Weak Verbs
Hebrew verbs can be either strong (hooray!) or weak (sigh).

• Strong verbs have three consonants, none of which is a gutteral or a weak letter: קַחְלִּים מְשַׁלֶּהְק

• Weak verbs are those which have only two consonants, have one or more gutterals, begin with ו י or נ, or have identical second and third consonants.
Classes of Weak Verbs

There are 10 classes of weak verbs

1. נָחָל I Gutteral
2. נָאָל II Gutteral
3. נָאָל III Gutteral
4. אֲנֵל I Alef
5. אֲנֵל III Alef
6. בָּנָה III He
Classes of Weak Verbs, cont.

7. נָפַל I Nun

8. שׁוּב/שִׁי II Vav/II Yod (hollow verbs)

9. יָשַׁב I Vav/I Yod

10. גֶּפַב Geminate Verbs
Rules of the Gutterals

• Gutterals cannot be doubled.
• Gutterals will not take the simple shewa, so must take compound shewas instead.
• Gutterals prefer A-class vowels before and sometimes after them.
The Implications of These Rules

- When, in a given form, a vocal shewa usually appears under a given consonant, if that consonant is a gutteral, a compound-shewa will appear instead.
Case Study– I Gutteral Qal Imperfect

יָשָׁר (he stood)

• The first consonant of this verb is a gutteral (I Gutteral)

• Usually, in the Qal imperfect, a simple shewa would stand under the first root consonant, but here the gutteral rejects the simple shewa.

• In addition, in most of the persons the prefix is vocalized with a hireq (short i), but gutterals prefer A-class vowels before them.
I Gutteral Qal Imperfect, cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qal Imperfect Strong Verb</th>
<th>Qal Imperfect I Gutteral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms יִׁקְטֹל</td>
<td>3ms יִׁקְטֹל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs תִׁקְטֹל</td>
<td>3fs תִׁקְטֹל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms תִׁקְטֹל</td>
<td>2ms תִׁקְטֹל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs תִׁקְטֹל</td>
<td>2fs תִׁקְטֹל</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs אָקְטֹל</td>
<td>1cs אָקְטֹל</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study-Qal Perfect II Gutteral

ב חַר (he chose)

• The second consonant of this verb is a gutteral (II Gutteral)

• Usually in the Qal perfect 3fs and 3cp, a vocal shewa appears under the second root consonant, but here the gutteral refuses the simple vocal shewa and takes a compound shewa instead.
Qal Perfect II Gutteral cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong verb</th>
<th>II Gutteral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3fs קְפַלְלָה</td>
<td>3fs בִּזְזֵה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3cp קְפַלְלָו</td>
<td>3cp בִּזְזָר</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When, in a given form, a consonant is usually doubled, if that consonant is a gutteral, it will reject the doubling dagesh. In this case one of two things will happen:

1. The consonant will be understood to be *virtually doubled*. (That is, no dagesh appears, but there are no other consequences.)

2. The vowel preceding the gutteral will be lengthened to compensate for the rejected dagesh. This is called *Compensatory lengthening*. 
Case Study-Piel Perfect II Gutteral

גחב (he comforted)

• The second consonant in this verb is a gutteral (II Gutteral)

• Usually, all piel verbs have their second consonant doubled, but here, the gutteral rejects the dagesh.

• Although no dagesh appears in the second consonant, the verb is not affected in any other way. The consonant is said to be virtually doubled.
### Piel Perfect II Gutteral, cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Verb</th>
<th>II Gutteral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms קִׁטֵּל</td>
<td>3ms נִׁחַם</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs קִׁטַלְהָ</td>
<td>3fs נִׁחַמְתָ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms קִׁטַלְבָ</td>
<td>2ms נִׁחַמְתָ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs קִׁטַלְחָ</td>
<td>2fs נִׁחַמְתָ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs קִׁטַלְחָ</td>
<td>1cs נִׁחַמְתָ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study-Niphal Imperfect I Gutteral

(he was abandoned)

• The first consonant of this verb is a gutteral (I Gutteral)

• Usually, in the Niphal imperfect the first root consonant is doubled, but here the gutteral rejects the dagesh.

• As a result, the preceding vowel is lengthened in compensation (compensatory lengthening).
## Niphal Imperfect I Gutteral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Verb</th>
<th>I Gutteral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms יִׁקֵּל</td>
<td>3ms יִׁקֵּב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs תִׁקֵּל</td>
<td>3fs תִׁקֵּב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms תִּקֵּל</td>
<td>2ms תִּקֵּב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs תִּקֵּל</td>
<td>2fs תִּקֵּב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs יִׁקֵּל</td>
<td>1cs יִׁקֵּב</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications of These Rules, cont.

Because gutterals prefer A-class vowels before and sometimes after them, other vowels preceding or following a gutteral in a verb may be changed to A-class vowels.
Case Study-Qal Imperfect III Gutteral

שָלֵךְ (he sent)

• The third consonant in this verb is a gutteral (III Gutteral).

• Usually, in the Qal imperfect a holem (long O) precedes the final consonant, but here, because of the gutteral’s preference for A-class vowels, the holem is changed to a patah (short A).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Verb</th>
<th>III Gutteral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms יִשְׁלַח</td>
<td>3ms יִשְׁלַח</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs יִשְׁלַח</td>
<td>3fs יִשְׁלַח</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms יִשְׁלַח</td>
<td>2ms יִשְׁלַח</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs יִשְׁלַח</td>
<td>2fs יִשְׁלַח</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs יִשְׁלַח</td>
<td>1cs יִשְׁלַח</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verbs with Other Weak Letters

We know the rules which apply to the gutterals, and we’ve seen some of the ways in which these rules play out in verbs containing gutteral letters.

There are a few additional consonants which are also weak, and which cause verbs to deviate from the strong paradigm.
Weak Letters- I Nun & I Yod

If a verb begins with a י or a ב, that letter will sometimes drop off when a prefix is added. It may leave a dagesh behind as the sign of its disappearance, or it may signal its disappearance with compensatory lengthening of the vowel.

For example:

• The Qal imperfect 3ms of the verb יִפֹלַ (he fell) is יִפֹלָל: The י has disappeared and has left a dagesh in the פ.
Weak Letters, I Nun & I Yod cont.

• The Qal imperfect 3ms of the verb יֵשֵׁב (he settled/dwelt) is יֵשֵׁב: The י of the root has disappeared, and the vowel under the prefix has been lengthened from a hireq (short O) to a sere (long E).
Weak Letters: III ו

• ו is a gutteral and participates in the rules governing gutterals, but it is also weak in its own, unique right.
• Its weakness sometimes causes it to disappear from the ends of words.
• Sometimes, instead of disappearing, it changes into a ת, which is not weak!
Strong Verb Qal Perfect

3ms קִלַּה

3fs קִלְלָה

2ms קִלָּה

2fs קִלָּה

1cs קִלְלָה

3ms בָּנָה (he built)

3fs בָּנָה

2ms בָּנֵיה

2fs בָּנֵיה

1cs בָּנִי
Verbs with 2 Consonants

Verbs which have only two consonants are bound to look different from verbs which have three consonants! These verbs may be called biconsonantal verbs, which refers to the fact that they have only two consonants, or hollow verbs, which refers to the fact that their middle letter is a ‘ or a ‘ functioning as a vowel.
The Qal Perfect Inflection of קים (to arise)

3ms קים 3cp קים

3fs קמה

2ms קמ 2mp קמה

2fs קמה 2fp קמה

1cs קמה 1cp קמה
Geminate Verbs

• Geminate verbs are verbs whose second and third consonants are the same: סָבַב (he surrounded).

• Many of these are inflected just like strong verbs: the fact that their second two consonants are identical doesn’t cause any problems.

• Sometimes, however, the third consonant may disappear and vowel changes may take place in the verb.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>סַבֹּת</td>
<td>סַבֹּת</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>סַבֹּתָה</td>
<td>סַבֹּתָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>סַבֹּתָה</td>
<td>סַבֹּתָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>סַבֹּתָה</td>
<td>סַבֹּתָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1cs</td>
<td>סַבֹּתִי</td>
<td>סַבֹּתִי</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Qal Perfect Inflection of סַבְּבִים (he surrounded)
Tips for Dealing with Weak Verbs

• Remember the rules of the gutterals. When you come across a verb that looks strange, check if it contains a gutteral, and think about what rule it might be responding to.

• Remember that נ י and ח are weak letters which tend to disappear. When you come across a verb that appears to have only two consonants, ask if one of these letters may have dropped off. Is there a dagesh or compensatory lengthening as a result?
Tips for Dealing with Weak Verbs, cont.

• Remember that some verbs have only two consonants, and so will naturally look different from verbs which have three consonants.

• Remember that geminate verbs may lose their third consonant. When you come across a verb with only two consonants, ask if an identical third letter may have disappeared.

• If you get stuck, use Accordance/BibleWorks to help you decipher the verb. The next time you come across it, it will be easier to recognize!