וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהָעָם

Morphology : וְהַכֹּהֲנִים

We shall require several words in English to translate this one Hebrew word.

וְהַכֹּהֲנִים begins with the conjunction Waw. After this we find a He, a Pathach, and a Daghesh in the following Kaf; these elements constitute the definite article (הַ·).

MORPHOLOGY

The Daghesh in the Kaf of וְהַכֹּהֲנִים is Forte because it is preceded by a vowel.

In order to analyze the rest of the word וְהַכֹּהֲנִים, let's for a moment ignore the conjunction Waw and the definite article. After disregarding these elements, we are left with the following form: כֹּהֲנִים.

MORPHOLOGY

When כֹּהֲנִים stands by itself, the Daghesh in its Kaf is Lene. Recall that a word cannot begin with a doubled consonant (represented by the presence of a Daghesh Forte), and so the Daghesh that normally appears in a word-initial *begadkephat* letter is Lene.

If a word beginning with a *begadkephat* letter is preceded by a word that ends in a vowel, the *begadkephat* letter does not take a Daghesh Lene; e.g.,

<div dir="rtl">

כֹהֲנִים וְשִׁבְעָה   (Josh 6:4)

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MORPHOLOGY

The ־ים of כֹּהֲנִים is a plural suffix usually found on *masculine* plural nouns. Occasionally, however, it is also found on *feminine* plural nouns; e.g.,

Sing.		Pl.	
אִשָּׁה	→	נָשִׁים	woman/women
עִיר	→	עָרִים	city/cities

If we disregard the plural ending of כֹּהֲנִים for a moment, we are left with the consonants כהן, which are those of the singular noun כֹּהֵן, "priest." The transition from the singular form כֹּהֵן to the plural form כֹּהֲנִים consists of two changes:

(1)   ־ים has been added to כֹּהֵן, and

(2)   The Tsere following the He in כֹּהֵן has reduced to Hateph Pathach in כֹּהֲנִים.

When the plural ending ־ִים is added to כֹּהֵן, the latter changes from a two-syllable word

(כֹּ|הֵן)

to a three-syllable word

(כֹּ|הֲ/נִים) .

At this point we might expect the vowel in the propretonic syllable to reduce (the propretonic is the syllable two away from the accented syllable; in כֹּהֲנִים the propretonic is כֹּ).

Often, when a noun which (a) consists of two syllables (e.g., דָּ|בָר) and (b) whose first syllable is open (דָּ|בָר) is made plural, propretonic reduction occurs (דְּ|בָ|רִים). This happens, for example, when the vowel in the first of the two syllables is Qamets or Tsere (דָּ|בָר).

As we have just seen, some two-syllable nouns undergo propretonic reduction when they are made plural.   Others, however, undergo *pretonic* reduction.

A two-syllable noun will undergo pretonic reduction when it becomes plural if it:

(a)　contains an unchangeable long vowel in its first syllable,

(b)　contains a changeable long vowel (besides Qamets) in its second syllable, and

(c)　is accented on its second syllable (e.g., שׁוֹ|פֵּ֫ט).

When such a noun is made plural, the changeable long vowel in the second syllable reduces to shewa because the unchangeable long vowel in the first syllable cannot reduce.

When the plural ending □ִים is added to שׁוֹפֵט, for example, the result is שׁוֹפְטִים. (Note that the Holem Waw of this form is always written defectively in the Bible, i.e., שֹׁפְטִים). The unchangeable long o-vowel (Holem Waw) in the propretonic syllable of שׁוֹפְטִים could not reduce, so the changeable long e-vowel (Tsere) in the pretonic syllable reduces to Shewa.

Like שֹׁפְטִים, כֹּהֲנִים experiences pretonic reduction (הֵ → הֲ), not propretonic reduction.

The Holem in כֹּהֲנִים, like the Holem in שֹׁפְטִים, is actually a Holem Waw spelled defectively. This is not immediately obvious (and, what is more, neither כֹּהֵן nor כֹּהֲנִים is ever spelled with a Holem Waw in the Bible!).

We know that the Holem of כֹּהֵן is a defectively written Holem Waw because כֹּהֵן, like שׁוֹפֵט, is a participle. (We'll learn about participles in chapter 22). All participles of the שֹׁפֵט/כֹּהֵן type (that is, Qal active participles) undergo pretonic reduction when made plural.

MORPHOLOGY

The gutturals (of which group He is a member) cannot take Vocal Shewa, and thus in lieu of Vocal Shewa, the He of כֹּהֲנִים takes a compound Shewa (Hateph Pathach).

Translation : וְהַכֹּהֲנִים

The conjunction Waw is often translated "and," though in the present case the disjunctive translation "but" is preferable. (The context of Exod 19:24, whence the phrase וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהָעָם has been taken, as well as some knowledge of Hebrew syntax, tells us this.)

We may translate the definite article "the." כֹּהֵן is "priest," and thus כֹּהֲנִים means "priests."

We can therefore translate וְהַכֹּהֲנִים "but the priests."

וְהָעָם

Like וְהַכֹּהֲנִים, וְהָעָם is one word but requires several English words to translate it.

וְהָעָם begins with the conjunction Waw, "and."

MORPHOLOGY

Disregarding the Waw of וְהָעָם for a moment, we are left with הָעָם. Is this perhaps a noun with a vowel pattern like that of such nouns as דָּבָר, "word," אָדָם, "man," and הָדָר, "splendor"? A quick look at a lexicon informs us that no such noun as הָעָם exists in Biblical Hebrew.

הָעָם consists of

- the definite article (here spelled הָ)
- the noun עַם, "people"

MORPHOLOGY

Gutturals (of which Ayin is one) cannot be doubled. Thus, when the definite article (הַ·) is prefixed to עַם, the Ayin rejects the Daghesh of the article. The Pathach under the He of the article lengthens (to Qamets) in compensation for the loss of the Daghesh.

After the Ayin of עַם rejects the Daghesh of the article, and the He of the article lengthens to Qamets, we might expect the form *הָעַם. (Remember that the symbol * marks a theoretical or unattested form.) What we find, however, is הָעָם.

וְהָעָם may be translated "and the people."

Final Translation

but the priests and the people