



## Season 4, Episode 4 Conjugating the Passive

Welcome, dearest listeners. If you're back with me for this episode of Bereka Buna, it probably means I didn't scare you sufficiently in the last. But fret not, because we're back today with a bit of Amharic grammar that never ceases to frustrate. So, take a deep breath before we pick up where we left off last episode, by looking at how the passive form is conjugated.

Last episode we covered the passive form using simple past tense verbs, like ወሰደ/ተወሰደ (he took/it was taken), and ከፈተ/ተከፈተ (he opened/it was opened). To complicate matters, though, the passive form can also be used in other tenses. How this is done is what we'll be deciphering today.

I wish I could tell you that, unlike most of Amharic grammar, there is a hard and fast rule to help you conjugate verbs into different tenses using the passive form. In truth, sadly, there is no such rule, and learning the passive becomes a matter of some interpretation, lots of hard listening, and, of course, practice. I myself am very much mired in the process of trying to learn these, and given my accent, Adam will help elucidate the small nuances in pronunciation. For this episode I would really recommend pulling up the transcript and having a look at the Fidel as you listen to these conjugations.

We'll start by simply drilling several verbs by listing to the verb for እሱ in the active form followed directly by the passive. Try to notice the subtle differences in pronunciation (and sometimes in ፊደል) that occur when using the passive form. Let's have a listen.

ወሰደ – he took	Active – to take	Passive – to be taken
Past	ወሰደ	ተወሰደ
Infinitive	መውሰድ	መወሰድ
Present/Future	ይወስዳል	ይወሰዳል
Contingent	ይወስድ	ይወሰድ
Gerund	ወስዶ	ተወስዶ
Imperative	ውሰድ	ተወሰድ
Jussive	ይውሰድ	ይወሰድ

ከፈተ – he opened	Active – to open	Passive – to be opened
Past	ከፈተ	ተከፈተ
Infinitive	መከፈት	መከፈት
Present/Future	ይከፍታል	ይከፈታል
Contingent	ይከፍት	ይከፈት
Gerund	ከፍቶ	ተከፍቶ
Imperative	ከፈት	ተከፈት
Jussive	ይከፈት	ይከፈት

በላ – he ate	Active – to read	Passive – to be read
Past	በላ	ተበላ
Infinitive	መብላት	መበላት
Present/Future	ይበላል	ይበላል



Contingent	ይበላ	ይበላ
Gerund	በልቶ	ተበልቶ
Imperative	ብላ	ተበላ
Jussive	ይብላ	ይበላ

As you may have noticed, there are some subtle differences in pronunciation and spelling between the active and passive form, but these can be hard to pick up on when you're first learning the language, and they are often inconsistent. Breaking down the when and how of the passive would take the work of a serious linguist, so don't be too hard on yourself if it's not coming easily. I have found through my own struggles with this particular piece of Amharic grammar that all I can do is be drilled using many examples and try to pay attention to when the passive is used in a sentence.

Let's listen to a couple more verb examples in this format, using verbs starting with the letter አ. Notice that these can sometimes be even more different in the passive than previous examples:

አነበበ – he read	Active – to read	Passive – to be read
Past	አነበበ	ተነበበ
Infinitive	ማንበብ	መነበብ
Present/Future	ያነባል	ይነበባል
Contingent	ያነብ	ይነበብ
Gerund	አንበቦ	ተነቦ
Imperative	አንብብ	ተነብብ (not commonly used)
Jussive	ያንብብ	ይነበብ

አየ – he saw	Active – to see	Passive – to be seen
Past	አየ	ታየ
Infinitive	ማየት	መታየት
Present/Future	ያያል	ይታያል
Contingent	ያይ	ይታይ
Gerund	አይቶ	ታይቶ
Imperative	እይ	ታይ
Jussive	ይይ	ይታይ

Ok, now that you've heard a few examples of the passive, let's break it down even further by conjugating verbs in each of their persons for these tenses. Remember you can always go back to the previous episode for a foundational explanation of the passive. For example, remember that not all verbs that start with ተ are passive (like ተሸከመ, he carried; ተቀበለ, he received; ተመለከተ, he looked, etc.), and that not all verbs lend themselves to be made passive. In Amharic, and in Ethiopia in general, I've learned, it's best not to take rules too much to heart.

ተሰማ – to be heard/listened	Past	Present/Future	Contingent	Gerund	Imperative/Jussive
እኔ	ተሰማሁ	እሰማለሁ	እሰማ	ተሰምቼ	ልሰማ
አንተ	ተሰማህ	ትሰማለህ	ትሰማ	ተሰምተህ	ተሰማ



አንቺ	ተሰማሽ	ትሰሚያለሽ	ትሰሚ	ተሰምተሽ	ተሰሚ
እናንተ	ተሰማችሁ	ትሰማላችሁ	ትሰሙ	ተሰምታችሁ	ተሰሙ
እሱ	ተሰማ	ይሰማል	ይሰማ	ተሰምቶ	ይሰማ
እሷ	ተሰማች	ትሰማለች	ትሰማ	ተሰምታ	ትሰማ
እኛ	ተሰማን	እንሰማልን	እንሰማ	ተሰምተን	እንሰማ
እነሱ	ተሰሙ	ይሰማሉ	ይሰማ	ተሰምተው	ይሰሙ

Notice that the spelling of the active and passive verb in the present and contingent tenses are exactly the same and even the pronunciation might also be very difficult to differentiate for beginners. So, don't be hard on yourselves.

ተፈለገ – to be wanted/looked for	Past	Present/Future	Contingent	Gerund	Imperative/Jussive
እኔ	ተፈለግኩ	እፈለጋለሁ	እፈለግ	ተፈልጌ	ልፈለግ
አንተ	ተፈለግክ	ትፈለጋለህ	ትፈለግ	ተፈልገህ	ተፈለግ
አንቺ	ተፈለግሽ	ትፈለገሂያለሽ	ትፈለገሂ	ተፈልገሽ	ተፈለገሂ
እናንተ	ተፈለግችሁ	ተፈለጋላችሁ	ትፈለጉ	ተፈልጋችሁ	ተፈለጉ
እሱ	ተፈለገ	ይፈለጋል	ይፈለግ	ተፈልጎ	ይፈለግ
እሷ	ተፈለገች	ትፈለጋለች	ትፈለግ	ተፈልጋ	ትፈለግ
እኛ	ተፈለግን	እንፈለጋልን	እንፈለግ	ተፈልግን	እንፈለግ
እነሱ	ተፈለጉ	ይፈለጋሉ	ይፈለጉ	ተፈለገው	ይፈለጉ

ታወቀ – to be known	Past	Present/Future	Contingent	Gerund	Imperative/Jussive
እኔ	ታወቅኩ	እታወቃለሁ	እታወቅ	ታውቄ	ልታወቅ
አንተ	ታወቅክ	ትታወቃለህ	ትታወቅ	ታውቀህ	ተታወቅ
አንቺ	ታወቅሽ	ትታወቂያለሽ	ትታወቂ	ታውቀሽ	ተታወቂ
እናንተ	ታወቃችሁ	ትታወቃላችሁ	ትታወቁ	ታውቃችሁ	ተታወቁ
እሱ	ታወቀ	ይታወቃል	ይታወቅ	ታውቆ	ይታወቅ
እሷ	ታወቀች	ትታወቃለች	ትታወቅ	ታውቃ	ትታወቅ
እኛ	ታወቅን	እንታወቃለን	እንታወቅ	ታውቀን	እንታወቅ
እነሱ	ታወቁ	ይታወቃሉ	ይታወቁ	ታውቀው	ይታወቁ

Great, now that we've been through some conjugations of various verbs in the passive form, let's go through some practice examples.

### Exercise 1: Translate from Amharic to English

- ሌባው ሲታወቅ እንነግራችኋለን  
when the thief is known [is found out], we will tell you
- የእኛ የእጅ ጽሁፍ አይነበብም  
your handwriting can't be read.
- ትንሿ ድመት ነገ ትሰጣለች  
tomorrow the little cat will be given away.



4. ትላንትና ኳስ ለመጫወት ሊሰባሰቡ ነበር  
yesterday they were going to gather to play soccer.
5. ማንን አላቼህ? ይቅርታ፣የለንም፣ሁሉም ተሸጠዋል  
do you have Mango? Sorry, we don't have [any], they've all been sold.
6. ደራርቱን ታውቃለህ? አዎ፣ጎበዝ ሯጭ ናት፣ኢትዮፕያ ውስጥ ትታወቃለች  
do you know Derartun? Yes, she's a great runner, she's famous [well known] in Ethiopia.
7. እንዴት ነሽ?፣አለሁ እግዚአብሔር ይመስገን  
how are you (f)? I'm well, thanks be to God.
8. ለጎደኛው ልደት አልተጠራም  
he hasn't been invited to his friend's birthday.
9. ቁልፌ ካልተገኘ መኪናዬ አይከፈትም  
If my keys aren't found my car can't be opened.
10. እሷ ተጎድታለች፣ወደ ሆስፒታል ትወሰድ  
She has been injured, let her be taken to the hospital.
11. ወደ ስልጣን ሲሾሙ ፍትህ ይደረጋል  
When they are appointed [to a position of power], justice will be done
12. ለአስራ ሁለት አመት እስር ቤት ተፈርዶባቸዋል  
They have been sentenced to prison for twelve years.

**Exercise 2:** Convert the following Active sentences into Passive ones

1. I sent her to the market – ወደ ገበያ ላከኳት  
She's been sent to the market – ወደ ገበያ ተልካለች
2. They're eating the food – ምግቡን እየበሉ ነው  
The food is being eaten – ምግቡ እየተበለ ነው
3. We were going to burn the sticks – እንጨቶችን ልናቃጥል ነበር  
The sticks were going to be burnt – እንጨቶቹ ሊቃጠሉ ነበር
4. I have to hear this message – ይሄንን መልእክት መስማት አለብኝ  
This message must be heard – ይህ መልእክት መስማት አለበት
5. They stole his phone and money – ስልኩን እና ገንዘቡን ሰረቁበት  
His phone and his money were stolen – ስልኩ እና ገንዘቡ ተሰረቁ
6. Sell the car (f) – መኪናውን ሽጪ  
Let (may) the car be sold – መኪናው ይሸጥ
7. I haven't written the letter – ደብዳቤውን አልጻፍኩም  
The letter hasn't been written – ደብዳቤው አልተጻፈም
8. Having built the house, they painted it – ቤቱን ገንብተው፣ቀለም ቀበት  
Being built, the house was painted – ቤቱ ተገንብቶ ተቀባ

And that's all for today, make sure to review this episode and last as many times as you need to in order to start hearing the patters in the use of the passive. It's not easy and continues to be a challenge for me, but we'll get there! አይዞን and don't forget, you can also find the transcripts and other Amharic resources on our website at [berekabuna.org](http://berekabuna.org).