plural
Gender	Masculine
Tense	Imperfect
Voice	Simple
Mood	Active
Translation	and they perished

Verse Numbers 33:52

Hebrew וַיָּבִדוּם

Transliteration *v'iy'bad'tem*

Person 2nd

Number plural

Gender Masculine

Tense Perfect

Voice Intensive

Mood Active

Translation and you will utterly
destroy