

The Qal Perfect Conjugation

The least you need to know:

| Pl | | Sg | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| שָׁמְרָנוּ | we kept | שָׁמַרְתִּי | I kept |
| שָׁמַרְתֶּם | you (m pl) kept | שָׁמַרְתָּ | you (m) kept |
| שָׁמַרְתֶּן | you (f pl) kept | שָׁמַרְתְּ | you (f) kept |
| שָׁמְרוּ | they kept | שָׁמַר | he kept |
| | | שָׁמְרָה | she kept |

Things you might want to know

The word Qal (קָל) means “light”, although for the purposes of verbs we can think of it as “uncomplicated”. Qal is the most basic verb stem, and is used for simple action.

Biblical Hebrew does not have tenses in the way that English does. The Hebrew Perfect and Imperfect are used to indicate whether or not the action is completed. The Perfect indicates completed action, and can be translated several ways: *he kept*, *he did keep*, *he had kept* could all be valid translations of שָׁמַר depending on context.

Verbs that regularly follow the pattern above are called strong verbs. Verbs whose conjugation deviates from the pattern shown above are called weak verbs. Weak verbs can be identified by the presence of certain letters in their stems. Verbs are weak if:

Their stem contains a וּ or אֵ that functions as a vowel, for ex.

בּוֹא go, enter

מוֹת die

שׁוּב turn, return

If any of its consonants is a guttural (א, ה, ח, ע, and sometimes ר)

If it begins with י, ו, נ,

If its second and third consonants are identical

Personal Pronouns

The least you need to know

| Pl | | Sg | |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| אֲנַחְנוּ, נַחְנוּ, אָנוּ | we | אֲנִי, אַנְכִי | I |
| אַתֶּם | you (m pl) | אַתָּה | you (m) |
| אַתֶּן, אֲתַנָּה | you (f pl) | אַתְּ | you (f) |
| הֵם, הֵמָּה | they (m) | הוּא | he |
| הֵן, הֵנָּה | they (f) | הִיא | she |

Uses of personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are optional with verbs, because the verb form already contains the information needed to determine person and number. When a pronoun is used it should be considered emphatic. For example both of the following sentences

שָׁמַרְתִּי הַבְּהֵמוֹת
אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי שָׁמַרְתִּי

mean the same thing, *I guarded the beasts*. But if I say שָׁמַרְתִּי הַבְּהֵמוֹת it is a matter-of-fact statement: I guarded the beasts, and it's no big deal. If I say אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי שָׁמַרְתִּי, I really want you to know that **I** guarded the beasts. My siblings may have run off somewhere to have fun, but **I** guarded the beasts like I was supposed to.

Personal pronouns are also used in verbless sentences. Sentences that follow the pattern *x is y* do not usually use a verb in Hebrew.

Some examples

| | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| אֲנִי יי | I am the Lord |
| אַתָּה מֶלֶךְ | You are king |
| אַתְּ אִשָּׁה | You are a woman |
| הוּא עֶבֶד | He is a slave |
| הִיא נְעִרָה | She is a young woman |

Here is an example from the liturgy:

אַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קְדוֹשׁ

You are holy and your name is holy

(Note that verbless sentences can have nouns or pronouns as the subject)

