27. Second Aorists

Lesson in a Nutshell

Rather than using $\sigma \alpha$ to show that they are aorists, second aorists undergo a stem change. This is not unlike how in English the past tense of "go" is "went."

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If you understand the previous sentence, you understand second aorists. That's all there is to them.

It is easiest to show what a second aorist is by beginning with English.

In English, we have a regular way to put things in past tense — we add ed.

So, for example:

Today I clean. Yesterday I clean<mark>ed</mark>.

Today I play. Yesterday I play<mark>ed</mark>.

But there is another way that English verbs move into past time. They undergo a stem change. For example:

Today I teach. Yesterday I taught.

Today I go. Yesterday I went.

Today I run. Yesterday I ran.

Little kids often say something like this:

Yesterday I goed swimming with my mom. We correct them and say, "Yesterday you went swimming with your mom."

But actually, the kid is applying a logical rule to "go" to make it into "goed." The problem is not with the kid's logic. The problem is with English!

In Greek, second aorists are exactly like this. We have already seen one thing Greek verbs do to show they move into past time — they add an augment to the front of the verb.

But how do Greek verbs normally indicate they are in the aorist tense?

They add $\sigma\alpha$.

λύω I loose ἔλυσα I loosed

βλεπω | see ἔβλεψα¹ | saw

Second aorists do not follow the rules. They do not add $\sigma \alpha$.

They undergo a stem change. Just like in English!

For example:

λάμβανω: I take ἔλαβον: I took

βάλλω: I throw έβαλον: I threw

Sometimes these changes are very obvious (as in $\lambda \dot{\alpha} \mu \beta \alpha \nu \omega / \check{\epsilon} \lambda \alpha \beta \circ \nu$.) Other times there is only the difference of a single letter (as in $\beta \dot{\alpha} \lambda \lambda \omega / \check{\epsilon} \beta \alpha \lambda \circ \nu$.)

Which set of endings would you expect the second aorists to use, primary or secondary?

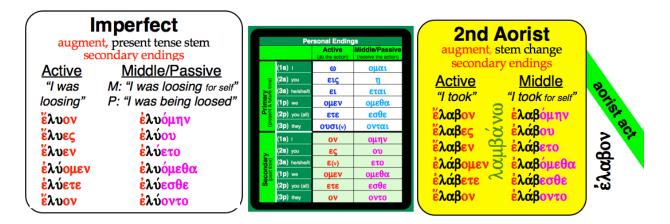
Secondary, of course. We are in past time.

¹ Notice that the σ is "hidden" in the ψ . $\check{\epsilon}\beta\lambda\epsilon\pi\sigma\alpha$ became $\check{\epsilon}\beta\lambda\epsilon\psi\alpha$. See the square of stops.

Without the $\sigma \alpha$, the endings look much more normal to us. In fact, the second aorists look exactly like imperfects with one important difference:

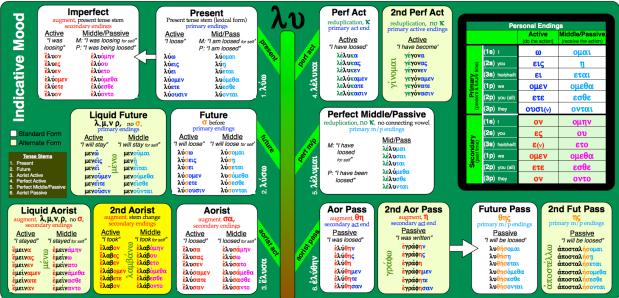
the stem change

I put that in big, bold blue since it is so important to remember. Second aorists are simply verbs that show you they have moved to the aorist tense by changing their stem rather than adding a $\sigma \alpha$.



Look at how $\lambda \alpha \mu \beta \dot{\alpha} \nu \omega$ shows it is an aorist. No $\sigma \alpha$. Just the stem change.

Compare the second aorist of $\lambda \alpha \mu \beta \alpha \nu \omega$ with the imperfect of $\lambda \omega \omega$. Do you see how similar they are?



Here is the second aorist on the Master Chart.

Please notice that there are three types of aorists: Regular, liquid and second.

This has nothing to do with the meaning!

These are just different forms that aorists use to say, "Hey! I'm an aorist!"

One more time: What is a second aorist?

A verb that shows does not use $\sigma \alpha$ to show you it is aorist. Instead, it uses

a stem change!

That's all there is to it.