WEAK VERBS

The presence of certain letters within the verbal root can affect the way in which verbal forms are produced.

There are 5 main groups of weak verbs:

1. Verbs beginning with n [ן]
2. Verbs containing a guttural (laryngeals / pharyngeals) h ’ h [ה ו ה] or r [ר].
3. Verbs containing aleph ’ [א]
4. Verbs containing either w or y [וי].
5. Verbs with identical second and third radicals (geminate verbs) [e.g. טֶלֶלָּל].

The basic features of these Aramaic weak verb forms are as follows:

1. **I.n (or Pe Nun):** When a nun is the first root letter, and it has no vowel, it is often (but not always!) assimilated to the following radical. (Which in pronunciation would have been doubled.)

Affects: G (impf., impv.); H / A (pf., impf., ptc., inf.).

**Examples:**

| G impf. S2M | (た) | (<た>) | But た is also found! |
| G impv. SM | (た) | (<た*) | All G impv. forms lose nun. |
| A pf. S3M | (た) | (<た*) | In BA,た not. Cf. EA P3M た. |
| H impf. S3M | (た) | (<た*) | But た and た (A form) are also found! |

A tiny group of verbs with I or II lamed can behave in a similar way to I.n verbs, although in practice this is quite rare in EA: e.g. ָלת, ָלת, and probably also ָלת.

**Examples:**

| G impf. P3M | (た) | (<た*?) | た is also found, and た is retained in all other forms in EA, except impv. |
| G inf. | (た) | (<た*) | (On this ‘degenerating /n/’ see M&P §3c.) |
| G impf. S3M | (た) | (<た*) | M&P attribute these common G impf. forms to an unattested root た |

2. **Verbs with guttural letters:**

i) Short i / e / u vowels preceding רדס at the end of a syllable become ‘a’.
ii) Short vowels before א and ר may be lengthened.
iii) A vocalic šewa  ת under a guttural usually becomes א ת (or א ת).
iv) NB These changes are usually INVISIBLE in consonantal EA!

**III. guttural (or Lamed Guttural):**

Always changes a preceding ‘e’ into ‘a’, and often the ‘u’ of the G impf. into ‘a’.

**Examples:**

| G ptc. SM | (た) | (cf. יב) |
| G impf. S3M | (た) | (cf. יב) |
| H pf. S3M | (た) | (cf. יב) |
3. **I.** (or Pe Aleph):
i) The vocalic Sewa א (under an initial aleph becomes א or אא). [Invisible in EA.]
ii) In the G impf. and infin., and tG, the aleph elides, lengthening the preceding vowel.
iii) In H and tH forms the initial aleph is replaced by waw or by yodh. [cf. I.y verbs]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples:</th>
<th>(cf. שָׁמַר)</th>
<th>(cf. אָכַל)</th>
<th>(cf. חָקֵשׁ)</th>
<th>(cf. חָקַל)</th>
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<tr>
<td>G pf. S3M √ שָׁמַר (to say)</td>
<td>אָכַל (to eat)</td>
<td>חָקֵשׁ (to say)</td>
<td>חָקַל (to eat)</td>
<td>Sometimes elided aleph is not written; e.g. לָמַר for 'to say'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G impf. S3M √ שָׁמַר (to eat)</td>
<td>אָכַל (to eat)</td>
<td>חָקֵשׁ (to say)</td>
<td>חָקַל (to eat)</td>
<td>NB This form not yet attested in EA, but probably existed!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H impf. S2M √ שָׁמַר (to perish)</td>
<td>חָקֵשׁ (to say)</td>
<td>חָקַל (to eat)</td>
<td>Other final vowels attested in BA: בָּשָׂם (בש, to be able); בָּשָׂם (בש, to sit).</td>
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</tbody>
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4. **Verbs containing either w or y:**

**I.y (or Pe Yodh):**
In Aramaic, roots that once began with w have merged with those that began with y (cf. Arabic wahaba, Aramaic yohab, ‘to give’).
i) The original w reappears in the G inf., and in one group of verbs in the H and tH stems.
ii) The y disappears in the G impf. and impv.
iii) [In BA only, the loss of y in the G impf. and impv. can lead to gemination of the 2nd root letter, and, in the case of מֶרֶם (to know), insertion of a ‘degeminating n’; e.g. מְרַם > מְרַם*].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples:</th>
<th>(cf. מַעַבְדָּן)</th>
<th>(cf. וָתַךְ)</th>
<th>Other final vowels attested in BA: בָּשָׂם (בש, to be able); בָּשָׂם (בש, to sit).</th>
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<tr>
<td>G inf. √ וָתַךְ (to sit)</td>
<td>מַעַבְדָּן (to make)</td>
<td>מַעַבְדָּן (to make)</td>
<td>From an old form of inf., maktab?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H pf. S3M √ וָתַךְ (to add)</td>
<td>וָתַךְ (to add)</td>
<td>וָתַךְ (to add)</td>
<td>Cf. ‘Joseph’, ‘[God] will increase’. Some original I.y verbs keep y in H forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G impf. S3F √ וָתַךְ (to give birth)</td>
<td>וָתַךְ (to add)</td>
<td>וָתַךְ (to add)</td>
<td>Other final vowels attested in BA: בָּשָׂם (בש, to be able); בָּשָׂם (בש, to sit).</td>
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</table>

**II.w/y (Ayin Waw / Yodh):**

i) In G and H forms (except G ptc.), w/y function as vowels, and so are not always written. (In G ptc. and in D forms the second root letter takes a vowel, and so functions as a consonant.)
ii) In G pf. most II.w and II.y verbs have the same forms, but a small minority are distinct.
iii) In G impf. all II.w and II.y verbs are distinct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples:</th>
<th>(cf. מִית)</th>
<th>(cf. שָׁמַר)</th>
<th>(cf. שָׁמַר)</th>
<th>(cf. שָׁמַר)</th>
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<tr>
<td>G pf. S3M √ מִית (to stand)</td>
<td>שָׁמַר (to stand)</td>
<td>שָׁמַר (to stand)</td>
<td>שָׁמַר (to stand)</td>
<td>[For SF impv. יִחמָה see Mark 5:41, תָּלָלָת קְוִימָה (mss. BN); תָּלָלָת קְוִימָה (A vg.).]</td>
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<td>שָׁמַר (to stand)</td>
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III.y (Lamedh Yodh):
A common form [includes שָׁלֶל (‘was’)]. Original III.’ and III.y verbs are converging in Aramaic.
i) There are two G pf. patterns, נָאָס (sabî, to desire) and נָבַע (bănû, to build), of which the second is far more common. (But the endings of the first, נָאָס, are those found in all other forms.)
ii) Jussives end in –y (‘-’) whereas imperfects end in –h (ח-). [in BA – ת-]

Examples:

| G pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (was) | נָאָס (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| G pf. S2M | שָׁלֶל (to build) | נָאָס (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| G impf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (to build) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| H pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (was) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| H pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (to build) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| D pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (to speak) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |

5. II.geminante (Double Ayin):
There are very few examples of these attested in EA, except שָׁלֶל (to enter).

i) In G and H forms, the 2nd root letter is written once only (except G passive ptc.)
ii) In pronunciation, the 2nd root letter may have been geminated (when not word final). Hence in some cases of G impf., and H pf. and impf., a ‘degeminating n’ appears.
iii) In D and tD the forms are regular.

Examples:

| G pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (to enter) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| H pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (to enter) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |
| D pf. S3M | שָׁלֶל (to speak) | נָבַע (חַדָּה) | (cf. כַּהֲבָה) |

Some verbs occasionally appear to drop a root letter, so if you can only identify 2, it could be:

a) I.n
b) III.y
c) II.w/y
d) II.gem
**Weak Verbs: Some comparative paradigms**

**G stem:**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRONG</th>
<th>III.Y/’</th>
<th>II.W/Y</th>
<th>II.GEM</th>
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**Imperfect:**

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<td>H stem:</td>
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NB Many of these forms taken from BA.
### III.y* VERBS  [IDEALISED, WITH GAPS IN ATTESTED FORMS FILLED BY ANALOGY]

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#### PERFECT

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