

Ross Lesson 26: Niphal Stem LECTURE NOTES Dr. Phillip Marshall

1. Intro to Hebrew Stems/Binyanim (Ross 26.1)

In Biblical Hebrew (BH), the core of the verb is the triradical root (the three consonants in a particular sequence that contribute lexical information). As well, BH has 7 major “stems” or “binyanim” in the verbal systems—patterns of formation that relate the way the Subject participates in the action of the verb (active, passive, reflexive, causative, etc.—we discuss all these in lessons 26-31).

We have learned the Qal stem already—it’s the most basic stem. The other stems are often described as the “derived stems” because BH

Qal	פָּעַל	Piel	פִּעֵל	Hiphil	הִפְעִיל
Niphal	נִפְעַל	Pual	פֻּעַל	Hophal	הִפְעִיל
		Hithpael	הִתְפַּעֵל		

modifies the basic stem with special affixes (and vowel points) in order to derive the other 6 stems. Within each stem the verb uses inflectional affixes to indicate the conjugation pattern (pft, impf, juss, impv, etc.). In the past, the 3ms perfect of פָּעַל (‘to do, make’) in the different derived stems has been used among grammarians as a pattern to illustrate the derived stems.

2. Forms/principal parts of the Niphal (Ross 26.2)

The Niphal stem (Ross Lesson 26) is often described as the “passive” stem that makes the verb’s Qal-stem meaning passive (although that is only one of the possible semantic nuances of using this stem, see below). The Niphal stem’s formation pattern is characterized by a Niphal stem prefix *nun* (-נ). For our paradigm verb פָּקַד, the Niphal means ‘to be visited/appointed’.

Forms	Niphal
Pft 3ms	נִפְקַד
Impf 3ms	יִפְקַד
Wci(wayyiqtol) 3ms	וַיִּפְקַד
Juss 3ms	יִפְקַד
Coh 1cs	אֶפְקַדְהָ
Impv 2ms	הִפְקַד
Ptc ms	נִפְקָד
Infc	הִפְקֹד
Infa	נִפְקֹד / הִפְקֹד

Below, let’s fill in the vowel-pointing for the Niphal stem, based on the principal parts we see above. *Please*

have your “Principal Parts” master handout available to consult along with these lecture notes! (Notice that I’ve taken the inflectional affixes/boxes handout that you’ve been using for the Qal stem and applied them to each conjugation pattern for the Niphal stem—the inflections marking the subject are *all the same, no matter the stem!* Great news, eh?)

Perfect

3ms	פקד	3cp	פקדו
3fs	פקדה		
2ms	פקדת	2mp	פקדתם
2fs	פקדת	2fp	פקדתן
1cs	פקדתי	1cp	פקדנו

Imperfect

3ms	יפקד	3mp	יפקדו
3fs	תפקד	3fp	תפקדנה
2ms	תפקד	2mp	תפקדו
2fs	תפקדי	2fp	תפקדנה
1cs	אפקד	1cp	נפקד

Wci 3ms ויפקד 3mp ויפקדו

Juss 3ms יפקד 3mp יפקדו

2ms תפקד 2mp תפקדו

Coh 1cs אפקדה 1cp נפקדה

Impv

2ms	פקד	2mp	פקדו
2fs	פקדי	2fp	פקדנה

Ptc

ms	פקד	mp	פקדים
fs	פקדה	fp	פקדות

Infinitive: cst פקד +3ms sfx הפקדו abs פקד / פקד

3. Translation/Semantics of the Niphal (Ross 26.3)

3.1. Most common: Niphal makes the Qal meaning *passive*.

John ate rice.
Qal

Rice was eaten.
Ni.

3.2. Reflexive/Reciprocal use.

מָכַר Qal pft 3ms = He sold (my car!)

נִמְכַּר Ni. pft 3ms = He was sold. (Use #1 above, pure passive)
= He sold himself. (Use #2, reflexive sense)

רָאוּ Qal pft 3cp = They saw (somethg.)

נִרְאוּ Ni. pft 3cp = They saw one another (Use #2, reciprocal sense). But also
possible are (based on context):
= They saw themselves. (Use #2, reflexive sense)
= They were seen. (Use #1, pure passive)

3.3. Unpredictable senses (must learn from usage and/or checking the lexicon/vocab list).

a. Many verbs in the Niphal stem do not have any apparent passive, reflexive, or reciprocal meaning.

b. Some verbs that occur in the Niphal stem do not occur in the Qal stem—so the meaning of the verb in the Niphal cannot be that it makes the Qal meaning passive!

c. The semantics of such verbs in the Niphal stem can be unpredictable, and you have to learn those verbs' meanings individually as you come to them.

Exx.

לָחַם נִלָּחַם Ni pft 3ms 'he fought'

אָמַן נִאֲמַן Ni pft 3ms 'he was faithful'