

Chapter 23a-Sentence Syntax

normal word order

In Hebrew, normal word order for a verbal sentence is **verb-subject-object** (vso)

O **S** **V**
וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נֹחַ

(And) God remembered Noah (Gen 8:1).

O **S** **V**
וַיַּחְלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלֹם

(And) Joseph dreamed a dream (Gen 37:5).

O **S** **V**
וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל

(And) Moses called to all Israel (Ex 24:16).



Chapter 23b-Sentence Syntax

syntax of the verb

In the syntax of the verbal sentence, the verb is normally at the beginning, in first position.

וַיָּקָם מֶלֶךְ-חָדָשׁ עַל-מִצְרַיִם

(And) a new king *arose* over Egypt (Ex 1:8).

בְּטַחְתִּי בְּחֶסֶד-אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד

I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever
(Ps 52:10 [English 52:8]).

שִׁירוֹ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ

Sing to Yahweh a new song (Ps 96:1).



Chapter 23c-Sentence Syntax

syntax of the verb

The verb may also be preceded by an adverb of time, an adverbial phrase, הִנֵּה (behold), a temporal modifier (וַיְהִי or וַיְהִיָּה), an expression that provides context or circumstantial information, an independent personal pronoun for emphasis or a negative particle.

עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־גָדוֹל יְהוָה מִכָּל־הָאֱלֹהִים

Now I know that Yahweh is greater
than all gods (Ex 18:11).

אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם

After these things, the word of Yahweh
came (was) to Abram (Gen 15:1).

וְהִנֵּה נָפְלוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַחֶרֶב

And *behold*, our fathers have fallen
by the sword (2 Chr 29:9).

וַיְהִי בַּהֵיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּקָּם קַיִן אֶל־הַבֵּל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ

When they were in the field, Cain rose up against
Abel his brother and he killed him (Gen 4:8).

אַל־תִּבְטְחוּ לָכֶם אֶל־דְּבַרֵי הַשָּׁקֶר

Do *not* trust in deceptive words (Jer 7:4).

וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים

And *you* will be to me a kingdom
of priests (Ex 19:6).



Chapter 23d-Sentence Syntax

syntax of the subject

In the syntax of the verbal sentence, the verb is normally followed immediately by its subject if one is specified.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּחָשׁ אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה

The *serpent* said to the woman (Gen 3:4).

וַיִּשְׁכֵּן כְּבוֹד-יְהוָה עַל-הַר סִינַי

The *glory of Yahweh* dwelt upon Mount Sinai
(Ex 24:16).

The verb may be preceded by its subject to emphasize that subject, though there are other reasons for this type of variation.

יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד

Yahweh will reign forever and ever (Ex 15:18).

וּמֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים

And *Moses* went up to God (Ex 19:3).

וַנֹּחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה

And *Noah* found favor in the
eyes of Yahweh (Gen 6:8).



Chapter 23e-Sentence Syntax

syntax of the object

1. The indirect object is usually marked with the preposition לְ (to, for) or אֶל- (to, for) and may precede or follow the direct object (if any).

יִדְעֵתִי כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה לְכֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

I know that Yahweh has given *to you* the land
(Josh 2:9).

2. A direct object (if any) will frequently stand after the verb or its subject. It may precede or follow an indirect object.

בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

God created *the heavens and
the earth* (Gen 1:1).

3. The verb may be preceded by its object to emphasize that object, though there are other reasons for this syntax.

אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא

Yahweh your God you shall fear (Deut 10:20).



Chapter 23f-Sentence Syntax

conditional sentences

A conditional sentence consists of two clauses. The first clause states the condition and is called the *protasis* (“if-clause”). The second clause states the consequence of the condition and is called the *apodosis* (“then-clause”). The protasis will often begin with אִם (if) but it may also begin with כִּי, הֵן or אֲשֶׁר followed by a Perfect, Imperfect or Participle.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ בָּרַק
אִם-תֵּלְכִי עִמִּי וְהִלַּכְתִּי
וְאִם-לֹא תֵלְכִי עִמִּי לֹא אֵלֶךְ.

Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, *then* I will go; but *if* you will not go with me, (*then*) I will not go” (Judg 4:8).

Condition (Protasis)
“if (אִם) you will go”
“but *if* (אִם) you will not go”

Consequence (Apodosis)
“*then* I will go”
“(then) I will not go”

Chapter 23g-Sentence Syntax

adverbs

Adverbs are generally divided into four categories: adverbs of time (then, now), place (here, there), degree (very, extremely) and manner (swiftly, gently).

1. *Adverbs of Time.*

עַתָּה (now)

עַתָּה יֵדַעְתִּי כִּי־יִרָא אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה

Now I know that you fear God (Gen 22:12).

2. *Adverbs of Place.*

שָׁם (there)

וַיִּשֶׂם שָׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר

And he placed *there* the man whom he had formed (Gen 2:8).

3. *Adverbs of Degree.*

תָּמִיד (continually)

עֵינַי תָּמִיד אֶל־יְהוָה

My eyes are *continually* on the Lord (Ps 25:15).

4. *Adverbs of Manner.*

פְּתָאִם (suddenly)

וַיָּבֹא אֵלֵיהֶם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ פְּתָאִם

And Joshua came upon them *suddenly* (Josh 10:9).



Chapter 23h-Sentence Syntax

disjunctive waw

A disjunctive Waw is prefixed to a non-verbal form and is non-sequential, that is, it introduces some kind of break or interruption in the narrative. There are four basic uses.

1. **Parenthetical.** The disjunctive clause may interrupt the narrative flow in order to provide some explanatory information.

וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי שָׁמַעַ יוֹסֵף כִּי הִמְלִיץ בֵּינֵיהֶם

Now they did not know that Joseph was understanding them because there was an interpreter between them (Gen 42:23).

2. **Circumstantial.** The disjunctive clause may introduce or identify circumstantial information that relates to the main action of the narrative.

וַיְהִי כִּהְיוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֹא הַבַּיִתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכְתּוֹ

וְאֵין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבַּיִת

(And) one day, he went into the house to do his work *and* none of the household servants were there in the house (Gen 39:11).

3. **Contrastive.** The disjunctive Waw may introduce a contrastive idea and is often translated as “but.”

וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל-הָבֶל וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ

וְאֶל-קַיִן וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה

The Lord looked favorably on Abel and his offering *but* on Cain and his offering he did not look favorably (Gen 4:4b-5a).

4. **Introductory.** The disjunctive Waw may begin a new narrative or introduce a new idea or theme within a narrative.

וְהַנָּחַשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the creatures that the Lord God had made (Gen 3:1).

