

# Introduction to the Verb Stems

The Hebrew verbs also have **stems**, which tell you how the verb is being used in the verse.

In the grammar books, there are seven stems.

Note that two of the stems are in parentheses. This is because they are actually subsets of the

קל /Qal, or simple active, stem.

1. simple active: a noun does a **simple action**
2. simple passive: **something is done** to a noun
- (3. intensive active: subset of simple active: a noun does a **simple action intensively!**)
- (4. intensive passive: subset of simple active: **something is done intensively!** to a noun)
5. active causative: a noun **causes an action**
6. passive causative: something is **caused to be done** to a noun
7. reflexive: a noun **does something to itself**

These are the **patterns** for the seven stems. Notice that #1,3 and 4 have the same simple letter pattern; this is because they are all related.

#2, #5, #6, and #7 all have different patterns, with different letters added.

**By convention**, in grammar books (as in our workbook, Hinnah by Rahel Halabe) the **stems** are referred to by

the three-letter Hebrew word for ‘action’ פעל, where the פ is the first letter (1) of the verb, the ע is the second letter (2) of the verb, and the ל is the third letter (3) of the verb פ-ע-ל (see below).

Here are the seven Hebrew verb stems, and their English abbreviations as found in the Lexicon:

1. פִּעֵל/קַל Qal (simple/active)
2. נִפְעַל Niph. (simple/passive)
3. פִּעֵל Pi. (intensive!/active)
4. פִּעֵל Pu. (intensive!/passive, done to someone or something else)
5. הִפְעִיל Hiph. (active/causative)
6. הִפְעִיל Hoph. (passive/causative)
7. הִתְפַּעֵל Hithp. (passive/reflexive)

Here are three examples of Hebrew verbs שמר (guard), פקד (number), and ילד (beget), that are found in each of the seven stems in actual Bible verses (most Hebrew verbs can only be used in a few of the stems):

Ex: ש-1 מ-2 ר-3 שמר (guard)

1. שמר Qal (simple/active) he-(actively) guarded
2. נשמר Niph. (simple/passive) he-was-(passively) guarded
3. שמר Pi. (intensive!/active) he-guarded-intensively!
4. שמר Pu. (intensive!/passive, done to someone or something else) he-was-guarded-intensively!
5. השמיר Hiph. (active/causative) he-caused-to-guard (someone or something)
6. הושמר Hoph. (passive/causative) he-was-caused-to-be-guarded (by someone or something)
7. התשמר Hithp. (passive/reflexive) he-guarded-himself

Ex: פ-1 ק-2 ד-3 פקד (number)

1. פקד Qal (simple/active) he-(actively)-numbered
2. נפקד Niph. (simple/passive) he-was-(passively)-numbered
3. פקד Pi. (intensive!/active) he-numbered-intensively!
4. פקד Pu. (intensive!/passive, done to someone or something else) he-was-numbered-intensively!
5. הפקיד Hiph. (active/causative) he-caused-to-number (someone or something)
6. הופקד Hoph. (passive/causative) he-was-caused-to-be-numbered (by someone or something)
7. התפקד Hithp. (passive/reflexive) he-numbered-himself

Ex: י-1 ל-2 ד-3 ילד (beget)

1. ילד Qal (simple/active) he-begat
2. נולד Niph. (simple/passive) he-was-begotten
3. לדה Pi. (intensive!/active) she-begat-intensively!
4. ילד Pu. (intensive!/passive, done to someone or something else) he-was-begotten-intensively!
5. הליד Hiph. (active/causative) he-caused-to-beget (someone or something)
6. הולד Hoph. (passive/causative) he-was-caused-to-be-begotten (by someone or something)
7. התילד Hithp. (passive/reflexive) he-declared-his-own-begettings

**Here is a useful way to figure out which stem the verbs are in.**

1. Assign the numbers (3 2 1) to three-letter lexicon root of the verb you are working with:

The פ, or first letter of the verb, is '1',

the ע, or second letter of the verb, is '2',

the ל, or third letter of the verb, is '3.'

2. Remove any letters not seen in the verb stem patterns.

3. Remove any other markings (vowels and dageysh, etc.)

4. See which pattern the verb looks most like

(Note: most verbs are קל /Qal: simple active).

The stems will look like this:

1. 3 2 1 (qal/simple active) **Qal**

2. 3 2 1 נ (niphal/simple passive) **Niph.**

3. 3 2 1 (piel/active) **Pi.**

4. 3 2 1 (pual/passive) **Pu.**

5. 3 ' 2 1 ה (hiph'ihl/actively-causing-the-action) **Hiph.**

6. 3 2 1 ה(ו) (huph'ahl/hoph'ahl/passively-being-caused-to-do-the-action) **Huph./Hoph.**

7. 3 2 1 הַת (hith'pa'eyl/reflexive/action-on-self) **Hithp.**

Ex: שמר

1. 3 2 1 שמר (qal/simple active) **Qal**

2. 3 2 1 נ שמר (niphal/simple passive) **Niph.**

3. 3 2 1 שמר (piel/active) **Pi.**

4. 3 2 1 שמר (pual/passive) **Pu.**

5. 3 ' 2 1 ה שמר (hiph'ihl/actively-causing-the-action) **Hiph.**

6. 3 2 1 ה(ו) שמר (huph'ahl/hoph'ahl/passively-being-caused-to-do-the-action) **Huph./Hoph.**

7. 3 2 1 הַת שמר (hith'pa'eyl/reflexive/action-on-self) **Hithp.**

*Note:* these are the most common and simple patterns of the stems; there are other patterns that can make the word look somewhat different (taught in really advanced grammar classes).

*Note:* not all verbs will be used with their three-letter lexicon root. Some will use only their two-letter foundational root, or even with added letters. But the numbering according to the lexicon root of the letters remains the same.

Remember that all verb roots, by convention, are listed in the lexicon with three letters. But some verbs have just two foundational roots.

Many roots are foundationally made up of three root letters; they can't be reduced:

שָׁמַר (shamar) (guard)

פָּקַד (faqad) (number)

יָלַד (yalad) (beget)

אָכַל (achal) consume

דָּבַר (dabar) speak

זָכַר (zachar) remember

Many roots are foundationally made up of two root letters, but with certain added letters in the lexicon root,

either as a prefix (before the root), infix (inside the root) or suffix (after the root): ה, ו, י, ל, נ

**Here are some examples of verbs that are foundationally two letters, with their three-letter lexicon roots:**

ה

הָלַךְ (halach) go

הָיָה (hayah) be

חָיָה (chayah) live

כָּלָה (chalah) complete, finish

ו

גָּוַר (gur) sojourn

בָּאוּ (bo) come, bring

מוֹת (muth) die

י

יָדַע (yadah) know

יָלַד (yalad) beget

יָצָא (yatza) go-forth

ל

לקח קח (laqach) take

נ

נסע סע (nasah) set-out/journey

נפל פל (nafal) fall

נשא שא (nasa) lift

Here are some examples of the verb stems from the Torah:

Ex:

1. **פָּעַל/קַל** Qal (simple/active)

Genesis 37:11: Joseph after telling his father Jacob about his dream:

וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בּוֹ, אָחָיו; וַאֲבִיו, שָׁמַר אֶת-הַדְּבָר  
the-word (d/o) **he-guarded** and-his-father his-brothers in-him and-they-are-jealous

Genesis 21:1: God keeping His promise to Sarah regarding Yitzchaq:

וַיִּהְיֶה פָקֵד אֶת-שָׂרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר; וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר  
He-spoke as-which to-Sarah YHVH and-He-does He-conveyed as-which Sarah (d/o) **He-reckoned** and-YHVH

Genesis 4:1: Chavah on begetting Cain:

וְהָאָדָם, יָדַע אֶת-חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ; וַתַּהַר, וַתֵּלֶד אֶת-קַיִן, וַתֹּאמֶר, קָנִיתִי אִישׁ  
man I-acquired and-she-conveys Qayin (d/o) **and-she-begets** and-she-gets-pregnant his-wife Chavah (d/o) he-knew and-the-human  
אֶת-יְהוָה  
YHVH with

2. **נִפְעַל** Niph. (simple/passive)

Deuteronomy 4:15: Moses exhorting the Israelites at Horeb (Mount Sinai):

וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד, לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם: כִּי לֹא רָאִיתֶם, כָּל-תְּמוּנָה, בְּיוֹם דִּבֶּר  
He-spoke in-day likeness all you-all-saw no for to-you-all's-souls very **and-you-all-are-guarded**  
יְהוָה אֱלֵיכֶם בְּחֹרֵב, מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ  
the-fire from-midst in-Horeb towards-you-all YHVH

Numbers 31:49: the Israelites reporting to Moses after the successful battle against the Midianites:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, עֲבַדְיָךְ נָשְׂאוּ אֶת-רֹאשׁ אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה, אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדֵנוּ  
in-our-hand which the-war men-of head (d/o) they-lifted your-workers Moses toward and-they-convey

וְלֹא-נִפְקַד מִמִּנּוֹ, אִישׁ  
man from-his-kind **was-numbered** and-no

Genesis 21:3:

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-שְׁם-בְנוֹ הַנּוֹלֵד-לוֹ, אִשְׁרָיִלָהּ-לוֹ שָׂרָה--יִצְחָק  
Yitzchaq Sarah to-him she-begot which to-him **the-one-being-begotten** his-son name (d/o) Avraham and-he-calls

### 3. פִּעֵל **Pi.** (intensive!/active)

Genesis 38:28: Tamar, daughter-in-law to Judah, giving birth to twins, in hard labor:

וַיְהִי בְלִדְתָּהּ, וַיִּתֶּן-יָד; וַתִּקַּח הַמִּיֻּלֶּדֶת, וַתִּקְשֹׁר עַל-יָדוֹ שְׁנֵי לֵאמֹר, זֶה  
this to-convey (two-ply)yarn his-hand upon and-she-tie the-midwife and-she-take hand and-he-give **in-her-hard-begetting** and-it-is  
יָצָא רִאשׁוֹנָה  
first he-came-forth

Deuteronomy 4:15: Moses exhorting the Israelites at Horeb (Mount Sinai):

וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד, לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם: כִּי לֹא רִאִיתֶם, כָּל-תְּמוּנָהּ, בְּיוֹם דְּבַר  
**He-spoke** in-day likeness all you-all-saw no for to-you-all's-souls very and-you-all-are-guarded  
יְהוָה אֱלֵיכֶם בְּחֹרֵב, מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ  
the-fire from-midst in-Horeb towards-you-all YHWH

### 4. פִּעֵל **Pu.** (intensive!/passive, done to someone or something else)

Exodus 38:21: Moses appraising the work after the completion of the Mishkan:

אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדֻת, אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד עַל-פִּי מֹשֶׁה: עֲבֹדֹת  
work-of Moses mouth-of upon **is-numbered** which the-witnessing dwelling-place the-dwelling-place numberings-of these  
הַלְוִיִּם, בְּיַד אִיתָמָר, בֶּן-אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן  
the-cohen Aaron son-of Itamar in-hand the-Levites

Genesis 4:26: the progeny of Seth before the flood:

וַלְיֵשֶׁת גַּם-הוּא יָלַד-בֶּן, וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ אֶנוֹשׁ; אַזְ הוּסַל, לִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם  
in-Name to-call is-caused-to-shift thus Enosh his-name (d/o) and-he-calls son **is-begotten** he. also and-to-Seth  
יְהוָה  
YHWH

### 5. הִפְעִיל **Hiph.** (active/causative)

Genesis 39:5: Joseph in the household of Potifar, officer of the butchers:

וַיְהִי מֵאֵז הַפְּקִיד אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ, וַעֲלֵ כָל-אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ-לוֹ, וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת-בֵּית  
house (d/o) YHWH and-He-blesses to-him there-is which all and-upon in-his-house him **he-caused-to-number** from-thus and-it-be

הַמִּצְרִי, בְּגִלְלַל יוֹסֵף; וַיְהִי בִּרְפֹת יְהוָה, בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ-לוֹ--בְּבֵית, וּבְשָׂדֶה  
and-in-field in-house to-him there-is which in-all YHVH blessed-of and-it-be Joseph in-rolling-with the-Egyptian

Genesis 5:4: begettings of Seth:

וַיְהִיו יָמֵי-אָדָם, אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-שֵׁת, שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת, שָׁנָה; וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים  
sons and-he-begets year hundred eight Seth (d/o) **they-caused-begetting** after human days-of and-they-be  
וּבָנוֹת  
and-daughters

6. הִפְעֵל **Hoph.** (passive/causative)

Leviticus 5:23: YHVH conveying the laws to Moses:

וְהָיָה, כִּי-יִחָטֵא וְאָשָׁם--וְהָשִׁיב אֶת-הַגְזֹלָה אֲשֶׁר גָּזַל אוֹ אֶת-הָעֹשֶׁק אֲשֶׁר  
which the-oppressed (d/o) or he-swindled which the-swindled-thing (d/o) and-he-cause-to-return and-he-shames he-will-err for and-he-is  
עָשָׂק, אוֹ אֶת-הַפְקָדוֹן אֲשֶׁר הִפְקִיד אֹתוֹ; אוֹ אֶת-הָאֲבֵדָה, אֲשֶׁר מָצָא  
he-found which the-lost-thing (d/o) or with-him **is-caused-to-be-numbered** which the-numbered-thing (d/o) or he-oppressed

Genesis 40:20: Pharaoh's birthday in the time of Joseph:

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, יוֹם הַלֵּדָת אֶת-פַּרְעֹה, וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה, לְכָל-עֲבָדָיו  
his-workers to-all drinking-feast and-he-makes Pharaoh (d/o) **caused-to-be-begotten-of** day the-third in-day and-it-be  
וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת-רֹאשׁ שָׂר הַמִּשְׁקִים, וְאֶת-רֹאשׁ שָׂר הָאֹפִים--בְּתוֹךְ עֲבָדָיו  
his-workers in-midst the-ovens officer head and(d/o) the-drink-givers officer head (d/o) and-he-lifts

7. הִתְפַּעֵל **Hithp.** (reflexive)

Numbers 1:47: YHVH's census in the wilderness, excluding the Levites from the general census:

וְהַלְוִיִּם, לְמִטָּה אֲבֹתָם--לֹא הִתְפַּקְדּוּ, בְּתוֹכָם  
in-midst-of-them **they-numbered-themselves** no their-fathers to-tribe and-the-Levites

Numbers 1:18: Moses takes a census of the Israelites for God:

וְאֵת כָּל-הָעֵדָה הַקֹּהִילוֹ, בְּאַחַד לַחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁנִי, וַיִּתְּלְדוּ עַל-מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם, לְבֵית  
to-house their-families upon **and-they-declared-their-begetting** the-second to-month in-one they-caused-to-assemble the-witness all. and(d/o)  
אֲבֹתָם: בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת, מִבֶּן עָשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וְמוֹעֵלָה--לְגִלְגֻּלָּתָם  
to-their-rollings and-upward year twenty from-age names in-account their-fathers