

Strategy for Learning Hebrew Verbs

In terms of paradigms there are really three levels of verbs in Biblical Hebrew:

- 1) Qal strong (regular) verbs,
- 2) the rest of the strong verbs and,
- 3) weak (irregular) verbs.

Each level builds on the previous level. The weak verbs are a variation of the strong verbs and the Niphal through Hophal strong verbs are a variation of the Qal strong verb. Because of this dependency the better one knows the first level the easier it will be to learn the next level. Also learning the higher levels will reinforce the patterns of the lower levels.

With this in mind I recommend memorizing the following.

- 1) Qal Strong Verbs:
 - the complete paradigms
- 2) Remaining Strong Verbs:
 - the complete paradigms for the Niphal, Piel and Hiphil¹
 - principal parts for the Pual, Hithpael and Hophal
- 3) Weak Verbs:
 - principal parts for select binyan

The rest of the verb forms can then be studied for recognition purposes only. Once a person starts reading Hebrew texts all these verb forms will be reinforced inductively.

Below I outline a more detailed strategy of the above recommendation. It has three steps corresponding to the three groupings above. With respect to principal parts I recommend focusing on the following.

Principal Parts to Focus On

- Perfect 3 masc sing
- Imperfect 3 masc sing
- Preterite + Waw Consecutive 3 masc sing
- Imperative masc sing
- Active Participle masc sing
- Passive Participle masc sing
- Infinitive Construct
- Infinitive Absolute

¹ One could probably skip the jussive and cohortative for this set.

Detailed Strategy

Step 1. Qal Strong Verbs (36 words)

Be able to write in Hebrew and recite verbally the **full** paradigms of the Qal strong verbs. I.e. the full Qal paradigms for the following:

- Perfect
- Imperfect
- Preterite + Waw Consecutive
- Jussive
- Cohortative
- Imperative
- Active Participle
- Passive Participle
- Infinitive Construct
- Infinitive Absolute

Step 2. Remaining Strong Verbs (109 words)

Be able to write in Hebrew the following.

- the **full** paradigms of the Niphal, Piel and Hiphil strong verbs
- the **principal parts** of the Pual, Hithpael and Hophal strong verbs

Step 3. Weak Verbs (c. 240 words) (30 sets)

Be able to write in Hebrew the **principal parts** of the weak verbs in the following binyanim.

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|---------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| · I-Guttural | Qal עָמַד and חָזַק | Niphal עָמַד | Hiphil עָמַד |
| · I-Aleph | Qal אָכַל | | |
| · II-Guttural | Qal בָּחַר | Niphal בָּחַר | Piel בָּרַךְ |
| · I-Nun | Qal נָגַשׁ and נָפַל | Niphal נָגַשׁ | Hiphil נָגַשׁ |
| · I-Waw | Qal יָשַׁב | Niphal יָשַׁב | Hiphil יָשַׁב Hophal יָשַׁב |
| · I-Yod | Qal יָטַב | | Hiphil יָטַב |
| · III-He | Qal גָּלָה | Niphal גָּלָה | Piel גָּלָה Hiphil גָּלָה |
| · Hollow | Qal קוּם and שָׁם | Niphal קוּם | Hiphil קוּם |
| · Geminate | Qal סָבַב and קָלַל | Niphal סָבַב | Hiphil סָבַב |