

Irregularities in Hitpael

with compliments from Graham Thomason, 15th February 2013

In the descriptions below, verbs are given in their *dictionary-entry* form (third person singular of the past tense).

Rule 1

If the preformative **הִתְ** stands before a **sibilant** (hissing sound) – זסצששׁ – , the ת and sibilant change places (metathesis). NB: **צ** was originally a sibilant (a pharyngealized s).

(1a 1b 1c)

סָגַר	<i>to shut</i>	הִסְתַּגֵּר	<i>to shut oneself up</i>
נָשַׁח	<i>to forget</i>	הִשְׁתַּכַּח	<i>to be forgotten</i>
שָׁרַר	<i>to prevail</i>	הִשְׁתַּרַר	<i>to prevail</i>

But after the metathesis,

(1d) הִצָּתַם becomes הִצִּטֵּעַ

צָבַע	<i>to paint</i>	הִצִּטֵּעַ	<i>to paint oneself</i>
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This is for pharyngeal assonance (צ and ט were originally both pharyngealized).

(1e) הִזָּתַם becomes הִזִּדֵּן

זָקַן	<i>old; also to grow old</i>	הִזִּדֵּן	<i>to age</i>
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This is for assonance of voicing (זת is voiced + voiceless, whereas זד are both voiced). Compare English at-tribute, ad-join (Latin ad = to).

Rule 2

If the preformative **הִתְ** stands before a **dental** (a sound made using the teeth) – דטת – , the ת of **הִתְ** is lost (assimilated into the next letter), and the next letter acquires a dagesh in compensation. In the cases of ד and ט, the remaining ה is written with the vowel-letter yud, as הִי.

דָּל	<i>meagre</i>	הִידִּלֵּד	<i>to become meagre</i>
טָהַר	<i>to be cleansed</i>	הִיטָהַר	<i>to cleanse oneself</i>
תָּם	<i>naive, innocent</i>	הִתְמָם	<i>to pretend innocence</i>

Beware of confusing these third-person-past-tense forms with Nifal infinitives.