The Seven Benyamin For Hebrew Verbs

In the Menorah Form

Written by Lon T, Cherryholmes for Yesodey Yeshiva

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The Seven Binyanim

The Meaning

Hebrew Verbs can be classified into any one of the seven binyanim (בניינים) Each binyan portrays a particular aspect of the shoresh (שורש) "root". The word binyan in Hebrew means "a building" or "structure". The idea is that we can **build** all verbs by obeying certain rules, and that Hebrew Verbs have **structure**. Binyan comes from the three-letter shoresh: bet-nun-hey (בנה) which is related to another shoresh: bet-yud-nun (בין) which means "understanding". Through structure we can **understand** Hebrew verbs.

An Introductory Example

Here is a classical example of one Hebrew *shoresh* is inflected throughout all seven *binyanim*. The root is *chaf-tav-vet* (\square \square), which conveys an idea of writing. One may have heard of the *ketubba* (בתובה) which is a "marriage contract". This is because a marriage contract is a written agreement.

1. He wrote. c a t a v	בָּתַב
2. He engraved. cittev	כִּיתֵב
3. He dictated. hi ch't iv	הִכְתִּיב
4. He corresponded. hitcattev	טָתְכָּתֵב
5. He was dictated. hu ch' t av	הוּכְתַּב
6. It was engraved. cuttav	בּוּתַב
7. It was written. ni ch' t av	נְלְתַּב

The first thing one notices is that all seven of the examples you can see the same three-letter root, but the meanings have changed. All of the examples still convey the idea of writing, but are inflected into different aspects of writing. The **1st** *Binyan* is called *Pa'al*. (705) It's the form of the root which conveys the <u>simple aspect</u> of the *Shoresh*. Such as: "he wrote a book", or "he wrote in the sand", or "he wrote his phone number down." Nothing can be simpler than that. That's why the *Binyan* is also called *Qal*, which means "easy" or "light"; for this is the easier or lighter meaning of the *Shoresh*.

The **2nd** *Binyan* is called *Pi'el*. (פֿיעל) It's the more <u>intensified aspect</u> of the *Shoresh*. "He engraved tablets", or "he wrote in stone", is a lot more difficult and more intensive than simply writing down something with ink. It's still the action of writing, but it's harder to do.

The **3rd** *Binyan* is called the *Hiph'il*. (הפעיל) It's the <u>causative aspect</u> of the root. This means that the person is not doing the action himself, but causing something else to do the action. In our particular example, "he dictated" is causing someone else to write. "He dictated every word of the letter as I typed". It also conveys the meaning of "taking control", like a dictator. Such as: "the dictator dictated the laws".

The latter three *Binyanim* are equivalent to the first three *Binyanim*, but are in the passive voice. These are appropriate for sentences like "the book was written", "the stone was engraved", and "the letter was dictated".

- o The **7th** Binyan is equivalent to the **1st**, and it's called Niph'al. (נפעל)
- o The **6th Binyan** is equivalent to the **2nd** and is called **Huph'al**. (הופעל)
- o The **5th** *Binyan* is equivalent to the **3rd** and is called *Pu'al*. (פֿועל)

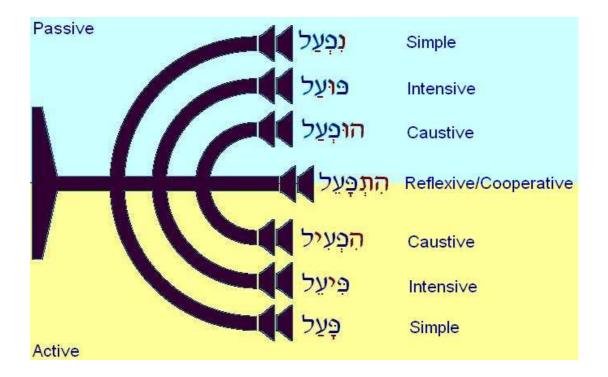
The **4th** *Binyan* is called *Hitpa'el* (התפעל) because it is both Passive and Active at the same time. This is called the <u>reflexive/cooperative aspect</u>. In this particular example, "corresponding" is both active and passive in the cooperative aspect. Actively "he wrote letters" and passively "received letters that were written to him".

The problem with these names is that they have a silent *ayin* as the middle root letter, which makes it difficult to see how the verb structure works. Thus there is another way of representing the names of the *Binyanim* by replacing the root with kuf-tet-lamed ($7\ 0\ 7$), which means "kill":

1. Qatal, 2. Qittel, 3. Higtil, 4. Hitgatel, 5. Hugtal, 6. Quttal, 7. Nigtal.

The Menorah Diagram

The *Binyanim* are compared to a seven-candle Temple *menorah* (מנורה), where on one side of the candelabrum there are the active aspects, and on the other side the passive aspects. The equivalent *Binyanim* are connected by the stems of the candelabrum, forming a symmetric picture of the *Binyanim*.



The Truth

The *chaf-tav-vet* ($\supset \cap \supset$) example that has been presented earlier was a *Shoresh* that ideally fits all the *Binyanim*. Yet it must be noted that most *Shoreshim* don't use all of the available *Binyanim*. A lot of *Shoreshim* can only fit into two or three *Binyanim*, and have no meaning if put in the other *Binyanim*. The average *Shoresh* can fits into four or five of the *Binyanim*.

To be completely honest, the *chaf-tav-vet* ($\supset \supset \supset$) example presented above only fits into a total of six *Binyanim*. There is only theoretical meaning in the 6th *Binyan: kuttav* "it was engraved". This verb form has **never** been used in Hebrew. It was only presented in the above example to smoothen off the understanding of how *Binyanim* theoretically work.

As well, the aspects presented in this example aren't always consistent. Here is a chart to show you the possible aspects each *Binyan* can portray, from most likely to least likely:

1. Pa'al / Qatal

1. Simple Active

- He killed. קַטַל
- He learns. למד
- He saw. ראַח
- He washed. אָרַתֹץ
- He broke. שַׁבַר
- He wore. לַבַשׁ
- He loved. אָתַב

2. Simple Intransitive Active

- He was lost. אַבַּד
- He was scared. ชกุ

2. Pi'el / Qittel

1. Intensive Active

- He slaughtered him. קיטֵל אותו
- He shattered. שׁיבֶּר

2. Simple Active (No Pa'al Form Exists)

- He spoke Hebrew. דִּיבֵּר עברית

3. Causative Active

- He taught. (caused learning) לִימֵּל
- He lost keys. (caused them to be lost) אָיבֶּד מפתחות
- He confused. (caused confusion) בּילָבֵּל

3. Hiph'il / Hiqtil

1. Causative Active

- He showed. (caused seeing) הַּרְאָה
- He dictated. (caused writing) הַּכְתִּיב
- He destroyed. (caused utter loss) הֶאֶבָּיד
- He dressed a boy. (caused wearing) הַלְבִּישׁ ילד

3. Transformational

- He became white. הַלְבִּין

4. Hitpa'el / Hitqattel

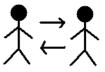
1. Reflexive (One does to oneself.)

- He killed himself. (He lost himself) הַתַּאַבֶּד
- He washed himself. אָתְרָחֶץ
- He taught himself. הָתַלְמֵּד
- He dressed himself. התלבש



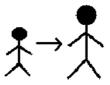
2. Cooperative (One does with someone else.)

- He corresponded (with her). הַתְּבָּתֵב
- He got married with her. הָתָּחֶתֵּן איתה
- They kissed (each other). התנשקו
- Let's see each other again. לְהַתְּרַאוֹת



3. Transformational (Words with "got")

- It got broken. הָשִׁתָּבֶּר
- He got confused. הְתְבַּלְבֵּל
- They fell in love. הַּנְאָהֲבוּ



4. Generally Passive

- He was covered. הַּתְּכָּסָה
- He was blessed. הָתָבָּרֵך

5. Huph'al / Huqtal

1. Passive of Hiph'il

- He was dressed up. הוּלְבַּשׁ
- It was shown. הּרְּאָה

6. Pu'al / Kuttal

1. Passive of Pi'el

- He was educated. לוּמַד
- Hebrew was spoken. עברית דוּבָּרָה

7. Niph'al / Niqtal

1. Passive of Pa'al

- He was killed. נְקְטַל
- It seemed (It looked like). נְרְאֶה
- It was broken. נִשְׁבַּר
- A shirt was worn. חולצה נִלְבְּשָׁה

2. Simple Active

- He entered. נְכְנַס
- He met. נְבְנַשׁ
- He remembered (suddenly). נְוֹפַר