

## Learning Hebrew: Niphal Stem

### NIPHAL STEM

The Niphal stem verbs take the prefix נ. The Niphal stem is used to express simple action with either a passive or a reflexive voice. Often, whatever a Qal stem verb means, the verb becomes passive or reflexive in the Niphal stem.

Qal: שָׁמַע (he heard)

Niphal: נִשְׁמַע (he was heard-passive; he heard himself-reflexive)

### NIPHAL STEM – STRONG VERBS

The Niphal Perfect is formed with the Niphal prefix (נ), verbal stem, and Perfect sufformative.

Qal: קָטַל

Niphal: נִקְטַל

The Niphal Imperfect is formed with the Imperfect preformative, verbal stem with the assimilated נ of the Niphal, and the Imperfect sufformative.

Qal: יִקְטֹל

Niphal: יִנְקֹטֵל

The Niphal Imperative and Infinitive Construct basic forms are identical. The Niphal Imperative is formed with the ה prefix, verbal stem with the assimilated נ of the Niphal, and the Imperative sufformative.

Qal: קָטַל

Niphal: הִנְקֹטֵל

The first form of the Niphal Infinitive Absolute preserves the נ of the Niphal. The second form has the ה prefix and assimilates the נ of the Niphal.

Qal: קָטוּל

Niphal (first form): נִקְטוּל

Niphal (second form): הִקְטוּל

The Niphal Participle is formed with the Niphal prefix (נִ), the verbal stem, and the inflectional endings that are the same as the Qal Participle.

Qal: קָטַל  
Niphal: נִקְטַל

#### NIPHAL STEM – WEAK VERBS

Category III-א verbs retain the prefix (נִ) in both the Perfect and Participle forms. The Perfect stem vowel becomes a qamets (ֶ) in the category III-א weak verbs.

Category III-ב verbs also retain most of the same rules for the Niphal strong verbs. The Perfect stem vowel is a qamets (ֶ) in the third-person masculine singular only. The remainder of the stem vowels in the Perfect form are the tsere-yod (ֵי).

Category I-Guttural verbs change the prefix vowel chiriq (ִ) to a tsere (ֵ). The Niphal Perfect and Participle prefix vowel is a segol (ֶ).

Category I-א verbs retain all the rules for the Niphal strong verbs.

Category I-ב verbs were originally identified as I-א verbs. The original consonant reappears in the Niphal stem as either a consonant (ב) (Imperfect, Imperative, and Infinitive) or a vowel (ו) (Perfect and Participle).

Sources: *The First Hebrew Primer, Third Edition* by Simon, Resnikoff, and Motzkin *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* by Pratico and Van Pelt