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-consonant 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 (ך, כ, מ, נ, 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 (ח, ט, ו, ר) and they change predictably throughout the paradigm.
Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

- Examples of Strong and Weak Verbs

- פָּקַד
  - III II I
  - 1st – Heh
  - GO, WALK

- גְָאַל
  - III II I
  - 2nd – Guttural
  - REDEEM

- בָּאַל
  - III II I
  - Strong
  - VISIT

- נָשֲׁלָה
  - III II I
  - 3rd – 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binyan (Stem)</th>
<th>3ms Perfect</th>
<th>Note:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qal</td>
<td>קָטַל קָטֵל</td>
<td>Qamets under 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niphal</td>
<td>בֹּקֵל בֹּקֵל</td>
<td>Prefixed בֹּקֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel</td>
<td>מְטַל מְטַל</td>
<td>Dagesh in 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; strong root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pual</td>
<td>מַטְל מַטְל</td>
<td>Kibbuts under 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitpael</td>
<td>הַתִּפְּטַל הַתִּפְּטַל</td>
<td>Prefixed הַתִּפְּטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiphil</td>
<td>הַפִּטַל הַפִּטַל</td>
<td>Prefixed הַפִּטַל ; הַפִּטַל in 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophal</td>
<td>הָפַל הָפַל</td>
<td>Prefixed הָפַל (qamets hatuph)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ָקָטַל is our paradigm verb meaning *To kill*. It is also called the **perfect** verb form.
# Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binyan (Stem)</th>
<th>3ms Imperfect</th>
<th>Note:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qal</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niphal</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td>ה assimilated as dagesh in 2nd root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td>Dagesh in 2nd strong root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pual</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td>Kibbuts under 1st root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitpael</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td>Only ה remains from the יָכֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiphil</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td>Prefixed ה gone; ה between 2nd and 3rd root letter in all forms but 2fp &amp; 3fp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophal</td>
<td>יָכֵל</td>
<td>Prefixed ה (qamets hatuph)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

כָּל 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-consonant 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-consonant roots.
Introduction to Hebrew Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>3rd Person, Masc. Sing. Perfect</th>
<th>3rd Person, Masc. Sing. Imperfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qal</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
<td>יְִקָטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niphal</td>
<td>נְִקַל</td>
<td>יְַנְִקַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel</td>
<td>קִטֵל</td>
<td>יְַקִּטֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pual</td>
<td>קֻּטֵל</td>
<td>יְַקֻּטֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitpael</td>
<td>הִתְַקָטֵל</td>
<td>יְַהִתְַקָטֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiphil</td>
<td>הִקִּטֶל</td>
<td>יְַהִקִּטֶל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophal</td>
<td>הָקַל</td>
<td>יְָהָקַל</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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 darkness Night.
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 3rd 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 (כָּתַל) or suffix conjugation]
  - Imperfect [also known as yiqtol (יִקְּסֵתָל) 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qal Perfect (Qatal)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
<td>ka-tal</td>
<td>3cp</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>קָטַּל</td>
<td>ka-te-la</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
<td>ka-tal-ta</td>
<td>2mp</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
<td>ka-talt</td>
<td>2fp</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
<td>ka-tal-tee</td>
<td>1cp</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

\[ M = \text{memorize this chart} \]
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.
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>3ms</th>
<th>3mp</th>
<th>3fs</th>
<th>3fp</th>
<th>2ms</th>
<th>2mp</th>
<th>2fs</th>
<th>2fp</th>
<th>1cs</th>
<th>1cp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>יְִ קְטֹל</td>
<td>yik-tol</td>
<td>yik-te-loo</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td>Tik-tole-nah</td>
<td>Tik-tole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td>Ek-tole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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).
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 וְיִקְטֹל). 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.
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 (3rd), Imperative (2nd), Cohortative (1st)]
  - Weqatal – 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
  - Participles - Gives background activities
  - Mainline form of היה makes transitions
  - ל negates any verb

Dependent (relative) clauses begin with בִּ, אִ, כִּי, etc.
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.
Overview of Biblical Hebrew

- **Learn Biblical Hebrew, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition, with Audio CD-Rom**, John H. Dobson, Piquant Editions, Ltd., Carlisle, CA3 9GR, United Kingdom.