

Lesson 8

Yes/No Questions

Vocabulary

Báa	Type-of-Sentence Word: interrogative
balin	to be old (of persons or animals; rarely of inanimates to mean “antique”)
be	he/she/it (third person pronoun, not gender-marked, singular)
bun	to be new (of inanimates; occasionally of persons who are “new” to a role or position)
dala	plant, any growing thing
loyo	to be black
oób	to jump
shane	to be downy; to be furry
waá	Evidence Word: believed to be false because the speaker mistrusts the source
yem	to be sour (flavor)

As we discussed in the previous lesson, once the Type-of-Sentence Word is established, it need not be repeated in connected sentences. Another factor enters the situation now that we have more than one type of Type-of-Sentence Word. When the Type-of-Sentence Word changes (“statement” to “question” or vice-versa), the new one must be given. Where the Type-of-Sentence Word does not change from sentence to connected sentence, it may be omitted after the first sentence.

With the addition of “**báa**,” we also gain a new verb: “**dibáa**” (to ask). “**Dibáa**” asks a question; to “ask for” something would involve a different Type-of-Sentence word. Of course, “**dibáa**” can be used as a noun, in which case it would mean “a/the question.”

Note that the third person pronoun is not gender-marked. This means that it does not carry the meaning of “**he**” (marked as male) or “**she**” (marked as female); neither is it the neuter “**it**,” (marked as neither male nor female). Just as in the case of “**with**” (person), you can specify that a given pronoun refers to a female or a male by use of the suffixes “**-izh**” (female) or “**-id**” (male); thus “**behizh**” and “**behid**” (remember the “h” to separate the vowels) would mean “**she**” (explicitly female) and “**he**” (explicitly male), respectively. Because Láadan’s native gender-neutrality can be difficult to render in English, we sometimes resort to “**X**” to translate the problematic “**be**,” more often, we supply a gender based on context.

And, as may by this time go without saying, along with “**be**” (X, singular) come “**bezh**” (X, few-to-several: 2 to 5) and “**ben**” (X, many: more than 5). The gender suffix, if used, would be attached to the already-formed plural: **bezhizh**, **bezhid**, **benizh**, **benid**. No “h” need be inserted in these forms, as the plural forms already end in consonants.

Notes

Yes/No Questions

[Verb (Neg) CP–S]

You'll notice that the sentence word-order is exactly the same for asking a question as for making a statement. There are two main differences. The first is that instead of starting the sentence with “**Bíi**,” we begin with “**Báa**,” the interrogative Type-of-Sentence Word. The second is that we're asking for information rather than providing information for which we would provide evidence. Therefore, we wouldn't use an Evidence Word at the end of a question.

Examples

Bíi thal withizh wa. The woman is good.
Báa thal withizh? Is the woman good?

Bíi tháa ne wáa. You thrive, I hear.
Báa tháa ne? Do you thrive? Are you well?

“Báa tháa ne?” is also the standard conversation-opener, “How are you?”

Bíi laya bal waá. The bread is red (I hear, but I don't believe it).
Báa laya bal? Is the bread red?

One further note about questions in Láadan: in English we employ a rising tone at the end of a question. This raised tone is not employed in Láadan; in fact, it might very well confuse the meaning of the word at the end of the question since some Láadan words only vary by the tone on the last syllable.

Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 **Báa shane mid?**
- 2 **Báa mehóoha thulid?**
- 3 **Báa hal be?**
- 4 **Báa thal bal?**
- 5 **Báa medóon bezh?**
- 6 **Báa née dala?**

1 En: _____

2 En: _____

3 En: _____

4 En: _____

5 En: _____

6 En: _____

Notes

Transform the following into questions; translate into English before and after.

- 7 Bii oób henahizh wa.
- 8 Bii wii hesh wáa.
- 9 Bii medathim benid wáa.
- 10 Bii héeya thili wi.
- 11 Bii medi Shuzhéth i Thíben wáa.
- 12 Bii memíi nen wa.

7 En:

La:

En:

8 En:

La:

En:

9 En:

La:

En:

10 En:

La:

En:

11 En:

La:

En:

12 En:

La:

En:

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Translate the following into Láadan.

- 13 Is the stone beautiful?
- 14 Do the pigs follow?
- 15 Is the grain red?
- 16 Is the pillow old?
- 17 Are you thriving?
- 18 Are the doors open?

In #16, you might be tempted to use the verb “balin” (old, of animates). The pillow in #16 doesn’t qualify (unless it’s an antique—a state not declared for it in this sentence). Instead, we need to use “rabun” (old, of inanimates) [ra- (NON) + bun (new, of inanimates)]. This means “old”—but a very different “old” than “balin.” “Balin” refers to people or animals that are honored for having survived a long time. “Rabun” refers instead to objects or things that are no longer new—with the implication that they may be worn out or outmoded. English uses the same word “old” for both concepts. The words we use tend to channel the things we think; so, having only the one word, it becomes more difficult to distinguish the two concepts. This leads to much suffering by our elders as well as much squandering of the skills and wisdom they have accrued over their long lives—which might otherwise benefit us all.

English does much better with “young” versus “new” (“rabalin” versus “bun”). There is no conflation here to muddle our thinking—which also gives us the entree to disambiguating the various meanings of “old.”

- 13 La: _____
- 14 La: _____
- 15 La: _____
- 16 La: _____
- 17 La: _____
- 18 La: _____

Notes

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Not

1 Is the creature furry? 2 Are the fathers weary? 3 Does X work (Is X working)? 4 Is the bread good? 5 Are they (few) correct? 6 Is the plant alien?
 7 The sister jumps. Baa oob henañhizh? Is the sister jumping? 8 The grass is alive. Baa wii hesh? Is the grass alive? 9 They (many, male) needlework. Baa medathim benid? Do they (many, male) needlework? 10 The fish is afraid. Baa hēya thii? Is the fish afraid? 11 Suzette and Steven speak. Baa medi Shuzhēth ! Thiben? Do Suzette and Steven speak? 12 You (many) are amazed. Baa memii nen? Are you (many) amazed?
 13 Baa āya ud? 14 Baa medoth muda? 15 Baa laya ede? 16 Baa rabun thom? 17 Baa thaa ne? 18 Baa mehu dath?