Learning Hebrew: Qal Infinitive Construct

QAL INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
Infinitives are verbal nouns which mean they have features in common with both verbs and nouns. The Infinitive Construct as similar to the English Infinitive and is commonly translated with the preposition “to” plus a verb – such as, to drive.

Since the Infinitive Construct is not inflected for person, gender, or number, there is only one basic form. The vowel pattern for the Qal Infinitive Construct is consistent for all strong verbs and most weak verbs.

QAL INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT FORM
The Infinitive Construct form of Category III-ה verbs end in רָת.

בָּנָּה [Verbal Root] בְּנוֹת [Infinitive Construct] (to build, building)

The Infinitive Construct form of Category I-נ verbs preserve the nun in the first root position. However, there are many verbs that have an alternate Infinitive Construct form where the initial נ is lost and a ר is added to the end.

נָּסַע [Verbal Root] נְּסֹעַ [Infinitive Construct with נ] סַעַת [Alternate Form with ר] (to depart)

A few of the Infinitive Construct form of Category I-י verbs preserve the standard vowel pattern as in יְשֹן (to sleep). Most of these verbs however drop the initial י and add a final ר.

יָּשַב [Verbal Root] שֶׁבֶת [Infinitive Construct] (to dwell)

QAL INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT WITH PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES
The Infinitive Construct often appears with a pronominal suffix that can act as either the subject or object of the verbal idea.

קָטְלִי (my killing – suffix as subject) (killing me – suffix as object)

QAL INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT WITH INSEPARABLE PREPOSITIONS
The inseparable prepositions ב, ל, and זו may be prefixed to the Infinitive Construct. The Infinitive Construct with the זו inseparable preposition is generally used to express purpose of result.

לְזֹר (in order to remember)
When the inseparable prepositions בּ and בּ are prefixed to the Infinitive Construct, they may be translated as “when” or “while”.

כִּשְׁמֹר or בִּשְׁמֹר (when observing or while observing)

NEGATION OF THE INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
The negative particles לא and אל are not used to negate the Infinitive Construct. Instead, the Hebrew Infinitive is negated with לָבֶלִית (also spelled לְבֶלִית) meaning “not” or “in order not”.


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