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, ל, 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 (ש, ח, ט, 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
  - 1st – Heh
  - GO, WALK

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

- נָשַׁלָּה
  - 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</td>
<td>Qamets under 1(^{st}) root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niphal</td>
<td>בֶּנֶפֶעַל</td>
<td>Prefixed ב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel</td>
<td>מַפְעַל</td>
<td>Dagesh in 2(^{nd}) strong root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pual</td>
<td>מַפְעַל</td>
<td>Kibbuts under 1(^{st}) root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitpael</td>
<td>חִתְפַעַל</td>
<td>Prefixed חִתְפ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiphil</td>
<td>הִפְעַל</td>
<td>Prefixed הִפְעַל ;י in 3(^{rd}) person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophal</td>
<td>רִפְעַל</td>
<td>Prefixed רִפְעַל (qamets hatuph)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 karşı 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 קָל</td>
<td>יְִקַטֵל</td>
<td>assimilated as dagesh in 2(^{nd}) root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niphal נִפּ עַל</td>
<td>יְִקַטּ el</td>
<td>Dagesh in 2(^{nd}) strong root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel פִעֵל</td>
<td>יְִקַטֵל</td>
<td>Kibbuts under 1(^{st}) root letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pual פֻּעַל</td>
<td>יְִקַטּ el</td>
<td>Only י remains from the הִפּ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitpael הִת פַעֵל</td>
<td>יַרְכַּבַּל</td>
<td>Prefixed הִgone; ה between 2(^{nd}) and 3(^{rd}) root letter in all forms but 2fp &amp; 3fp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiphil הִפ עִל</td>
<td>יַרְכַּבַּל</td>
<td>Prefixed הִgone (qamets hatuph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophal הָפ עַל</td>
<td>יָרְכַּבַּל</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- Different verbal stems \([\text{binyan (sg)} \text{ or } \text{binyanim (pl)}]\) 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

<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>יְִ קָטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niphal</td>
<td>נְִ קָטֵל</td>
<td>יְִ קָטֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel</td>
<td>קִטֵל</td>
<td>יְַ קִטֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pual</td>
<td>קֻּטַל</td>
<td>יְַ קֻּטַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitpael</td>
<td>הִתָּ קַטֵל</td>
<td>יְַ הִתָּ קַטֵל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiphil</td>
<td>הִropheַל</td>
<td>יְַ הִropheַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hophal</td>
<td>הָropheַל</td>
<td>יְַ הָropheַל</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 (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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>קָטַל</td>
<td>ka-tal</td>
<td>3cp</td>
<td>קָבַל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>קָטָלָה</td>
<td>ka-te-la</td>
<td></td>
<td>קָבָלָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>קָטַלְתָה</td>
<td>ka-tal-ta</td>
<td>2mp</td>
<td>קָבָלַת</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>קָטָלָה</td>
<td>ka-talt</td>
<td>2fp</td>
<td>קָבָלָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs</td>
<td>קָטֹלַה</td>
<td>ka-tal-tee</td>
<td>1cp</td>
<td>קָבֹל</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 = 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3ms</th>
<th>3mp</th>
<th>2ms</th>
<th>2mp</th>
<th>1cs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>יְִק טֹל</td>
<td>יְִק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>יְִק טֹל</td>
<td>יְִק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>יְִק טֶלַּו</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>תִּק טָל</td>
<td>תִּק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>תִּק טָל</td>
<td>תִּק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>תִּק טֶלַּו</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>תִּק טָל</td>
<td>תִּק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>תִּק טָל</td>
<td>תִּק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>תִּק טֶלַּו</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs</td>
<td>אֶק טֹל</td>
<td>אֶק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>אֶק טֹל</td>
<td>אֶק טֶלַּו</td>
<td>אֶק טֶלַּו</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).
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 עַיֵּקֶתֹל). 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 (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
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
