18 Introduction to Verbs, Part 1
Verbal System Concepts and Terminology
(Excludes Spelling)
Goal: Understand Parsing Features of Hebrew Verbs

Parsing for a Hebrew verb always specifies the following:

- Root: דָּבָר
- Stem: פיֵל
- Conjugation: פֶּרֶךְ

Parsing includes the following, if present:

- Person, Gender, and Number: 2ms
  - Presence depends upon the conjugation
- Prefixed words (e.g., conjunction עוד, interrogative, …): +1
- Suffixes, if present (pronominal suffix, paragogic ה): +3ms

Spelling & the Verb Stem Chart are in part 2 of the lecture.
Parsing Features of Hebrew Verbs

Parsing for a Hebrew verb always specifies the following:

- Root (דבר)
- Stem (Piel)
- Conjugation (Perfect)

Parsing includes the following, if present:

- Person, Gender, and Number (2ms)
  - Presence depends upon the conjugation
- Prefixed words (e.g., conjunction ַ, interrogative, …) (+1)
- Suffixes, if present (pronominal suffix, paragagic ֶ) (+3ms)
Root & Lexical Form
The ‘root’ of a verb is a set of consonants

- 3 root consonants: $R_1$, $R_2$, $R_3$
- The root carries the lexical meaning (e.g., ‘run’, ‘eat’, ‘be holy’)

Example root:

**דבר** ‘speak’

$R_1 = ד$

$R_2 = ב$

$R_3 = ר$
The Root is Normally the Lexical Form

The root is the lexical form of a verb

- בקש ‘seek’
- דבר ‘speak’

Includes the vowels of the Qal Perfect 3ms if that form occurs in the Bible

- דרכ ‘tread’
- שמר ‘keep’, ‘guard’
Parsing Features of Hebrew Verbs

Parsing for a Hebrew verb always specifies the following

- Root • דבר
- Stem • Piel
- Conjugation • Perfect

Parsing includes the following, if present

- Person, Gender, and Number • 2ms
- Presence depends upon the conjugation • +1
- Prefixed words (e.g., conjunction י, interrogative, ...) • +3ms
- Suffixes, if present (pronominal suffix, paragogic ה) •
Verb Stem
&
Verbs of Doing vs. Verbs of Being
Verb Stem

Verb stem is a pattern of inflecting the verb

- It affects the spelling and pronunciation
- E.g., שׁקד in the Perfect 3ms is שׁקָּד in the Qal and קֵּד in the Piel

Verb Stem indicates the relationship of the subject to the verb

- Voice: Active, Middle, or Passive
- Normal or Causative
  - E.g., דָּרֶךְ is ‘tread’ in the Qal (normal) but ‘cause to tread’ in the Hiphil.

Strong verbs can occur in 7 stems

- Qal, Niphal, Piel, Hitpael, Pual, Hiphil, Hophal
- Other stems are spelling variations used for weak verbs
Two Kinds of Verb Meanings

There are 2 kinds of verb meanings: doing and being

Doing
• Action verb, fientive verb, dynamic verb, process verb
• בקע ‘seek’
• דבר ‘speak’

Being
• Stative meaning
• צדק ‘be righteous’
• קדש ‘be holy’

The meaning of a stem depends upon whether the verb is ‘doing’ or ‘being’
The Meaning of the Verb Stems with Verbs of Doing
Voice and Causation for Verbs of Doing

If no causation

• Active: The subject does an action  ‘she reported’
• Passive: An action is done to the subject  ‘it was reported’
• Middle: The subject does an action that affects itself  ‘she escaped’

If causation

• Active: The subject causes the direct object to do an action
• Passive: The subject is caused to do an action or to have an action done to it
# Meanings of the Stems for Verbs of Doing

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Qal, Piel, and Hiphil are Active-Voice Stems

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The Qal is the Basic Verb Stem

Basic verb stem

- Active voice  
  e.g., ‘she saw’ NOT ‘she was seen’

- Not causative  
  e.g., ‘she saw’ NOT ‘she caused him to see’

- 69% of all verbs in the Bible are Qal

- Its spelling is the most irregular of all stems

The subject does the action

- E.g., לָאֲלֹהֵי אָבִיו דָּרָשׁ  
  ‘He sought the gods of his father’

- E.g., כָּשׁ גָּם־יְהוּדָּעִימ  
  ‘Judah also stumbled with them’
The Piel is Like the Qal for Verbs of Doing

The subject does the action

- E.g., מִי־בִּקֵַּ֥שׁ זֹ֛את מִיֶּדְכֶָּ֖ם ‘Who sought this from your hand?’
- E.g., כֵֽה־דִּבֶַ֥ר אֵּלָ֖י ‘Thus the man spoke to me.’

Verbs of doing usually mean the same in the Qal and Piel

- Some verbs occur in Qal, not Piel e.g., שָׁרַשׁ Qal ‘seek’
- Some verbs occur in Piel, not Qal e.g., בָּקַשׁ Piel ‘seek’
- Some verbs occur in both Qal and Piel e.g., הָפִּיךָ Qal or Piel ‘write’

  - Differences between Qal and Piel depend upon the specific verb of doing
  - 3 or 4 verbs are causative in the Piel e.g., לַמֶּד Qal ‘learn’; Piel ‘teach’
The Hiphil is the Causative of the Qal, if Both Occur

If a verb occurs in both the Qal and the Hiphil

- The subject of the Hiphil causes the object to perform the action of the Qal
  - Qal: ידר בגוalus
  - Hiphil: המלך בנסחך
    - ‘He will walk within our territory’
    - ‘Cause me to walk in your truth’

If a verb does not occur in the Qal

- Translate the Hiphil as if it were a Qal
  - Hiphil: והשמיד יהוה
    - ‘YHWH destroyed him’

For a few verbs, the Qal and Hiphil meanings are the same or unrelated

- קשב ‘listen’ in both Qal and Hiphil (but Qal occurs only once)
The Middle- and Passive-Voice Stems

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The Niphal is Middle Voice or Passive

The Niphal is used when the subject is affected by an action

Middle voice (Qal often does not occur)

- The subject does the action and is affected by its own action
- E.g., נִמְלֵטַּ דָּוִד מִקְעִילָָ֔ה ‘David escaped from Keilah’

Passive voice (Usually for verbs that occur in the Qal)

- The subject is affected by another’s action
- E.g., זֶֶָּ֖֖֖ר עַרְשָּׁ֣יסַנְּ נִכְרֵָּֽת ‘a seed of wicked [ones] is cut off’
Hitpael is Middle Voice

Hitpael indicates that the subject does an action that affects itself
  • Just like middle-voice Niphal verbs

When Niphal vs. Hitpael?
  • If a verb occurs in the Qal not Piel, the middle is usually Niphal
  • If a verb occurs in the Piel not Qal, the middle is usually Hitpael
  • Niphal (418 verbs, 4159x) is more common than Hitpael (169 verbs, 840x)

The middle voice meaning is the same in the Niphal and Hitpael
  • Niphal
    גַּקְרָנָה בֵּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
    Gather together, O sons of Jacob!
  • Hitpael
    גַּקְרָנָה בֵּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
    The sons of Israel gathered together.
Pual and Hophal are Passive Voice

So the subject of a Pual or Hophal verb is affected by another’s action

The Pual is usually the passive of the Piel

- Piel שֵׁלֵךְ יְבֻק ה דָּבָּר
  ‘I am seeking my brothers’
- Pual נָבִךְ שֵׁלֵךְ תָּכְר
  ‘The thing was sought’

The Hophal is usually the passive of the Hiphil

- Qal כָּשְׁלָּה יְרוֹשָׁלִ ָם
  ‘Jerusalem has stumbled’
- Hiphil הִכְשָׁלֶהּ לְתֶַּם ר בִָ֖ים
  ‘You have caused many to stumble’
- Hophal וְיִהְיֵוַּ מֻכְשָּׁלִים
  ‘Let them be caused to stumble’
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The Meaning of the Verb Stems with Verbs of Being
Verbs of Being Describe a State

Also called ‘stative verbs’

The relationship between the subject and the state depends upon the stem

- **Qal**: Describes the subject
  - ‘she is great’

- **Piel, Hiphil**: The subject causes the object to be in a state
  - ‘she made ___ great’

- **Niphal, Hitpael, Hiphil**: The subject causes itself to be in a state
  - ‘she made herself great’

- **Niphal, Pual**: The subject is caused to be in a state
  - ‘she was made to be great’
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Qal Stem for Verbs of Being

The subject is in or enters the state described by a verb of being

- E.g., גָּדַל ‘he is great’ or ‘he became great’
- E.g., צָדְקָה ‘she is righteous’ or ‘she became righteous’

The Qal is the only stem that can express this meaning

Verbs of being in the Qal are like predicate adjectives

- Predicate adjective
  - גָּדַלְתַּא תָֹּ֛ה ‘you are great’
- Qal verb
  - גָּדַל ‘you (are/became) great’
- The Qal verb allows ‘became’, conjugation, person, etc.
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Non-Qal Stems Indicate Causing or Declaring a State

- **Qal**  
  'בָּקְרֵץ הָיוָה'  
  'he is holy'

- **Niphal** (middle/passive)  
  'שָׁאַכֶּל'  
  'I will declare myself/be declared holy'

- **Piel** (active/rarely middle)  
  'וֹיְקַדֶּשַׁא ת'  
  'he made it holy'

- **Hitpael** (middle)  
  'וּשְּקֵדָּשִים'  
  'they made themselves holy'

- **Pual** (passive)  
  'הָּמְקֻדָּשִים'  
  'the ones made holy'

- **Hiphil** (active/middle)  
  'שַׁא תָּמַהְקִדַּי'  
  'he made them holy'

- **No clear occurrences of the Hophal with a verb of being**
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Summary of the Stems

Causative:
- Qal: Never
- Verbs of being: All non-Qal
- Verbs of doing: Hiphil and Hophal (vary rarely Piel)

Voice:
- Qal: Active
- Piel and Hiphil: Active (occasionally middle for verbs of being)
- Niphal: Middle or Passive
- Hitpael: Middle
- Pual and Hophal: Passive
## Meanings of the Stems

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Conjugation
Parsing Features of Hebrew Verbs

Parsing for a Hebrew verb always specifies the following:

- **Root**
- **Stem**: Piel
- **Conjugation**: Perfect

Parsing includes the following, if present:

- **Person, Gender, and Number**: 2ms
  - Presence depends upon the conjugation
- **Prefixed words** (e.g., conjunction ו, interrogative, ...): +1
- **Suffixes, if present** (pronominal suffix, paragogic ר): +3ms
'Modal’ Means Non-Indicative Mood (of Various Sorts)

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Meaning of Conjugations is Context Dependent

Common translational equivalents now. Refine these later.

Finite verb conjugations (have person)
- Perfect: Usually past or present
- Imperfect: Usually future or modal
- Imperative: Usually command
- Prefixed vav can change their meaning

Non-finite verb conjugations (no person)
- Participle: An adjective formed from a verb
- Infinitive construct: A noun formed from a verb, like Greek infinitive
- Infinitive absolute: Bare verb form used for a variety of purposes
Perfect Conjugation

Other names

- Suffix conjugation
- Qatal קָטַל

Usual translations

- Verbs of being → Present: צָדְקָה ‘she is righteous’
- Verbs of doing → Past: קָבָץ ‘he gathered’

always has a suffix that indicates the subject
the paradigm verb קָטַל in Qal Perfect 3ms
Imperfect Conjugation

Other names

- Prefix conjugation always has a prefix that helps indicate the subject
- Yiqtol \( \text{יִקְטָל} \) the paradigm verb \( \text{קטל} \) in Qal Imperfect 3ms

Usual meanings

- Action over time in the past or present \( \text{יִקְבָּץ} \) ‘he gathers’
- Future action \( \text{אֶקְבָּץ} \) ‘I will gather’
- Modal \( \text{וּבִּ֣מִּ֑הַאֲכַ֖פֶּר} \) ‘How can I atone?’
- Command \( \text{וּתְּשִׁמֵּ֣יד} \) ‘you shall destroy’
Perfect and Imperfect with a Prefixed Vav

Perfect with a vav

- Perfect vav consecutive
- Weqatal בַּכִּסֵּל

the paradigm verb כִּסֵּל in this form

Imperfect with a vav takes two forms

- Imperfect vav consecutive, wayyiqtol בַּכִּסֵּל
- Imperfect + vav, weyiqtol בַּכִּסֵּל

Meaning:

- Continues time, aspect, and mood of preceding verb
- OR purpose/result of preceding verb
  (not wayyiqdol)
Imperative

Imperative is a 2nd-person command

• 'write this!' אָֽתָה 'ךְָֽתֵב

• 'make yourselves holy!' רֵעֲֽךָֽיָּו 'וֹרֵוָֽהָֽאָשְׁנֵי

With prefixed vav, it may be a purpose as well as a command

• 'How can I atone so that you will bless?' אֶֽתְַֽבֵּלַךְ 'וֹֽבָֽכָלִֽךְ

  • The imperative + vav is used for purpose because there is a sense of command in the purpose.
A Participle is an Adjective Made from a Verb

Attributive

כָּל־הַָּמְבָּקָים הַמְבָּקֶדֶשְׁשָׁם אֵת הָּךְ בָּשׁוֹק

‘all of the men who are seeking your life’

Predicate

אֶּת־אָֽחַי אָנ כִִ֣יַ מְבָּקֶשׁ

‘I am seeking my brothers’

Substantive – The one who does the action of the verb

וְהַמְבָּקָים אֶל־אַדְנָ֣י רָּעֵָּֽה׃

‘And the ones who are seeking calamity for my lord’
An Infinitive Construct is a Noun Made from a Verb

An infinitive construct is a noun that refers to the action

• Infinitive: לַבְּשִׁים אֶת־יְהוָה ‘to seek YHWH’

• Participle is for a person: בְּחַמְפֵי שֶׁמֶךָ ‘and the ones who seek’

Infinitive construct acts like a noun

• Construct chain: וְבָּעֵת קָבָּעֹת אֶתְכִֶּ֑ם ‘in the time of my gathering you’

• Object of preposition: לַבְּשִׁים אֶת־יְהוָה ‘to seek YHWH’

• Subject of clause: שְׁמֵעַ מִזְבַּח טוֹב ‘to obey is better than sacrifice’
An Infinitive Absolute is a Bare Verb with Multiple Purposes

The name is misleading

• It is not the absolute form of the infinitive construct
• It is not like an infinitive in other languages

It is a bare verb form

• One form per verb stem (e.g., Qal, Hiphil)
• No other inflection (no person, number, gender, …)

It has a variety of uses

• Used with another verb of the same root to underscore certainty or lack of it
• Used with the same meaning as the preceding verb.
  Didn’t bother to conjugate the verb.
Person, Gender, and Number
Goal: Understand Parsing Features of Hebrew Verbs

Parsing for a Hebrew verb always specifies the following:

- **Root**
- **Stem**
- **Conjugation**

Parsing includes the following, if present:

- **Person, Gender, and Number**
  - Presence depends upon the conjugation
- **Prefixed words** (e.g., conjunction ו, interrogative, …)
- **Suffixes, if present** (pronominal suffix, paragogic ה)

Spelling & the Verb Stem Chart are in part 2 of the lecture.
Finite Verbs have ‘Person’

Person in verbs is like in pronouns
- 1\textsuperscript{st} person: the speaker
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} person: the one spoken to
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} person: everyone else

Finite verbs indicate the person of the subject
- Perfect and Imperfect
- Imperative is always 2\textsuperscript{nd} person
- Therefore, an explicit subject is often unnecessary for finite verbs

Non-finite verbs do not have person
- Participle, infinitive construct, infinitive absolute
All Verbs (Except Infinitives) Have Gender & Number

Gender and number for verbs are just like for adjectives

- Masculine or feminine
  - Common gender means same form for masculine and feminine
- Singular or plural (no dual)

Finite verbs indicate the gender and number of the subject

- Perfect, Imperfect, Imperative
- Therefore, an explicit subject is often unnecessary for finite verbs

Participles indicate the gender and number of the noun they modify or replace

- Just like adjectives

Infinitives do not have gender and number