

Q39. Watch that cow Solution

Question D: Watch that cow

D1. (a) malḥah kotevet ṯagadot ṯaroḥot laseḥkanim

(b) hameleḥ hazeh šamar al haḥatulim hatovim

(c) hajaldah hakatonah šamra al hasaḥkanah hazot

(d) hakeleb hatov katav miktavim ṯaroḥim lamalḥot

(e) hajm {kotvut|kotvim} neʿum tov lamelaḥim

(f) hu kotev et hamiktav laʿaḥbarim

D2. Write your explanation on the last page or on extra pages if necessary

In (e) accept *kotvot* instead of *kotvim* since gender of ‘they’ is not specified. Actually, *hajm* is masculine (the feminine is *hen*), though this is not stated ... but could be reasonably guessed since *-im* is the masculine plural ending.

GRAMMAR (as seen here)

Word-order is SVO. Adjectives (including ‘this’) come after the noun, and agree in gender (m/f) and number.

Definite article is *ha-* prefixed to both noun and adjective; indefinite article is omitted.

Preposition ‘to’ or ‘for’ is a prefix *l-* which forms a portmanteau *la-* with the definite article.

Feminine nouns and adjectives (in these examples) end in *-ah* in singular, *-ot* in plural; masculine nouns/adjectives add *-im* to form plural. If the last vowel of the masculine singular is *e*, change it to *a* (*jeled/jeladim*, *sefer/sefarim*, *seḥken/seḥkanim*) so plural of *meleḥ* is *melaḥim*, and, applying the rule backwards, singular of *kelabim* is *keleb*.

Feminine singular of ‘this’ is *hazot*, even though this looks like a plural.

Definite objects are preceded by a preposition, *al* with ‘watch’, *et* with write, but *et* is omitted if the object is indefinite (no evidence whether *al* is also omitted).

A masculine noun CeCeC can be changed to feminine CaCCah (from *jeled/jaldah* infer ‘king’ is *meleḥ* from *malḥah*; it is not asked for but ‘bitch’ is indeed *kalbah*). This rule only applies when all the consonants are single. Other masculine nouns simply change any final *e* to *a* and add *-ah* without dropping a syllable, so *seḥken/seḥkanah* (not *saḥknah*)

Verb conjugations are formed by taking the three consonants of the verb and a vowel pattern sometimes with an ending. Verbs agree with the subject in number and gender as per the following table, which shows the relevant patterns for the two verbs used here. Note that masc and fem plural are the same in the past tense.

	ms	fs	mp	fp
pres	CoCeC	CoCeCet	CoCCim	CoCCot
past	CaCaC	CaCCa	CaCCu	

A valid generalisation is that the first vowel indicates tense (*o* present, *a* past), and the coincidence in the present tense plural of the masculine *-im* and feminine *-ot* could be mentioned.

In fact Hebrew has seven different conjugation paradigms, has further forms for 1st and 2nd person singular and plural, 2nd person also having different forms for masculine and feminine; and has a further tense (future), all three tenses having active and passive forms... and a few other verb forms on top of all that. The system of 3-consonant roots is a feature of Semitic languages (also Arabic for example) and goes beyond the verb paradigms, with countless other word derivations possible; for example the root K-T-V seen here as verb ‘to write’ shows up in *miktav* ‘letter’, *maktavah* ‘desk’, *kotev* ‘writer’, *kattav* ‘reporter’, *ktovet* ‘address’, *taktiv* ‘written rule’, *ktiv* ‘spelling’, *liktov* ‘to register’, etc.

Vocabulary (underlined words have to be derived)

Masculine nouns: *jeled* (boy), *sefer* (book), *seḥken* (actor), *keleb* (dog), *ḥatul* (cat), *ʔaḥbar* (mouse), *miktav* (letter), *neʔum* (speech), *meleḥ* (king)

Feminine nouns: *parah* (cow), *jaldah* (girl), *malḥah* (queen), *seḥkanah* (actress), *ʔagadah* (story)

Adjectives: *tov* (good), *zeh* (this), *gadol* (big), *katon* (small), *ʔaroḥ* (long)

Pronouns: *hajm* (they), *hu* (he)

Prepositions: *et*, *al*, *la*

Verbs: *šamar*, *katar* (the 3rd person masculine singular, past tense, is the dictionary citation form for all verbs, perhaps because it has the simplest vowel pattern. Also it is unique for each of the seven verb paradigms, and so serves to indicate which group a verb belongs to). Note: the verb *šamar* is more accurately translated as ‘guard’ rather than ‘watch’ (perhaps ‘watch over’ would be a better translation), and *ʔagadah* is not the normal word for ‘story’, rather having the meaning ‘legend’ or ‘tale’.

Finally, Hebrew is normally written without vowels (though there are some “vowel letters” for some initial and final vowels), so for example *jeled* is <JLD>, *jaldah* is <JLDH>, *kotev* and *kataḥ* are both written <KTV> and so on, so the vowel shifts are an added complication for learning to read Hebrew!