

Chapter Four

The Noun Prefixes

Vocabulary

אל	God (m)	מֶלֶךְ	king (m)
אלהים	God, gods (m)	מֹשֶׁה	Moses
אָרֶץ	earth (f)	סוּס	horse (m)
בַּיִת	house (m)	עֶבֶד	servant (m)
בֵּן	son (m)	פַּרְעֹה	Pharaoh
דְּבָר	word, thing (m)	צָא	host, army (m)
יְהוָה	Lord ¹	רֹאשׁ	head, chief (m)
יוֹם	day (m)	שֵׁם	name (m)
יְרוּשָׁלַם	Jerusalem (dual)	שָׁנָה	year (f)
יִשְׂרָאֵל	Israel	תּוֹרָה	law, Torah (f)

Gutturals

The gutturals are: א, ע, ה, ח, and sometimes ר. There are certain rules regarding gutturals. These rules are as follows:

- a. Gutturals cannot be doubled using the *daghesh forte*. When doubling is required, instead of using the *daghesh forte*, a preceding short vowel is left in an open, unaccented syllable, and the following lengthening occurs:
 - If pathach, it will lengthen to a qamets.
 - If hireq, it will lengthen to a tsere.
 - If qibbuts, it will lengthen to holem.
 - If the guttural is ה or ח then no lengthening takes place and the preceding syllable is treated as a closed syllable.
- b. Gutturals tend to use “a” class vowels. Examples are:

רָקִיעַ	firmament
נֹחַ	Noah
גָּבַהּ	high, exalted

¹ Most likely יהוה is pronounced Yahweh. Historically in English, Jehovah. יהוה is the covenant name of Israel's God and was regarded as too sacred to be pronounced. Pious readers avoided pronouncing it, instead substituting the vowels for אֲדֹנָי (ā-dō-nāy) “Lord” or “my Lord.” When Masoretic scholars began adding vowels to the text, they applied the vowels of אֲדֹנָי to the consonants of יהוה resulting in יְהוָה and for the most part spelled Jehovah in the English. On occasion the combination אֲדֹנָי יהוה appear together and the Masoretic scholars chose to point יהוה with the vowels of אֱלֹהִים resulting in יְהוָה as found in Amos 1:8.

- c. Gutturals tend to take compound shevas rather than simple shevas.² Initial א will use hatef-s^eghol (ְּ), whereas most others will use hatef - pathah (ַ). On rare occasions a guttural will have a hatef- qamets (ֻ). Example are:

אֲשֶׁר	who, which, what
אֱלֹהִים	God
חֲלוֹם	dream
חֲלִי	sickness

Noun Prefixes

Hebrew noun extensions includes the prefixes and the suffixes. The prefixes include the definite article, vav (waw) conjunction, and prepositions. The suffixes include the pronominal nouns and a few special markers.

The Definite Article

To make a Hebrew noun definite, the addition of the definite article prefix is added to the word. The form of the article is not affected by the gender or number but is affected by how the word is spelled. There is no special marker for the indefinite article in Hebrew. A word without the definite article prefix is indefinite.

1. The definite article used for a noun whose initial consonant is a non-guttural (i.e., not א, ע, ה, ח, and ר) is ה־ (הַ plus *daghesh forte* in the first consonant). Examples are:

Indefinite noun		Definite noun	
מֶלֶךְ	king or a king	הַמֶּלֶךְ	the king
יָד	hand or a hand	הַיָּד	the hand
לֵב	heart	הַלֵּב	the heart
נָבִיא	a prophet	הַנָּבִיא	the prophet

2. The definite article used for a noun whose initial consonant is a guttural (א, ע, ה, ח, and ר) is changed as follows:
 - a. If the initial consonant is ח, י (yod with a sheva), or מ (mēm with a sheva), the definite article will not have the *daghesh forte* and is simply הַ (הַ with pathach).

Indefinite noun		Definite noun	
חֶרֶב	a sword, sword	הַחֶרֶב	the sword
הֵיכֵל	a temple, temple	הַהֵיכֵל	the temple
יְלָדִים	children	הַיְלָדִים	the children
מַסְלָה	highway	הַמַּסְלָה	the highway

² Page Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 23

- b. If the initial consonant is א, ע, or ר, the definite article is changed to ה (ה with gamets).

Indefinite noun		Definite noun	
ראש	a head, head	הראש	the head
אב	a father, father	האב	the father
עיר	a city, city	העיר	the city

- c. If the initial consonant is ח, ה, or ע, the definite article is changed to ה (ה with s^eghol).

Indefinite noun		Definite noun	
חכם	a wise man	החכם	the wise man
עפר	dust	העפר	the dust
הרים	mountains	ההרים	the mountains

3. Some nouns undergo internal changes when the definite article is added. Memorize the following³:

Indefinite noun		Definite noun	
ארץ	earth	הארץ	the earth
הר	mountain	ההר	the mountain
עם	people	העם	the people
גן	garden	הגן	the garden
פר	bull	הפר	the bull
חג	festival	החג	the festival
ארון	ark	הארון	the ark

Special Use of the Definite Article

When translating the definite article also remember the following:

- The definite article can be translated as a demonstrative pronoun with temporal words.

היום	this day (today)
השנה	this year
הפעם	this time

- The definite article can be translated with a vocative force.

המלך	O King!
הכהן	O Priest!

³ This list adopted from Page Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 26

The Vav Conjunction

Hebrew makes extensive use of the vav (waw) conjunction. This conjunction is attached to the front of a word and is translated “and, but, also, even.” For example, אִישׁ is “a man,” but וְאִישׁ is “and a man.” When a vav conjunction is added to a word, the following rules apply:

1. It is normally written ׀ (vav plus simple sheva) before consonants pointed with full vowels except ך, ם, or ן.

Indefinite noun		Definite noun	
וְאָרֶץ	and earth	וְהָאָרֶץ	and the earth
וְאִישׁ	and man	וְהָאִישׁ	and the man

2. It is written ׀ (shureq) before labials ך, ם, and ן, and before consonants pointed with a simple sheva, except yod.

וּבַיִת	and a house	וּמֶלֶךְ	and a king
וּפְרִי	and fruit	וּבֵין	and between

3. It is written as ׀ (vav plus hireq-yod) before ׀ (yod plus simple sheva).

וּירוּשָׁלַיִם	and Jerusalem	וּיהוּדָה	and Judah
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4. When the consonant has a compound sheva the vav conjunction uses the short vowel corresponding to that compound sheva.

וְאָנִי	and I	וְאֵמֶת	and truth
וְחָלִי	and sickness	וְנָשִׁים	and men

5. It is written as ׀ (vav plus qamets) before monosyllabic words or accented syllable of words with two or more syllables.

וְלֶחֶם	and bread
וְצֹאן	and sheep
טוֹב וְרָע	good and evil
תְּהוֹ וְבְהוֹ	without form and void

The Prepositional Prefix

Hebrew has both standalone prepositions and prepositions prefixed to words. Prepositional prefixes are called inseparable prepositions because they are inseparable from their objects.

Hebrew has three inseparable prepositions:

- בּ in, by, with
- כּ as, like, according to
- ל to, for, at

The rules for attaching inseparable prepositions are as follows:

1. Prepositions attached before consonants that have full vowels, except with an accented syllable, use a simple sheva.

בְּשֵׁם	in a name	בְּרוּחַ	by a spirit
כְּדָבָר	according to a word	לְשָׁלוֹם	for peace

2. Prepositions attached before consonants that have simple (vocal) shevas attach with a hireq.

בְּדְבָרִים	with words	בְּשֵׂאוֹל	in Sheol
כְּבְרִית	according to a covenant	לְפְרִי	for fruit
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם	in Jerusalem	בִּיהוּדָה	in Judah

3. Prepositions attached before consonants with a compound sheva will take the short vowel of the compound sheva, except for the consonant א possessing a hatef- s^eghol (אָ). For the case of אָ the preposition takes the tsere.

בְּאֵמֶת	in truth	לְחֵלִי	for sickness
לְאֱלֹהִים	for God	לְאֹמַר	to say

4. For prepositions attached before the definite article, the ה is dropped and the preposition takes its place.

אִישׁ	man
לְאִישׁ	for a man
הָאִישׁ	the man
לְאִישׁ	for the man

5. Prepositions attached to the tone syllable (accented syllable) of a noun, the vowel will often be gamets.

לְעֵד	to eternity	לְמַיִם	to water
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The translation of ל

1. The use of the lamed prefix can be translated as “have.” For example, לְיוֹסֵף אָח “to Joseph [is] a brother,” means, “Joseph has a brother.”

2. When “brother” is in the predicate position the translation is: אָח לְיוֹסֵף “a brother to/of Joseph.”

3. When lamed is used with a noun sentence the translation is:

predicate	subject	translation
אָח לְיוֹסֵף	בְּנֵימִין	Benjamin [is] a brother to/of Joseph.