

Lesson 9: Passive and Reflexive Constructions

Part 1:

Each of the stems has a corresponding passive perfect and participle (but no imperative, imperfect, or infinitive forms).

Exercise 9a.

Fill out the following chart for the verb כְּתַב, consulting the paradigms in the Answer Appendix as needed.

	G-pass. Perfect	D-pass. Perf.	H-pass. Perfect
3ms 3fs	כְּתִיב כְּתִיבַת	כְּתִב	הִכְתֵּב / הִכְתֵּבַת
2ms 2fs	כְּתִיבְתָּ / כְּתִיבְתִי כְּתִיבְתִי	כְּתִבְתָּ	
1cs	כְּתִיבַת		
3mp 3fp	כְּתִיבוּ כְּתִיבֵינָה	כְּתִבוּ	הִכְתִּבוּ / הִכְתִּבוּ
2mp 2fp	כְּתִיבְתוּן כְּתִיבְתִין		
1cp	כְּתִיבְנָא		

Note that the second vowel of the D- and H-stems is not the /e/ like in the active form, but a short /a/. This pattern is also found in the passive participles:

	G-passive part.	D-passive part.	H-passive part. and A-pass. part.	
m.s.	כְּתִיב	מְכַתֵּב	מְהַכְתֵּב	מְכַתֵּב
f.s.	כְּתִיבָה	מְכַתֵּבָה	מְהַכְתֵּבָה	מְכַתֵּבָה
m.p.	כְּתִיבִין	מְכַתֵּבִין	מְהַכְתֵּבִין	מְכַתֵּבִין
f.p.	כְּתִיבֵין	מְכַתֵּבֵין	מְהַכְתֵּבֵין	מְכַתֵּבֵין

It should be obvious that these forms produce many ambiguities. For example, the G-f.s. passive participle is identical to the G-3fp passive perfect. Similarly, the f.s., m.p., and f.p., passive participles in the D- and H-stems are identical in form to their active counterparts. Only context can distinguish these forms.

Now, notice some of the salient characteristics of the passive forms in relation to their active counterparts. While the G- active perfect has an a-vowel after the second root-consonant (כְּתִיב), the G-passive perfect and participle have an i-vowel after the second root-consonant (specifically a long-ī vowel). Just the opposite pattern is observed between the D-, H/A-active forms and the D-, H/A-passive forms. Thus, while the D- and H/A-active perfect and imperfect have an e-vowel after the second root-consonant (כְּתִיב, יְכַתֵּב and הַכְתֵּב, יְהַכְתֵּב), the D-, H/A-passive perfect and participles always have an a-vowel.

Part 2:

Each of the stems has a corresponding reflexive stem, which, as its name suggests, can connote reflexivity, or sometimes habitual, repeated action. More often, however, it represents passivity. Thus, this is yet another way to represent passivity in Aramaic.

The tG or Hithpə‘el (הִתְפַּעֵל)

The tD or Hithpa‘‘al (הִתְפַּעֵל)

The tH or Hithhaph‘al (*הִתְהַפַּעֵל)

However, only the tG and tD stems are attested for BA and therefore merit our attention.

These reflexive stems are characterized by their hit- (or, in the imperfect, yiṭ-, tit-, ’it-, niṭ-) prefixes.

The stems have perfect, imperfect, imperative, participle, and infinitive forms, though not all of these are attested in Biblical Aramaic.

Exercise 9b.

Fill out the spaces left blank in the following chart and answer the following questions.

	tG-Perfect	tD-Perfect	tG-Imperfect	tD-Imperfect
3ms 3fs	התכתב התכתבת	התכתב התכתבת	יִתְּכַתֵּב	יִתְּכַתֵּב
2ms 2fs	התכתבת התכתבתו	התכתבת		
1cs	התכתבת			
3mp 3fp	התכתבו התכתבה	התכתבו		
2mp 2fp	התכתבתון התכתבתון			
1cp	התכתבנא			

1. What are the distinctions in the vowel patterns between the tG-perfect and those of the G-perfect?
2. In an unvocalized text, how many different forms could התכתבת represent? What are they?
3. There are no tG- or tD-imperatives in Biblical Aramaic. But, given the imperfect forms you've written down in the above chart, what would the imperative forms of the tG and tD look like, if they did occur?
4. There are tG- or tD- participles in Biblical Aramaic. If the masc. sing. forms are, respectively מתכתב and מתכתב, what do the other forms look like?

One wrinkle to this rather straightforward paradigm is found with roots that have a sibilant as a first-consonant (ס, ז, צ, ש, שׁ). If the first consonant is a ס, ז, ש, or שׁ the sibilant and the prefix ת switch places: משתכל is the m.s. tD-participle from

שכל (“to consider”). If the first root consonant is a **צ**, then the consonants switch places, but the **ת** becomes a **ט**: הַצְמַטְבַּע is the m.s. tD-participle from **צבע** (“to be wet”).

Exercise 9c.

Translate this slightly simplified version of Daniel 7:8-10:

8.

מִשְׁתַּבֵּל הָיִית בְּקַרְנָיָא נְאֻלוּ קַרְנֵי אַחֲרֵי זַעֲיָרָה סְלִקַת בִּינֵיהֶן
וְתִלַּת מִן-קַרְנָיָא קְדָמֵיהָא הִתְעַקְרָה מִן-קְדָמֵיהָ
אֻלוּ עֵינֵין בְּעֵינֵי אַנְשָׂא בְּקַרְנָא-דָּא וּפִם מְמַלֵּל רַבְרָבִין

9.

חֲזָה הָיִית עַד דֵּי כְרָסוֹן רַמְיֹו וְעַתִּיק יוֹמִין יִתַּב
לְבוּשָׁה בַתְּלַג חוּר וּשְׁעַר רֵאשָׁה כַּעֲמַר נִקְא
בְּרָסִיָּה שְׁבִיבִין דֵּי נוֹר גְּלִגְלוּהִי נוֹר דְּלִק

10.

נְהַר דֵּי-נוֹר נִגַּד וְנִפְק מִן-קְדָמוּהִי
אֵלֶּף אֵלֶּף פִּין יִשְׁמְשׁוּנָה וְרַבּוּ רַבּוֹן קְדָמוּהִי יְקוּמוּן
דִּינָא יִתַּב וְסַפְרִין פְּתִיחוּ

Consider the following:

In the first line to verse 8, notice that the feminine word “horn” (קַרְנֵי) is modified by two feminine adjectives.

In the second line to verse 8, notice the two distinct, but similar, words: the adjective/cardinal number קְדָמֵי and the preposition קְדָם.

In the third line to verse 8, notice the last word is a generic word for “great things.”

In the first line to verse 9, notice that the verb is רַמְיֹו, a 3mp G-passive perfect of רָמָה (“to throw, set up”). The subject is “thrones.” Also, the phrase עַתִּיק יוֹמִין is usually translated “Ancient of Days,” and indicates a single divine individual. The verb יִתַּב is not a G-passive perfect, but a simple G-perfect, with an /i/ vowel, instead of an /a/ vowel in its second syllable.

In the second line of verse 9, both clauses contain a non-verbal predicate.

In the third line of verse 9, both clauses contain a non-verbal predicate.

In the second line of verse 10, notice the two similar expressions “thousand of thousands” and “ten-thousand of ten-thousands,” idioms expressing great numbers. Also, note the object suffix (3ms) on the imperfect verb ܘܡܫܘܢ in verse 10. In the third line of verse 10, notice that the word for justice and judgment, ܟܘܢܝܢܐ, seems to indicate the court itself. (Unless, this is a misreading of ܟܘܢܝܢܐ, the word for judge.)