

## Rules for Analyzing Hebrew Verbs

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Note 1: Please call any errors or unclarities to my attention.

Note 2: When a root is called “pê wāw” in this document, the dictionary form is, of course, written with an initial yôd.

1. Learn thoroughly Qal Perfect and Imperfect so that you can write and recite them and so that you can recognize instantaneously that a suffix like **תָּ** indicates 2mp Perfect. The PGN (person, gender, number) of any Perfect or Imperfect verb form in any Pattern can be identified by knowledge of the Qal Paradigm. In every Pattern there are two stems: The Perfect Stem and the Imperfect Stem (usually the Imperative, Infinitive Construct and Infinitive Absolute, and Participle are based on the Imperfect Stem). In the Qal and Niphal the Infinitive Absolute and Participle are not based on this stem and must be memorized).

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2. Begin analysis of any verb form by marking off the prefixes and suffixes.

קטלָתָּ

תקטלָנָה

נחמָו

The first example is Perfect 2fs (תָּ), the second 3fp or 2fp Imperfect (תִּנָּה), and all we can say about the third (וּ) is that it is 3 common plural perfect or masculine plural imperative .

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3. For the Perfects of the Derived Patterns (everything but Qal), let the name of the Pattern be your guide (that is, the 3ms will sound like the

## Rules for Verb Analysis (2)

name of the Pattern). Niphal begins with nun, Piel and Pual have a *dāgēš* Forte in their middle character and can be distinguished by their vowel sequence (i-e for Piel, or u-a for Pual); Hiphil, Hophal, and Hithpael begin with Hi-, Ho- (*qāmeš ḥātûp*) and Hith- respectively.

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4. If an Imperfect has a *yod* prefix, it is a 3m form (singular or plural);  
if it has a *tāw* prefix, it is a 3f or 2m-2f form (singular or plural);  
if it has an aleph or nun prefix it is a 1st person form (singular and plural respectively).

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5. Identify the Pattern of Imperfects and other forms based on the Imperfect Stem by the recognition points.

**Qal:** ḥîreq-šěwă'. ק' or ק' , etc.

**Niphal:** Niphal triangle ק'טל (formed by ḥîreq--*dāgēš* forte--*qāmeš*)

With a Guttural ק'טל (Compensative lengthening instead of *dāgēš* forte)

Pe Wāw ק'טל (Note the Niphal triangle)

(With a Hollow Verb ק'טל The *dāgēš* results from the assimilation of the Nun of the Niphal)

**Piel** and **Pual:** A *dāgēš* forte will be in the middle letter and a vocal *šěwă'* under the prefix consonant; one can distinguish Piel from Pual by the sound of the vowels (a Pual will have a *qibbûš* under the first root consonant). The *dāgēš* sometimes disappears when there is a *šěwă'* under the letter (Seow, p. 59).

## Rules for Verb Analysis (3)

יִקְטֹל      יִקְטֹל

Note: By definition a hollow verb cannot double its middle letter. Instead we have **Polel** (יִקְוֹמֵם) and **Polal** (יִקְוֹמֵם). That is, the final letter of the root is doubled. These patterns also have Perfect tenses.

**Hiphil:** Note the pataḥ under the prefix יִקְטִיל

[Sometimes a pataḥ will show up in the Qal before verbs beginning with a guttural יִעְמֹד].

**Hophal:** Note the qāmeṣ ḥaṭûp under the prefix followed by a silent šewā' יִקְטַל

A qāmeṣ ḥaṭûp is a short vowel and appears only in a closed, unaccented syllable. Before dāgēš forte, the qāmeṣ ḥaṭûp is replaced by a qibbûṣ. נִגְשׁ Hophal Perfect from נָגַשׁ.

**Hithpael:** yith-, tith-, 'eth-, or nith- prefix יִתְ, תִּתְ, אִתְ, נִתְ. There will also be a dāgēš forte in the middle letter of the root.

Note: By definition a hollow verb cannot double its middle letter. Instead we have **Hithpolel** (יִתְקוֹמֵם). That is, the final letter of the root is doubled. This pattern also has a Perfect tense.

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6. In Piel through Hithpael the Participles begin with a mêm and are based on the imperfect stem.

מִקְטֹל, מִקְטָל, מִקְטִיל, מִקְטֹל, or מִתְקַטֵּל

In the Qal and Niphal the participles are not based on the imperfect stem and must be memorized:

## Rules for Verb Analysis (4)

Qal Active    Qal Passive    Niphal

קָטַל

קָטוּל

נִקְטַל

קָם (Qal active participle from a Hollow verb)

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7. The Jussive is distinguished from the Imperfect in the Strong Verb only in the Hiphil. The vowel is shortened in the second syllable. In all other Patterns the forms can be either Imperfect or Jussive.

Hiphil Imperfect יִקְטִיל    Hiphil Jussive יִקְטַל

(In the weak verbs, the Jussive is distinguished from the imperfect by a shortening of the stem vowel)

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8. The imperative is formed in the Qal and Piel by removing the prefix from the 2nd person imperfect forms and making necessary vowel changes for other genders and numbers (see Rule of šěwă', Seow, p. 56). In the Niphal, Hiphil, and Hithpael, a hê replaces the taw of the imperfect prefix, and in the Hiphil 2ms a šērê also replaces the hîreq as the stem vowel.

Qal קָטַל    Niphal הִקְטִיל    Piel קָטַל    Hiphil הִקְטִיל    Hithpael הִתְקַטַּל

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9. The infinitive construct is formed the same way as the imperative 2ms in Qal, Niphal, Piel, and Hithpael. In the Hiphil, the infinitive construct is הִקְטִיל .

A final taw (ת) indicates a Qal Infinitive construct in

Pe Yod: שָׁבַת from יֵשֶׁב . (Note the loss of the initial yôd)

With suffix: שָׁבַתִּי . Cf. לָכַת from הִלַּךְ .

## Rules for Verb Analysis (5)

Pe Nun: גָּשַׁת from נָגַשׁ . (Note the loss of the initial nûn)  
With suffix גָּשַׁתִּי . Cf. לָקַח from קָחַת . With suffix קָחַתִּי .

A final וּ is the sign of an Infinitive Construct in all Patterns for  
Lāmed Hê verbs.

Qal בָּנוּת from בָּנָה Piel גָּלוּת from גָּלָה .

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10. The infinitive absolute, from Piel to Hithpael, has similar  
recognition points to those of the Imperfect.

Piel קָטַל or קָטַל (dāgēš forte in the middle letter of the root), Pual  
קָטַל (dāgēš forte in the middle letter of the root), Hiphil הִקָּטַל  
(pathaḥ in the prefix), Hophal הִקָּטַל (qāmeš ḥāṭûp in the prefix), and  
Hithpael הִתְקָטַל (hith- prefix and dāgēš forte in the middle letter  
of the root)

In the Qal and Niphal the infinitive absolutes are not based on the  
imperfect stem. The Qal should be memorized.

Qal קָטַל Niphal נִקָּטַל or הִקָּטַל Both Niphal forms are rare.

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11. If only two root consonants appear in a verb form, the following  
rules will help discover the third consonant.

*a. If there are only two root consonants, and the first is pointed with  
dāgēš forte, the word is Pe Nun.*

יָגַשׁ from נָגַשׁ . Cf. תָּקַח from לָקַח

## Rules for Verb Analysis (6)

Pe Nûn verbs tend to have the first letter of the root assimilated (dāgēš forte appears in the following consonant). They act like the Strong Verbs in Piel and Pual.

Niphal Perfect נִגַּשׁ from \*נִגַּשׁ  
Hiphil Perfect הִגַּשׁ from \*הִגַּשׁ  
Hophal Perfect (qibbûṣ replaces qāmeṣ hāṭûp before a dāgēš forte) הִגַּשׁ from \*הִגַּשׁ  
Hophal Imperfect 1cs הִגַּשׁ from the root נִגַּשׁ .

*b. If there are only two root consonants, and the prefix and the first two root consonants (that is, up to the second consonant, but not beneath it) are pointed like the Strong Verb, the word is lāmed hê.*

תִּגַּלְוּ Qal Imperfect, 2mp, from גִּלָּה  
עֲנִיָּתָּ Piel Perfect, 2ms, from עָנָה

The Jussives of Lāmed Hê Verbs are apocopated (shortened):

Qal Imperfect יִגַּלְּהָ Qal Jussive יִגַּלְּ  
Qal waw consecutive with imperfect וַיִּגַּלְּ  
Piel Imperfect יִגַּלְּהָ Piel Jussive יִגַּלְּ

cf. wāw consecutive with the imperfect וַיִּצַּו instead of וַיִּצַּוְהָ

Hiphil Imperfect יִגַּלְּהָ; Hiphil Jussive יִגַּלְּ.

*c. If there are only two root consonants, and they are separated by a long vowel, the word may be Hollow (Ayin Wāw or Ayin Yôd). Note rules “c” and “d” belong together.*

Qal Imperfect  
יִקְוּם and יִשְׁוּם

Qal Jussive  
יִקְוּם and יִשְׁוּם

## Rules for Verb Analysis (7)

*d. If there are only two root consonants, and the prefix of the imperfect is pointed with a qāmeṣ in an open syllable, the verb is Hollow and the pattern is Qal or Hiphil.*

Qal Imperfect יְקוּם or יְשִׁים from קוּם and שִׁים.

Qal Jussive יִקֶּם or יִשֶּׂם derived from קוּם or שִׁים.

Qal Imperfect with Waw Consecutive וַיִּקֶּם or וַיִּשֶּׂם derived from קוּם or שִׁים.

Hiphil Imperfect יִקְוּם or יִשִּׂים derived from קוּם or שִׁים.

Hiphil Jussive יִקְשֶׂם or יִשֶּׂם derived from קוּם or שִׁים.

Hiphil Imperfect with Waw Consecutive וַיִּקְשֶׂם or וַיִּשֶּׂם derived from קוּם or שִׁים.

Note: the Qal and Hiphil Imperfects of ‘Ayin Yôd verbs are identical.

יְשִׁים is Qal or Hiphil Imperfect 3ms from שִׁים.

*e. If there are only two root consonants, and the prefix is pointed with a Naturally Long vowel [a vowel usually written with a vowel letter], the word is Pê Wāw, Pê Yôd, or Hollow.*

Pe Wāw (the examples cited are from יֵשֵׁב, יֵלֵד and יֵרֵד).

Niphal נִישֵׁב perfect. The imperfect is regular: יִנְשֵׁב

(Niphal Triangle)

Niphal infinitive construct הוֹלִיד .

Hiphil Perfect הוֹלִיד

Hiphil Imperfect יוֹלִיד

Hophal יוֹרֵד and הוֹרֵד Imperfect and Perfect from ירד

## Rules for Verb Analysis (8)

Pê Yôd (true pê yôd)

Hiphil הִיטִיב from יטב

Hollow

Hophal הִקַּם and הִקַּם Imperfect and Perfect from קום.

Note: Pê Wāw and Hollow roots have the same kind of Hophal forms. Theoretically, הִקַּם could come from either יקם or קום.

The Hiphil perfect of Hollow verbs is הִקַּם (3ms) and הִקִּימוּתָּ (2ms; note vowel reduction in the propretone). Though these forms do not have a naturally long vowel in the prefix and therefore do not fit this rule, the *hê* prefix is a tipoff that they are Hiphil. The Hiphil participle of Hollow verbs is מְקִים.

*f. If there are only two root consonants, and the prefix of the Qal Imperfect is pointed with a šērê, the word is Pê Wāw.*

יִשְׁבוּ Qal imperfect 3mp from ישב. cf. יִלְךְ from הלך

*g. If there are only two root consonants, and none of the above rules applies, the word may be ‘Ayin ‘Ayin.*

סָבוּ, הִסִּיב, וַיִּסֹּב are all from סבב (Qal Perfect 1cs, Hiphil Perfect 3ms, and Hiphil Imperfect with waw consecutive 3ms respectively).

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12. Guttural verbs differ from Strong verbs in the following ways:



## Rules for Verb Analysis (9)

**F** = no dāgēš forte; **S** = Silent šewā' replaced by ḥāṭēp vowel; **V** = Vocal šewā' is replaced by ḥāṭēp vowel; **A** = Preference for “a-class” vowels. The letter *rêš* also does not take dāgēš forte.

Piel perfect מֵאַנָּהּ with compensative lengthening  
מֵהָרַר with virtual doubling  
בִּירַךְ No dāgēš forte in the *rêš*

Qal imperfect יַעֲמֹד ḥāṭēp vowel for silent šewā' and preference for “a” vowel

Qal imperative עֲמֹד ḥāṭēp vowel for vocal šewā'

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### Procedure for Analyzing Hebrew Verbs

13. Examine words to see whether they show any suffixes of the Perfect or any prefixes (and suffixes) of the Imperfect. These clues will give you the tense and the Person, Number, and Gender.

- A verb is an infinitive construct if it has a preposition in front of it (ל, ב, כ, ל), or if it has possessive suffixes like those used on a noun. Other recognition points of the Imperfect also apply.

לְהַצִּיל, לְשַׁבְּתוֹ, לְהַקְטִיל, לְקַטַּל, גִּשְׁתוּ, בְּגִלוֹת, לְקַטַּל

(From left to right: Qal infinitive construct from a strong verb; Qal infinitive construct with a preposition from a lāmed hê verb; Qal infinitive construct with a 3ms suffix from גִּשַׁ; Piel infinitive construct; Niphal infinitive construct; Qal infinitive construct from Pê yôd with a 3ms suffix; Hiphil infinitive construct from a pê nûn verb).

## Rules for Verb Analysis (10)

Infinitive constructs for Lāmed Hê verbs end in הַ  
Infinitive constructs for Pê Yôd and Pê Nûn verbs  
end in הַ

- A verb is an infinitive absolute if it is used immediately before or immediately after a finite verb of the same root.

Qal = קָטוּל. In other patterns, standard recognition forms for the Imperfect apply.

- A verb is a participle if it is קָטוּל, קָטוּל in the Qal (active and passive respectively), נִקְטָל in the Niphal, or has a מַ prefix in Piel--Hithpael (other Imperfect recognition points apply).
- A verb is probably an imperative if an imperative is used in an English translation. Imperatives are formed by removing the הַ prefix of the Imperfect in Qal or Piel, or by replacing it with a הַ (in Niphal, Hiphil, and Hithpael; other Imperfect recognition points apply).

### 14. Object Suffixes

## Rules for Verb Analysis (11)

### Suffixes with the Perfect Tense

Note: In certain cases the computer forced me to use the letters of the paradigm word in order to express the Hebrew of the suffix accurately.

Normal perfect ending	Perfect ending before suffixes		PGN of object suffix	Possible suffixes	Translation of suffix
3ms 0			1cs	נִי נִי נִי	me
3fs הַ	תַּ תַּ		2ms	קַטְלְךָ קַטְלְךָ קַטְלְךָ	you (m.)
2ms תַּ	תַּ		2fs	קַטְלְךָ קַטְלְךָ קַטְלְךָ	you (f.)
2fs תַּ	תִּי		3ms	וּ וּ וּ	him or it
1cs תִּי	תִּי		3fs	קַטְלָהּ קַטְלָהּ קַטְלָהּ	her or it
3cp וּ	וּ		1cp	קַטְלָנוּ	us
2mp תְּכֶם	תְּכֶם		2mp	כֶּם	you (pl., m.)
2fp תְּכֶנּוּ	תְּכֶנּוּ		2fp	never appears	
1cp נוּ	נוּ		3mp	קַטְלָם קַטְלָם קַטְלָם	them (men)
			3fp	קַטְלָן קַטְלָן	them (women)

## Rules for Verb Analysis (12)

### Suffixes with the Imperfect and Imperative

Normal imperfect prefixes and suffixes	Normal imperative suffixes		Suffixes with imperfect or imperative	Suffixes with nun energetic	
3ms י			3ms קטלהו	3ms קטלנו	him
3fs ת			3fs קטלה	3fs קטלנה	her
2ms ת	2ms 0		2ms קטלת	קטלת	you m.
2fs ... ת לי	2fs קטלי		2fs קטלת		you f.
1cs א			1cs קטלני	1cs קטלני	me
3mp י...לו			3mp קטלם		the m m.
3fp ת...נה			3fp קטלן		the m. f.
2mp ת...ו	2mp ו		2mp קטלכם		you m. pl.
2fp ת...נה	2fp נה		2fp not attested		you f. pl.
1cp נ			1cp קטלנו	1cp קטלנו	us

## Rules for Verb Analysis (13)

Note: The 3fp and 2fp imperfect and 2fp imperative forms are not attested; they are replaced by their corresponding mp forms. (û instead of nâ). Also note: If the imperfect or imperative form ends in a vowel (2fs, 2mp, 3mp), the connecting vowel between the verb and the suffix is omitted.

15. Identify the root letters in the form--usually two or three will be present. Choose the third letter. See #11 above for a list of rules on how to determine the third root consonant.

16. Determine the Pattern of the verb:

A. If the verb (according to #13 above) is Perfect, the recognition points are the following:

**Qal**--no prefixes, no dāgēšes

**Niphal**--N prefix

**Piel-Pual**--dāgēš forte in middle letter. (Look for the “u” vowel in the Pual)

**Hiphil**--ה prefix (ה [strong verbs], הו [pê wāw].ה or ה [hollow], ה [gutturals])

**Hophal**--הו, (הו [pê wāw or hollow], הו [pê nûn])

**Hithpael**--הת

B. If the verb (according to #13 above) is Imperfect, the recognition points are the following:

**Qal**--ק? (י, ה, א, ו for Pê Yôd; ו etc. for Hollow)

**Niphal**--ק? (Niphal triangle). וק? with initial guttural

**Piel-Pual**--קטל? (Note šewā' under the prefix and dāgēš forte in the middle letter)

**Hiphil**--ק? (י Pê wāw; ו Pê yôd, ו Hollow)

**Hophal**--ק? (ו for Hollow or Pê Yôd; ו for Pê Nûn)

**Hithpael**--ק?, etc.