

# Lesson 15

## Possessives

### Vocabulary

-tha	Suffix (CP): Possessive, by birth or growth
-the	Suffix (CP): Possessive, for no known or acknowledged reason
-thi	Suffix (CP): Possessive, by chance
-thu	Suffix (CP): “False” possessive (Partitive); also used to mean “about”
-tho	Suffix (CP): Possessive, for all other reasons, including law, custom, etc.

### Additional Vocabulary

beth	home
ith	light
oda	arm
óol	moon
rosh	sun

### Possessive Case

[(Aux) Verb (Neg) CP–Possessive–S]

To use the Láadan possessive, you must first decide what sort of “ownership” is involved. Is it because of birth, as with “**my arm**” or “**my mother?**” If so, add the ending “**-tha.**”

Is it for no known reason—for example, a task that you just ended up with somehow, inexplicably, and that is now “your” work? Then the proper ending is “**-the.**”

Is it a phony ownership, marked in English by “**of**” but really involving no possession, as in “**a heart of stone**” or “**a collection of books?**” If so, use the ending “**-thu.**”

Is it by luck, by chance? Use the ending “**-thi.**”

In any other situation, when ownership is due to law or custom or anything not included in the other forms, use the ending “**-tho.**” You would use “**-tho**” if you were not certain of the reason but were quite sure there was one and that it was legitimate.

The Láadan Possessive word order may seem awkward at first because English expresses the possessive by stating the possessor *first* and the thing possessed afterward; arguably, this indicates that the possessor is more important in English while the thing possessed is more important in Láadan.

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Finally, you cannot add the Possessive markers directly to the name of a person or animal. Instead, you add a pronoun to carry the case ending—like this:

Báa ril meháya hena?	Are the siblings beautiful?
Báa ril meháya hena netha?	Are your (by birth) siblings beautiful?
Báa ril meháya hena Méri betha?	Are Mary's (by birth) siblings beautiful?

The sequence “**Méri betha**” is literally “**Mary | X1 + POSSBIRTH.**” You cannot say “**Méritha**” to mean “**Mary + POSSBIRTH.**” (Note that this rule does not apply to names of places and of times—only living or once-living beings.)

## Possessive Pronouns

The Demonstrative pronouns, “**hi/hizh/hin,**” can stand in for the noun in a Possessive phrase; this construction would be translated “**mine**” or “**ours**” or “**yours**” or “**his/hers**” or “**theirs**” rather than “**my [noun]**” or “**our [noun]**” or “**your [noun]**” or “**his/her [noun]**” or “**their [noun].**”

Bíi wil u dem wa.	Would that the window be open.
Bíi wil u dem letho wa.	Would that my window be open.
Bíi wil u hi netho wa.	Would that yours be open.
Bíi wil mehu hin Therísha betho?	Would that Teresa's (many) be open.

## Interrogative Possessive

In a wh-question, the item of information being requested is represented by “**bebáa.**” In such a question where the possessor is the item of information being requested, “**bebáa**” would take the possessive suffix: “**bebáatha**” (whose, by birth), “**bebáathe**” (whose, for no known or acknowledged reason), “**bebáathi**” (whose, by chance), “**bebáatho**” (whose, for other valid reason), or “**bebáathu**” (of what, as in “**container of what**” or “**house made of what**”).

Báa rilrili tháa dala?	Might the plant be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa dala netho?	Might your (other valid reason) plant be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa dala Shuzhéth betho?	Might Suzette's plant be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa hi Shuzhéth betho?	Might Suzette's be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa dala bebáatho?	Whose plant might be thriving?
Báa rilrili tháa hi bebáatho?	Whose might be thriving?

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## Examples

Bíi ril medo oda wo. I suppose arms are strong.  
Bíi ril medo oda netha wo. I suppose your (by birth) arms are strong.  
Bíi ril medo oda Ánetheni betha wo. I suppose Anthony's arms are strong.  
Bíi ril medo hizh omátha wo. I suppose the teacher's arms are strong.  
Báa ril medo oda bebáatha? Whose arms are strong?

Bíi eril mebalin ra rul wa. The cats were not old.  
Bíi eril mebalin ra rul nethi wa. Your (by chance) cats were not old.  
Bíi eril mebalin ra rul Elízabeth bethi wa. Elizabeth's cats were not old.  
Bíi eril mebalin ra hizh shonáthi wa. The peacemaker's were not old.  
Báa eril mebalin ra rul bebáathi? Whose cats are not old?

Bíi rilrili loyo lanemid wa. A dog may be black.  
Bíi rilrili loyo lanemid nethe wa. Your (no known reason) dog may be black.  
Bíi rilrili loyo lanemid Máthu bethe wa. Matthew's dog may be black.  
Bíi rilrili loyo hi belidáthe wa. The carpenter's may be black.  
Báa rilrili loyo lanemid bebáathe? Whose dog may be black?

Notice that, in this example set, the speaker knows or acknowledges no reason why this dog should belong either to me, to Matthew, or to the carpenter; that's why she chose to use the possessive suffix “-the.”

Bíi aril rahíya éezh wi. Clearly, the goat will be large.  
Bíi aril rahíya éezh netho wi. Clearly, your (other valid reason) goat will be large.  
Bíi aril rahíya éezh Ána betho wi. Clearly, Anna's goat will be large.  
Bíi aril rahíya hi ábedátho wi. Clearly, the farmer's will be large.  
Báa aril rahíya éezh bebáatho? Whose goat will be large?

Notice, in the third of each of these sets, that the name of a living or once-living person or animal doesn't take suffixes directly. We must insert the pronoun “be” following the name and apply the suffixes to the pronoun instead.

Bíi laya dim wáa. The container is red, I'm told.  
Bíi laya dim udethu wáa. The container of rocks is red, I'm told.  
Bíi laya hi udethu wáa. That of rocks is red, I'm told.  
The one of rocks is red, I'm told.  
Báa laya dim bebáathu? The container is red; what is it a container of?  
The container of what is red?

In this example we see the “false possessive” (or, as students of other case languages may be comfortable calling it, the “partitive”) case. In Láadan, this is Possessive in form, even though there is no actual ownership involved. The third example in this set is specifying, since containers being red had already been being discussed, whether that applied to the one containing rocks.

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Báa léli omid?

Is the horse yellow?

Báa léli omid Hérel bethé?

Is Carol's horse yellow?

Báa léli omid lanethe Hérel betho?

Is Carol's friend's horse yellow?

Báa léli omid lanethe edinetho Hérel betha?

Is Carol's cousin's friend's horse yellow?

Here we see how Láadan can “stack” Possessives. The horse belongs (by chance—perhaps won in a contest?) first to Carol, then to her friend, and lastly to her cousin’s friend; the friend “belongs” (other valid reason) first to Carol, then to Carol’s cousin; the cousin “belongs” (by birth) to Carol. Note how the Possessive suffix applied to the pronoun (rather than directly to Carol’s name) changes in each sentence.

In most cases, formal writing would avoid this type of structure—in English or in Láadan. However, in speech or informal writing, it would not be at all uncommon.

## Exercises

Translate the following into English.

- 1 Bé aril lalom i amedara onida ehomátha wa.
- 2 Báa ril menédeshub medathim sherídan Másha betha i héena déelahátho?
- 3 Bíi eril medush merahu áath belidethu lezhetho wáa.
- 4 Bíi théethad shumáad yáababí Máyel betho wi.
- 5 Báa abahul bal berídanetho bebáatha?
- 6 Bíi eril ranime áana hoshem Bétheni betha wáa.

Did you note the new word in #6? It’s a straightforward opposite, so you may have just translated it without noticing that we haven’t actually seen it before: “ranime” (to be unwilling) [ra- (NON) + nime (be willing)].

- 1 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 E: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 E: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Translate the following into Láadan.**

- 13 The songwriter's (no reason) flower is tiny and green.
- 14 William's great-niece began to teach.
- 15 Whose (many of them) great-aunt is menopausing?
- 16 The light of the moon is cool and white, but the sun's light is warm and yellow.
- 17 Do the needleworker's parents want to be safe?
- 18 The alien's (by chance) creatures were unable to speak [trusted report].

In #13, did the word “tiny” give you pause? Consider that “tiny” means “very small”: either **híyahal** [híya (be small) + -hal (Degree: unusual)] or **híyahul** [híya (be small) + -hul (Degree: extreme)] would serve.

In #17, did you easily form a word for “needleworker?” Consider that a “needleworker” is “one who does needlework:” **dathimá** [dathim (needlework) + -á (doer/maker)].

Another new word in #20: “to be unable” is a straightforward opposite of “thad” (to be able): “rathad.”

- 13 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 15 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 16 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 17 L: \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 L: \_\_\_\_\_

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1 I promise the education-specialist's family will sing and dance. 2 Do Marsah's niece and the gardener's heart-sibling intend to needlework? 3 The doors of our house had to be closed. 4 Clearly, Michael's fledgling is about to be able to fly (but not any minute). 5 Whose aunt's bread is extremely fragrant? 6 Bethany's grandchild was unwilling to sleep, I heard.

7 I suppose the clothing was unusually warm. Baa eril owahal bud imátho wo. I suppose the traveler's clothing was unusually warm. 8 I suppose the work might be easy. Bii rilri! dozh hal denáthe wo. I suppose the assistants (no reason) work might be easy. 9 Upon my word, a kettle was singing. Bē eril zho dizh hothuletho lettha wa. Upon my word, my grandmother's kettle was singing. 10 Will a sheep try to follow? Baa aril dudoth ésh bebaazhetho? Whose (few of them) sheep will try to follow? 11 Would that the offspring promise to stay. Bii wil medibē mebenem shem lalomátha wa. Would that the singer's offspring promise to stay. 12 Clearly, the cousin needs to help. Bii ril them den edin amedarahátha wi. Clearly, the dancer's cousin needs to help.

13 Bii ril híyahul i liyen mahina lomáthe wá. 14 Bii eril nahom hosherdan Wilem betha wa. 15 Baa ril zháadin hoberidan bebaanetha? 16 Bii rahowahl i lliithi ith dolethu wi, izh owa i leli ith roshethu. 17 Baa menéde meyom thul dathimátha? 18 Bii eril merathad medi mid néhathi wá.