Ross Lesson 10: Perfect Conjugation, Accusatives, Verbal Sentences
LECTURE NOTES

1. Intro to Hebrew Verbal System (Ross 10.1)

Roots:

Stems:

Conjugations:

Person:

Gender:

Number:

2. Perfect Conjugation (Ross 10.2 & 10.3)

2.1. Perfect Verb Personal Endings Handout
In the following chart, the three boxes represent the three root letters of any standard "strong" Hebrew verb. The Personal endings (inflectional suffixes) represent the doer of the action of the verb. No matter which verb is being used, if you see these endings, you can tell who the subject of the action is:

3ms =	"he, it"	3cp =	"they"
3fs =	"she, it"		
2ms =	"you" (male)	2mp =	"you (all)" (male/mixed)
2fs =	"you" (female)	2fp =	"you (all)" (female)
1cs =	"I"	1cp =	"we"

2.2. Below I provide the <u>General</u> Perfect Suffixes (with all internal vowels <u>omitted</u>). These affixes are applicable to the perfect forms in *all seven stems*, which is why the internal vowels are omitted.

Perfect : Memorize this chart

3ms	□□□	3cp	וּ□□□
3fs	ה◌ָ□□		
2ms	תָּ◌ְ□□	2mp	תֶּם◌ְ□□
2fs	תְּ◌ְ□□	2fp	תֶּן◌ְ□□
1cs	תִּי◌ְ□□	1cp	נוּ◌ְ□□

2.3. Below I provide the full Qal Perfect paradigm (with vowels and inflections):

Qal Perfect Paradigm of פָּקַד, "to appoint, visit": Memorize this chart

3ms	פָּקַד	3cp	פָּקְדוּ
3fs	פָּקְדָה		
2ms	פָּקַדְתָּ	2mp	פְּקַדְתֶּם
2fs	פָּקַדְתְּ	2fp	פְּקַדְתֶּן
1cs	פָּקַדְתִּי	1cp	פָּקַדְנוּ

3. Gutterals in Perfect Conjugation (Ross 10.4)

If we have a Gutt letter in one of the three consonant root positions (R1 = root 1, R2 = root 2, R3 = root 3), there can be problems with the normal paradigm (model) of the Qal perfect conjugation. Review the identity and characteristics of gutterals:

Verb Root	Forms of the Verb when Gutts prevent normal pointing (fill in vowel points)	
עמד	עמדתֶם	2mp: you/y'all stood
בחר	בחרָה	3fs: she chose
שמע	שמעתָ	2fs: you heard

4. Translating the Perfect conjugation (Ross 10.5)

In Biblical Hebrew (BH) there are two main <u>conjugations</u>: the Perfect (Ross 10) and the Imperfect (Ross 17). The use of a conjugation pattern determines the speaker's (or writer's) *portrayal/conceptualization* of the verbal action (its aspect). To put it in very simple terms:
- the <u>Perfect</u> conjugation portrays an event as a bounded, self-contained whole (perfective aspect);
- the <u>Imperfect</u> conjugation portrays an event as unbounded & open-ended, or in progress (imperfective aspect).

The following chart might be helpful:

Perfective aspect	Imperfective aspect
Moses *ate* a mutton-burger.	Moses *was eating* a mutton-burger.
self-contained	open-ended
bounded	unbounded

The choice to use perfective aspect is a choice to portray the action (*Moses ate*) as a bounded whole, or in summary fashion without reference to the way it unfolds in time, and without reference to anything that happened between the beginning and the end of the action/event. On the other hand, the choice to use imperfective aspect (*Moses was eating*) is a choice to portray an action that has begun but without reference to its conclusion (thus it is "open-ended" rather than self-contained).

NOTE: BH's conjugations patterns (the Perfect conj. and the Imperfect conj.) do not signify tense (most languages we know are tense-prominent languages, like English or Spanish). BH's verbal system is <u>aspect-prominent</u>, not tense-prominent! At the same time, BH frequently employs the Perfect conj. to describe past time events, but the Imperfect conjugation to describe non-past time events (present or future). We'll see this more in Ross 17.

Perfect Conjugation	Imperfect Conjugation
פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה בַּֽיִת:	יִפְקֹד מֹשֶׁה בַּֽיִת:
Moses visited a house.	Moses will visit a house.
frequently past time events	frequently non-past time events

How should we translate BH sentences with Perfect verbs? There are a number of ways, based on context and the verb's semantics.

1. Simple past tense in English.	Most common option.	נָפַל מֹשֶׁה: Moses *fell*.
2. Perfect tenses in English.	Contextually dependent, if the verbal action has ongoing relevance to the time of speaking or some other reference time.	A: Why isn't Moses here? B. נָפַל מֹשֶׁה: Moses *has fallen*…. (present perfect)

A: Why wasn't Moses there?

B. נָפַל מֹשֶׁה׃

Moses *had fallen*....
    (past perfect)

3. Present tense in English.

a. If lexically the verb is stative (indicates the Subject's state, disposition, experience, or mental activity), the Perfect can be translated as present tense.

זָכַרְתָּ׃

= 'you remembered' (in past context'

= 'you remember' (in present context')

b. Contextually, for verbs where the assertion is habitually or proverbially true, present tense can be used.

A. Why don't you war?

B. יָשַׁבְנוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם׃

We dwell in peace.

5. Sign of the Accusative (DO-marker) (Ross 10.6)

If a BH verb is transitive, then it takes a direct object (DO). Many grammars describe the DO function of a noun as "accusative." When the DO in BH is *definite*, then it will commonly be prefixed with the particle אֵת/אֶת־ (some call this particle the *sign of the accusative*). A noun is considered definite if it is a proper noun (Moses), is articular (<u>the</u> horse), or has a pronoun (<u>his</u> horse). If the DO is not definite, it will not be preceded by a form of אֵת.

NOTE: this particle is a *function word* and serves to signal a definite DO; do not translate it.

שָׁפַט הָאִישׁ עַם	The man judged a people.
שָׁפַט הָאִישׁ אֵת הָעָם (אֶת־הָעָם)	The man judged the people.
זָכַר הַמֶּלֶךְ סוּס	The king remembered a horse.
זָכַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת הַסּוּס (אֶת־הַסּוּס)	The king remembered the horse.
זָכַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת יְהוָה (אֶת־ יְהוָה)	The king remembered YHWH.

בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃   God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1)

6. Syntax of Verbal Sentences (Ross 10.7)

There is some debate about what the standard word order is for BH sentences. Many believe that the normal word order is V-S-O (that is, Verb first, then Subject, then Object, if the constituents are present). If the S or O is fronted (placed before the verb), it is to give it marked focus (for ex., contrastive focus: "I love pizza; *lima beans* I hate.").

Let's review the prior clauses and see the V-S-O word order.

How does BH negate verbs? By placing the negative particle **לֹא/לוֹא** (the defective spelling is most frequent) directly before the verb.

שָׁפַט הָאִישׁ אֶת הָעָם (אֶת־הָעָם)   The man judged the people.

לֹא שָׁפַט הָאִישׁ אֶת הָעָם (אֶת־הָעָם)   The man did not judge the people.

Finally, keep in mind that Hebrew verbs agree with their S in person, gender, and #. The personal ending/inflectional markings are agreement features of the verb that must reflect the Subject-noun. If the S is overt/explicit, then it is translated as the S. If there is no overt S (if there's a null-Subject), then the inflectional marking provides the implied S and you should use the appropriate pronoun as your English Subject.

יָרְדָה הָאִשָּׁה לַנָּהָר׃   <u>The woman</u> went down to the river.

יָרְדָה לַנָּהָר׃   <u>She</u> went down to the river.