

Ross 13.4 Perfect Conjugation of III-Aleph Verbs (מָצָא)

Ross 13.5 The Relative Particle אֲשֶׁר (who, which, that)

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Remember the pesky problem with א? In addition to being a part of the Gutts Gang, the letter א likes to quiesce when it's in a closing position (that is, closing any syllable, whether at the end of the word or in the middle of a word). To put it another way, א is like a great many Houston Astros relief pitchers—*it's a lousy closer!*

When א quiesces as the closing consonant of a syllable, it loses its consonantal value, ceases to be pronounced, loses any pointing underneath it, and for all intents and purposes is treated like it's not there.

When a Hebrew verb has an א as its third root letter (these are called III-Aleph Verbs), it will frequently end up quiescing because, in the Qal Perfect paradigm, R-3 (Root-3) is often in closing position. The preceding short vowel (pataḥ) under R-2 will undergo compensatory lengthening to make up for the loss of א, and any DL in the consonantal endings of the Perfect personal endings will be blown away. Here is the paradigm for מָצָא (to find), accompanied by the regular verb פָּקַד (to appoint, visit), for comparison.

|     |            |             |     |            |             |
|-----|------------|-------------|-----|------------|-------------|
| 3ms | מָצָא      | פָּקַד      | 3cp | מָצְאוּ    | פָּקְדוּ    |
| 3fs | מָצְאָה    | פָּקְדָה    |     |            |             |
| 2ms | מָצְאַתָּ  | פָּקְדָתָּ  | 2mp | מָצְאַתֶּם | פָּקְדֶתֶם  |
| 2fs | מָצְאַתְּ  | פָּקְדִיתְּ | 2fp | מָצְאַתֶּן | פָּקְדִיתֶן |
| 1cs | מָצְאַתִּי | פָּקְדִיתִי | 1cp | מָצְאַנּוּ | פָּקְדִנּוּ |

Ross 13.5 The Relative Particle אֲשֶׁר (who, which, that)

Relative clauses are clauses that modify a noun; thus, they are *adjectival in function*. The noun they modify is called *the head* of the relative clause (some call it the antecedent).

ENGLISH: In English we have relative words/pronouns that introduce relative clauses: *who, which, that*

The lady who won American Ninja Warrior is my pedicurist.

President Trump loves his comb-over, which most people dislike.

I know the man that swallowed a pound of lard.

The hairdo that I prefer is the mohawk.

Note: in English, the relative words serve both as conjunctions to introduce a modifying, relative clause, and as relative pronouns that serve a syntactic/grammatical function within the relative clause. The relative pronoun and the head always refer to the same referent (they are co-referential). The relative pronoun is sometimes described as “resumptive” since it resumes the referent of the head within the relative clause.

HEBREW: The main word in Hebrew that introduces relative clauses is **אֲשֶׁר**. Like English, Hebrew relative clauses (RCs) have a head, and that head is resumed within the RC as well (the resumption might be in the form of a resumptive pronoun, or it might be null—unstated but implied). Unlike English, however, the word **אֲשֶׁר** is *not a relative pronoun*; it is a relative particle whose only function is to introduce a RC. The word **אֲשֶׁר** does not have a syntactic/grammatical role to play inside the RC.

The man *REL/who* *Moses gave to him a wife* fell.

נָפַל הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לוֹ מֹשֶׁה אִשָּׁה:

The man *REL/who* *he gave to Moses a wife* fell.

נָפַל הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הוּא נָתַן לְמֹשֶׁה אִשָּׁה:

The man *REL/who*  $\emptyset$  [*he*] *gave to Moses a wife* fell.

נָפַל הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְמֹשֶׁה אִשָּׁה:

The man *REL/who*  $\emptyset$  [*he*]  $\emptyset$  [*is*] *in the temple* fell.

נָפַל הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בַּהֵיכָל: