

Learning Hebrew: Vav Conversive

VAV CONVERSIVE

When a vav is prefixed to an Imperfect verb, the value of the verb becomes Perfect – in other words, the vav is a vav conversive (aka vav consecutive) and the verb becomes a converted Imperfect.

When a vav is prefixed to a Perfect verb, the value of the verb becomes Imperfect. The vav conversive converts the Perfect verb to a translation value of an Imperfect verb.

The vav conversive is used primarily to denote consecutive actions – that is, actions occurring in a sequence. For example: I sat in the truck, and then I started the engine, and then I drove home.

VAV CONVERSIVE WITH THE IMPERFECT VERB

When an Imperfect verb is prefixed with the vav conversive, it will be translated with the values of a Perfect verb.

Example: יִשְׁמַר (Imperfect) – He will observe

וַיִּשְׁמַר (Imperfect with vav conversive) – And he observed

The Imperfect verbal vav conversive is spelled with a patach vowel and a dagesh forte in the Imperfect preformative. (וַיִּשְׁמַר)

Except when a vav conversive is added to the Imperfect verb, the spelling of the verb is unchanged.

In the Hebrew narrative, the converted Imperfect verb is usually used as a past tense verb form. Often, the narrative will begin with a Perfect verb and then be followed by converted Imperfect verbs.

VAV CONVERSIVE WITH THE PERFECT VERB

When a Perfect verb is prefixed with the vav conversive, it will be translated with the values of an Imperfect verb.

Example: שָׁמַר (Perfect) – He observed

וַיִּשְׁמַר (Perfect with vav conversive) – And he will observe

In the case of the Perfect verb, there is no difference in spelling between the vav conversive and the simple conjunction vav.

In the Hebrew narrative, the converted Perfect verb is usually used as a future tense verb form. Often, the narrative will begin with an Imperfect verb and then be followed by converted Perfect verbs.

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

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