

# Weak Verbs

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

- Strong verbs have three consonants, none of which is a guttural or a weak letter: קָטַל מִשַׁל
- Weak verbs are those which have only two consonants, have one or more gutturals, begin with י, ו or נ, or have identical second and third consonants.

# Classes of Weak Verbs

There are 10 classes of weak verbs

1. עָמַד I Guttural
2. שָׁאַל II Guttural
3. שָׁלַח III Guttural
4. אָכַל I Alef
5. מָצַא III Alef
6. בָּנָה III He

# Classes of Weak Verbs, cont.

7. נָפַל | Nun

8. וָשַׁב / וָשָׁב | Vav/|| Yod (hollow verbs)

9. יָשַׁב | Vav/| Yod

10. סָבַב | 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 guttural, a compound-shewa will appear instead.

# Case Study– I Guttural Qal Imperfect

עָמַד (he stood)

- The first consonant of this verb is a guttural (I Guttural)
- Usually, in the Qal imperfect, a simple shewa would stand under the first root consonant, but here the guttural rejects the simple shewa.
- In addition, in most of the persons the prefix is vocalized with a hireq (short i), but gutturals prefer A-class vowels before them.

# I Guttural Qal Imperfect, cont.

Qal Imperfect Strong Verb

3ms יִקְטֹל

3fs תִּקְטֹל

2ms תִּקְטֹל

2fs תִּקְטֹלִי

1cs אֶקְטֹל

Qal Imperfect I Guttural

3ms יַעֲמֹד

3fs תַּעֲמֹד

2ms תַּעֲמֹד

2fs תַּעֲמֹדִי

1cs אֶעֱמֹד



# Case Study-Qal Perfect II Guttural

בָּחַר (he chose)

- The second consonant of this verb is a guttural (II Guttural)
- Usually in the Qal perfect 3fs and 3cp, a vocal shewa appears under the second root consonant, but here the guttural refuses the simple vocal shewa and takes a compound shewa instead.

# Qal Perfect II Guttural cont.

**Strong verb**

3fs קָטְלָהּ

3cp קָטְלוּ

**II Guttural**

3fs בָּחַרְהָ

3cp בָּחַרוּ

# The Implications of These Rules, cont.

When, in a given form, a consonant is usually doubled, if that consonant is a guttural, 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 guttural will be lengthened to compensate for the rejected dagesh. This is called *Compensatory lengthening*.

# Case Study-Piel Perfect II Guttural

נָחַם (he comforted)

- The second consonant in this verb is a guttural (II Guttural)
- Usually, all piel verbs have their second consonant doubled, but here, the guttural 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 Guttural, cont.

## Strong Verb

3ms קָטַל

3fs קָטְלָהּ

2ms קָטַלְתָּ

2fs קָטַלְתְּ

1cs קָטַלְתִּי

## II Guttural

3ms נָחַם

3fs נָחַמָּהּ

2ms נָחַמְתָּ

2fs נָחַמְתְּ

1cs נָחַמְתִּי

# Case Study-Niphal Imperfect I Guttural

עזב (he was abandoned)

- The first consonant of this verb is a guttural (I Guttural)
- Usually, in the Niphal imperfect the first root consonant is doubled, but here the guttural rejects the dagesh.
- As a result, the preceding vowel is lengthened in compensation (compensatory lengthening).

# Niphal Imperfect I Guttural

## Strong Verb

3ms יִקְטֹל

3fs תִּקְטֹל

2ms תִּקְטֹל

2fs תִּקְטֹלִי

1cs אֶקְטֹל

## I Guttural

3ms יֵעָזֵב

3fs תֵּעָזֵב

2ms תֵּעָזֵב

2fs תֵּעָזְבִי

1cs אֶעָזֵב

# Implications of These Rules, cont.

Because gutturals prefer A-class vowels before and sometimes after them, other vowels preceding or following a guttural in a verb may be changed to A-class vowels.



# Case Study-Qal Imperfect III Guttural

שָׁלַח (he sent)

- The third consonant in this verb is a guttural (III Guttural).
- Usually, in the Qal imperfect a holem (long O) precedes the final consonant, but here, because of the guttural's preference for A-class vowels, the holem is changed to a patah (short A).

# Qal Imperfect III Guttural

## Strong Verb

3ms יִקְטֹל

3fs תִּקְטֹל

2ms תִּקְטֹל

2fs תִּקְטְלִי

1cs אֶקְטֹל

## III Guttural

3ms יִשְׁלַח

3fs תִּשְׁלַח

2ms תִּשְׁלַח

2fs תִּשְׁלְחִי

1cs אֶשְׁלַח

# 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 guttural 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 נ or a י, 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 נָפַל (he fell) is יִפֹּל : The נ has disappeared and has left a dagesh in the פ.

# Weak Letters, I Nun & I Yod cont.

- The Qal imperfect 3ms of the verb יָשַׁב (he settled/dwelt) is יֹשֵׁב : The ך 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 ה

- ה is a guttural and participates in the rules governing gutturals, 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 ח, which is not weak!

# ה וו

## Strong Verb Qal Perfect

3ms קָטַל

3fs קָטְלָהּ

2ms קָטַלְתָּ

2fs קָטַלְתְּ

1cs קָטַלְתִּי

## ה וו Qal Perfect

3ms בָּנָה (he built)

3fs בָּנְתָהּ

2ms בָּנִיתָ

2fs בָּנִיתְּ

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 ʾ or a ʿ functioning as a vowel.



# The Qal Perfect Inflection of קום (to arise)

3ms קָמוּ

3cp קָמוּ

3fs קָמוּהָ

2ms קָמוּתְּם

2mp קָמוּתְּכֶם

2fs קָמוּתְּהֶן

2fp קָמוּתְּכֵן

1cs קָמוּתִי

1cp קָמוּנוּ

# 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.

# The Qal Perfect Inflection of סָבַב (he surrounded)

3ms סָבַב

3cp סָבְבוּ

3fs סָבְבָה

2ms סִבְבוּתָ

2mp סִבְבוּתְכֶם

2fs סִבְבוּתֵיכֶם

2fp סִבְבוּתֵינוּ

1cs סִבְבוּתִי

1cp סִבְבוּנוּ

# Tips for Dealing with Weak Verbs

- Remember the rules of the gutturals. When you come across a verb that looks strange, check if it contains a guttural, and think about what rule it might be responding to.
- Remember that א, ה, and ו 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!