

42. THE INFINITIVES

There are two Infinitives in Hebrew, known as :

(a) the Infinitive Absolute: שָׁמוֹר, שָׁפֹט and

(b) the Infinitive Construct: שָׁמוֹר, שָׁפֹט.

The Infinitive is a verbal noun, ending in '-ing', as in the phrase 'seeing is believing'.

(a) The Infinitive Absolute functions in syntax, thus :

שָׁמַר—'he hath kept' : שָׁמוֹר שָׁמַר 'he hath indeed (or surely) kept'

שָׁמוֹר שָׁמַר 'he hath kept—continually'.

יִשְׁמַר—'he will keep' . יִשְׁמוֹר יִשְׁמַר 'he will indeed (or surely) keep'

יִשְׁמוֹר יִשְׁמַר 'he will keep—continually'.

The Infinitive Absolute expresses emphasis when it immediately precedes the finite verb, and duration when it immediately follows it.^b

(b) The Infinitive Construct with the preposition ל expresses

^a M. pl. part. with art.—'the (ones) remembering'.

^b The Infinitive Absolute is sometimes used to represent the Imperative.

the English Infinitive:^a לְשָׁמַר 'to keep', לְמַשֵּׁל 'to rule',
לְשָׁפֹט 'to judge'.^b

NOTE: When the third root-letter is a guttural (as שָׁמַע
'to hear') both Infinitives (שָׁמוֹעַ and שָׁמַע) have Furtive
Pathah under the guttural (p. 19. 4).

43. 'HE' INTERROGATIVE

The simple question is introduced by the prefixed particle הֲ :

'Thou (m.) hast kept' שָׁמַרְתָּ; 'hast thou (m.) kept?' הֲשָׁמַרְתָּ

'Thou (m.) hast not kept' לֹא שָׁמַרְתָּ; 'hast thou (m.) not kept?' הֲלֹא שָׁמַרְתָּ^c

'There is' יֵשׁ; 'is there?' הֲיֵשׁ

Before a simple shewa it is הֲ: 'do ye know?' הֲיָדַעְתֶּם;
likewise before gutturals it is הֲ: 'is there not?' הֲאֵין, 'art thou?'
הֲאַתָּה, except when the guttural has Qames when it is הֶ, as
הֶעָצוֹם הוּא = is he mighty?

● Cf. J. Weingreen, A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew.