

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 **פָּעַל** (‘to do, make’) in the different derived stems has been used among grammarians as a pattern to illustrate the derived stems.

Qal	פָּעַל	Piel	פִּעֵל	Hiphil	הִפְעִיל
Niphal	נִפְעַל	Pual	פֻּעַל	Hophal	הִפְעַל
		Hithpael	הִתְפַּעֵל		

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* (-נ). For our paradigm verb **פָּקַד**, the Niphal means ‘to be visited/appointed’.

Forms	Niphal
Pft 3ms	נִפְקַד
Impf 3ms	יִפְקַד
Wci(wayyiqtol) 3ms	וַיִּפְקַד
Juss 3ms	יִפְקַד
Coh 1cs	אֶפְקַדְהָ
Impv 2ms	הִפְקַד
Ptc ms	נִפְקָד
Infç	הִפְקֹד
Infa	נִפְקֹד / הִפְקֹד

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?)

_____ Perfect

3ms	פִּקַּד	3cp	פִּקְדוּ
3fs	פִּקְדָּה		
2ms	פִּקְדְתָּ	2mp	פִּקְדְתֶּם
2fs	פִּקְדְתִּי	2fp	פִּקְדְתֶּן
1cs	פִּקְדְתִּי	1cp	פִּקְדְנוּ

_____ Imperfect

3ms	יִפְקַד	3mp	יִפְקְדוּ
3fs	תִּפְקַד	3fp	תִּפְקְדְנָה
2ms	תִּפְקַד	2mp	תִּפְקְדוּ
2fs	תִּפְקְדִי	2fp	תִּפְקְדְנָה
1cs	אֶפְקַד	1cp	נִפְקְדוּ

_____ **Wci** 3ms וַיִּפְקֹד 3mp וַיִּפְקְדוּ

_____ **Juss** 3ms יִפְקֹד 3mp יִפְקְדוּ

2ms תִּפְקֹד 2mp תִּפְקְדוּ

_____ **Coh** 1cs אֶפְקְדָה 1cp נִפְקְדָה

_____ **Impv**

2ms פִּקֹּד 2mp פִּקְדוּ

2fs פִּקְדִי פִּקְדְנָה

_____ **Ptc**

ms פֹּקֵד mp פֹּקְדִים

fs פֹּקְדָה fp פֹּקְדוֹת

Infinitive: construct פִּקֹּד, +3ms sfx **absolute** פִּקֹּד

26.3 Translation/Semantics of the Niphal

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

John ate rice.
Qal

Rice was eaten.
Ni.

2. Reflexive/Reciprocal use.

מָכַר Qal pft 3ms = He sold (my car!)

נִמְכַּר Ni. pft 3ms = He was sold. (Use #1 above, pure passive)
= He sold himself. (Use #2, reflexive sense)

רָאוּ Qal pft 3cp = They saw (somethg.)

נִרְאוּ 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.

לָחַם נִלְחַם Ni pft 3ms 'he fought'

אָמַן נִאֲמַן Ni pft 3ms 'he was faithful'