

A Short Summary Introductory Hebrew Grammar

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gary Staats was the Gale and Harriette Ritz professor of Old Testament at Winebrenner Theological Seminary in Findlay, Ohio. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible at Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963; his Th.M, in New Testament Greek from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1967; his Th.D in Biblical Studies from DTS in 1971; his Master of Arts in Hebrew and Ancient Near Eastern languages at Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate Learning in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1983. He completed his Ph.D, in Hebrew and Ancient Near Eastern Languages at New York University in 1989. Dr. Staats has been a professor and pastor for many years, serving at various schools and in numerous pastorates.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my former student and colleague Jim Davison and my student Jeffery Gujjarlamudi for their tremendous overall help in typing this Old Testament Hebrew and Aramaic Christological Grammar book for me. Their kindness in typing this project has made my book on inductive Hebrew grammar in classic texts a tool that I can use in my classes. They are true friends with servants' hearts.

I want to also thank my students Erik Lightner, Linda Davison, Katie Erickson, Dan Adkins, Kevin Vile, and Dean Stoner for the sections which they helped to transcribe. I also want to thank my former student and colleague in ministry Marty Daly and Ruth Whitaker, Academic Advancement Coordinator, Winebrenner Theological Seminary for their technological assistance. I would also like to thank Don Gillis, Vice-President of Business Development for WordSearch Bible, for his encouragement in my writings.

I also would like to thank my parents for instilling in me a love of the Bible from childhood.

Finally, and foremost, I want to thank my wife Janet for her unfailing encouragement, her infinite patience and kindness, and for her constant love and sharing in all of life and ministry with me. She is truly אִשָּׁת־חַיִל.

- Gary Staats

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Hebrew Alphabet

Transliteration

א	aleph	ʾ
ב	bet	b
ג	gimel	g
ד	dalet	d
ה	he	h
ו	waw	w
ז	zayin	z
ח	het	h
ט	tet	t
י	yod	y
כ, ך	kaph	k
ל	lamed	l
מ, ם	mem	m
נ, ן	nun	n
ס	samek	s
ע	ayin	ʿ
פ, ף	pe	p
צ	sade	ṣ
ק	qoph	q
ר	res	r
ש, ך	sin, shin	s, š
ת	taw	t

Hebrew Vowels

	Short Vowel		Long Vowel
a	Class פָּ pathah, ba		פֶּ qameṣ, bā
e	Class פֶּ seghol, be		פֵּ ṣere, bē
			פֵּי ṣere yod, bey
i	Class פִּי ḥireq, bi		פִּי ḥireq yod, bî
o	Class פֹּ qameṣ ḥatuph, bo		פֹּי ḥolem, bō
u	Class פֻּ qibbuṣ, bu		פֻּי ṣureq, bû

Half Vowels

(Simple & Composite shewas transliterated)

Simple shewa	ְ	Under non guttural consonants
Composite shewas		Under gutturals such as ע א ה ח
		Transliterated
hateph (hurried) pathah	ֵּ	ă
hateph seghol	ֶּ	ě
hateph qameṣ	ֹּ	ö

Article indicator at the beginning of the word
(**ְ** before non-guttural consonant followed by a dagheš forte, **ֶּ** before gutturals)

Personal Pronoun

Singular		Plural	
אֲנִי	I (c)	אֲנַחְנוּ	we
אַתָּה	you (m)	אַתֶּם	you (m)
אַתְּ	you (f)	אַתֶּן	you (f)
הוא	he	הֵם, הֵמָּה	they (m)
היא	she	הֵן, הֵמָּה	they (f)

Suffix and Gender Indicators

Singular	Plural
None for masculine	ים for plural (m)
הַ for fem singular	ות for plural (f)

Suffix Pronoun Indicators

Singular Nouns

Singular	Plural
(שְׁלוֹם - Peace)	
שְׁלוֹמִי	שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ
my peace	our peace
שְׁלוֹמְךָ	שְׁלוֹמְכֶם
your peace (m)	our peace
שְׁלוֹמְךָ	שְׁלוֹמְכֶן
your peace (f)	your peace (f)
שְׁלוֹמוֹ	שְׁלוֹמָם
his peace	their peace (m)
שְׁלוֹמָהּ	שְׁלוֹמָן
her peace	their peace (f)

(Christ is שְׁלוֹם)

Suffix Pronoun Indicators

Plural Nouns

Singular

Plural

(אָׁחִים - Brothers)

אָחִי	my brothers	אָחֵינוּ	our brothers
אָחֶיךָ	your brothers (m)	אָחֵיכֶם	your brothers (m)
אָחֶיךָ	your brothers (f)	אָחֵיכֶן	your brothers (f)
אָחָיו	his brothers	אָחֵיהֶם	their brothers (m)
אָחֶיהָ	her brothers	אָחֵיהֶן	their brothers (f)

Nouns in Construct Indicators

Singular

Plural

ִ (m) in first syllable

ִ (m) at end of word

ָ (f) at end of word

ָ (f) at end of word

It is necessary to learn the Qal Perfect and Imperfect of the regular verb with its suffixes and then these suffixes can be added to the other 6 stems.

Qal Perfect

Singular

Suffix endings

פָּעַל	he has done		
פָּעַלָּהּ	she has done	הָ	she
פָּעַלְתָּ	you have done (m)	ךָ	you (m)
פָּעַלְתָּ	you have done (f)	ךְ	you (f)
פָּעַלְתִּי	I have done	י	I

Plural

פָּעְלוּ	they have done	וְ	they
פָּעַלְתֶּם	you have done (m)	תֶּם	you (m)
פָּעַלְתֶּן	you have done (f)	תֶּן	you (f)
פָּעַלְנוּ	we have done	נּוּ	we

Qal Imperfect

Singular

Prefixes to Imperfect

יִפְעֹל	he will do	י	he
תִּפְעֹל	she will do	ת	she
תִּפְעֹל	you will do (m)	ת	you (m)
תִּפְעֹלִי	you will do (f)	י, ת	you (f)
אֶפְעֹל	I will do	א	I

Plural

Prefixes and Suffixes to Imperfect

יִפְעֹלוּ	they will do	וְ, י	they (m)
תִּפְעֹלְנָה	they will do	נָה, ת	they (m)
תִּפְעֹלוּ	you will do	וְ, ת	you (m)
תִּפְעֹלְנָה	you will do	נָה, ת	you (f)
נִפְעֹל	we will do	נ	we

we she/you he I

וְ ת י א

Since the verb **פָּעַל**, “to do,” is used to classify the stems in most grammars it is used here

There are 7 basic stems in Hebrew

(The following are in the Perfect stem)

1. **Qal/Paal** is the basic stem (ā/a) vowel pattern

פָּעַל - he did

2. **Niphal** is the passive of the Qal with a נ prefix (i/a) vowel pattern

נִפְעַל - he/it was done

3. * **Piel** is the active intensive stem (i/ē) vowel pattern

פִּעַל - he did (something) intensely

(normally the form is פִּעֵל with doubling of second radical & i/ē vowel pattern)

4. **Pual** is the passive of the Piel (u/a) vowel pattern

פֻּעַל - it was done (intensely)

5. **Hiphil** is the active causative stem with a ה prefix (i/i) vowel pattern

הִפְעִיל - he caused to do (something)

6. **Hophal** is the passive causative of the Hiphil with ה prefix and an (o/a) vowel pattern

הֻפְעַל - he was caused to do (something)

7. **Hithpael** is the reflexive with a ה prefix and an (a/ē) vowel pattern

הִתְפַּעֵל - he himself did (something)

*Because the middle radical consonant is a guttural it cannot take a daghes forte (.) which indicates a doubling in the middle radical of the Piel, Pual and Hithpael stems, but this verb is used because it is the basis of the naming of the stems in most Hebrew grammars. For example since doubling of the ayin(ע) פִּעַל cannot occur, the daghes forte is omitted here. In a non-guttural middle radical the form would be קִדְּשׁ , קִדְּשׁוּ , קִדְּשׁוּהוּ he sanctified, he was sanctified, he himself sanctified.

The seven basic stems in the Imperfect tense

1. **Qal/Paal** *(i/o) vowel pattern
יִפְעַל - he will do (i/a because of guttural)
* with a non-guttural middle consonant יִשְׁמַר i/o vowel pattern
2. **Niphal** (i/a) vowel pattern
יִפְעַל - it will be done
3. **Piel** (shewa/a) vowel pattern
יִפְעִל - he will do (intensely)
4. **Pual** (shewa/u) vowel pattern
יִפְעֹל - it will be done (intensely)
5. **Hiphil** (a/i) vowel pattern
יִפְעִיל - he will cause to do
6. **Hophal** (o/a) vowel pattern
יִפְעֹל - he will be caused to do
7. **Hithpael**
יִתְפַּעֵל - he himself will do

In the Hithpael there is the prefix יִתְ and an a/ē vowel pattern

Basic tenses

In Hebrew there is the past or perfect tense and the imperfect or future tense. They indicate completed action in the perfect and incomplete action in the imperfect.

Transliteration

In the beginning the student can learn the vowels and consonants by transliterating in Genesis as follows:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (Gen 1: 1)

b'rē'shît bārā' ʿlohîm'ēt haššāmāyim w' ēt hā' ā reṣ

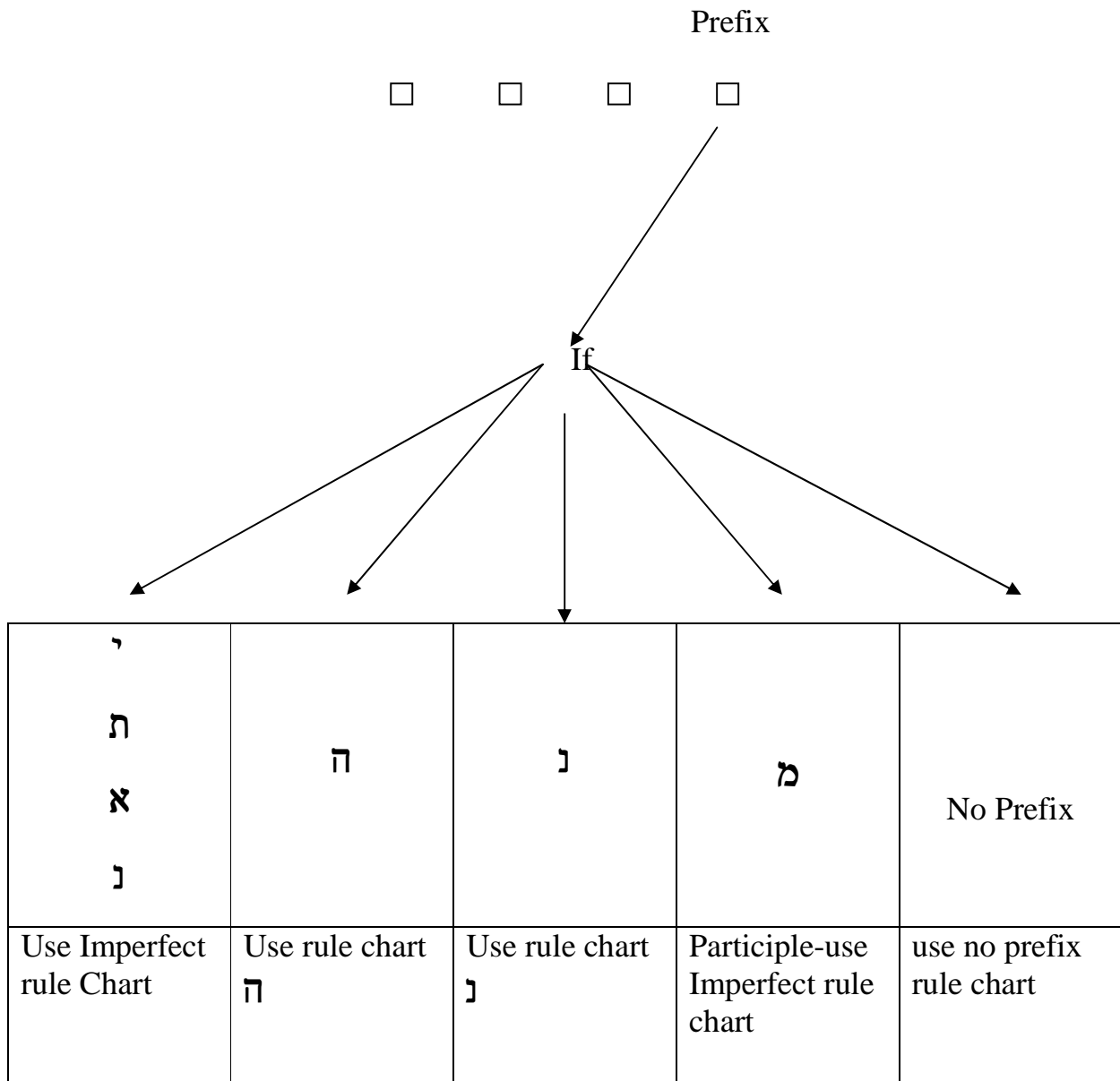
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” etc.

This can be continued for learning the consonants. There are 3 steps: 1) Write the Hebrew, 2) Transliterate and then 3) Translate it.

The audio for each verse or passage should then be listened to and repeated aloud to develop reading skill. Also memorization of some verses in Hebrew is encouraged. Reading of Hebrew should always be out loud.

Overall Chart Identification for Parsing Verbs

Check Prefix (rules for parsing)



Parsing: Imperfect rule chart

(One must know the Qal regular perfect verb suffixes & imperfect prefixes)

Specific Principles: Go to Prefix consonant and vowel

1. If “A” class vowel → go to the next full vowel
 - a. If “I” class vowel → Hiphil
 - b. If any other → Qal

Example: יִגְדֵּל יֵל he will cause to be great or magnify

(Hiphil Imperfect causative)

2. If “I” class → go to 1st radical or consonant of root
 - a. If “a class vowel → Niphal
 - b. If any other → Qal

Example: יִשְׁמֵר (Niphal Imperfect) – he will be kept, note also the ך of the Niphal stem has assimilated into the ש by progressive assimilation → נשׁ → becomes שׁ with daghes forte doubling of the שׁ.

3. If “shewa” under Prefix → go to next vowel
 - a. “a” vowel → Piel יְדַבֵּר he will speak
 - b. “u” vowel → Pual יְדַבְּרָהּ it was spoken

Note: (doubling of the middle radicals)

4. If “o” class vowel under Prefix (qames qaton / hatuph qames) → Hophal

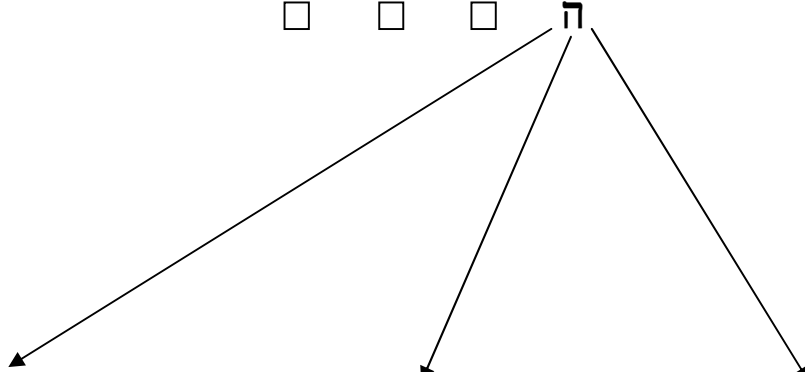
Example: יִגְדַּל “he has been magnified”

5. The participle with the prefix will be parsed with the same rules in the piel, pual, hiphil hophal, and hithpael stems.

Example: מְגַדֵּל יֵל magnify (with a/i) pattern showing a hiphil participle

ה Prefix Chart

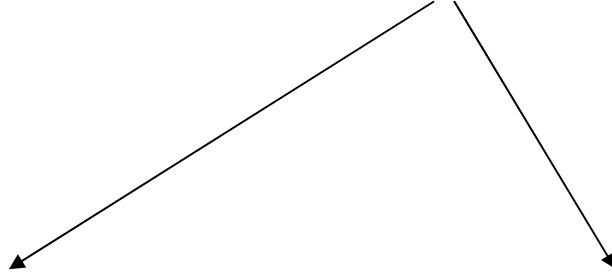
□ □ □ ה



“A” Vowel	“I” Vowel	“U” or “O” Vowel
<p>It will be Hiphil imperative or infinitive הַגְדִּיל “magnify”</p>	<p>Go to the 1st radical or consonant of the root and if:</p> <p>1. “A” vowel → Niphil Imperative or Infinitive</p> <p>Example: הִשְׁמֵר “be kept” note the ך of the Niphil has assimilated into the ך for progressive assimilation → נִשׁ → שׁ with the daghes forte doubling.</p> <p>2. Otherwise → Hiphil Perfect</p> <p>Example: הִגְדִּיל “he magnified”</p>	<p>It will be a Hophal Perfect or Imperative or Infinitive Example: הִגְדִּיל “be magnified” (Imperative)</p> <p>Note Qameṣ T is Hatuph or short “o” vowel</p>

ן Prefix Chart

□ □ □ ן



1. If i/pathah vowel pattern → Niphal Perfect, נִשְׁמַר he was kept

2. If i/qames or final long ā = Niphal Participle, Example: נֹשֵׂם “he was keeping”

If the i/a vowel pattern does not appear then apply the imperfect rule chart to determine the Imperfect form for the 1st common plural.

No prefix chart with examples of vowel patterns

Qal Stem	Vowel Pattern	
שָׁמַר	ā /a	Qal Perfect, “he has kept”
שֹׁמֵר	o/ē	Qal Active Participle “he is keeping”
שְׁמוּרָה	ā /û	Qal Passive Participle “he was kept”
שָׁמַרְתָּ	shewa/ō	Qal Imperative “keep”
לְשָׁמֵר	shewa/ō	Qal Infinitive construct “to keep”
שָׁמוֹר	ā /ō	Qal Infinitive absolute “indeed keep” or “continually keep” depending on whether the infinite absolute precedes or follows the verbs
Piel Stem	Vowel Pattern	
דִּבֶּר	i/ē	Piel Perfect “he spoke”
דִּבְרֵ	a/ē	Piel Imperative “speak”
לְדַבֵּר	a/ē	Piel Infinitive “to speak”
Pual Stem	Vowel Pattern	
בִּקַּד	u/a	Pual Perfect “he was visited” (or imperative/infinite)

Basic rules for identifying and Parsing weak verbs

Weak verbs are verbs that deviate from regular verbs in that some begin with a נ (nun) or a guttural or have a guttural for one or more of the consonants (אהחע). These verbs are classified by the verb פֿעַל, to do or by 1st, 2nd, 3rd position depending on the position in the verb where these consonants occur.

Example: נָתַן is a Pe Nun or 1st נ for it is in the פ or first position. Some of these verbs are:

1. Pe Nun - where נ (nun) is in the position or first position Example: נָתַן
2. Pe Yod - יצא
3. Pe Waw - יָשַׁב from historic ושב
4. Pe Guttural - עָזַב
5. Pe Aleph - אָמַר
6. ‘Ayin Guttural - פָּעַל
7. Lamed He - הָיָה
8. Lamed Guttural - שָׁמַע
9. ‘Ayin Waw - קָוַם
10. ‘Ayin Yod - שָׁיַם

(See J. Weingreen, A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew. Clarendon Press, 1959, pp139-238, for a full grammatical discussion of weak verbs)

Basic Rules

- Pe Nun** נתן The basic rule is that of assimilation
Perfect: נתַן becomes נתָן, נ ת → ת by progressive Assimilation, you have given
Imperfect: יִנְתֵּן → יִתֵּן → the ן assimilates into the ת causing a doubling with a daghes forte.
- Pe Yod** There are two types of Pe Yod verbs: Those historically Pe Yod יִטֵּב “to be good,” and those historically Pe Waw as in יִשֵּׁב, “to sit.” These are impacted in the Imperfect in different ways: יִיטֵב “he will be good” where the historic ך is retained in a Pe Yod original verb, whereas the verb יִישֵׁב “he will sit” in an historical Pe Waw verb where the waw from יִישֵׁב elides and with compensatory lengthening from hireq to sere under the prefix the form became יִישֵׁב .
The Imperative & Infinitive Construct in the historically Pe Waw verb have שֵׁב “sit” (Imperative) and שֵׁבַת “to sit” (Infinitive construct) where the historical ך elided or dropped out.
- Pe Guttural** The main rule change in these verbs are seen in the Imperfect Niphal and Hiphil stems with composite shewas
Examples: יִעֲזֹב “he will forsake” the ע takes a composite hateph pathah which changed the expected hireq under the ך to a pathah under the influence of the pathah in the hateph pathah composite shewa. In the Niphal נִעְזַב “he has been forsaken” where the seghol occurs under to ן

corresponding to the seghol of the hateph seghol under the guttural rather than being a yod as in נִפְאֵל

4. Pe Aleph

The main rule change is that of dissimilation seen in the imperfect יֹאמֵר “he will say”. Possibly an historical יֹאמֵר at some point dissimilated into יֹאמֵר where two seghol vowels changed to an o/e pattern with a dropping out of the hateph seghol under the א since the א is quiescent and vowel like. Hence dissimilation is the key element here.

5. ‘Ayin Guttural

פָּעַל “he did”. The main changes is that the guttural will take a composite shewa rather than a simple shewa and that in the Piel and hithpael there will be compensatory lengthening of the a vowel from pathaḥ (-) to qameṢ

(ֶ)

Examples are פָּעַלָּה “she did” in the Qal. In the Piel

since the ע cannot double taking a dagheš forte as in שָׁכַן “to dwell”, it has compensatory lengthening from a hireq to a long vowel in the sere. Example: פָּעַל

The same is true in the Piel Imperfect becoming יִפְעֵל .

Since the ע cannot take a dagheš forte showing doubling compensation occurs by lengthening the pathaḥ (short a vowel) to qameṢ (long a vowel).

6. Lamed He

Since most Lamed He verbs were historically Lamed Yod, the yod will reappear in the perfect and imperfect and the final ה will drop out in the shorter jussive form.

For example in the Lamed He verb **הָיָה**, “to be,” the form in the Qal Perfect **הָיִיתָ** “you have been” shows the reappearing of an historical yod. In the Qal Imperfect **יְהִי** “he will be” the final vowel is seghol or an i/e class vowel since and original yod seems to have preferred that to **יָהִי** with an o vowel as in **יִשְׁמַר** “he will keep.” In the shorter jussive **יְהִי** “let there be” the final ה drops out and this form appears.

7. **Lamed Guttural** Prefers a pathah (־) in the Qal Imperfect instead of an “o”

class vowel because the guttural attracts pathah.

For example: **יִשְׁמַע** “he will hear” instead of **יִשְׁמֹר**. A furtive pathah appears under some forms to cause the final guttural to be pronounced as in **הִשְׁמִיעַ** “he caused to hear”.

8. **ʿAyin Waw and ʿAyin Yod** In these verbs the middle consonant become so weak that it either dropped out as in the Qal Perfect or space became a vowel as in the Qal Imperfect

For example: **קָם** “he arose” from an original **קוּם** in the Perfect. **יָקוּם** in the Imperfect the ו became a vowel and the pathah under the yod prefix lengthened to a qames.

Example: **יָקוּם** → **יָקוּם**

The ʿAyin Yod verb **שָׁם** “he placed” (Qal perfect) comes from an original **שָׂם** where the yod weakened and dropped out. And the Qal Imperfect became **יָשִׁים** “he will place” from an original **יָשִׂים** where the י became weak and disappeared and the pathah was lengthened to a qames under the yod prefix.

Example: **יָשִׂים** → **יָשִׁים**

Summary of rules for weak verb

- Pe Nun** - Assimilation and doubling
יְנַתֵּן → יִתֵּן “he will give”
- Pe Yod** - The yod is retained in the imperfect
יִיטֵב → יִיטֵב “he will be good”
- Pe Waw** - The original ו elides with compensatory lengthening
יִישֵׁב → יִישֵׁב “he will sit”
- Pe Guttural** - The composite shewa appears under the guttural with a corresponding pathah under prefix
יַעֲזֹב
- Pe Aleph** - Dissimilation appears in the Qal Imperfect with an ō vowel with the prefix
יִאמֹר → יִאמֹר
- ‘Ayin Guttural** - Compensatory lengthening appears before the guttural in the Piel form
פַּעַל → פַּעַל
- Lamed He** - The final ה will drop out or elide in the jussive form and the i vowel will appear in the imperfect. יִהְיֶה in jussive, יִהְיֶה in the Imperfect “let there be,” and “he will be.”

8. Lamed Guttural

- The pathah is preferred before the guttural

ישמע

9. ‘Ayin Waw and ‘Ayin Yod

- The middle ל and middle ך weaken into vowels and under the prefix the - (pathah) lengthens to a qames (ך) by compensatory lengthening

יקום → “he will arise” for יקום

ישום → “he will place” for ישום

The middle ל and ך drop out in the Perfect קום and שום