

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Some parts of this presentation will repeat what was covered in the Overview of Biblical Hebrew presentation.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Verbs are composed of a 3-consonantal root called a *shoresh*.
  - Each letter of the root is numbered (right to left): III – II – I
  - These become important when identifying weak verbs; these usually involve guttural letters (א, ה, ח, ע, ר) in one of these 3 positions.
- Depending on the form of the verb, prefixes and/or suffixes are added to identify the person doing the action of the verb.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Hebrew grammars use either qatal (קָטַל = to kill) or paqad (פָּקַד = to visit) as their paradigm verb for strong verbs to show the various prefixes and suffixes that can be attached to a shoresh (root).
- These verbs are called strong verbs because they do not contain any guttural letters (א, ה, ח, ע, ר) and they change predictably throughout the paradigm.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Examples of **Strong** and **Weak** Verbs

פָּקַד

III II I

Strong  
VISIT

הָלַךְ

III II I

1<sup>st</sup> – Heh  
GO, WALK

גָּאַל

III II I

2<sup>nd</sup> – Guttural  
REDEEM

שָׁלַח

III II I

3<sup>rd</sup> – Guttural  
SEND

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Before I give a general overview of the verb stems (binyanim), we need to understand what active, passive, and reflexive is.
  - **Active** = when the subject is **doing** the action.
    - *The boy (subject) hit the ball.*
  - **Passive** = when the subject is **receiving** the action.
    - *The boy (subject) was hit by the ball.*
  - **Reflexive** = when the subject does something **to himself**.
    - *The boy (subject) hit himself with the ball.*

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- The 7 major (most common) binyanim are:
  - **Qal** = active voice, simple basic action
  - **Niphal** = passive voice, simple basic action
  - **Piel** = active voice, intensive action
  - **Pual** = passive voice, intensive action
  - **Hitpael** = reflexive voice, intensive action
  - **Hiphil** = active voice, causal action
  - **Hophal** = passive voice, causal action
- The vast majority of the verbs in Scripture are Qal.
- (Note: Slight spelling differences in the binyanim may be seen in various grammars.)

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Each binyan has a range of uses:
  - **Qal** – action or state
  - **Niphal** – passive, reflexive, reciprocal
  - **Piel** – acting strongly, factitive/resultative, urging others, doing an action related to a noun
  - **Hiphil** – causing, doing, being, declaring
  - **Hitpael** – doing to/for oneself; doing together/reciprocally; doing repetitively or continually; acting or pretending



# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- You may see a few more binyanim mentioned in your lexicon or grammar that are considered to be minor:
- These are used with bi-consonantal and geminate (twin) roots.
  - **Polel** – same meaning as Piel (active voice, intensive action)
  - **Polal** – same meaning as Pual (passive voice, intensive action)
  - **Hitpolel** – same meaning as Hitpael (reflexive voice, intensive action).

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

## Binyanim

Binyan (Stem)		3ms Perfect	Note:
Qal	קָל	קָטַל	Qamets under 1 <sup>st</sup> root letter
Niphal	נִפְעַל	נִקְטַל	Prefixed נִ
Piel	פִּעֵל	קִטַּל	Dagesh in 2 <sup>nd</sup> strong root letter
Pual	פֻּעַל	קִטַּל	Kibbuts under 1 <sup>st</sup> root letter
Hitpael	הִתְפַּעֵל	הִתְקַטַּל	Prefixed הִתְ
Hiphil	הִפְעִיל	הִקְטִיל	Prefixed הִ ; י in 3 <sup>rd</sup> person
Hophal	הִפְעִיל	הִקְטִיל	Prefixed הִ (qamets hatuph)

קָטַל is our paradigm verb meaning *To kill*. It is also called the *perfect verb form*.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

## Binyanim

Binyan (Stem)		3ms Imperfect	Note:
Qal	קָל	יִקְטֹל	
Niphal	נִפְעַל	יִקְטֹל	נ assimilated as dagesh in 2 <sup>nd</sup> root letter
Piel	פִּעֵל	יִקְטֹל	Dagesh in 2 <sup>nd</sup> strong root letter
Pual	פֻּעַל	יִקְטֹל	Kibbuts under 1 <sup>st</sup> root letter
Hitpael	הִתְפַּעֵל	יִתְקַטֵּל	Only ה remains from the הֵת
Hiphil	הִפְעִיל	יִקְטֹרֵל	Prefixed הֵ gone; י between 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> root letter in all forms but 2fp & 3fp
Hophal	הֻפְעַל	יִקְטֹל	Prefixed הֵ (qamets hatuph)

יִקְטֹל is our paradigm verb meaning *To kill*. It is also called the *perfect verb form*.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Different verbal stems [binyan (sg) or binyanim (pl)] are formed with a 3-consonantal root (shoresh) by:
  - Changing the vowel points;
  - Sometimes by adding a dot called a dagesh;
  - Sometimes by adding a prefix.
- Be aware that some verbs have bi-consonantal roots.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

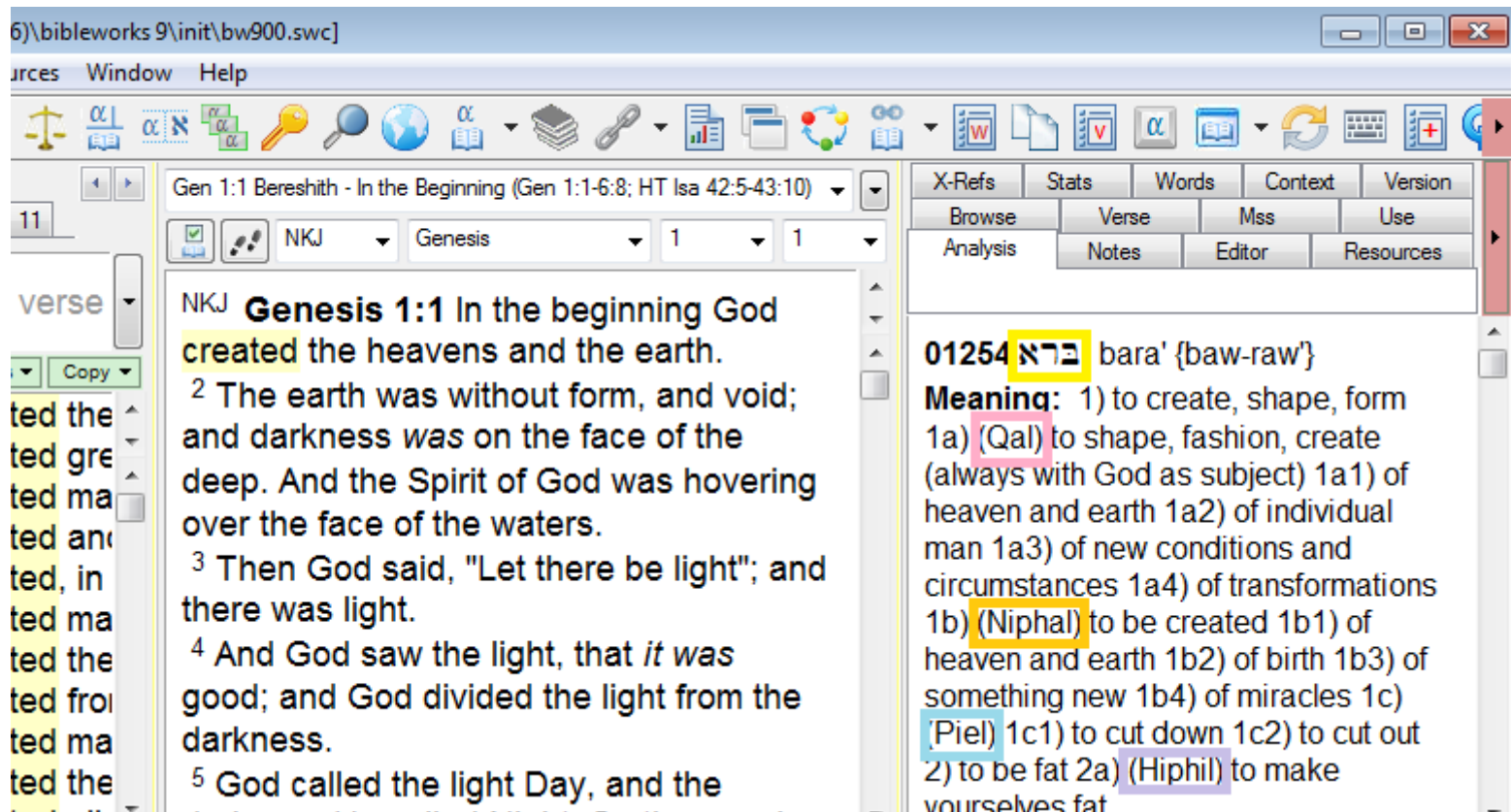
Binyan	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person, Masc. Sing. Perfect	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person, Masc. Sing. Imperfect
Qal	קָטַל	יִקְטֹל
Niphal	נִקְטַל	יִקְטָל
Piel	קִטַּל	יִקְטִיל
Pual	קִטַּל	יִקְטָל
Hitpael	הִתְקַטַּל	יִתְקַטֵּל
Hiphil	הִקְטִיל	יִקְטִיר
Hophal	הִקְטַל	יִקְטָל

Notice the addition of prefixes, dageshes, and variation in vowel pointings of the perfect and imperfect forms between binyamin.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Verbal stems (binyanim) affect a root's meaning; not its function within a discourse.
- If your lexicon gives you meanings for a verb's various binyanim, you must consider only the definitions for the specific binyan in the verse you are looking at.
- These are seen in BDB (or Gesenius) but not in Strong's.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs



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Gen 1:1 Bereshith - In the Beginning (Gen 1:1-6:8; HT Isa 42:5-43:10)

NKJ Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that *it* was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light Day, and the

X-Refs	Stats	Words	Context	Version
Browse	Verse	Mss	Use	
Analysis	Notes	Editor	Resources	

**01254** בָּרָא bara' {baw-raw'}

**Meaning:** 1) to create, shape, form  
1a) (Qal) to shape, fashion, create (always with God as subject) 1a1) of heaven and earth 1a2) of individual man 1a3) of new conditions and circumstances 1a4) of transformations  
1b) (Niphal) to be created 1b1) of heaven and earth 1b2) of birth 1b3) of something new 1b4) of miracles  
1c) (Piel) 1c1) to cut down 1c2) to cut out  
2) to be fat 2a) (Hiphil) to make yourselves fat

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Hebrew verbs do not always exist in every possible binyan.
- Not every binyan has an attested form of every person, number, and gender (PNG) in Scripture.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine, singular, qal perfect is the lexical form of a verb whether or not the qal binyan even exists for that verb.



# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Weak verbs have one or more guttural letters in their root but their vowels do not always change exactly the same as strong verbs throughout the paradigm.
- Other verbs have missing root letters or are bi-consonantal.
- These and weak verbs have their own paradigm lists.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- In Scripture, verbs appear in different forms. Verbal paradigms exist for the binyanim in these forms:
  - Perfect [also known as qatal (קָטַל) or suffix conjugation]
  - Imperfect [also known as yiqtol (יִקְטֹל) or prefix conjugation]
  - Participles [active and/or passive depending on the binyan]
  - Infinitives [construct and absolute]
  - Volitionals [Jussives (3p), Imperatives (2p), Cohortatives (1p)]
  - Preterite
- All of these will eventually be covered in future presentations.
- Begin focusing on the Perfect and Imperfect forms for now.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

## Qal Perfect (Qatal)

3ms	קָטַל	ka-tal	3cp	קָטַלוּ	ka-te-loo
3fs	קָטַלָּהּ	ka-te-la			
2ms	קָטַלְתָּ	ka-tal-ta	2mp	קָטַלְתֶּם	ka-tal-tem
2fs	קָטַלְתְּ	ka-talt	2fp	קָטַלְתֶּן	ka-tal-ten
1cs	קָטַלְתִּי	ka-tal-tee	1cp	קָטַלְנוּ	ka-tal-noo

The suffixes of a perfect verb identify the person of the verb which must agree in number and gender with the accompanying noun or pronoun.

**M = memorize this chart**

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- The Perfect (Qatal) Verb can be used to describe completed or definite action. These can be translated as:
  - Past tense;
  - Past/Present/Future Perfect Tense
- Not all verbs describe action; a state of being can be translated as:
  - Past or present tense.
- Verbs of perception or attitude can be translated:
  - Present tense.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Qatal is the verb form used to *begin* a historical narrative.
  - Translated as a simple past tense
- Qatal is also used in combination with a relative pronoun to form dependent clauses. It can be translated as a:
  - past perfect (had \_\_\_\_\_)
  - present perfect (have/has \_\_\_\_\_)

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

## Qal Imperfect (Yiqtol)

3ms	יִקְטֹל	yik-tol	3mp	יִקְטֹלוּ	yik-te-loo
3fs	תִּקְטֹל	tik-tol	3fp	תִּקְטֹלְנָה	tik-tol-na
2ms	תִּקְטֹל	tik-tol	2mp	תִּקְטֹלוּ	tik-te-loo
2fs	תִּקְטֹלֵי	tik-te-lee	2fp	תִּקְטֹלְנָה	tik-tol-na
1cs	אֶקְטֹל	ek-tol	1cp	נִקְטֹל	nik-tol

The prefixes and suffixes of a verb identify the person of the imperfect verb which must agree in number and gender with the accompanying noun or pronoun.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- The imperfect (yiqtol) verb describes past, present, or future incomplete or continued action. It can be translated as:
  - Present tense
  - Future tense
- If used this way, it will usually not be the first word in its clause.
- If it is the first word in a clause, this is usually a volitional verb (Jussive, Cohortative).

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Don't worry too much about memorizing the tense of verbs based on this information at this point.
- I'm just trying to introduce you to various terminology and lay a foundation for future learning.



# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Try to memorize the strong verb paradigm tables for all the binyamin starting with the qal (most basic form).
- Eventually you can work on becoming familiar with the vowel differences seen in the paradigms of weak verbs.
- Realize you will always be using a computer or tables to identify forms you don't know. This is normal.
- The more you practice reading Hebrew, the easier it will be to naturally pick up on these things.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Obviously, there are different ways to approach the translation of Hebrew verb tense.
- Personally, I think it's easier to learn how to translate verb tense based on the genre of the discourse.
  - The key is in learning the discourse profile schemes through repetition and seeing examples.
- We will look at lots of examples from Scripture in future presentations.
- Before we can do that, we'll need to learn a few more terms.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- One verb form we need to know is:
  - **Wayyiqtol** (pronounced va-yiqtol, spelled וַיִּקְטֹל). Hebrew grammars may call it:
    - Converted imperfect
    - Imperfect with Vav consecutive
    - Future with Waw conversive
    - Future
    - waPC
  - It's basically a **vav** + imperfect verb.
  - It is the primary verb form seen in historical narrative.

# Overview of Biblical Hebrew

- Another verb form is **weqatal** (pronounced ve-qatal, spelled וְקָטַל ).
  - It's basically a **vav** + perfect verb.
  - It is seen in predictive narratives, procedural discourses (which describe repetitive or customary behavior), and for isolated pivotal events.
  - The tense of the weqatal is translated differently (past or future tense) depending on the genre and purpose of the text.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- When a vav is prefixed to a yiqtol (imperfect) verb form, it always reverses or converts the verb to the opposite tense.
- Hence the name **vav-conversive**. (Remember, it's also known as a vav-consecutive.)
- **Yiqtol** – usually present or future tense
- **Wayyiqtol** – past tense in historical narrative.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- When the Vav is prefixed to the qatal (perfect) verb form, it often (but not always) reverses or converts the verb to the opposite tense.
- When it does convert the tense of the verb, it is a vav-conversive (vav-consecutive).
- When it doesn't, it is vav-conjunctive (or conjunctive vav).
  - This is the case for procedural discourse (customary behavior) and isolated pivotal events.
- **Qatal** – usually past perfect, or present perfect tense in dependent clauses; or past tense
- **Weqatal** – past, present, or future tense depending on the genre.

# Overview of Biblical Hebrew

- **Mainline verb forms** move the Biblical Narrative forward.
- **Historical Narrative:**
  - **Wayyiqtol**;
  - **Weqatal** in procedural discourse; or isolated **Weqatal** in pivotal/climatic events
- **Predictive Narrative and Instructional Discourse:**
  - **Weqatal**; or occasional imperative
- **Hortatory Discourse (influence someone's behavior):**
  - **Volitionals** [Jussive (3<sup>rd</sup>), Imperative (2<sup>nd</sup>), Cohortative (1<sup>st</sup>)]
  - **Weqatals** – for Mitigated (less intense) Hortatory Discourse

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- **Off-line verb forms** slow down the movement of the Biblical Narrative. Here's a limited list:
  - **X-qatal** = Shifts focus (subject precedes verb)
  - Relative background information
    - **Qatal** - Past
    - **Yiqtol** - Non-past
- **Dependent (relative) clauses** begin with **אֲשֶׁר**, **אִם**, **כִּי**, etc.
- **Participles** - Gives background activities
- Mainline form of **הִידָה** makes transitions
- **לֹא** negates any verb



# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs


- As you can see, verb forms, not verbal stems (binyanim), have special discourse functions.
- In English, verb tense such as past, present, and future is represented by their own specific verb forms.
- In Hebrew, verb tense is not determined just by verb forms; it is also a function of the genre of the discourse.
- See Rocine for full details on discourse profile schemes.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- In the next presentation we will look at examples of the use of some of the things we have been discussing.

# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- ***Biblical Hebrew A Compact Guide***, Miles Van Pelt, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 2012.
- ***Biblical Hebrew An Introductory Grammar***, Page H. Kelly, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 1992.
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- ***Learning Biblical Hebrew A New Approach Using Discourse Analysis***, B.M. Rocine, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., Macon, Georgia, copyright 2000.



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