

Stem guide – identifying the stem of all verbs in Biblical Hebrew by Naama Zahavi–Ely

Prefix (Yiqtol) form: look at the vowels of the prefix and the first root letter.

- An extra tav after the prefix and before the root: Hitpa'el
- A sibilant after the prefix, followed by tav, tet, or dalet and two more root letters: Hitpa'el
- Patach under the prefix, sheva under the first root letter: Hif'il
- Chiriq under the prefix and sheva under the first root letter: Qal
- Chiriq under the prefix, dagesh in the first root letter, Qamatz under the first root letter: Nifal
- Tzere under the prefix: Qal
- Sheva under the prefix, patach under the first root letter: Pi'el
- Sheva under the prefix, o/u with the first root letter, patach under the 2nd root letter: Pual
- Sheva under the prefix, followed by הַי or חַי (root letters) only: Qal of הַיָּה / חַיָּה (short form)
- Sheva under the prefix, two root letters only, middle vav or o/u vowel, pronominal suffix: Qal
- Sheva under the prefix, two root letters only, middle yod or chiriq, pronominal suffix: Hif'il
- Qamatz under the prefix, two root letters only, middle vav or cholam: Qal
- Qamatz under the prefix, two root letters only, middle yod: Hif'il (rarely Qal)
- Qamatz under the prefix, sheva or compound sheva under the first root letter: Hof'al
- A compound sheva under the first root letter, final Heh: Qal or Hif'il, use lexicon or context to determine
- A compound sheva under the first root letter, "o" or "a" under the second root letter: Qal
- A compound sheva under the first root letter, "e" or "ee" under the second root letter: Hif'il
- A vowel indicator ם "o" after the prefix: Hifil stem, first Yod root
- A vowel indicator ם "oo" after the prefix: Hofal stem, first Yod or middle Yod/Vav

Not prefix (Yiqtol) form: look at the vowel of the first root letter and at any letters before the root.

Nothing before the root:

- Qamatz under the first root letter: Qal
- Sheva under the first root letter: Qal
- Tzere under the first root letter: Qal
- Chiriq under the first root letter, dagesh in the 2nd root letter: Pi'el
 - Watch out for Nif'al of first-nun roots, which look like Pi'el
- Chiriq under the first root letter, no dagesh in the 2nd root letter: Qal imperative/infinitive or Piel
- Patach under the first root letter: Pi'el imperative/infinitive
- Patach under the first, compound patach under the 2nd root letter: Qal imperative
- Cholam with the first root letter: Qal participle (watch out for Hif'il prefix jussive of first yod roots)
- Two root letters only, o/u/e vowel: Qal imperative/infinitive of middle-yod-vav roots
- Mem before the root: participle of Pi'el, Pu'al, Hif'il, Hof'al, or Hitpa'el; follow prefix vowels to identify stem
- Nun before the root: Nif'al (but watch out for nun in prefix 1cp)
- Heh+tav before the root: Hitpa'el
- Heh followed by sibilant followed by tav, tet, or dalet and two root letters: Hitpa'el
- Heh with Chiriq before the root: Hif'il
- Heh with Tzere before the root: Hif'il of middle yod/vav root
- Heh with Qamatz before the root: Hof'al
- Heh followed by a vowel indicator: Hif'il or Hof'al, follow Prefix vowels to identify stem
- Segolet pattern with a final tav: Qal infinitive of a first yod root (or a noun which is not a verb)

Two root letters only - special cases:

- If the two letters are לַכּ the root is הַלַּכּ, usually Qal, may be Hifil (with a first ם vowel indicator)
 - ** Watch out for the ל preposition + 2nd person singular pronominal suffix!
- If the two letters are קַח the root is לַקַּח, usually Qal, may be Nifal or Pu'al (originally Qal Passive)
- If you find only תַּנּ or תַּנּ or only תַּנּ, the root is נַתַּנּ and the stem is Qal or Nif'al

One root letter only (example in prefix 3ms): first nun+final heh, usually Hifil (ַׁךְ from נִכַּה)

The only common root in this pattern is נִכַּה; נִזַּה and נִשַּׁה are the only others.