

Learning Hebrew: Qal Imperative, Cohortative, and Jussive

QAL IMPERATIVE

The Qal Imperative is generally used to express a direct command. Other uses for the Qal Imperative are granting permission or communicating a request. The Qal Imperative is related to the corresponding Imperfect forms.

The Qal Imperative only occurs in the second person, singular and plural.

| | Imperative | Sufformative | Translation |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Second Masculine Singular | קַטֵּל | | You kill |
| Second Feminine Singular | קַטְּלִי | יְ | You kill |
| Second Masculine Plural | קַטְּלוּ | וּ | You kill |
| Second Feminine Plural | קַטְּלֵנָה | נָה | You kill |

For negative commands, Hebrew does not negate the Imperative form. Negative commands are expressed with the negative particles **לֹא** or **אַל** with the Imperfect.

The particle **נָא** may be translated as please or may simply remain untranslated. The particle may or may not be connected to the Imperative with a maqgef.

Example: **נָא שְׂמֹר** and **נָא־ שְׂמֹר** may be translated as *observe* or *please observe*

COHORTATIVE

The Cohortative conjugation is used to express a wish, request, or command. This conjugation may also be used to express purpose or result. When translated, it may be used as either the term *let* or *may*.

The Cohortative occurs only in the first person singular and plural forms. The Cohortative verbal form is constructed by adding **הִ** to a first person form of the Imperfect. For example: **אֶשְׂמְרָה** means *may I observe* or *let me observe*.

The particle **נָא** may be translated as please or may simply remain untranslated. The particle may or may not be connected to the Imperative with a maqgef.

For negative commands, generally the negative particle **אַל** is used. Sometimes you will see the **נָא** particle attached to this negative particle with the maqgef.

JUSSIVE

The Jussive conjugation is used to express either a mild command or a strong wish. It occurs in the third person. When translated, it may be used as either the term *let* or *may*.

With strong verbs, the Jussive is the same as its corresponding Imperfect form. For example:

יִכְתֹּב may be translated as *he will write* or *let him write*. The Imperfect translation is far more frequent than the Jussive and context should suggest the correct translation.

For negative commands, generally the negative particle אַל is used. Sometimes you will see the אַלְּ particle attached to this negative particle with the maqqef.

Sources: *The First Hebrew Primer, Third Edition* by Simon, Resnikoff, and Motzkin *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* by Pratico and Van Pelt

© Rachel-Esther bat-Avraham, 2009
For Personal Use Only. All Other Uses Must be Pre-Approved
rachel-esther@becomingjewish.org