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: שָמַע (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: נִקְׁטַל

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

Qal: יִקְׁטֹל
Niphal: יִקָּטֵל

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: קְׁטֹל
Niphal: הִקָּטֵל

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: קָטוֹל
Niphal (first form): נִקְׁטוֹל
Niphal (second form): הִקָּטוֹל
The Niphal Participle is formed with the Niphal prefix (נ), the verbal stem, and the inflectional endings that are the same as the Qal Participle.

Qal: קֹטֵל
Niphal: נִקְׁטָל

NIPHAL STEM – WEAK VERBS

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

Category III-ה 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 (ֵֽ).

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

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

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


© Rachel-Esther bat-Avraham, 2009
For Personal Use Only. All Other Uses Must be Pre-Approved
rachel-esther@becomingjewish.org