

C. Notes on Hebrew Verb Stems

There are seven potential stems in which a Hebrew verb may occur...and a few random ones beside. Most Hebrew verbs do not occur in all of these..in fact, many, many Hebrew verbs only occur in one so the total picture is not nearly so confusing as it sounds at first sight. You are not asked to learn how the stems are formed but you should know the names of the stems and what they signify in general practice. There is some argument about the exact defining of some of these and so I just present the median stuff:

The Seven stems are:

QAL ...just the normal word meaning

PIEL...an intensification of Qal *

PUAL...a passive of the Piel

Hiphil..."causative" of the Qal**

Hophal...passive of the Hiphil

Niphal...passive of the Qal***

Hithpael...reflexive of the Qal ****

Very crudely, the seven stems go like this:

"I struck"

"I really struck"

"he was really struck"

"I caused a strike"

"I was caused to strike"

"I was struck"

"I struck myself"

Now that is hopelessly crude so don't show it to any of the other Hebrew teachers in this citadel of knowledge.

Now some notes on the above:

* Many words appear in the Piel only and hence there is no intensification. Some words occur in Qal and Piel but it is hard to see any gradation of activity as in the following illustrations.