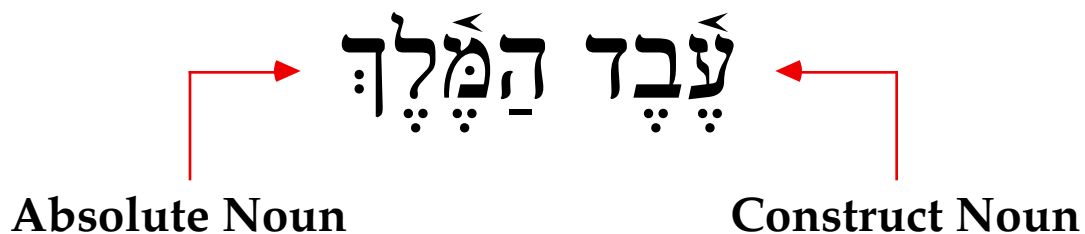


Chapter 10a – Construct Chain

Introduction

Hebrew expresses the “of” (possessive) relationship between two nouns by what is called the *construct chain*. This grammatical relationship is created by placing two or more nouns side by side.



“the servant of the king”

The first of the two nouns in the construct chain is called the *construct noun* and is said to be in the *construct state*. The second of the two nouns is called the *absolute noun* and is said to be in the *absolute state*. The absolute form of a noun is also its lexical form.



Chapter 10b – Construct Chain

Examples of Simple Construct Chains

The first noun in each construct chain is the *construct noun*. The second of the two nouns in each chain is the *absolute noun*.

קוֹל הָאִישׁ	the voice <i>of</i> the man
מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ	the king <i>of</i> the land
עֶבֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ	the servant <i>of</i> the king
דְּבַר הַנְּבִיא	the word <i>of</i> the prophet
סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה	the book <i>of</i> the law



Chapter 10c – Construct Chain

Definiteness and Indefiniteness

Construct chains are either entirely definite (the ... of the ...) or entirely indefinite (a ... of a ...). The definiteness or indefiniteness of a construct chain is determined by the absolute noun. If the absolute noun is definite, the entire construct chain is definite. If the absolute noun is indefinite, the entire construct chain is indefinite.

Definite Construct Chain

סֵפֶר הַנְּבִיא

the book of the prophet

Indefinite Construct Chain

סֵפֶר נְבִיא

a book of a prophet



Chapter 10d – Construct Chain

Noun Definiteness

A noun is considered to be definite under three circumstances:

(1) if it has the definite article as in הַמַּלְכָּה (the queen)

דְּבַר הַמַּלְכָּה
the word *of* the queen

(2) if it has a pronominal suffix as in אָבִי (my father)

בֵּית אָבִי
the house *of* my father

(3) if it is a proper noun as in שְׁמוּאֵל (Samuel)

עֶבֶד שְׁמוּאֵל
the servant *of* Samuel



Chapter 10e – Construct Chain

Multiple Construct Nouns

Multiple construct nouns may appear in a construct chain but there is *only one absolute noun* for each construct chain. The absolute noun is always the last noun in the construct chain. Again, the definiteness of the construct chain depends upon the definiteness of the one absolute noun.

עֶבֶד אָחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ

the servant of the brother of the king

עֶבֶד בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ

the servant of the house of the king

דְּבָרֵי מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ

the words of the king of the land



Chapter 10f – Construct Chain

Construct Nouns with Attributive Adjectives

When an **adjective** modifies either the construct or absolute noun, it must follow the entire chain and must agree with the noun it modifies in gender, number and definiteness.

מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ הַטוֹב

the *good* king of the land

מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ הַטוֹבָה

the king of the *good* land



Chapter 10g – Construct Chain

Possible Ambiguity with Attributive Adjectives

In the following construct chains, the adjective may modify either the construct or absolute noun. In ambiguous constructions like these, context must be your guide.

דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ הַטוֹב

the *good word* of the king *or*

the word of the *good king*

עֶבֶד הַנְּבִיא הָרָע

the *evil servant* of the prophet *or*

the servant of the *evil prophet*



Chapter 10h – Construct Chain

Construct Chains with Demonstrative Adjectives

Just like attributive adjectives,
demonstrative adjectives must also
follow the construct chain.

דְּבַרֵּי הַנְּבִיא הָאֵלֶּה

these words of the prophet

דְּבַרֵּי הַנְּבִיא הַזֶּה

the words of *this* prophet

דְּבַרֵּי הַנְּבִיא הַטּוֹב הַזֶּה

the words of *this* good prophet

דְּבַר הַנְּבִיא הַזֶּה

the word of *this* prophet *or*
this word of the prophet



Chapter 10i – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Introduction

In many instances, a singular construct noun and its lexical (or absolute) form are identical in spelling.

*Lexical/Absolute
Spelling*

סוּס horse

מֶלֶךְ king

*Construct
Spelling*

סוּס horse of

מֶלֶךְ king of

Most construct nouns, however, are spelled differently than their lexical (or absolute) form.

*Lexical/Absolute
Spelling*

דְּבַר word

תּוֹרָה law

אָב father

*Construct
Spelling*

דְּבַר word of

תּוֹרַת law of

אָבִי father of



Chapter 10j – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Endingless Nouns (Masculine or Feminine)

In a construct chain, the construct noun surrenders its primary accent and the following *rules of vowel reduction* apply.

1. Qamets (and sometimes Tserere) changes to Pathach in a final closed syllable.

מִשְׁפֵּט	judgement	➤	מִשְׁפֵּט	judgement of
מִזְבֵּחַ	altar	➤	מִזְבֵּחַ	altar of

2. Qamets or Tserere change to Vocal Shewa in an open, unaccented syllable.

שְׁלוֹם	peace	➤	שְׁלוֹם	peace of
מְקוֹם	place	➤	מְקוֹם	place of

3. Both rules 1 and 2 may apply to the formation of a noun in the construct state.

דְּבַר	word	➤	דְּבַר	word of
לֵבָב	heart	➤	לֵבָב	heart of

4. In monosyllabic nouns with changeable long vowels, the long vowels reduce to the corresponding short vowel.

בֵּן	son	➤	בֶּן	son of
כֹּל	all	➤	כֶּל	all of



Chapter 10k – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Masculine Plural and Dual

The masculine plural ים־ and dual יִם־ endings change to יִ (Tseré Yod) in the construct state and then the *rules of vowel reduction* apply.

אֱלֹהִים	God	>	אֱלֹהֵי	God of
בָּנִים	sons	>	בָּנָי	sons of
עֵינָיִם	(two) eyes	>	עֵינָי	(two) eyes of
דְּבָרִים	words	>	דְּבָרָי	words of

In the last example, both propretonic reduction and Rule of Shewa have applied to produce the construct plural.

דְּבָרָי > דְּבָרַי > דְּבָרִים



Chapter 10I – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Feminine Singular Nouns Ending in הַ

Feminine singular nouns ending in הַ change this ending to הַ in the construct state and then the *rules of vowel reduction* apply.

תּוֹרָה	law	>	תּוֹרַת	law of
מַלְכָּה	queen	>	מַלְכַּת	queen of
שָׁנָה	year	>	שָׁנַת	year of



Chapter 10m – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Feminine Plural

Feminine plural nouns ending in **ות** retain this plural ending and then the *rules of vowel reduction* apply.

מַמְלָכוֹת	kingdoms	>	מַמְלָכוֹת	kingdoms of
שִׁמוֹת	names	>	שִׁמוֹת	names of
שָׂדוֹת	fields	>	שָׂדוֹת	fields of
בְּרָכוֹת	blessings	>	בְּרָכוֹת	blessings of

In the last example, both propretonic reduction and Rule of Shewa have applied to produce the construct plural.

בְּרָכוֹת > בְּרָכוֹת > בְּרָכוֹת



Chapter 10n – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Certain Monosyllabic Nouns

Certain *singular monosyllabic nouns* add Hireq Yod to their stem in the construct state. Do not confuse this Hireq Yod with the 1cs pronominal suffix (אָבִי “my father”).

אָב	father	➤	אָבִי	father of
אָח	brother	➤	אָחִי	brother of

The *diphthong* יָ (as in בַּיִת) changes to Tseré Yod in the construct state.

בַּיִת	house	➤	בֵּית	house of
עַיִן	spring	➤	עֵין	spring of



Chapter 10o – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State: Segholate Nouns

The lexical (or absolute) form of a singular Segholate noun is spelled the same as its corresponding construct form.

מֶלֶךְ	king	>	מֶלֶךְ	king of
סֵפֶר	book	>	סֵפֶר	book of
בֹּקֶר	morning	>	בֹּקֶר	morning of
נֶעַר	boy	>	נֶעַר	boy of

The plural construct form follows the pattern
of מַלְכֵי (kings of).

מַלְכֵי	kings	>	מַלְכֵי	kings of
עֲבָדֵי	servants	>	עֲבָדֵי	servants of



Chapter 10p – Construct Chain

The Spelling of Nouns in the Construct State:

Nouns Ending in הַ

Nouns ending in הַ have a singular construct form with an הַ ending.

שָׂדֶה	field	>	שָׂדֶה	field of
מַחֲנֶה	camp	>	מַחֲנֶה	camp of

