

Biblical Hebrew Verbs

A Simplified Introduction

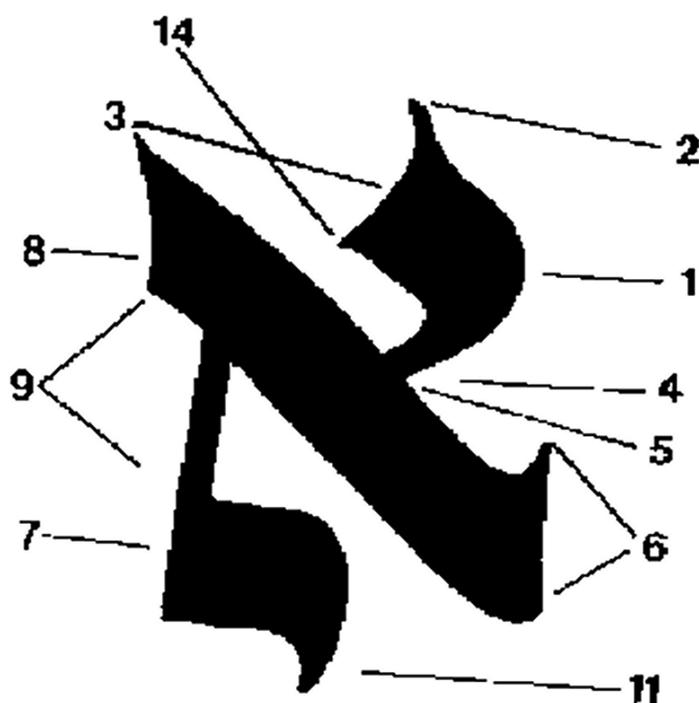




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Simple Present Tense

1. Active Participles: XXִיX

	fem	masc
singular	ת+XXִיX	XXִיX
plural	וֹת+XXִיX	יִם+XXִיX

Description

Present tense participles are indicated by the opening cholem vowel sound. As a verb they express action in the present, though they can also function as adjectives. They are inflected according to gender and number.

Examples:

- קוֹל קוֹרֵא בַּמִּדְבָּר - A voice calls out in the wilderness (Isa. 40:3)
- שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל - the Guardian of Israel (Psalm 121:4)
- מִגֵּן הוּא לְחֹסִים בּוֹ - “He is a shield for those trusting in him” (Prov. 30:5)
- כִּי־הַשְּׂבִיעַ נַפְשׁ שִׁקְקָה - “For he satisfies the hungry soul” (Psalm 107:9)
- הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלְדֵת בֵּן - “Behold, the maiden conceives and bears a son” (Isa. 7:14)

2. Passive Participles: XִיXX

	fem	masc
singular	ה+XִיXX	XִיXX
plural	וֹת+XִיXX	יִם+XִיXX

Description

Passive participles are indicated by the shireq vowel following the second letter of the root. As a verb they express passive voice in the present, though they can also function as adjectives. They are inflected according to gender and number.

Examples:

- כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת הַכְּתוּבִים בְּסֵפֶר הַזֶּה - “All the words of this law are written in this book” (Deut. 28:58)
- בְּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה - “Blessed is the one coming in the name of the LORD” (Psalm 118:26)
- כִּי־אָדָם לְעָמָל יוֹלָד - “For man is born to trouble” (Job 5:7)



Simple Past Tense

1. Perfect Verbs: XXX + sfx

	fem	masc	
"	תי+XXX	אני	
ת+XXX	ת+XXX	אתה / את	
ה+XXX	XXX	הוא / היא	
"	נו+XXX	אנחנו	
תן+XXX	תם+XXX	אתם / אתן	
"	ו+XXX	הם / הן	

Description

The simple past tense is called “qal” (light) because it is the easiest to learn. The Qal is also called the “perfect” conjugation because it often expresses completed action. Inflections of the Qal are formed by adding suffixes to the verbal root which indicate pronominal function.

2. Weak and Strong Verbs

A verb root that contains the letters ו, ג, ה (or the guttural letters ע, ח, א) are called “weak verbs.” A strong verb does not contain any “weak letters” in its three-consonant root.

Strong Verb Examples:

- כִּי־שָׁמַרְתִּי דְרָכֵי יְהוָה - “For I have kept the ways of the LORD” (Psalm 18:21)
- אֵיךְ כָּתַבְתָּ אֶת־כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה - “How did you write all these words?” (Jer. 36:17)

Weak Verb Examples:

- אֶת־קַשְׁתִּי נָתַתִּי בַעֲנָן - “I give my rainbow in the cloud” (Gen. 9:13)
נתתי - “I give.” Adding תי to the root נתנ causes the weak letter נ to drop off before the suffix: נתנ+תי
- עָשִׂיתִי מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶק - “I have done justice and righteousness” (Psalm 119:121)
עשיתי - “I do, make.” Adding תי to the root עשה causes the weak letter ה to change to י before the suffix: עשה+תי



Simple Future Tense

1. Imperfect Verbs: XXX + pfx

	fem	masc	
"		XXX+א	אני
'+XXX+ת		XXX+ת	אתה / את
XXX+ת		XXX+י	הוא / היא
"		XXX+נ	אנחנו
נָה+XXX+ת		י+XXX+ת	אתם / אתן
נָה+XXX+ת		י+XXX+י	הם / הן

Description

The future or “imperfect” conjugation is used to express incomplete action, usually in the present or in the future. Inflections are made by adding both prefixes and suffixes to the verb to indicate gender, person and number. Note that the first person forms for both genders (1cs) and plural (1cp) are the same. Note also that the second person forms both use (ת), and the third person uses (י), except in the case of the feminine form which is the same as the second person feminine form

Strong Verb Examples:

- אֶתְחַקֵּךְ אֲשַׁמֵּר - “I will keep your statutes.” (Psalm 119:8)
- יִזְכְּרוּ וְיָשׁוּבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה - “They will remember and return to the LORD” (Psalm 22:27)

Weak Verb Examples:

- אֶמַר לַיהוָה מַחְסֵי - “I will say to the LORD: you are my refuge” (Gen. 9:13)
אֶמַר - “I will say.” Adding א to the root אָמַר causes the guttural letter א to drop off before the prefix: אָמַר + א. Note that a vowel change also occurs.
- יִרְאוּ רַבִּים וַיִּירָאוּ - “Many will see and fear” (Psalm 40:3)
יִרְאוּ - “They will see.” Appending ו to the root רָאָה causes the letter ה to drop off before the suffix: י + רָאָה + ו



Simple Imperative Moods

1. Imperatives (Commands)

In general, the Qal imperative expresses a command directed to another. It is formed by removing the prefixes from the second person ("you") Qal imperfect forms:

Drop ~~-ה~~ prefix from second person imperfect forms:

	<i>Imperfect</i>	→	<i>Imperative</i>	<i>Example</i>
2ms	□□□ ה		□□□	שָׁמֹר - watch, guard!
2fs	י□□□ ה		י□□□	שְׁמַעִי - hear, listen!
2mpl	ו□□□ ה		ו□□□	שָׁמְרוּ - watch, be careful!
2fpl	נָה□□□ ה		נָה□□□	שְׁמַרְנָה - watch, be careful!

Grammatical Notes:

- The letter Hey (ה-) *may* be added as a suffix to the 2m singular form (e.g., שָׁמְרָה).
- The particle נָא (which means "please") may follow an imperative (e.g., נָא שָׁמֹר).

Examples:

- אֲשַׁמְרָה דְרָכַי מִחַטּוֹא בְלִשׁוֹנִי - "I will guard my ways from sin with my tongue" (Psalm 39:1)



2. First Person Imperatives (Cohortatives)

The imperative mood in the *first* person is called the “cohortative” (“let us go”). It is formed by adding the suffix הִ to the first person imperfect forms:

Add הִ- suffix to first person imperfect forms:

	Imperfect	→	Imperative	Example
1cs	□□□אֲ	→	הִ+□□□אֲ	אֲשַׁמְרֶה - watch, guard!
1cpl	□□□נִ	→	הִ+□□□	נִשְׁמְרֶה - watch, be careful!

Examples:

- אֲשַׁמְרֶה דְרָכַי מִחַטּוֹא בְלִשׁוֹנִי - “I will guard my ways from sin with my tongue” (Psalm 39:1)
- לָכוּ וְנִלְכְּהָ בְּאוֹר יְהוָה - “Come and let us walk in the light of the LORD! (Isa. 2:5)
- נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בּוֹ - “Let us rejoice and let us be glad in Him!” (Psalm 118:24)

3. Third Person Imperatives (Jussives)

The imperative in the the *third* person is called the “jussive” (“may he prosper!”). It often functions as an indirect command translated with the helping verb “may” or “let,” depending on the context (“May he do this!”).

It is often difficult to distinguish “jussive” verb forms from imperfect verb forms, though in weak verbs ending in Hey (ה) the Hey drops off. Generally in negative commands, the jussive *follows* the particle אֵל (“not”) while the imperfect usually follows לֹא (“no”).

Examples:

- בְּסִדְרָם אֵל-תִּבְא נַפְשִׁי - “In their council let not enter my soul” (Gen. 49:6)
- וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר - “And God said, ‘Let there be light!’” (Gen. 1:3)
- יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ - May the king live” (1 Sam. 10:24)



Simple Infinitives

1. Infinitive Constructs

2. Infinitive Absolutes

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The Reversing Vav

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Piel Verbs

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