26.1 Intro to Hebrew Stems/Binyanim

In Biblical Hebrew (BH), the core of the verb is the triradical root (the three consonants in a particular sequence that contribute lexical information). As well, BH has 7 major “stems” or “binyanim” in the verbal systems—patterns of formation that relate the way the Subject participates in the action of the verb (active, passive, reflexive, causative, etc.—we discuss all these in lessons 26-31).

We have learned the Qal stem already—it’s the most basic stem. The other stems are often described as the “derived stems” because BH modifies the basic stem with special affixes (and vowel points) in order to derive the other 6 stems. Within each stem the verb uses inflectional affixes to indicate the conjugation pattern (pft, impf, juss, impv, etc.). In the past, the 3ms perfect of בָּעַל (‘to do, make’) in the different derived stems has been used among grammarians as a pattern to illustrate the derived stems.

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<tr>
<th>Qal</th>
<th>Piel</th>
<th>Hiphil</th>
<th>Niphal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>פָּעַל</td>
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<td>הִפְעִיל</td>
<td>נִפְעַל</td>
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<td>הָפְעַל</td>
<td>הִתְפַּעֵל</td>
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26.2 Forms/principal parts of the Niphal

The Niphal stem (Ross Lesson 26) is often described as the “passive” stem that makes the verb’s Qal-stem meaning passive (although that is only one of the possible semantic nuances of using this stem, see below). The Niphal stem’s formation pattern is characterized by a Niphal stem prefix nun (-ן). For our paradigm verb נָפַד, the Niphal means ‘to be visited/appointed’.
Below, let's fill in the vowel-pointing for the Niphal stem, based on the principal parts we see above. (Notice that I've taken the inflectional affixes/boxes handout that you've been using for the Qal stem and applied them to each conjugation pattern for the Niphal stem—the inflections marking the subject are all the same, no matter the stem! Great news, eh?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Niphal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pft 3ms</td>
<td>נפקד</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impf 3ms</td>
<td>יפקד</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wci(wayyiqtol) 3ms</td>
<td>יפקד</td>
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<td>Juss 3ms</td>
<td>יפקד</td>
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<td>Coh 1cs</td>
<td>אפקדה</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impv 2ms</td>
<td>תפקוד</td>
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<td>Ptc ms</td>
<td>נפקד</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infc</td>
<td>פקד</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infa</td>
<td>פקד/פוקד</td>
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<table>
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<th>2fp</th>
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________ **Imperfect**

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Infinitive: construct נפקד, +3ms sfx נפוקד absolute נפוקד

26.3 Translation/Semantics of the Niphal

1. Most common: Niphal makes the Qal meaning passive.

John ate rice. Rice was eaten.
Qal Ni.

2. Reflexive/Reciprocal use.

מכר Qal pft 3ms = He sold (my car!)
מכר נמכר Ni. pft 3ms = He was sold. (Use #1 above, pure passive)
= He sold himself. (Use #2, reflexive sense)

ראו Qal pft 3cp = They saw (somethg.)
ראו נראו Ni. pft 3cp = They saw one another (Use #2, reciprocal sense). But also possible are (based on context):
= They saw themselves. (Use #2, reflexive sense)
= They were seen. (Use #1, pure passive)

3. Unpredictable senses (must learn from usage and/or checking the lexicon/vocab list).
a. Many verbs in the Niphal stem do not have any apparent passive, reflexive, or reciprocal meaning.

b. Some verbs that occur in the Niphal stem do not occur in the Qal stem—so the meaning of the verb in the Niphal cannot be that it makes the Qal meaning passive!

c. The semantics of such verbs in the Niphal stem can be unpredictable, and you have to learn those verbs’ meanings individually as you come to them.

Exx.

לחם נִלְמָה Ni pft 3ms ‘he fought’

אמן נֶאֱמַן Ni pft 3ms ‘he was faithful’