

The Qal Passive

וְלִשְׁתָּ גַם־הוּא יָלַד־בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אֶנּוֹשׁ

Now to Seth, a son **was born** and he called his name Enosh (Gen. 4:26)

Recent studies in Biblical Hebrew have identified an independent passive form of the *qal binyan*—the usual way of forming the passive of the *qal* in biblical literature is via the *niphal*. Amongst the more common roots attested as *qal* passives are: לָקַח, אָכַל, נָתַן, and יָלַד. With respect to morphology, the basic form of the perfect *qal* passive is קָטַל, and the basic form of the imperfect is יִקְטַל.¹ The two verses below, Gen 10:24-25, demonstrate the use of the *qal* passive verses its active counterpart. In Gen 10:24 the active *qal* verb לָקַח describes the male role in the generation of offspring. Here, the verb is active with a clear identification of the subject in both instances, Arpachshad and Shelah.

וַאֲרַפְכְּשָׁד יָלַד אֶת־שִׁלַּח וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־עֵבֶר

And Arpachshad **begat** Shalah,² and Shalah **begat** Eber (Gen. 10:24)

In Gen 10:25, below, the *qal* passive of the same root describes the sons born to Eber. Here, the father, Eber, is not the subject of the sentence (the agent performing the verb), but the indirect object.

וַיֵּעֶבֶר יָלַד שְׁנֵי בָנִים

Now to Eber two sons **were born** (Gen. 10:25)

Because the *qal* passive has the same perfect form as the *pual* (LINK) in the perfect, and the *hophal* in the imperfect, it can be difficult to recognize. Consequently, great care must be taken in properly identifying this form. As a rule of thumb, if a suspected form does not have an equivalent active *piel* or *hiphil* form, but does have an active *qal* counterpart, then it should be considered a *qal* passive. In Genesis 5:24, below, the active form of the verb לָקַח is used with an agent, God, and a direct object (Enoch).

וַיִּתְּהַלֵּךְ חֲנוּךְ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲיָנֶנּוּ כִּי־לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים

And Enoch walked with God, and then he was no more, because God **took him** (Gen 5:24)

Because the root לָקַח, within biblical literature, does not appear in the *piel* or *hiphil*, and it has an active counterpart in the *qal*, as seen above, we can assume that it represents a *qal* passive below.

וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה בֵּית פַּרְעֹה

And the woman **was taken** into Pharaoh's house (Gen. 12:15)

Unlike Gen 5:24, in Gen 12:15, the verb's agent is removed, and we are simply told that the woman (Sarai) "was taken" into the house of Pharaoh.

¹ See Joüon §58 for more details. Because most of the attested forms consist of weak verbs, it is not beneficial to produce a full table here.

² An alternative spelling for Shalah is used here because the name is in a pausal form.