Introduction to Hebrew Verbal Patterns, Stems, Binyanim

1. Grammatical Concepts

Active: Subject is the "agent" or "actor"
        The dog   ate   the homework
  "The dog" = subject/actor; "ate" = active verb; "the homework" = direct object

Passive: Subject is what is acted upon
        The homework   was eaten
  "The homework" = subject/acted upon; "was eaten" = passive verb

Passive with **agent**
        The homework   was eaten   by the dog.

Reflexive: Action directed back onto the grammatical subject
        The homework   ate   itself.

Transitive: Verbal action takes a direct object (action is transferred from subject to object)
        (See active example above.)

Intransitive: Verbal idea is complete without taking a direct object
        The homework   disappeared.

    Note: Some verbs can function in both transitive and intransitive ways:
        taste: The homework tastes good. // The dog tasted the homework.
        move: We moved (over the weekend). // We moved our stuff (over the weekend).
        broke: The bottle broke. // He broke the bottle.
        close: The door closed. // She closed the door.

2. Hebrew Word Basics

a. Hebrew words are based on "roots" consisting of 3 consonants.
b. Various types of words (e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs) are formed by modifying the tri-consonant root. Modifications can be made by
(1) changing the vowels
(2) adding consonants before the word (prefixes), after the word (suffixes), or inside the word (infixes)

3. Hebrew Verb Basics

a. Verbs undergo modifications to form passives, reflexives, and other verbal ideas (see below).
b. The "base" form ("lexical" form) of a Hebrew verb just happens to be the 3rd person masculine singular of the perfect (past) tense. This is the form that is found as a dictionary entry.
For example, if I want to look up the Hebrew word "guard" I would go to the entry שָׁמַר.

But שָׁמַר doesn't mean simply "guard", but "he guarded/has guarded".
c. This base form of the verb is called the "simple" or "light" form, or in Hebrew, **Qal**.
(What other use of "Qal" have we learned?)

4. Types of Hebrew Verb Modifications: Examples

a. Start with a Qal verb form expressing a simple active verbal idea:
Examples used below: "break", "be/become big"
b. Modify the root in various ways to create new verbal ideas and meanings related to the basic root. (See chart on back).

c. Types of modifications include, but are by no means limited to:

Changing a simple active verb into a corresponding simple passive	"break" → "be broken"
Changing a simple active verb into an active verb expressing action of greater intensity	"break" → "shatter"
Changing a verb expressing intensity of action into a corresponding passive	"shatter" → "be shattered"
Changing a simple active verb into action that causes something to happen	"be big" → "make big" (="magnify")
Changing caused action to a corresponding passive	"magnify" → "be magnified"
Changing simple action into action performed on or for oneself (reflexive)	"be big" → "magnify oneself"

5. Referring to the Patterns

Such patterns are called:
a. Patterns
b. Stems (distinguished from "root"); parallel to German "Stamm"
c. Verb stem patterns
d. Binyan (singular, בִּנְיָן "building, structure"), binyanim (בִּנְיָנִים plural), as in modern Hebrew

6. Names and Classification of the Patterns

Type of action	Active	Passive	
Simple	**QAL**	**NIPHAL**	
Intensive	**PIEL**	**PUAL**	
Causative	**HIPHIL**	**HOPHAL**	
Reflexive			**HITHPAEL**

Examples:

QAL	שָׁבַר	he (or it) has broken (something) [transitive]
NIPHAL	נִשְׁבַּר	he (or it) was broken [or, intransitive: "it broke"]
PIEL	שִׁבֵּר	he (or it) has shattered (something)
PUAL	שֻׁבַּר	he (or it) was shattered
HIPHIL	הִגְדִּיל	(from גָּדַל, be big) he magnified
HOPHAL	הָגְדַּל	he was magnified [with Qameṣ Qatan/¿ aᵃuf]
HITHPAEL	הִתְגַּדֵּל	he has magnified himself

What happens?
Niphal adds the prefix נ
Piel/Pual double the middle root consonant; they differ from each other in the vowels
Hiphil/Hophal add the prefix ה; Hiphil adds the infix י; they differ in the vowels
Hithpael adds the prefix הת and also doubles the middle root consonant

The Real Story

1. Very few Hebrew verbs are attested in all 7 patterns. Most of those that do are given below.
2. Modifications of the meanings can vary substantially from the examples given above.

בקע   Qal: split, cleave (wood)

        Niphal: (be) split, burst open
        Piel: split (wood), rip up, tear to pieces
        Pual: be ripped up, be assaulted (town)
        Hiphil: take by assault (town)
        Hophal: be taken by assault
        Hithpael: be burst (skins), be cleft (valleys)

גלה   Qal: uncover, go into exile

        Niphal: be exposed, appear, reveal oneself
        Piel: uncover, disclose
        Pual: (be) undisguised
        Hiphil: deport
        Hophal: be deported
        Hithpael   expose oneself, become obvious

חלה (I)   Qal: grow weak, tired; be ill

        Niphal: be exhausted, be overcome by sickness
        Piel: to appease, flatter
        Pual: be made weak
        Hiphil: make sick
        Hophal: be seriously wounded
        Hithpael   fall ill, pretend to be sick

ידע   Qal: know, learn

        Niphal: make oneself known, reveal, be known
        Piel: cause to know
        Pual: be known ("acquaintance", "what is known")
        Hiphil: let someone know, make known, inform
        Hophal: be made known
        Hithpael   make oneself known

פקד   Qal: look at, inspect; afflict; pass in review, muster; call to account

        Niphal: be missed, be lacking; be summoned
        Piel: muster
        Pual: be summoned; be accurately recorded
        Hiphil: appoint, hand over
        Hophal: be appointed; be deposited in safe-keeping
        Hithpael   be mustered, be counted
        Hothpael: be mustered, be counted

Two common words occurring in most of the stems

קדשׁ   Qal: be holy (be removed from common use)
              Niphal: be treated as holy, show oneself as holy
              Piel: transfer something to the state of holiness, declare holy, dedicate
              Pual: be sanctified, consecrated
              Hiphil: mark as sanctified, consecrated; treat, consider as holy
              Hophal: —
              Hithpael   keep oneself sanctified, show oneself as holy; be sanctified

ראה   Qal: see; understand
              Niphal: appear, become visible
              Piel: —
              Pual: be seen
              Hiphil: let someone see, show; cause to experience
              Hophal: be made to see, get shown
              Hithpael   look at one another

Examples of קדשׁ from the Hebrew Bible:

Exodus 29:21b (Qal)

וְקָדַשׁ הוּא וּבְגָדָיו וּבָנָיו וּבִגְדֵי בָנָיו אִתּוֹ׃

Exodus 29:43 (Niphal)

וְנֹעַדְתִּי שָׁמָּה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִקְדַּשׁ בִּכְבֹדִי׃

1 Kings 8:64 (Piel)

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא קִדַּשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־תּוֹךְ הֶחָצֵר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי בֵית־יְהוָה

2 Samuel 8:11 (Hiphil)

גַּם־אֹתָם הִקְדִּישׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד לַיהוָה

Ezekiel 38:23 (Hithpael)

וְהִתְגַּדִּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדִּשְׁתִּי וְנוֹדַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה׃

Example of ראה from modern Hebrew

לְהִתְרָאוֹת

(The prefix ל and the suffix ות are for the infinitive form)