

# The Adjective

## Vocabulary

אחד	one	מאד	very, exceedingly
גדול	great, large	מעט	few, little
פל	poor	קדוש	holy
זקן	old	קדש	(noun) holy thing
חדש	new	קטן	small
חזק	strong	קרוב	near
חכם	wise	קשה	difficult, hard
טוב	good	רב	many, much, great
יפה	beautiful	רחוק	far, distant
ישר	straight, right, just	רע	evil

## The Adjective

Hebrew adjectives, like English adjectives, serve to describe or limit a noun. For example, אב טוב "a good father," further describes father. Compared to other languages, Hebrew has relatively few adjectives.

### Number and Gender

The adjective will match the noun it is modifying in both number and gender. The masculine singular is the dictionary form also referred to as the *lexical form*. The other forms adhere to the following rules and do not change even if the noun being modified is irregular:

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	Dictionary form	ים
Feminine	ה	ות

Adding the adjective טוב number and gender			
אב טוב	msg	A good father	
אבות טובים	mpl	Good fathers	
אשה טובה	fsg	A good woman	
נשים טובות	fpl	Good women	

### Usage of the adjective

The adjective can be used attributively, predicatively, or substantively.

1. *Attributive usage.* The attributive usage is the usage closest to English adjective, namely, the adjective modifies the noun, further describing it.
  - a. Normally, the adjective is placed after the noun it modifies, but when emphasis is placed upon to adjective, it will be placed before the noun.
  - b. The attributive adjective must agree in gender, number and definiteness with the noun it modifies. To agree in definiteness is to agree with the noun's definiteness. If the noun is definite, the adjective will also be definite.

איש טוב	A good man
האיש הטוב	The good man

2. *Predicative usage.* The adjective can be used to construct a simple noun sentence where the noun functions as the subject and the adjective as the predicate. In this case the "to be" verb must be supplied in the English. In the predicative usage, the adjective usually stands before the noun, but occasionally it can be found after the noun.
  - a. The predicate adjective must agree with its subject noun in gender and number, but it will never take the definite article, even if the noun is definite.

טוב האיש	The man [is] good.
המקום קדוש	The place [is] holy.
מוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד	The land [is] exceedingly good.

3. *Substantive usage.* The adjective is used as an independent noun when no noun is present. When an adjective is used substantively, supply the gender noun "man, woman, or one."

טוב	A good man
טובה	A good woman

### Adjectival Inflection

Certain changes take place to the vocalization and structure of adjectives when gender and number endings are added. These changes can be broken down to whether the singular form is monosyllabic or bisyllabic.

1. Rules for adding gender and number endings to adjectives that are monosyllabic.
  - a. Monosyllabic adjectives with the unchangeable long vowels ו, י, ו, or ו require no change.

	ms	mp	fs	fp <sup>1</sup>
good	טוב	טובים	טובה	טובות
empty	ריק	ריקים	ריקה	ריקות

- b. Monosyllabic adjectives ending in non-gutturals and have short vowels retain their short vowels.

	ms	mp	fs	fp
living	חי	חיים	חיה	חיות

<sup>1</sup> This table adapted from Kelly.

strong	עז	עזים	עזה	עזות
many	רב	רבים	רבה	רבות

- c. Monosyllabic adjectives ending in gutturals and have short vowels have their short vowels lengthened to long vowels.

	ms	mp	fs	fp
bitter	מר	מרים	מרה	מרות
evil	רע	רעים	רעה	רעות

2. When adding gender and number endings to singular adjectives that are bisyllabic.
- a. The initial qamets of a bisyllabic singular adjective two syllables before the tone syllable is reduced to a vocal sheva. This occurs in one of two ways.
- (i) If the initial consonant of the bisyllabic adjective is a non-guttural, the qamets is reduced to a simple sheva ( ).

	ms	mp	fs	fp
great	גדול	גדולים	גדולה	גדולות
old	זקן	זקנים	זקנה	זקנות
right	ישר	ישרים	ישרה	ישרות

- (ii) If the initial consonant of the bisyllabic adjective is a guttural, then the qamets is reduced to the compound sheva Hateph-Pathach ( ).

	ms	mp	fs	fp
new	חדש	חדשים	חדשה	חדשות
strong	חזק	חזקים	חזקה	חזקות
wise	חכם	חכמים	חכמה	חכמות

- b. The bisyllabic adjective קטן, “small,” is irregular, the holem is replaced by patach and a dagesh-forte is added to the nun.

	ms	mp	fs	fp
small	קטן	קטנים	קטנה	קטנות

- c. Bisyllabic adjectives ending in הָ will be dropped.

	ms	mp	fs	fp
beautiful	יפה	יפים	יפה	יפות
difficult	קשה	קשים	קשה	קשות

## Practice

- I. Identify the following as translate (identify as adj.m.sg, and n.m.sg. for nouns)
- אשה יפה
  - העיר הגדולה

3. ברית חֲדָשָׁה (Jer. 31:31)
- II. Identify and translate the following predicate adjectives.
1. טוֹב הַדְּבָר (1 Kings 2:38)
  2. וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְקַן מְאֹד (1 Kings 1:15)
  3. טוֹב-יֵשֶׁר יְהוָה (Psalm 25:8)
  4. קְרוֹב הַיּוֹם (Ezek. 7:7)
  5. קְדוֹשׁ הַיּוֹם
  6. אֵל גָּדוֹל יְהוָה (Ps. 95:3)