

These tense, however, actually have very little to do with time and almost everything in their meaning is related to the sort and nature of the action. The student must be careful not to think:

Perfect -past

Imperfect -future

Should one fall into this sort of thinking, it greatly narrows one's ability to glean the fuller meanings of the Hebrew tenses, and it also deprives one of more fully comprehending the nature of verbs and usage.

The material in this lesson is the presentation of differing concepts in the understanding of the tenses. It follows the pattern of the discussions in Gesenius but in a simplified, compacted form. Further reading is suggested at the close of each section. We will look at each of the systems and discuss briefly the representative ideas...add a very few passages for consultation and make a few suggestions in the passing. Soon the lesson will be over!

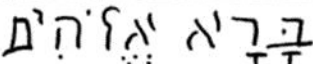
B. THE HEBREW PERFECT

The perfect is used to show a variety of actions that are conceived of as complete in the mind of the writer. Among these we find the following:

1. Action completed in time past

This is probably the most common use of the perfect for the simple reason that most things that are complete are "over." But even here there is a variety of ideas with the perfect and we sketch three of these.

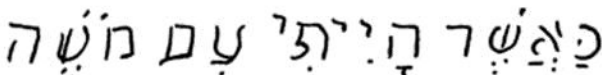
a. The completeness of a single punctiliar act

Genesis 1:1 

"God created...." The whole of creative activity is seen as something finished by God. He simply did it and nothing more need be said.

b. The progressive completion of an action

The act is now complete but in its day it was the result of a succession of events and so completed over a longer or shorter time

Joshua 1:5 ... 

"as I was with Moses"...the age of Moses is over now but throughout his days the Lord was with him. It is now complete but was a progressive action in the past. It was not a single, individualized act but a long series of events.