



Adding & Subtracting: Gen 2:16-17: Lucifer's Interpretation, Ishah's Deception, & Its Accurate Translation; the Two Deaths in v. 17

11. Verse 17 ends with a penalty clause for violating the mandate: you shall surely die. However, this translation misses the impact of this dread consequence. We get help from:

Gesenius, Wilhelm. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by E. Kautzsch. Revised by A. E. Cowley. 2d English ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1910), 342:

The infinitive absolute occurs most frequently in immediate connexion with the finite verb of the same stem, in order in various ways to define more accurately or to strengthen the idea of the verb.

The infinitive absolute used before the verb to strengthen the verbal idea, i.e. to emphasize in this way either the certainty or the forcibleness and completeness of an occurrence. In English, such an infinitive is mostly expressed by a corresponding adverb, but sometimes merely by putting greater stress on the verb; e.g. Genesis 2:17.

12. The doubling of the verb is designed for stress or to define more accurately the idea of the verb. The best English rendering of this Hebrew construct is, "dying you will die."
13. The stress is on the fact that two deaths were forecast for violating the prohibition. The Qal infinitive absolute, *mōth*, refers to spiritual death while the Qal imperfect, *ta-muth*, refers to physical death as the inevitable result:

Genesis 2:17b - ... from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it dying spiritually [**Qal infinitive absolute: מוֹת *mōth***] you will die physically [**Qal imperfect: תָּמוּת *ta-muth***].

14. By violating the prohibition Adam and Ishah sinned and as a result experienced spiritual death. Adam did not die physically for another 900 years so we may conclude that the emphasis from the infinitive absolute is on the sentence of spiritual death which then caused physical death.
15. This concept is brought out by the Qal imperfect: תָּמוּת *ta-muth*, "you will die." We return to Gesenius for further explanation:

Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 125, fn 1:

The *imperfect* denotes the *beginning*, the *unfinished*, and the *continuing*, that which is just happening, which is conceived as in process of coming to pass, and hence, also, that which is yet future.

16. Thus the Qal imperfect indicates that spiritual death, caused by sin, is the catalyst that initiates the process of physical death. When Adam and Ishah sinned they died spiritual death immediately but something else was *just* happening. Spiritual death started a *process* that would *continue unfinished* until a point *yet future*. So we read:



Genesis 2:17b - ... from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it dying spiritually [**Qal infinitive absolute:** מוֹת *mōth*] you will begin a process that will continue until you die physically [**Qal imperfect:** תָּמוּת *ta-muth*].

17. Lucifer is able to convince Ishah that this mandate does not mean what its literal interpretation asserts: "You surely shall not die!"
18. He calls God a liar and then goes on to instruct Ishah that this idle threat is designed to keep her ignorant when otherwise she could be as smart as God by violating the commandment and eating the forbidden fruit: "For God knows that in the day you eat from it you eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."