

## Lesson 6: The G Perfect Verb and Nominal Suffixes

### Part 1.

Most Semitic languages attest a number of verbal stems or conjugations that communicate different basic concepts. In Aramaic, there are three basic stems, named either after what the Germans call it, or after the form of the stem in the third person, masculine singular (3ms) perfect form of the root פֿעַל, and/or after its distinctive morphological feature:

The G-stem (i.e., *Grundstamm*) or the Pa'al (פֿעַל) --- The basic stem (used to express both transitive and intransitive actions).

The D-stem (i.e., *Doppelstamm*) or the Pa'el (פֿעֵל) --- The stem used for factitive and fientive meaning, for verbs that convey the causing of a state: “to make broken”, “to make experienced.” These notions can be distinguished from those that are more purely transitive (“to make something break”, “to make someone experience”); the D-stem implies that a subject has been brought into a state of being. (Factitive refers to verbs which are intransitive in the G-stem, but transitive in the D-stem; fientive refers to verbs that are transitive in the G-stem as well as the D-stem). Its distinctive morphological feature is the doubling of the middle root consonant, thus the German name of the root means “Double-stem”.

The H-stem or Haph'el (הֿפֿעֵל). This stem is associated with causation (hence it is sometimes called the Causative Stem). Its distinctive morphological feature is its prefix הֿ.

This stem, associated with causation, can be compared with the D-stem since both describe the transformation of things. While the D-stem describes bringing something into a state, where that something is essentially passive, the H-stem describes that something actively participating in an action.

Waltke and O'Connor's *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (pp. 355-357) offers an English example that helps to distinguish these various nuances of the Hebrew (and Aramaic) verbal system.

“Sarah flies the airplane” G-stem

“Sarah, [by herself,] gets the airplane flown” D-stem

“Sarah makes the airplane fly” H-stem

Because each of these stems is associated with a particular semantic nuance, it is often easy to reason, based on the basic meaning of the root and the associations of

each stem, what the meaning of a given root is in a given stem. It so happens, due to the limited nature of the preserved written Aramaic, few roots appear in all three stems. But, e.g., take the root associated with “perishing” אָבַד:

In the G-stem it means “to perish” (an intransitive verb).

In the D-stem it means “to put something into a state of ruin”.

In the H-stem it means “to cause something to perish”, i.e., “to destroy”.

Verbs of movement are also easy to predict, like נָחַת “to go down”

In the G-stem it means “to go down” (an intransitive verb).

In the D-stem it means “to bring into a state of being lower”.

In the H-stem it means “to deposit” or “to cause something to go down”.

There are also passive stems that correspond to these three basic stems:

The Gp, G-passive, or Pə‘īl (פְּעִיל)

The Dp, D-passive, or Pu‘‘al (פְּעֵל)

The Hp, H-passive, or Huph‘al (הַפְּעֵל)

Of these, the G-passive is the most important, the most commonly used.

In addition, there are three prefix-t stems, each corresponding to one of the three active stems, each usually expressing a reflexive notion or a passive notion. (This means that there are technically two ways to create a passive verbal form, one through the passive stems [Pə‘īl, Pu‘‘al, Huph‘al], the other through the prefix-t stems.)

The tG or Hithpə‘el (הִתְפַּעֵל)

The tD or Hithpa‘‘al (הִתְפַּעֵל)

The tH or Hithhaph‘al (\*הִתְהַפְּעֵל)

Of these, only the tG and tD stems are found in Biblical Aramaic with any frequency.

Each of these stems (G, D, H, Gp, Dp, Hp, tG, tD, [tH]), or conjugations, has a perfect form (expressing actions already completed, finished) and an imperfect form (expressing actions not yet completed), as well as participles, imperatives, and infinitives. We learn first the perfect. The 3ms form is the most important since it is the form of the verb listed in the dictionaries.

The following paradigm isolates the distinctive features of each form of the perfect.

3ms	כְּתַב	--	
3fs	כְּתַבְתְּ	כְּתַבְתְּ	(The forms of the 3fs and 1cs perfect are somewhat counter-intuitive, given that their etymological form is <i>*katabat</i> and <i>*katabtu</i> . Based on these forms, we would expect the first vowel to be /a/ not /i/. It is, in fact, /a/ in roots that begin with a guttural consonant. E.g., עֲבַדְתְּ “she made” and אָמַרְתְּ “she said”, עֲבַדְתִּי “I made”, etc.)
2ms	כְּתַבְתָּ / כְּתַבְתֵּי	כְּתַבְתָּ / כְּתַבְתֵּי	(The shewa preceding the suffix in these forms represents the absence of a vowel: kəṭabtā / kəṭabt, kəṭabtī <sup>y</sup> . The final shewa in כְּתַבְתֵּי also represents the absence of a vowel.)
2fs	כְּתַבְתִּי	כְּתַבְתִּי	
1cs	כְּתַבְתִּי	כְּתַבְתִּי	(The shewa preceding the suffix in this form represents the absence of a vowel: kitbet.)
3mp	כְּתַבּוּ	כְּתַבּוּ	
3fp	כְּתַבְהוּ	כְּתַבְהוּ	
2mp	כְּתַבְתֶּינָּה	כְּתַבְתֶּינָּה	(The shewa preceding the suffix in these forms represents the absence of a vowel: kəṭabtū <sup>wn</sup> , kəṭabten.)
2fp	כְּתַבְתֶּינָּה	כְּתַבְתֶּינָּה	
1cp	כְּתַבְנָא	כְּתַבְנָא	(The shewa preceding the suffix in this form represents the absence of a vowel: kəṭabnā .)

Adding these suffixes to the stem of the D- or H-stem allows you usually to predict the correct form.

Thus, the 2fp suffix כְּתַבְתֶּינָּה + the base of the D-stem כְּתַב = כְּתַבְתֶּינָּה

Or, the 1cp suffix כְּתַבְנָא + the base of the H-stem כְּתַבְנָא = כְּתַבְנָא (Note that while both forms contain the sequence --כְּתַב--, it represents something slightly

different in each case. The dot in the *taw* in the D-stem form indicates that the middle consonant is doubled. In the H-stem form, the dot in the *taw* indicates only that it is pronounced “hard”. The above D-stem form would be transcribed *katteḇten*, while the H-stem form would be transcribed *haḵteḇnā* .)

### Exercise 6a.

Understanding the suffixes attached to the G-stem perfect and understanding the basic principles of vowel reduction, allows you to predict often what the verbal forms will look like in the D- and H-stems.

Fill out the chart below for the verb כְּתַבְתָּ; consult the Answer Appendix as needed.

	G-Perfect	D-perfect	H-perfect
3ms 3fs	כְּתַב כְּתַבְתְּ	כְּתַב	חְתַבְתְּ
2ms 2fs	כְּתַבְתְּ / כְּתַבְתְּ כְּתַבְתְּ	כְּתַבְתְּ	
1cs	כְּתַבְתְּ		
3mp 3fp	כְּתַבּוּ כְּתַבְתְּוּ	כְּתַבּוּ כְּתַבְתְּוּ	חְתַבּוּ חְתַבְתְּוּ
2mp 2fp	כְּתַבְתְּוּ כְּתַבְתְּוּ		
1cp	כְּתַבְתְּוּ		

In some cases the G-perfect verbs have a short /i/ vowel, where כְּתַב has a short /a/ vowel. So, e.g., the G-3ms perfect of the verb indicating ability looks like this: יָכַל (“he was able”). Similarly, with the verb indicating sitting, יָתַב (“he sat”).

Occasionally verbs will have /e/ ( ֵ ), instead of /i/, or /a/. But, these verbs (like שָׁלַח) are otherwise analogous in their paradigm to יָכַל and יָתַב. Verbs like שָׁלַח even have the same vowel in their 3mp and 3fp forms as יָכַל and יָתַב.

### Exercise 6b.

Parse the following forms (indicating stem, person, gender, number, and root) and fill in the blanks:

סָלַחְךָ (“\_\_\_\_ came up”)

מָלַחְתָּ (“\_\_\_\_ salted”)

שָׁלַחְתָּ (“\_\_\_\_ sent”)

בִּשְׁאַלְתָּ (“\_\_\_\_ inquired”)

הִשְׁבַּחְתָּ (“\_\_\_\_ found”)

יָתַבְתָּ (“\_\_\_\_ sat”)

#### Part 2:

Instead of using independent pronouns to indicate possession (as in English “my”, “your”, “her”), Aramaic uses suffixal pronouns. Because Aramaic distinguishes between masculine and feminine genders and between singular and plural in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons, this means that you can have a masculine noun (like “king”) with a 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine plural possessive pronoun (“your king”). In order to disambiguate the “your” in the translation I include a parenthetical identification of gender and number: “your (fp) king”. (This, of course, does not imply that the king is either feminine or plural.)

The addition of pronominal suffixes to nouns follows the rather simple principles illustrated so far. If you know the suffixes and the absolute, construct, and emphatic/determined forms of the noun, you can usually predict the form of the suffixed noun.

Often, if confused, one can take the emphatic/determined form of the noun and subtract the ִּ ending (or the ִּי ending for masculine plural nouns) and then supply the appropriate suffix to this form.

“the scribe” סִפְרָא → סִפְרָ\* → סִפְרִי “my scribe”

“the letter” אִנְרִתָּא → אִנְרִתָּ\* → אִנְרִתְךָ “your letter”

This technique does not work for some nouns, especially in relation to the 2mp, 2fp, 3mp, and 3fp suffixes (see the note <sup>o</sup> beneath the chart).

Note that for this and the following charts, the footnotes to the words in the first column apply to the analogous forms in the other columns.

	ms noun סָפֵר	ms noun לְשׁוֹן	fs noun אַגְרָה	fs noun מַלְכוּ
const./emph. form	סָפֵר / סָפְרָא	לְשׁוֹן / לְשׁוֹנָא	אַגְרָת / אַגְרָתָא	מַלְכוּת / מַלְכוּתָא
1cs “my” אֲנִי	סָפְרִי <sup>a</sup>	לְשׁוֹנִי	אַגְרָתִי	מַלְכוּתִי
2ms “you” אַתָּה	סָפְרְךָ <sup>a</sup>	לְשׁוֹנְךָ	אַגְרָתְךָ	מַלְכוּתְךָ
2fs “you” אַתְּ	סָפְרְכִי <sup>a b</sup>	לְשׁוֹנְכִי	אַגְרָתְכִי	מַלְכוּתְכִי
3ms “his” הוּא	סָפְרֵה <sup>a c</sup>	לְשׁוֹנֵה	אַגְרָתֵה	מַלְכוּתֵה
3fs “her” הִיא	סָפְרֵה <sup>a c</sup>	לְשׁוֹנֵה	אַגְרָתֵה	מַלְכוּתֵה
1cp “our” אֲנַחְנוּ	סָפְרֵנָא <sup>a b</sup>	לְשׁוֹנָנָא	אַגְרָתָנָא	מַלְכוּתָנָא
2mp “your” כֻּם	סָפְרְכֻם <sup>d e</sup>	לְשׁוֹנְכֻם	אַגְרָתְכֻם	מַלְכוּתְכֻם
2fp “your” כֻּן	סָפְרְכִין <sup>e</sup>	לְשׁוֹנְכִין	אַגְרָתְכִין	מַלְכוּתְכִין
3mp “their” הֵם	סָפְרֵהֶם <sup>e f</sup>	לְשׁוֹנֵהֶם	אַגְרָתֵהֶם	מַלְכוּתֵהֶם
3fp “their” הֵן	סָפְרֵהֶן <sup>e</sup>	לְשׁוֹנֵהֶן	אַגְרָתֵהֶן	מַלְכוּתֵהֶן

<sup>a</sup> The shewa in this form is pronounced.

<sup>b</sup> The accent is over the next-to-last syllable.

<sup>c</sup> Note the dot in the final *heh*, which distinguishes the 3fs pronoun from the marker of the feminine noun.

<sup>d</sup> The suffix could also be כִּין—

<sup>e</sup> The suffix of the 2mp, 2fp, 3mp, and 3fp pronouns includes a shewa that represents the absence of a vowel when the preceding vowel is short (סָפְרְכֻם, מַלְכוּתְכֻם), and a murmured vowel when the preceding vowel is long (אַלְהֵכֻם) or when another shewa that represents the absence of a vowel comes right before it (אַרְעֵכֻם, מַלְכֵכֻם). Whether or not the shewa represents the absence of a vowel, the following *kaph* is always spirantized or pronounced “soft”. Thus, for “your scribe” we have סָפְרְכֻם (sāparkōm), for “your word” מַלְכוּתְכֻם (millatkōm), for “your God” אַלְהֵכֻם (’ēlāhākōm), for “your king” we have מַלְכֵכֻם (malkəkōm), for “your land” אַרְעֵכֻם (’ar’ākōm). Notice that the basic form of the noun before the 2mp, 2fp, 3mp, and 3fp suffix is usually the form of the noun in the construct singular: סָפֵר, מַלְכָּה, אֱלֹהֵהּ, though the form of “your (2mp) king” is similar to the emphatic/determined form of the noun מַלְכָּא (the const. sing. of “king” being מַלְכָּךְ). Similarly, the form of “your (mp) silver” would be כַּסְפֵּכֻם (kaspəkōm), not

\*כְּסַפְּכֹם (\*kəsapkōm), and “your (mp) book” would be סִפְרְכֹם (siprəkōm), and “your (mp) servant/slave” would be עֲבַדְכֹם (‘abdəkōm).

<sup>f</sup> The suffix could also be הֵן—

### Exercise 6c.

Transliterate and translate the following forms:

בְּעוֹתָהּ  
 חֶלְמָךְ  
 מַלְתְּכֵם  
 סִפְרָהּ  
 קַלְנָא  
 חֲמֵרָהּ  
 חֵיוֹתֵי  
 צִדְקָתְךָ

Feminine plural nouns take the same suffixes in essentially the same way.

	fp noun אֲגָרָן	fp noun מַלְכוּן
const./emph. form	אֲגָרְתָא / אֲגָרְתָּא	מַלְכוּתָא / מַלְכוּתָּא
1cs “my” אֲנִי	אֲגָרְתִּי	מַלְכוּתִי
2ms “you” אַתְּ	אֲגָרְתְּךָ	מַלְכוּתְךָ
2fs “you” אַתְּ	אֲגָרְתְּכִי	מַלְכוּתְכִי
3ms “his” הוּא	אֲגָרְתָּהּ	מַלְכוּתָּהּ
3fs “her” הִיא	אֲגָרְתָּהּ	מַלְכוּתָּהּ
1cp “our” אֲנַחְנָא	אֲגָרְתְּנָא	מַלְכוּתְנָא
2mp “your” כֻּם	אֲגָרְתְּכֵם <sup>a b</sup>	מַלְכוּתְכֵם
2fp “your” כֻּן	אֲגָרְתְּכֵן <sup>a</sup>	מַלְכוּתְכֵן
3mp “their” הֵם	אֲגָרְתְּהֵם <sup>a c</sup>	מַלְכוּתְהֵם
3fp “their” הֵן	אֲגָרְתְּהֵן <sup>a</sup>	מַלְכוּתְהֵן

<sup>a</sup> The shewa in this word represents a murmured vowel since the preceding vowel is long: E.g., ’iggərātəkōm.

<sup>b</sup> The suffix could also be כֵּן—

<sup>c</sup> The suffix could also be הֵן—

Masculine plural nouns take slightly different suffixes, but in essentially the same way. A *yodh* appears as part of each suffix, except for in the 3ms suffix. This *yodh* is pronounced only in the 1cs suffix as part of the diphthong /ay/; it is not pronounced in the other forms. In an earlier stage of Aramaic it was pronounced, but now it simply helps to graphically differentiate these suffixes from those used on the singular and feminine plural nouns.

	mp noun סְפָרִין	mp noun לְשָׁנִין
const./emph. form	סְפָרִי / סְפָרִיאַ	לְשָׁנִי / לְשָׁנִיאַ
1cs "my" אֲנִי	סְפָרִי <sup>a</sup>	לְשָׁנִי
2ms "you" אַתָּה	סְפָרִיךָ <sup>a b</sup>	לְשָׁנֶיךָ
2fs "you" אַתְּ	סְפָרִיכִי <sup>a b c</sup>	לְשָׁנֶיכִי
3ms "his" הוּא	סְפָרוֹהִי <sup>a c d</sup>	לְשָׁנוֹהִי
3fs "her" הִיא	סְפָרִיהָ <sup>a b</sup>	לְשָׁנֶיהָ
1cp "our" אֲנַחְנוּ	סְפָרִינָא <sup>a b c</sup>	לְשָׁנֵינָא
2mp "your" אַתְּכֶם	סְפָרִיכֶם <sup>a b</sup>	לְשָׁנֵיכֶם
2fp "your" אַתְּכִי	סְפָרִיכֶן <sup>a b</sup>	לְשָׁנֵיכֶן
3mp "their" הֵם	סְפָרֵיהֶם <sup>a b</sup>	לְשָׁנֵיהֶם
3fp "their" הֵנּוּ	סְפָרֵיהֶן <sup>a b</sup>	לְשָׁנֵיהֶן

- <sup>a</sup> The shewa in this form is pronounced.  
<sup>b</sup> The *yodh* of the suffix is not pronounced.  
<sup>c</sup> The accent is over the next-to-last syllable.  
<sup>d</sup> Note the strange form of the 3ms pronoun.

As might be obvious, feminine nouns that follow a masculine paradigm in the plural, take the suffixal pronouns as if the word were a masculine noun

	fs noun אִמָּה	fp noun אִמִּין
const./emph. form	אִמָּתַ / אִמָּתֵא	אִמִּיַ / אִמִּי
1cs "my" אֲנִי	אִמָּתִי <sup>a</sup>	אִמִּי
2ms "you" אַתָּה	אִמָּתְךָ	אִמִּיךָ
2fs "you" אַתְּ	אִמָּתְכִי	אִמִּיכִי
3ms "his" הוּא	אִמָּתֵהּ	אִמִּוֵּהּ
3fs "her" הִיא	אִמָּתֵהּ	אִמִּיָּהּ



1cp "our"	אַמְתָּנָא	אַמְיָנָא
2mp "your"	אַמְתְּכֻם	אַמְיְכֻם
2fp "your"	אַמְתְּכֵן	אַמְיְכֵן
3mp "their"	אַמְתְּהֻם	אַמְיְהֻם
3fp "their"	אַמְתְּהֵן	אַמְיְהֵן

<sup>a</sup> Because the *mem* in this word is doubled (as indicated by the dot), the shewa must represent a murmured vowel.

### Exercise 6d.

Consider the following examples and then write the words beneath these in Aramaic:

his slave (עַבְדָּהּ)

her son (בְּרָהּ)

our kings (מְלָכֵינוּ)

their kingdom (מְלְכוּתָהֻם)

his words (מְלוּוָהּ)

my letter (אַגְרָתִי)

your (masc. sing.) nation (אַמְתְּךָ)

your (fem. pl.) crimes (חֻבּוּלְתְּכֵן).

1. my slaves
2. our sons (remember the unpredictable plural to this word)
3. your (fem. sing.) king
4. their (masc.) kingdoms
5. her word
6. your (masc. sing.) letter
7. our nations (remember the unpredictable plural)
8. my crimes
9. his illumination
10. their (fem.) greatness
11. your (fem. pl.) judges
12. his needs

Part 3:

Syntax of ךֿ.

In Aramaic, one can express a genitive relationship between two words through the construct state, as already discussed above. In addition, one can express a genitive relationship through the particle, ךֿ, which might be translated “of” in the following cases. Thus, the expression “the son of the king” might be expressed with either

the construct state: בַּר מְלָכָא

or

the particle ךֿ: בְּרָא דִּי מְלָכָא

Quite often in Aramaic one encounters an expanded version of this second construction, in which the first word has a 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive suffix on it, agreeing in number and gender with the word that follows the ךֿ. This seems redundant to the English reader, but makes good Aramaic. This allows a third way to express the same phrase “the son of the king”:

בְּרָהּ דִּי מְלָכָא

Here, the 3ms suffix on בַּר agrees in number and gender with the word “king”. Note that although the more literal translation is “his son of the king”, this is not idiomatic in English and so this Aramaic construction should never be translated this way. Rather, your translation should always be in idiomatic, comprehensible English.

Consider the plural forms of the same expression:

a. “the sons/children of the king”:

בְּנֵי מְלָכָא

בְּנֵיא דִּי מְלָכָא

בְּנוּהֵי דִּי מְלָכָא

b. “the sons/children of the kings”

בְּנֵי מְלָכֵי

בְּנֵי דֵי מְלָכֵי

בְּנֵיהֶם דֵי מְלָכֵי

c. “the son of the kings”

בְּר מְלָכֵי

בְּרֵא דֵי מְלָכֵי

בְּרֵהֶם דֵי מְלָכֵי (?) (This form of son is unattested, but here based on the analogous form in Syriac: *bērhōn*.)

The particle דֵי (and its alternate form דְּ) also functions as a relative pronoun, translated into English either as “who”, “whose”, “whom”, “which”, “that”, “that which”, “where”, depending on the context. E.g., note the following usages from the single verse of Daniel 2:11:

מְלָתָא דֵי מְלָכָה שְׂאֵל יִקְרָה  
וְאִחְרָן לָא אִיתֵי דֵי יְחֻוּנְהָ קְדָם מְלָכָא  
לְהֵן אֵלֵהֵן דֵי מְדַרְהוֹן עִם בְּשָׂרָא לָא אִיתוּהֵי

“The matter (lit. “word”) *that* the king requests (is) hard.  
Another there is not *who* can explain it before the king,  
except gods *whose* dwellings are not among mortals.”

The English word “whose” usually denotes a possessive or genitive relationship. Notice that in Aramaic such a relationship is indicated by דֵי + noun + possessive suffix: הוֹן + דֵי + מְדַרְהוֹן.

In addition, דֵי can be used as a conjunction to connect phrases together, especially after verbs of knowing, saying, or perception, like English “that” in “I know that you are buying time,” or “I said that I would find it,” the former of which is a direct quotation from Daniel 2:8:

יִדַע אֲנִי דִּי עֲדָנָא אֲנִתּוֹן זְבָנִין

“I know that you are buying time.”

The extremely versatile particle ׀ can also indicate direct speech, especially when it follows a verb for speaking. In these cases it is not translated. Because it can also mean “that” after verbs of speaking, there is sometimes ambiguity as to whether the particle is indicating direct or indirect speech.

### Exercise 6e.

Write in Aramaic the following phrases using the third manner of expressing the genitive with the suffixed pronoun.

1. the decrees of the kings
2. the servants/slaves of the nation
3. the scribes of the land
4. the needs of the children
5. the crimes of those serving God
6. the request of the one sending the letter

7. The judges of the nation made an image of the old king. They said to their children (use עַל for “to”): “We are writing in our language (for “in” use ב; for “language” use the word for “tongue”).

### Exercise 6f.

Translate the following passage from Ezra 5:11-12, vocalizing the two unpointed forms. For words you do not know, use the vocabulary list that follows the passage.

אֲנִחְנָא הַמּוֹ עֲבֻדוּהִי דִּי־אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָּא וְאֲרַעָא  
לְהֵן מִן־דִּי הֲרָגוּ אֲבָהֵתְנָא אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָּא

יְהֵב הַמּוֹ בְּיַד נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל כְּשָׂדִיָּא

## Vocabulary:

### Nouns:

בִּאָ = “father” (Pl. with 1cp suffix: אֲבֵהָתָנָא = “our fathers” --- see the next lesson for this word and its strange forms.) m.

דִּינָ = “judge” m.

הֵמָ = the 3mp independent pronoun “they”. This form is peculiar to the book of Ezra; elsewhere it is אֲנָנָ and הֵמֹנָ

יָדָ = “hand” f.

כְּשָׁדָיָ = “Chaldaean” (emph./det.: כְּשָׁדָיָא = “the Chaldaean”) --- see the next lesson for the forms of gentile nouns.

עֲבָדָ = “slave” or “servant” (emph./det.: עֲבָדָא), m.

שָׁמַיָ = “heavens” (emph./det.: שָׁמַיָא) m.

### Verbs (Verbs are always listed in their G-3ms perfect form):

יָהֵבָ = “to give”

יָכַלָ = “to be able”

יָתֵבָ = “to sit”

יָסֵלֵקָ = “to come up”

יָרָגָ = In H-stem: “to anger”

### Particles

לָהֵן = “but”, “except”

מִן־דִּי = “because”