

Praise for *Weak Verb Morphology*

Morphology is all important. I used to tell my students, “If you have no morphology, you have no theology.” Apparently 68,000 of 72,000 verbs in the Hebrew Bible are weak verbs. In addition, 70 percent of all verbs are *qal* stem, so mastering the weak verb is essential to reading biblical Hebrew. Here Adam Howell has done a remarkable job of assisting students in building a foundation that is solid for a lifetime of exegesis in the Old Testament. Based upon solid, up-to-date scholarship, I heartily recommend this work.

Peter J. Gentry, Senior Professor,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Adam Howell continues to solidify himself as one of the most helpful voices in Hebrew language pedagogy today. This book fills a strategic gap in many introductory grammars, outlining a reliable process for approaching weak verbs. Rather than expecting students to memorize endless pages of paradigms, the methodology presented in this book gives students a systematic framework to parse and recognize weak verbs in context. Beyond this, Howell’s aptitude as a teacher comes through in his accessible writing style and clear explanations. The abundant examples and exercises provide ample opportunity to practice applying the method. For anyone who has struggled to grasp the formation of weak verbs, this is the book for you!

Andrew M. King, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary & Spurgeon College

Emphasizing consistencies and regularities in the patterns of biblical Hebrew verbs, Howell’s book helpfully breaks down for students how to identify weak verbal forms. The presentation is accessible, employing easy-to-read charts and diagrams, while at the same time not neglecting some of the more complex aspects of verb morphology. The book will be an asset to students wishing to bridge the gap between elementary grammars and more technical reference grammars.

Eric D. Raymond, Senior Lector II in Biblical Hebrew,
Yale Divinity School

For the intermediate student of biblical Hebrew, weak verbs can feel chaotic and unpredictable and so pose a major obstacle to developing proficiency in reading. What if Adam Howell convinced you that weak verb spelling changes are not random or haphazard? What if he helped you to understand the consistent and predictable patterns they follow that make identification manageable? In this book—that is accessible to second-year students and useful for seasoned readers of biblical Hebrew—Adam Howell serves as a gifted, wise guide who will not only lead readers to greater proficiency in reading Hebrew but also greater delight in encountering God in his precious word.

Ian J. Vaillancourt, Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew,
Heritage Theological Seminary

Adam Howell's *Weak Verb Morphology* is poised to become one of the most significant contributions to Hebrew pedagogy in the 21st century. Weak verbs are notoriously challenging for students, but Howell's method to demystify verbs will bring order out of chaos for those learning Hebrew. Drawing on both modern insight and rabbinic tradition, Howell enables students not merely to memorize paradigms but to truly understand the structure and beauty of the Hebrew verb. This volume will benefit beginners and advanced students alike—and promises to reshape how Hebrew is taught and learned.

Michael C. Lyons, Associate Professor of Old Testament & Hebrew,
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Weak Verb Morphology

ADVANCING BIBLICAL HEBREW

Weak Verb Morphology

Adam J. Howell

MILES V. VAN PELT, SERIES EDITOR

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Weak Verb Morphology

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Abbreviations

General Abbreviations

EHLL	Khan, Geoffrey, ed. <i>Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics</i> . 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
ETCBC	Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer
GKC	Gesenius, Wilhelm. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arthur E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
HB	Hebrew Bible
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael Patrick O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
JM	Joüon, Paul, and T. Muraoka. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006.
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
Qimḥi	Chomsky, William, ed. <i>David Kimhi's Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol) Systematically Presented and Critically Annotated</i> . New York: Bloch, 1952.
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
SESE	Stuttgart Electronic Study Edition (morphology database)
WIVU	Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit (morphology database)

Grammatical Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
<i>a</i>	<i>pataḥ</i>
c	common
CAPL	Closed Accented Prefers Long

cons	consecutive
CURS	Closed Unaccented Requires Short
CV	Consonant-Vowel
CVC	Consonant-Vowel-Consonant
<i>ê</i>	<i>tsere yod</i>
fs	feminine singular
fp	feminine plural
<i>i</i>	<i>hireq</i>
<i>î</i>	<i>hireq yod</i>
inf abs	infinitive absolute
inf cstr	infinitive construct
I- ⌘ <i>ô</i> PV verb	I- ⌘ verb that in the imperfect conjugation quiesces the ⌘ and takes a <i>holem</i> (<i>ô</i>) as the Preformative Vowel
impf	imperfect
impv	imperative
J.I.I.V.E.	Jussive; Imperative 2ms; Infinitive absolute; <i>Vav</i> -Consecutive all get an E (<i>tsere</i>) thematic vowel
ms	masculine singular
mp	masculine plural
<i>ô</i>	<i>holem</i>
<i>ô</i>	<i>holem vav</i>
OAPS	Open Accented Prefers Short
OOPPS	Originally Open ProPretonic reduces short vowel to a vocal <i>Shewa</i>
OPRL	Open Pretonic Requires Long
pass	passive
pf	perfect
PGN	person, gender, number
ptc	participle
SQNMLVY	The mnemonic to remember the consonants that may omit a dagesh forte with a vocal <i>shewa</i> (sibilants, ק, ג, ב, ל, ו, י).
R ₁	first root radical
R ₂	second root radical
R ₃	third root radical
TAM	tense, aspect, mood
<i>u</i>	<i>qibbuts</i>
<i>û</i>	<i>shureq</i>
<i>w</i>	<i>waw/vav</i>
<i>y</i>	<i>yod</i>

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Introduction

According to the Groves-Wheeler Westminster Hebrew Morphology database, there are 72,396 verbs in the Hebrew Bible (excluding Aramaic). Statistics may vary on the total number of weak verbs depending on whether one includes verbal roots with guttural consonants as “weak” or how one counts verbal roots with two (or more) weak letters. However, if we tally all of the verbal roots that have at least one “weak” consonant and include geminate verbal roots, the number of weak verbs in the Hebrew Bible begins to push 85–90 percent of the total verbs. If we state the point a little differently: It is vital that Hebrew students master weak verbs because they will see them everywhere in the Hebrew Bible!

Often, when Hebrew students begin to learn verb morphology, they learn a set of paradigms or patterns for what they presume verbs *should* look like when they see them in the Hebrew Bible. But then, nearly 90 percent of the verbs they encounter have what seem to be morphological “exceptions” because of some sort of weakness. These changes to what the students have learned can lead to discouragement and frustration as Hebrew professors may say, “Yeah, we’ll cover that in more detail with a different paradigm later,” or “Yeah, that’s just the way Hebrew works.” Students genuinely sense that they are learning Hebrew because they can reproduce a *qal* or *niphal* strong verb paradigm on a quiz, but the majority of the verbs they see when reading the text do not appear with the same paradigm patterns they worked so hard to memorize.

In this book, I want to offer some morphological principles for the various types of weak verbs to minimize—and perhaps even alleviate—that discouraging experience for students. What I have found is that weak verbs are *not* all the exceptions to strong verb morphology. Rather, weak verbs differ from the strong verb based on consistent patterns specific to the particular weakness of the verb. While it certainly takes more time and effort to learn these “consistent patterns,” once those are in the student’s tool belt, weak verbs are no longer the exceptions, but are, in fact, “normal” as it pertains to what is phonologically and morphologically expected with specific weak verbal roots.

I regularly tell my first-year students that with Hebrew, we are trying *to describe* the morphology we observe in the Hebrew Bible. We are not trying to tell the Hebrew language what it ought to do morphologically. When we discuss morphology in English, we often say things like, “to make a word plural, add ‘s.’” Or, “If the word already ends with a sibilant (an “s” sound as with s, c, or z), then add ‘es.’” We all realize there are exceptions, but take the illustrative journey with me. When we speak about rules like this, we are telling students what English ought to do to make a word plural. With the Hebrew Bible, morphology is the inverse of that. We look at all the morphological patterns, and then try to describe what we see across the pages of the Hebrew Bible. We can combine these observed patterns with what we know from diachronic linguistics and comparative Semitics to get a clearer picture of the morphological expectations, but we never reach a point where we are telling the Hebrew language what it ought to do. We are always describing what we see.

With weak verbs, there are certainly some exceptional forms that do not follow the consistent patterns presented in this book. But there is also a considerable amount of consistency within the various categories of weak verbs. That consistency can be observed and described by looking at all of the forms of a specific weak verb type, and then we can begin to anticipate how a weak verb might appear in the Hebrew Bible. What I hope to present here is a description of those patterns and some of the morphological principles behind them so that lifelong learners can revisit those pesky weak verbs that caused so much trouble in class and find that they are quite “normal” within their own categories.

In addition to the discussions about weak verb morphology, this volume also provides exercises to practice parsing weak verbs. Similarly to Van Pelt and Pratico’s *Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary in Context: Building Competency with Words Occurring 50 Times or More* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), the verses in Part 3 of this book will give you plenty of practice parsing all types of weak verbs. One of my colleagues at Southern Seminary helped me find the fewest number of verses from the Hebrew Bible that contain at least one example of every type of weak verb.¹ The initial list contained forty-eight verses from the Hebrew Bible. By my count, II-guttural verbs had the lowest representation at fifteen occurrences in those forty-eight verses. The highest representation was II-1/ʾ verbs at seventy-six occurrences. If you were

1. I am very thankful to Joe Harrod for his help to analyze several spreadsheets to produce our initial list of verses.

to translate those forty-eight verses, you would encounter several examples of each weak verb category *in context*. In my opinion, this type of practice is more beneficial than parsing lists of weak verbs without any context.

In Part 3 of this resource, you will notice that there are seventy verses for the “Weak Verbs in Context” exercises. While the original list provided at least fifteen examples of each type of weak verb, those verbs did not represent each type of morphological change for each type of weak verb. For example, verbal roots with a **י** as the first root consonant (I-**י** verbs) sometimes contract the I-**י** and sometimes the **י** will drop out. The initial list may have had one of these morphological changes, but not both. After analyzing all the verbs in the original forty-eight verses, I added enough verses to provide at least one example of each type of morphological change for each type of weak verb. All in all, these examples should give readers an opportunity to encounter weak verbs “in the wild,” rather than staring at a paradigm or working exercises from a list of verbs with no context.

Some Historical Background

In the medieval period, mainly the tenth–eleventh centuries AD, Karaite and Rabbanite grammarians produced several grammars of the Hebrew language.² The first major Karaite grammarian was ‘Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ, who produced דקדוק (“fine grammatical investigation”) in the second half of the tenth century.³ His work was more a compilation of grammatical notes than an organized “Hebrew grammar.” In his notes, ibn Nūḥ “attempted to discover consistent rules governing the formation of words.”⁴ His goal was to show that odd word formations were not the product of random and haphazard vowel pointing. Rather, they followed consistent patterns from historical word bases.⁵ This book does not follow the Karaite tradition in full, but it certainly approaches the morphology of weak verbs from a similar perspective.

2. The Karaites were a group of medieval Jews who believed that the Scriptures (the written *torah*) were the only source of divine authority. They often found themselves at odds with the Rabbanites who favored oral tradition and Talmudic authority in the tenth and eleventh centuries AD. For our purposes, these groups represent two traditions from which we can discern longstanding, deep study of Hebrew morphology.

3. Geoffrey Khan, “Grammarians: Karaite,” *EHLL*, 2:76. Geoffrey Khan, *The Early Karaite Tradition of Hebrew Grammatical Thought: Including a Critical Edition, Translation and Analysis of the Dikduq of ‘Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ on the Hagiographa*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

4. Khan, “Grammarians: Karaite,” *EHLL*, 2:77.

5. Ibn Nūḥ did not affirm the concept of Hebrew verbal roots, but rather built his morphological arguments on historical “bases.”

Weak verbs are not the exceptions and anomalies. Rather, they show consistent patterns based on phonological and morphological principles that are analogous to other forms in the Hebrew Bible. Geoffrey Khan states, “In the early Karaite tradition, therefore, *diqduq* was a method of investigating Scripture by the study of the subtle details of its language. The purpose of this investigation was both to establish the fine details of its meaning and also to demonstrate that the language conformed to a logical system.”⁶

Another Karaite grammarian was ‘Abū al-Faraj Hārūn ibn Faraj, a resident of Jerusalem in the first half of the eleventh century.⁷ ‘Abū al-Faraj’s longest grammatical work, *The Comprehensive Book of General Principles and Particular Rules of the Hebrew Language*, was an eight-volume work completed in AD 1026.⁸ ‘Abū al-Faraj had a slightly different emphasis than his Karaite predecessors, but he added to ibn Nūḥ’s focus by saying that his primary goal was faithful interpretation and reading of the Hebrew text. In other words, ‘Abū al-Faraj was willing to focus on detailed morphology so that the biblical text would be read and interpreted correctly. Again, this emphasis of the Karaite grammarians matches the goal of this book. We want to devote time to these details so that we can more readily read God’s word in the original Hebrew and, therefore, interpret it more faithfully.

The Karaites also influenced later grammarians. Geoffrey Khan mentions two works from the eleventh century, *Light of the Eye* (מאור עין) and *Book of Rules Regarding the Grammatical Inflections of the Hebrew Language* (*Kitāb al-Uqūd fī Taṣārīf al-Luḡa al-‘Ibrāniyya*) that carried forward the grammatical approach of the Karaites.⁹ As grammarians continued to teach these detailed principles, they developed mnemonics to aid in memorizing verbal forms. The concept of mnemonics was also present in ‘Abū al-Faraj’s work, but these memory aids became prominent in these eleventh century works.¹⁰ Khan notes that these mnemonics were reminiscent of the Masoretic system of abbreviations for the Masorah Parva.¹¹ The decision to use mnemonics in

6. Khan, “Grammarians: Karaite,” *EHLL*, 2:78.

7. Khan, “Morphology in the Medieval Karaite Grammatical Tradition,” *EHLL*, 2:711.

8. Khan, “Grammarians: Karaite,” *EHLL*, 2:79.

9. Nadia Vidro, *Verbal Morphology in the Karaite Treatise on Hebrew Grammar Kitāb Al-Uqūd Fī Taṣārīf Al-Luḡa Al-‘Ibrāniyya*, Cambridge Genizah Studies Series 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Geoffrey Khan, “Grammarians: Karaite,” *EHLL*, 2:81.

10. Vidro, *Verbal Morphology in the Karaite Treatise*, §8.5.

11. Vidro, *Verbal Morphology in the Karaite Treatise*, §8.5. In the Masoretic Text, the Masoretes added notes in the margin called the Masorah Parva (“the small Masorah”). Since these notes were in the margin, they often used abbreviations or acronyms to convey their intended note. For further study of the masorah of the Masoretic Text, see Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

this present volume was not based on these Karaite grammarians. But note that this approach and methodology has roots in a longstanding grammatical tradition.

A prominent Rabbanite Hebrew grammarian was Sa'adya Gaon. Aharon Maman says, "Morphology constituted the core of Hebrew grammar in the Middle Ages."¹² In keeping with this focus on morphology, Gaon's approach consisted of analyzing words based on their morphological patterns to understand word usage in a particular context.¹³ While Gaon did not seem to accept the concept of a verbal root, other Rabbanite grammarians espoused this view and analyzed verbs from the perspective of a verbal root with affixes.¹⁴ Subsequent Rabbanite grammarians who analyzed morphology based on a verbal root include Yehuda ben Quraysh, Ḥay Gaon, Menaḥem ben Saruq, Dunash ben Labraṭ, Yehuda Ḥayyūj and Jonah ibn Janāḥ.¹⁵ The Spanish grammarian Yehuda ben David Ḥayyūj solidified the concepts of a triconsonantal root that are still in use today.¹⁶ For our purposes, understanding that the concept of a root has a rich history in grammatical discussion will help with how this book approaches the idea of a root and strong verb "shell" with consistent and predictable affixes.

One final grammarian to include here is Rabbi David Qimḥi (Radaq). According to Maman, Qimḥi employed the same morphological concepts as Ḥayyūj in his מכלול (*miklōl*).¹⁷ Ḥayyūj focused on weak I-, II-, and III-ו/י roots and geminate roots, and to the degree that Qimḥi followed his methodology, we find helpful discussions in Qimḥi's מכלול.¹⁸ Qimḥi also references ibn Janāḥ, another of the prominent Rabbanite grammarians. Because Qimḥi seems to rely upon this rich tradition, we have provided citations to Qimḥi's comments where they pertain to the topics discussed here.

Much has changed in the study of language since the medieval period, but these works were the precursors to how we approach Hebrew grammar and morphology today. We are not trying to replicate these medieval grammarians in every detail, but it is helpful to consider the rich tradition from which our current understanding of Hebrew arose.

12. Aharon Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," *EHL*, 2:712.

13. Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," 2:712.

14. Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," 2:713.

15. Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," 2:713.

16. Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," 2:715–16, 718–19.

17. Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," 2:720.

18. Maman, "Morphology in the Medieval Rabbanite Grammatical Tradition," 2:718.

A Note on Resources

A recent treatment of Hebrew phonology and morphology is *The Development of the Biblical Hebrew Vowels: Including a Concise Historical Morphology* by Benjamin Suchard.¹⁹ Suchard says, “Perhaps due to strong philological tradition in the scholarship of such languages as Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew, the field of comparative Semitics tends to be more tolerant of loosely formulated sound laws with unexplained exceptions and allows for nonphonetic factors to condition sound change.”²⁰ Suchard’s goal is to counter this tendency and to bring what he calls a “Neogrammarian” method to biblical Hebrew, showing that morphological vowel changes are driven by phonology.²¹ He says, “This work aims to bring this Neogrammarian method to bear on the problems surrounding the development of vocalic phonemes from Proto-Northwest Semitic to Biblical Hebrew in an attempt to describe the changes affecting them with exceptionless sound laws.”²² This aim proposed by Suchard expresses what I hope will also be true of this book. I hope you will begin to see that vowel changes in weak verbs are a result of regular phonological conditions. We cannot say, with Suchard, that weak verbs are “exceptionless,” but there is far more morphological consistency than is often assumed. Suchard focuses on vocalic sound changes that cannot be explained by other means whereas in this resource, the focus is on the regular patterns for identifying and parsing weak verbs. So, our emphases are slightly different. Even so, in Suchard’s appendix, “A Concise Historical Morphology of Biblical Hebrew,” he includes a section on weak verb morphology, and we will reference that section where it is fitting for our discussion.²³

An alternative approach is that of Joshua Blau in his 2010 monograph, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew: An Introduction*.²⁴ Blau applies what he calls a “diachronic-comparative” linguistics approach to biblical Hebrew.²⁵ Whereas Suchard recognizes that biblical Hebrew is multilayered, he also views

19. Benjamin D. Suchard, *The Development of the Biblical Hebrew Vowels: Including a Concise Historical Morphology*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

20. Suchard, *The Development of the Biblical Hebrew Vowels*, 2.

21. The Neogrammarian Hypothesis states that morphology is driven by phonology and that when a certain sound change happens in one place because of the surrounding conditions, that same sound change will occur in other places in the language when those same conditions are met. In other words, sound change happens due to certain phonetic conditions and those sound changes are preserved in the morphology of the word.

22. Suchard, *The Development of the Biblical Hebrew Vowels*, 3.

23. Suchard, *The Development of the Biblical Hebrew Vowels*, 248–53.

24. Joshua Blau, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew: An Introduction*, LSAWS 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010).

25. Blau, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew*, 5.

the unifying effect of the Tiberian Masoretic vocalization as what essentially makes biblical Hebrew a consistent language for investigation.²⁶ Blau is more inclined to explain the phonological and morphological changes within the diachronic layering of the Hebrew Bible by comparing the historical layers to comparative texts from the same periods. The net effect is that Blau argues for morphological change from a slightly different perspective than Suchard, but still offers important and helpful insights into the morphological patterns of weak verbs. So, while these approaches vary rather significantly, we will cite both throughout this book without a wholesale adoption of the particular approach of either. What I hope to show is that the morphological patterns we see in weak verbs are consistent and predictable within each weak verb type whether or not we can precisely define the historical derivation.

A third work to which we will refer is Eric Reymond's *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew Grammar: A Student's Guide to Phonology and Morphology*, another extensive treatment of Hebrew morphology.²⁷ Reymond employs a methodology that seems to embrace diachronic linguistics but also recognizes the consistency of the Masoretic Text. Reymond relies heavily on historical bases as the morphological derivative of inflected forms (e.g., **qatl*, **qitl*, or **qutl* for segolate nouns), but he also comments that "the vocalization of the text as we have it today in the MT has likely been made uniform to a degree that largely masks most dialectical and many chronological differences."²⁸ Reymond provides a good balance of diachronic explanations from Proto-Semitic while also recognizing the value of the Masoretic Text. Reymond's discussions are often quite similar to Blau's, but he considers that linguistic leveling may have had an effect on Hebrew morphology and some forms cannot be explained by diachronic linguistics and comparative Semitics alone. Reymond's work is another monograph that we will cite often to direct readers to a more in-depth discussion of the patterns observed and derivations proposed in this book. As such, all of these highly technical works on Hebrew morphology (Suchard, Blau, and Reymond) are cited in footnotes to provide the reader with more nuanced discussions if there is a desire to do further research.

26. Suchard says, "the Hebrew Bible's temporal heterogeneity does not affect the phonological homogeneity of Tiberian Hebrew" (Suchard, *The Development of the Biblical Hebrew Vowels*, 21).

27. Eric D. Reymond, *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew Grammar: A Student's Guide to Phonology and Morphology*, RBS 89 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018).

28. Reymond, *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 14. Aaron Hornkohl calls this "linguistic leveling," saying, "It is likely that a further portion [of the dialectical differences] is masked by the Tiberian vowel points, which reflect a remarkably uniform pronunciation that cannot possibly have been shared by all texts of the Hebrew Bible at the place and time each was composed" (Aaron D. Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization and the Language of the Book of Jeremiah: The Case for a Sixth-Century Date of Composition*, *Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics* 74 [Leiden: Brill, 2014], 19).

In addition to these technical monographs, I have also included citations to Gesenius (GKC), Joüon-Muraoka (JM), and Rabbi David Qimḥi (Qimḥi). The citations to Gesenius and Joüon-Muraoka were chosen because they (1) address these topics in significant detail and (2) are considered respectable reference grammars. These citations should be used for further research and study of the patterns we observe in weak verbs. As we said in the section on historical background, the citations of Qimḥi are provided to tie these discussions back to the rich history of investigating the details of phonological and morphological patterns in the Hebrew Bible. With citations to these resources, from medieval to modern, readers who desire to pursue these topics further should be well equipped.

For digital resources in this project, I have used several morphology databases. Since all electronic morphology databases are created by scholars who may approach Hebrew morphological tagging differently, I sometimes had to refer to different tagging systems to find certain forms (e.g., not all systems mark verbs as “jussive”). Also, some systems may differ in how they label roots. When a byform is possible, some tagging systems will label one byform whereas others will label a different root (e.g., תִּלַּח/תִּלָּה). These are not extremely common “problems” with searching databases, but in order to be as accurate as possible, I consulted multiple morphology databases. Throughout the book and in relevant footnotes, I have specified which tagging database I used for a particular search. Here is a list of the databases used and where one can access them for further study.

Morphology Database	Module Name	Software
Groves-Wheeler Westminster Morphology	<i>BHS-W4</i> <i>BHS-T</i>	Accordance Bible Software
ETCBC (WIVU) ²⁹	MT-ETCBC <i>BHS/WIVU</i>	
SESE (Stuttgart Electronic Study Edition) ³⁰	<i>BHS OT</i>	Logos Bible Software
Lexham Morphology (<i>Lexham Hebrew Bible</i>)	LHB	

29. WIVU is an acronym for Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit, the group led by Eep Talstra to develop this morphology database. ETCBC stands for Eep Talstra Center for Bible and Computer, the current name given to this database, named in honor of Eep Talstra when he retired in 2012. These are the same morphology databases. The ETCBC module in Accordance Bible Software contains syntactical tags as well as morphological tagging.

30. The SESE is an adaptation of the WIVU database that allows for slightly different searching in Logos Bible Software.

The Methodology

When I began my Hebrew studies in 2005, Dr. T. J. Betts was my professor at The Southern Baptist Theology Seminary. We used Russell Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi's grammar, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar*. I did not know at that time there were various methods for learning Biblical Hebrew, and so I just did what I was told as we progressed through the course. Fuller and Choi's grammar is what I have come to call a "morphology-heavy" approach to Biblical Hebrew. By that, I mean they teach students how to recognize the changes to all the jots and tittles on the page, by teaching them how to write all the jots and tittles on the page. Another way to summarize the approach is "if you can write it, then you can read it." So, when we arrived at weak verbs, we learned all of the minute details for how to compose weak verbs. We learned what weak verb forms *should* look like—e.g., what changes when a I- $\dot{\text{I}}$ follows a *pataḥ* preformative vowel, what changes when a guttural consonant rejects a *dagesh forte*, etc. At the time, I did not know the value of what I was learning. I simply did what I was told.

As I progressed in Hebrew classes, there was certainly a steep uphill learning curve for me with translation, but I found myself not asking the same questions as other students when parsing verbs. Some students who had learned from a "paradigm-heavy" approach seemed to be paralyzed in the mental Rolodex of paradigms when asked to parse verbs, especially weak verbs. On the other hand, I found myself saying in my head, "Of course that is a *hiphil* with an *aw* → *ô* contraction of the I- $\dot{\text{I}}$." This internal dialogue was no pat on my own back; I had plenty of other struggles. And yet, because I had been taught the detailed morphological changes that are rather consistent within the individual weak verb types, I was able to recognize the patterns even when they differed from the strong verb morphology.

In order to reach this understanding of weak verb morphology, the approach that Fuller and Choi present is one that teaches students to create (to compose by writing) nouns and verbs in all their various types. We learned to create weak verbs with all their idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. In order to anticipate the changes in weak verbs, this method requires a precise knowledge of the standard, strong verb morphology. If a student misses elements of strong verb morphology, then understanding weak verbs will be a challenge. Because of the need to know the strong verb perfectly, in Part 1 of this book, we will "review" Fuller and Choi's method for creating strong verbs so that our discussions of weak verb morphology will make sense. In order to say that the *hiphil* *holem-vav* preformative vowel of I- $\dot{\text{I}}$ verbs in the imperfect is the product of an

aw → *ô* contraction (יִשְׁבּ [יְשִׁיב]), we have to first know that there should have been a *pataḥ* as the “original” preformative vowel (יְיִשִּׁיב*).

We will talk more about the methodology in Part 1, but for now, it is important to know that it is worth the effort to learn the strong verb morphology *precisely* so that you can make sense of the consistent changes in weak verb morphology. We will not create weak verbs in this book. Rather, we will discuss weak verb morphology by referring to what the verbal root “originally” had before the morphological change we see in the Hebrew Bible. Or, we will say, “The R₂ (i.e., the second root consonant) *should* have a *dagesh forte*.” These kinds of statements will presume a precise knowledge of what the strong verb morphology was before any changes caused by the weaknesses of weak verbs. For those interested in the full “creating weak verbs” methodology, I would recommend *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* by Fuller and Choi.

Terminology

There is no small disagreement among Hebrew scholars regarding the “correct” terminology to use when describing verbal forms. Some conventions use “perfect,” “imperfect,” “imperfect + *vav*-consecutive,” while others use *qatal*, *yiqtol*, and *vayyiqtol*, respectively. It is important to clarify the terminology I will use throughout this book. However, I am not making an argument for which is best or even which is “correct.” I simply follow the conventions I learned as a Hebrew student and want to accommodate other systems where it is helpful.

The following sections provide the definitions of common terms we will use and how I will refer to them.

Roots and Root Consonants

We will speak of verbal roots as the consonantal “skeleton” that communicates the base meaning of a verb.³¹ Most verbal roots are triconsonantal, but there are good historical arguments for some biconsonantal roots as well. Additionally, biblical Hebrew has quadrilateral roots (four consonants), but they are rare.³² The concept of a root derives from early Jewish grammarians who used the term שׁוֹרֶשׁ (“root”) to refer to the consonantal base of Hebrew words.

In this book, the concept of a root and root consonants will be important as we consider the “shell” that can be superimposed on any three root consonants. Most Hebrew verbs can be created by adding a consistent pattern of

31. *IBHS*, §21.1a.; cf. *GKC*, §30. For an excellent introduction to Hebrew roots, see Tamar Zewi, “Roots: Modern Notions,” in *EHL*, 3:427–31.

32. *GKC*, §30p; *JM*, §60.

affixes before and/or after the root consonants. In order to work backwards and parse these verbs as we see them in their final form in the Hebrew Bible, we will need to dissect a word into its root and affixes, separating the base “skeleton” for lexical purposes (definition) and the affixes for inflectional purposes (function).

Throughout this book, we will refer to root consonants of the verbal skeleton as the R_1 (first root consonant), R_2 (second root consonant), and R_3 (third root consonant). These will read from right-to-left, of course ($R_3 R_2 R_1$).

Stems

The verbal stem is the pattern of pronunciation with affixes that give a verb its “varied shades of meaning.”³³ Medieval Hebrew grammarians called these *binyanim* (בִּנְיָנִים) or “buildings” since they “built” upon the base root to provide nuanced meanings (intensive, causative, passive, etc.). The base stem in the Hebrew verbal system is the *qal* (קָל; “light”). In other methodological systems, the *qal* may be called the G-stem or the *paʿal* from the pedagogical root פִּעַל. The other six stems we will work with are often called “derived” stems because they are derivative of the base stem *qal*. Using the root פִּעַל for the spelling of the stem names, these derived stems are *niphal*, *piel*, *pual*, *hithpaal*, *hiphil*, and *hophal*.

Conjugations

In this book, we will use the term conjugation to refer to the affix patterns that indicate tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) and identify person, gender, and number (PGN) in the verbal form. Gesenius and Joüon-Muraoka use the term conjugation to refer to the verbal stems listed in the previous section.³⁴ I cannot make the argument here as to which nomenclature is best, nor does it matter. I simply want to provide clarity with how we will refer to the phonological and morphological adjustments to the verbal root that provide TAM and PGN for a verbal form. The conjugations we will use are the perfect, imperfect, imperative, infinitive (absolute and construct), and participle. Some secondary, though no less important, conjugations are the jussive, cohortative, *vav*-consecutive imperfect (*vayyiqtol*), and *vav*-consecutive perfect (*veqatal*).³⁵

33. GKC, §39c.

34. GKC, §39c; JM, §40a. Both Gesenius and Joüon-Muraoka admit that they use the term “conjugation” to refer to the *binyanim* for lack of a better term and that it also has a different meaning in Hebrew than in Greek, Latin, or English.

35. There is debate about whether the jussive and cohortative are distinct conjugated forms or just contextual functions of the imperfect (*yiqtol*). In this book, we will treat the jussive and cohortative as unique morphological forms since some weak verbs distinguish the long and short imperfect. These forms

Preformatives and Sufformatives

For the various affixes that attach directly to the verbal root, we will use the terms preformatives and sufformatives.³⁶ Preformatives, as the name suggests, come at the front of the verbal root. Sufformatives attach at the end of the verbal root. Using this definition, we will consider both the ה of the *hiphil* stem and the ואתן letters of the imperfect conjugation to be examples of “preformatives.”³⁷ These are morphological affixes that occur at the beginning of the verbal root and are part of the final verbal form. Examples of sufformatives would be the endings of the perfect (suffixed conjugation; ותי-, ת-, ת-, נו-, etc.) or the *shureq* of many plural verbs (יקטלו; *qal* impf 3mp). Preformatives and sufformatives are the elements attached to the verbal root that make up the final verbal form before any other prefixes or suffixes are added.

Vocalic Sufformative/Ending

With sufformatives, we will further distinguish between vocalic sufformatives and syllabic sufformatives. Vocalic sufformatives are sufformatives that are *only* a vowel. For example, the ו added to the end of a perfect 3cp verb (קטלו) or the imperfect mp verbs (יקטלו; תקטלו) is a vocalic sufformative because it is *only* a vowel added to the verbal form. The *hireq yod* on the end of the imperfect 2fs is also a vocalic sufformative since the entire sufformative is *only* a vowel (תקטלי). I also consider ה of the perfect 3fs to be a vocalic sufformative (קטלה). It is true that when these vocalic sufformatives are added to the verbal root that they constitute a final syllable in conjunction with the R₃. The distinction we will make in this volume is that the vocalic sufformative is *only* a vowel when considered individually.

The concept of a vocalic sufformative is important in verbs because we will employ a vowel adjustment rule that a “vocalic ending causes reduction of the

display a morphological distinction that, in a book on weak verb morphology, is important to maintain. In addition to these morphological distinctions from the imperfect, their contextual function and clause position certainly help us to recognize these forms as jussive or cohortative. For an introduction to the advanced conversation on jussives and cohortatives, see Ahouva Shulman, “Jussive,” in *EHLL*, 2:437–40; Steven Fassberg, “Cohortative,” in *EHLL*, 1:476–77; Scott Callahan, “Mood and Modality: Biblical Hebrew,” in *EHLL*, 2:687–90; and their associated bibliographies.

36. For the sake of consistency in this volume, we will use the terms preformative and sufformative even for the affixes of the verbal stems. We will reserve the terms prefixes and suffixes for elements added before or after the final verbal form (e.g., pronominal suffixes or prefixed interrogative ה). While this convention may be a bit idiosyncratic, I believe that it helps students to consistently identify what morphological distinctives are part of the verbal form itself versus what elements may be secondary additions like pronominal suffixes, conjunctive ו, or interrogative ה.

37. Some may distinguish between preformatives/sufformatives that are part of the verbal conjugation and prefixes/suffixes that are part of the verbal stem. For this volume, we will follow the definitions provided in these paragraphs.

R₂ vowel.” For example, whenever we see a vocalic sufformative, the thematic vowel (R₂ vowel) will reduce to a vocal *shewa*. This may not seem like a big deal, but if that second root letter is a guttural consonant, then we will want to know that it will become a composite *shewa* (◌ְ◌ֿ, ◌ֿ◌ֿ, ◌ֿ◌ֿ) instead of a simple vocal *shewa* (◌ְ◌ֿ *qal* impf 2mp בעט, 1 Sam 2:29). We will discuss this more in the chapter on II-guttural verbs, but this morphological adjustment begins with knowing that a vocalic sufformative normally produces the reduction of the stem vowel associated with R₂.

Syllabic Sufformative/Ending

We will use the term “syllabic sufformative” to refer to an ending on a verbal root that is an entire syllable. Some describe these endings as those that “begin with a consonant,” and that would also be an accurate way to describe them. As opposed to vocalic sufformatives in which the ending itself is only a vowel, syllabic sufformatives constitute an ending that is an entire syllable in itself. Examples of syllabic sufformatives are several of the sufformatives in the perfect conjugation (◌ִי, ◌ִי, ◌ִי, etc.). The imperfect 2fp and 3fp also have a syllabic sufformative (◌ִי). Notice that all of these begin with a consonant and constitute an entire syllable when considered separately from the triconsonantal verbal root.

Syllabic sufformatives will require special attention in weak verbs when a verbal form takes a helping vowel as a phonological buffer between the verbal root and the sufformative (e.g., ◌ִי *niphal* pf 1cs פוג, Ps 38:9). Additionally, we will see in III-ה verbs that vocalic sufformatives in the imperfect attach directly to R₂ whereas syllabic sufformatives will use a helping vowel (◌ִי) as a buffer to the sufformative. Both examples will require a knowledge of the distinction between vocalic sufformatives and syllabic sufformatives. This is just a preview of why this terminology is important. We will address these concepts in more detail in later chapters, so there is no need to remember these examples perfectly now.

Prefixes and Suffixes

Prefixes and suffixes are the terms most often used to specify the affixes on a verbal root. We will use the terms preformatives and sufformatives to refer to those affixes and reserve the terms prefixes and suffixes to refer to elements added before or after the final verbal form. For example, the interrogative ה would be considered a prefix added to the beginning of a final verbal form (e.g., ◌ִי *niphal* impf 3ms פלא + ה, Gen 18:14). If a verb has an interrogative ה, that prefix will attach before the preformative. Other prefixed elements may

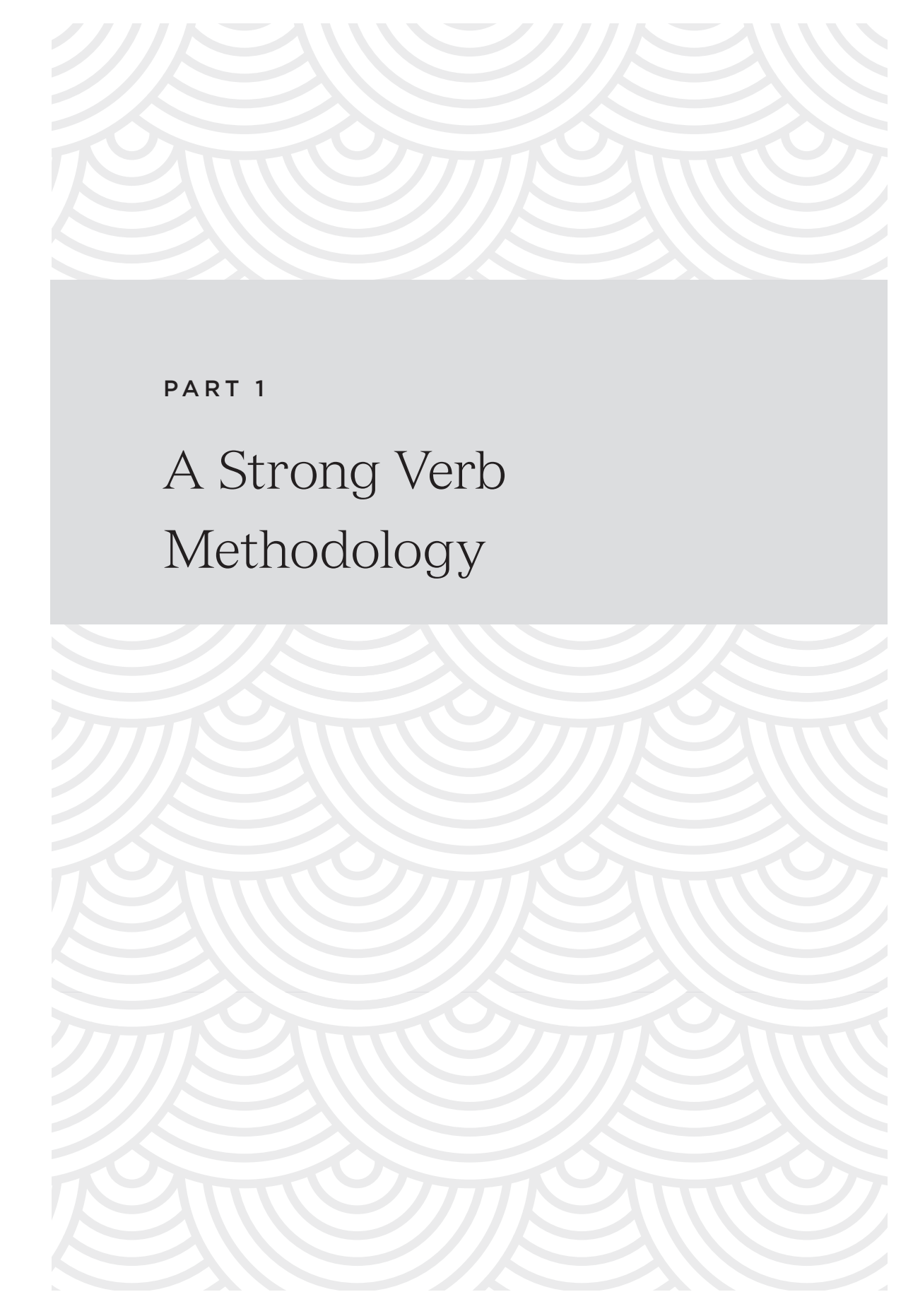
be the *vav*-consecutive or *vav*-conjunctive. Similarly, suffixes may attach to verbal forms *after* sufformatives (e.g., **עָבַדְוּ** *qal* pf 3cp **עָבַד** + 3mp suffix, Gen 15:13). Again, prefixes and suffixes are most often understood to be the affixes on a verbal root, but we will use those terms to refer to anything added to the beginning or end of a *final* verbal form.

Weak Verb Types

One will find that weak verbs can be categorized in different ways. Some grammars follow the system that uses the root **פֿעֿל** and will refer to פֿ"ן or הֿ"ה verbs for those roots with a פ as the first root letter or a ה as the third root letter, respectively. Other systems will use the nomenclature R₁, R₂, and R₃ (R₁-guttural verbs; R₂-ל/י verbs; etc.). In this book, we will use Roman numerals to define the weak verb type (I-guttural; II-ל/י; III-ה; etc.). There is nothing superior to this nomenclature. It is simply how I have come to refer to the weak verb types.

Other weak verb types do not fit neatly into this nomenclature. Geminate verbs, for example, we will refer to as “geminate verbs” rather than ע"ע verbs. The **פֿעֿל** nomenclature indicates that the R₂ (**פֿעֿל**) has been doubled (**ע"ע**). In the system of Roman numerals we will use, there is not a clean way to refer to geminate verbs other than to call them geminate verbs.

Another weak verb type to define is what I will call I-א *ō*PV verbs. These are a subset of I-guttural verbs that specifically have a I-א. In the imperfect conjugation of I-א *ō*PV verbs, the א quiesces and the verbal form takes a *holem* (*ō*) as the **p**reformative **v**owel (PV). There are only a few I-א verbs that morph in this way, and so they deserve their own unique nomenclature. The most common example of this weak verb type is **אָמַר** that in *vayyiqtol* forms becomes **וַיֹּאמֶר**. This admittedly idiosyncratic nomenclature (I-א *ō*PV) is simply my attempt to name these verbs in a memorable way based on their characteristic *holem* preformative vowel.



PART 1

A Strong Verb Methodology

A Strong Verb Methodology

1.1 Introduction

It may seem odd to begin a study of weak verb morphology with a chapter on the strong verb system. This is necessary, however, because this methodology for learning weak verbs presupposes mastery of a *specific approach* to strong verb morphology. This approach teaches the student to overlay “shells” on consonantal roots rather than requiring rote memorization of verbal paradigms.¹ Using this method, the student quickly learns to anticipate verbal forms by applying known morphological principles.² The operative pedagogical principle is that if you can “create”/“write” the verbal form, then you can “parse”/“read” the verbal form. This methodology should provide significant confidence when parsing and will hasten the student’s progress to Hebrew fluency.

We will begin by first unpacking two summary charts, namely, the *qal* paradigms and the derived stems chart. Next, we will introduce the steps to create Hebrew strong verbs. What is presented here is a methodology to help solidify what the weak verb forms would look like hypothetically, *prior to* any morphological adjustments due to the weakness. In later chapters, we will discuss the morphological changes due to specific weaknesses, but first, we must know what the strong verb pattern should be that led to the weak verb change. Finally in this chapter, we will discuss general vowel changes we can observe by applying the rules of vowel adjustment.

1. For an in-depth presentation of this approach see Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew*, 133–62.

2. In the following chapters on weak verbs, we will assume a knowledge of these strong verb characteristics. For example, we will use the term “originally” (that is, in the strong verb morphology) or say “the R₁ takes a silent *shewa*,” or that “I-guttural verbs often flip an R₁ silent *shewa* to a composite vocal *shewa* in their final forms.” Any comments about what verbs *should* look like refers to these strong verb characteristics.

1.2 The *Qal* Paradigms

We will not spend much time on the *qal* paradigms. Table 1.1 provides the paradigms that must be mastered in order to progress with this methodology. The purpose of the *qal* paradigms in this methodology is to provide the distinctive morphology of the verbal conjugations and their respective PGN. For example, the perfect 1cs will end with the sufformative יָה־ whether it is a *qal*, a *niphal*, a *piel*, etc. Regardless of the verbal stem, the *qal* paradigms are where we observe these morphological distinctives. Likewise, the imperfect 1cs will begin with אֶ across all verbal stems, but the *qal* paradigms provide this information.

We will use the *qal* paradigms later in this chapter to create strong verbs. If the *qal* paradigms are a little rusty for you, then you may want to devote some time to memorizing Table 1.1 perfectly. I tell my students that I should be able to bust into their dorm room at 2:00 am and ask for the *qal* perfect 2fs and they immediately say, “קִטְלִי” without any hesitation. I would, of course, never do that, but that is the degree to which the *qal* paradigms should be memorized.

Table 1.1: *Qal* Paradigms

	Perfect	Imperfect	Imperative	Cohortative	Jussive	Participle
3ms	קָטַל	יִקְטֹל			יִקְטֹל	Active
3fs	קָטְלָה	תִּקְטֹל			תִּקְטֹל	קָטַל ms
2ms	קָטַלְתָּ	תִּקְטֹל	קָטַל		תִּקְטֹל	קָטְלָה fs
2fs	קָטַלְתְּ	תִּקְטֹלִי	קָטְלִי		תִּקְטֹלִי	קָטַלְתָּ mp
1cs	קָטַלְתִּי	אֶקְטֹל		אֶקְטֹלָה		קָטַלְתָּ fp
3mp (3cp)	קָטְלוּ	יִקְטֹלוּ			יִקְטֹלוּ	קָטַלְתָּ t-form
3fp		תִּקְטַלְנָה			תִּקְטַלְנָה	Passive
2mp	קָטַלְתֶּם	תִּקְטֹלוּ	קָטְלוּ		תִּקְטֹלוּ	קָטְלוּ ms
2fp	קָטַלְתְּ	תִּקְטַלְנָה	קָטַלְנָה		תִּקְטַלְנָה	קָטְלוּ fs
1cp	קָטַלְנוּ	נִקְטֹל	Long Form Imperative קָטַלְנָה	נִקְטֹלָה		קָטַלְתֶּם mp
		Inf Abs	קָטְלוּ	Inf Cstr	קָטַל	קָטַלְתָּ fp

A few comments are worth adding here. First, the left column identifies PGN for the perfect, imperfect, imperative, cohortative, and jussive. For participles, you will want to refer to the far-right column for gender and number. Second, for participles, I have only included absolute participles and not construct participles. Again, the *qal* paradigms here are for reference and are not intended to be a full discussion of every *qal* form. You may want to refer to the *qal* paradigms in your introductory grammar to get the fullest review of these forms. Finally, the long form imperative is included here because of its distinctive morphology with the final הִּ. I am not trying to designate a separate function of the imperative, but because of its distinct morphology (הִּ), it is worth including.

1.3 The Derived Stems Chart

As we begin learning the derived stems chart, first remember that the derived stem names (*niphal*, *piel*, *pual*, *hithpael*, *hiphil*, *hophal*) are built on the pedagogical root פִּעַל. Next notice the transliterated פ (‘) in the stem names, and that some middle פs have a doubled transliteration (“). These unique spellings indicate that the stems *piel*, *pual*, and *hithpael* have a *dagesh forte* (doubling *dagesh*) in the R₂. Thus, a helpful strategy for learning the derived stems chart is to learn to spell the names of the stems, including the transliterated פ. Memorizing the stem name spellings will give you a jump start to mentally retrieve the shells when needed for parsing. If we look at an example, פִּעַל is the shell for the *niphal* perfect, the first shell in the *niphal* column. If you take the shell פִּעַל, the thematic vowel *patah*, and overlay them on the root פִּעַל, you get פִּעַל, the name of the stem.

The dotted circles represent any root consonant of a triconsonantal root. We will discuss later that some verbal roots may originally derive from biconsonantal roots, but for our purposes, we will overlay the shells in Table 1.2 on three root consonants even for supposed biconsonantal roots (e.g., *hiphil* impf shell [פִּעַל] on שׁוּב—יָשׁוּב). We designate the dotted circles as “R₁,” “R₂,” and “R₃.” This again, corresponds to the respective root consonants in a verbal root from right-to-left. This nomenclature also corresponds to the weak verb types that we will call I-וֹי, II-gutturals, etc.

Notice that the shaded boxes in the derived stems chart have the stem names *and* the thematic vowel symbols (e.g., A-e/E-a for the *hithpael*). We will speak more about this in a moment, but for now, know that this system of symbols identifies vowel classes (a, e, i, o, u). In the upper right corner of the chart, you can see the Hebrew vowels to which those letters correspond. To use this chart effectively, memorize the thematic vowel³ symbols for each derived stem.

3. The thematic vowel is what we will call the vowel under the second root consonant (R₂ vowel).

Table 1.2: The Derived Stems Chart

perfect imperfect imperative infinitive participle	Niph'al			
	A/E-a	A (or a) = <i>pataḥ</i> (פָּ) E (or e) = <i>tsere</i> (סֵ) I (or i) = <i>hireq-yod</i> (יִ) O = <i>holem</i> (וֹ)		
	○ ○ ○ פָּ			
	○ ○ ○ פִּ			
	○ ○ ○ פֹּ			
perfect imperfect imperative infinitive participle	○ ○ ○ פָּ/פִּ/פֹּ	○ = any root consonant		
	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ R ₃	○ R ₂	○ R ₁
	Pi'el	Pu'al	Hithpa'el	
	A-e/E	A/A	A-e/E-a	
	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּתָּ	
perfect imperfect imperative infinitive participle	○ ○ ○ פִּ	○ ○ ○ פִּ	○ ○ ○ פִּתָּ	
	○ ○ ○ פֹּ		○ ○ ○ פֹּתָּ	
	○ ○ ○ פָּ		○ ○ ○ פָּתָּ	
	○ ○ ○ פָּ		○ ○ ○ פָּתָּ	
	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּתָּ	
perfect imperfect imperative infinitive participle	Hiph'il	Hoph'al		
	A-i/I-e	A/A		
	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּ		
	○ ○ ○ פִּ	○ ○ ○ פִּ		
	○ ○ ○ פֹּ			
perfect imperfect imperative infinitive participle	○ ○ ○ פָּ			
	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּ		
	○ ○ ○ פִּ			
	○ ○ ○ פָּ			
	○ ○ ○ פָּ	○ ○ ○ פָּ		

Next observe that the shell for the imperfect conjugation in each stem has a ך as the preformative consonant. This ך serves as a placeholder for *any* of the preformative letters in the imperfect paradigm (אִתָּן; a.k.a. אִתָּן [ʿēytān] letters). For example, if we were to compose a *hiphil* imperfect 2ms, the appropriate shell *from the chart* is ○ ○ ○ פִּ. However, we know from the *qal* imperfect

paradigm that the preformative for the 2ms is a ת (תַּקְטֹל). Hence, we must adjust the shell from ׀׀׃ to ׀׀׃ת for the *hiphil* imperfect 2ms. For learning the chart, simply use the ׳ as a placeholder rather than trying to memorize a different shell for each of the יתן letters.

Finally, you may notice that the *pual* and *hophal* do not have imperative or infinitive shells. These forms are so rare in the Hebrew Bible, it is not worth putting brain energy into memorizing them.⁴

1.4 The Meaning of the Thematic Vowel Symbols

Table 1.3: Strong Verb Thematic Vowel Symbols

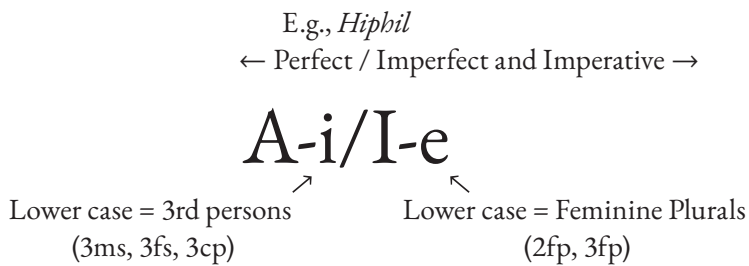
Perfect Imperfect Imperative	<i>qal</i>	Nonstative Verb A/O כתב A/E נתן A/A שלח	Stative Verb E/A מלא A-e/A כבד A/A גדל O/A קטן
	<i>niphal</i>	A/E-a	
	<i>piel</i>	A-e/E	
	<i>pual</i>	A/A	
	<i>hithpael</i>	A-e/E-a	
	<i>hiphil</i>	A-i/I-e	
	<i>hophal</i>	A/A	
Infinitives	absolute	O	<i>niphal</i> ; <i>piel</i> (!) ⁵
		E	<i>hiphil</i> [ׁ]; <i>hithpael</i> ; <i>piel</i> (!)
	construct	E or [I]	<i>hiphil</i> [ׁ׃]; <i>piel</i> ; <i>hithpael</i> ; <i>niphal</i>
Participles		A	<i>niphAġl</i> ; <i>puAġl</i> ; <i>hophAġl</i> [ׁ׃]
		E or [I]	<i>piEl</i> ; <i>hithpaEl</i> ; <i>hiphIl</i> [ׁ׃ or ׁ׃]

4. For those interested in the statistics, for the *pual*, no imperatives are found in the Hebrew Bible, only one infinitive construct occurs (עֲוִיתוּ [with 3ms suffix], Ps 132:1), and only one infinitive absolute occurs (נָגַב, Gen 40:15). For the *hophal*, none of these forms occur in the Hebrew Bible. These searches are based on the ETCBC morphology database.

5. The exclamation point beside the *piel* is simply to highlight that the thematic vowel for the *piel* infinitive absolute can be *holem* (O) or *tseré* (E).

The purpose of Table 1.3 is to assist the student's mastery of the thematic vowel symbols. This chart will prove essential to gain full facility in using this method to learn the Hebrew verb. In our previous discussion of Table 1.2, we observed these symbols for the derived stems located below the stem names in the shaded boxes. For the *qal*, Hebrew students do not often learn the nuances of the different thematic vowels that can appear. It is usually best simply to memorize the paradigm and move forward. However, even the *qal* has a variety of thematic vowels depending on the type of verb and various other factors. The top row of Table 1.3 shows the variety of thematic vowels for the *qal*. These are here mainly for reference. The primary benefit of Table 1.3 will be the derived stem thematic vowel symbols.

Students must memorize both the content and meaning of this system. To enable full comprehension let us take a closer look at the *hiphil* thematic vowel symbols as an example. We have chosen the *hiphil* because its complexity gives us an example of each element.



First, notice that all letters to the left of the slash represent the thematic vowel(s) for the perfect conjugation. So, in the *hiphil*, we would expect to see the R₂ vowel in the perfect to be primarily a *pataḥ* (A). The lower-case letter on the left side of the slash (“i”—*hireq yod*) represents all perfect third person forms (3ms, 3fs, 3cp). Indeed, that is what we find in the *hiphil* perfect paradigm (הִקְטִיל [3ms]; הִקְטִילָהּ [3fs]; הִקְטִילוּ [3cp]).⁶

The symbols on the right side of the slash represent the thematic vowel(s) for the imperfect and imperative conjugations. The capital “I” (again, *hireq yod*) represents most of the forms, but on the right side of the slash, the lower-case letter (“e”—*tsere*) represents the thematic vowel for the feminine plurals of the imperfect or imperative. Again, this is the pattern we see in the paradigm

6. In this symbolism, the upper case and lower case letters represent the same Hebrew vowel. Thus, the upper case “I” represents a *hireq yod* just the same as the lower case “i” represents a *hireq yod*. The difference in case for the English symbol is to differentiate the third person forms in the perfect conjugation, not to differentiate the vowel represented.

(e.g., *hiphil* imperfect 3ms with *hireq yod*—יִקְטִיל; *hiphil* imperfect 2/3fp with *tsere*—תִּקְטְלֶנָּה).

In the chapters on weak verbs, we will say things like “the original thematic vowel shifts to a *pataḥ* even though we expect to see a *tsere*.” The ideas of “original” and “expectation” refer to these symbols. We may also say, “the R_2 takes a *hireq yod*,” and that also refers to this system. Table 1.3 lists the thematic vowel symbols for the *qal* and also repeats the thematic vowel symbols for the derived stems in the perfect/imperfect and imperative. The thematic vowels for the derived stems are also listed in Table 1.2. These are repeated in order to have a complete thematic vowel chart. There is no difference in the derived stem thematic vowels between the two tables.

Now that we have our bearing on the perfect, imperfect, and imperative thematic vowel symbols, we must also address the thematic vowels for the infinitives and the participle. Table 1.3 also provides these thematic vowels below the derived stems, under the thicker line. You may notice that these are listed in an inverse relationship to the perfect, imperfect, and imperative. For the infinitives and participles, the table lists the thematic vowel and then lists the derived stems that take that thematic vowel.

A few things need to be clarified about this portion of the chart.

First, observe that the Hebrew vowel associated with the English letter is the same. Nothing changes there.

Second, notice that for the infinitive absolute, the *piel* stem is repeated, marked by the exclamation point in parentheses. This is done to draw your attention to the fact that the *piel* infinitive absolute may have a *holem* thematic vowel or it may have a *tsere* thematic vowel. Both are possible.

Third, for the infinitives, notice that the *hiphil* has bracketed vowels, a *tsere* (ִ) in the infinitive absolute and *hireq yod* (ִי) in the infinitive construct. There is no reason to memorize this if you know the *hiphil* “*tsere* forms.” These are forms in the *hiphil* that take a *tsere* thematic vowel even if a *hireq yod* is expected. These can be memorized with the mnemonic J.I.I.V.E. (Jussive; Imperative 2ms; Infinitive absolute; Vav-Consecutive all get an E [*tsere*] thematic vowel). I call these the “jive” forms though I realize the mnemonic is spelled with two I’s. If you know these J.I.I.V.E. forms for the *hiphil*, then there is no need to memorize which infinitive takes which vowel. Just expect the *hiphil* to get a *hireq yod* thematic vowel unless it is one of the J.I.I.V.E. forms. In that case, it gets a *tsere* R_2 vowel.

The last element to address in Table 1.3 is the thematic vowel for the participle. These may be the easiest ones on the chart, and it takes us back to where we began. All you need to do is learn to spell the stem names and you will have

the thematic vowel for the participles. Table 1.3 has the thematic vowel letter bold and capitalized to highlight which letter of the stem name is the thematic vowel for participles. The one caveat to mention here is that for participles, the “Ā” represents a long *qamets* rather than a short *pataḥ* as it has before. Hence, it is spelled in this table with the macron. This long *qamets* is also written in brackets in the table to remind you of this last point.

1.5 A Method for Building Hebrew Verbs

With the *qal* paradigms, the derived stems chart, and the thematic vowel symbols under our belt, we will now use this information to build strong Hebrew verbs. In the ensuing chapters, we will not build weak verbs, but our discussions about weak verbs will assume you understand the concepts for superimposing “original” shells on weak roots and then accounting for expected morphological adjustments.

The process for building Hebrew verbs can be summarized in three steps. The first step is to identify the shell for the specific verb stem and conjugation you are creating. For our example, we will create a *piel* imperfect 3fs using the root **בצַר**.⁷ From Table 1.2, we need to find the *piel* imperfect shell and that would be **יִבְצֹר**. We then superimpose that shell on the root—**יִבְצֹר**. The second step is to identify the thematic vowel. Since we are composing a *piel*, we use the vowel symbols A-e/E and find that the thematic vowel for the imperfect is E. This directs us to overlay a *tsere* as the R₂ vowel—**יִבְצֹר**. The final step is to determine the distinguishing marks of the PGN that we are composing. In this example, we are creating a 3fs. To finish composing this verb, we must refer to the *qal* paradigm. Regardless of the stem, the distinguishing marks for PGN come from the *qal* paradigm. When we look to the *qal* imperfect 3fs to find those distinguishing marks, we see that the preformative consonant should be a **ת** rather than the **י** placeholder of the derived stems chart. And so, in step three, we replace the **י** placeholder with the **ת** of the 3fs form we are composing—**תִּבְצֹר**. If there were sufformatives as part of the distinguishing marks, then we would overlay those as well, but in this example, there are no sufformatives. After those three steps, we find that the *piel* imperfect 3fs of **בצַר** is **תִּבְצֹר**.

Here is the process in a “steps” format.

7. I chose the uncommon root **בצַר** because that form occurs in the Hebrew Bible, and we can check it to confirm the method works. The verb we are creating occurs in Jer 51:53.

Piel Imperfect 3fs בצר

יִבְצֹר	וְיִבְצֹר	Step 1—Shells
יִבְצֹר	Ä-e/E	Step 2—Thematic Vowel
תִּבְצֹר	תִּקְטֹל	Step 3— <i>qal</i> 3fs distinguishing marks

There are many additional nuances to this method, including things like metathesis in the *hithpael* when the ת of the shell is adjacent to a sibilant⁸ or accounting for the *hiphil tsere* forms (J.I.I.V.E.). For all those nuances, I would refer you to chapters 23–25 of Fuller and Choi’s grammar.⁹ Again, the point here is not to grasp all the intricate nuances. Rather, what is important is that you understand the idea of shells, thematic vowels, and distinguishing marks of the PGN in order to compose what a strong verb *should* look like.

1.6 Examples

In this section, we will build two example verbs. Both are straightforward examples to demonstrate the process. We will use the simplified “steps” layout for these.

Niphal Participle fs רצח (Judg 20:4)

נֹרְצָח	וְנֹרְצָח	Step 1—Shells
נֹרְצָח	Ā (<i>niphāl</i>)	Step 2—Thematic Vowel
נֹרְצָחָהּ	קְטֹלָהּ	Step 3— <i>qal</i> distinguishing marks

In this example, the shell is pretty straight forward. Remember that the thematic vowel of the participle can be determined from the spelling of the stem name. And finally, the distinguishing sufformative from the *qal* paradigm gives us the fs participle ending, הָ. Remember that the thematic vowel Ā in the participle is a long *qamets* that will not reduce to a vocal *shewa* like in the *qal* paradigm.

8. Avihai Shviti, “Metathesis” in *EHLL*, 2:634–35; JM, §17b; GKC, §19m.

9. Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 141–162.

נִפְיָה

Step 1—Shells?	נִפְיָה	נִפְיָה	<i>hiphil</i> impf
Step 2—Thematic vowel?	יָ	A-i/I-e	יָ confirms the <i>hiphil</i> shell
Step 3— <i>Qal</i> distinguishing marks?	נִפְיָה	נִפְיָה	cohortative 1cp
<i>Hiphil</i> cohortative 1cp זכר			

a *hireq yod* as the thematic vowel. Recognizing these things will take some practice, but once you begin to think of Hebrew verbs in this way, seeing all the various “pieces” of the verb parsing will become much easier.

קָטַל

Step 1—Shells?	קָטַל		<i>pual</i> pf
Step 2—Thematic vowel?	ָ	A/A	These symbols for the <i>pual</i> are A/A, but the ָ obscures the thematic vowel
Step 3— <i>Qal</i> distinguishing marks?	קָטַל	קָטַל	pf 3cp
<i>Pual</i> perfect 3cp קָטַל			

Here, the shell is straightforward. Once we know the shell, we already know the expected thematic vowel (A/A). In this example, the thematic vowel reduces because of a vocalic ending (see §1.8 below) and obscures the expected *patah* thematic vowel, but that does not affect the parsing. Finally, the *qal* paradigm leads us to the perfect 3cp because of the *shureq* sufformative.

As you can hopefully see, this method of building verbs facilitates recognition of the components necessary to parse verbs. While this method is just one way to approach Hebrew verbal morphology, it is the one on which we will base the rest of our discussions of weak verbs. It is not imperative that you master this method for building strong verbs, but it may be helpful to refer to this chapter when we begin weak verb morphology.

1.8 Vowel Adjustment Rules

One final thing to address in this introductory methodology is vowel adjustment rules. We cannot possibly address all the details here, so I would again

commend to you Fuller and Choi.¹⁰ However, we need to cover enough here to make sense of later discussions related to expected vowel changes.

We will refer to the following general vowel adjustment rules in our discussions of weak verbs. These rules anticipate the expected vowel for a given syllable type.¹¹

1. A closed accented syllable prefers a long vowel.
2. An open pretonic syllable requires a long vowel.
3. A closed unaccented syllable requires a short vowel.
4. An open accented syllable prefers a short vowel.
5. An originally open prepretonic syllable reduces the vowel to a vocal *shewa*.

These five rules can be simplified with the following mnemonic.

CAPL—Closed **A**ccented **P**refers **L**ong
 OPRL—Open **P**retonic **R**equires **L**ong
 CURS—Closed **U**naccented **R**equires **S**hort
 OAPS—Open **A**ccented **P**refers **S**hort
 OOPPS—Originally **O**pen **P**ro**P**retonic *reduces the short vowel to a*
Vocal Shewa

In the vowel adjustment rule labeled OOPPS, the term “originally” means that the syllable would have been open and prepretonic prior to the reduction of the vowel to a vocal *shewa*. The final forms we see in the Hebrew Bible will have already reduced. And so, we expect to see a vocal *shewa* in a syllable that is at least two syllables in front of the accented syllable. Take, for example, the word **דְּבָרִים**. The initial syllable, prior to its reduction to a vocal *shewa* would have been a vowel—**דְּבָרִים***.¹² With the accent over the **ר**, the first syllable would be what we will call “originally” open prepretonic.

10. Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew*, chapter 6. Kutz and Josberger, *Learning Biblical Hebrew* also uses a similar methodology for vowel adjustment rules, but with simpler terminology (see pp. 63–80).

11. See GKC, §27 and JM, §28 for a much more detailed discussion of expected vowel changes. See Fuller and Choi, *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew*, 25 for these summarized rules of syllables.

12. The reconstruction here with *pataḥ* is based on the system of “proto-Hebrew” used by Fuller and Choi. In their system, proto-Hebrew is a pedagogical tool for building biblical Hebrew forms. In proto-Hebrew, original long vowels were short vowels, and so in this reconstructed form, the *qamets* of the lexical form is *pataḥ*. This is only a pedagogical tool and not an attempt to argue for a literal diachronic change in Hebrew.

*רִים		ב		ך
CAPL		OPRL		OOPPS
רִים		ב		ך

The division of these syllables shows how the initial syllable would be labeled as an “originally” open prepretonic syllable. The top form is theoretical (hence the asterisk). The bottom form shows the reduction of that “originally” open prepretonic syllable to a vocal *shewa*.

A second vowel adjustment rule we need to address is what I call the verbal adjustment rule. This rule says that a vocalic sufformative on a verb will result in the reduction of the R_2 thematic vowel. A more concise way to say it is, “Vocalic sufformative = R_2 vowel reduction.” One could also say that for verbs, thematic vowels in the pretonic position experience vowel reduction. Like the other vowel adjustment rules, this one will have already been applied when we see final forms in the Hebrew Bible. For example, the *qal* perfect 3fs and 3cp, both apply this rule (קָטְלוּ; קָטְלָה). However, most students just memorize the final form. When we discuss weak verb morphology, we will say “the vocalic sufformative causes the thematic vowel (R_2) to reduce.” This vowel adjustment rule provides context for those comments.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have summarized a methodology for building Hebrew strong verbs to give context for how we will talk about weak verbs. The overarching idea is that there are consistent patterns and “shells” that help us parse verbs. In strong verbs, these shells will be remarkably consistent.¹³ With weak verbs, we will see changes to these shells that often make parsing more difficult. We need to know how the “original” shell should have appeared so that our explanation of changes in weak verbs makes sense. Our system for discussing weak verbs will initially superimpose the strong verb shell onto the weak verb root and then make adjustments based on other morphological principles.

A quick example will make the concept more concrete. With I-ו/י weak verbs, we will discuss a series of contractions. To recognize the origin of these contractions, we must know what the “original” shell should have been. The *hiphil* imperfect 3ms of ילד in Gen 17:20 has a *holem vav* for the preformative vowel (יִוְלִיד). If we know that this *holem vav* was the result of an *aw* → *ô*

13. Gesenius uses phrases like “unvarying analogy” and “incomparably more regular and systematic” when referring to the strong verb patterns in biblical Hebrew (GKC, §39c).

contraction, then we can “unravel” the form and recognize the superimposed shell from Table 1.2 on the weak verb root (יָלִיד; יָלַד). If we can recognize the original shell, then parsing this form as a *hiphil* imperfect becomes considerably easier. But first, we must know what the original shell should have been. That is what this chapter has sought to provide.

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