

BBH Workbook p. 23 #8
(Eccl 12:2)

וְהָאֹרֶן וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים

As in BBH Workbook p. 23 #4, we have here a string of Hebrew words, each consisting of Waw, the definite article, and a noun.

וְהָאֹרֶן

וְהָאֹרֶן, “and the light,” consists of

- the conjunction Waw
- the definite article
- the noun אֹרֶן, “light”

MORPHOLOGY

The א of אֹרֶן has rejected the Dagshesh Forte of the definite article, and the Pathach of the article has lengthened to Qamets to compensate for the rejection of the doubling.

וְהַיָּרֵחַ

וְהַיָּרֵחַ, “and the moon,” consists of

- the conjunction Waw
- the definite article
- the masculine noun יָרֵחַ, "moon"

וְהַכּוֹכְבִּים

וְהַכּוֹכְבִּים, "and the stars," consists of

- the conjunction Waw
- the definite article
- כּוֹכְבִּים, the plural form of the masculine noun כּוֹכֵב, "star"

MORPHOLOGY

The plural ending יָם is usually suffixed to masculine nouns, but it may also be suffixed to certain feminine nouns. For example, the plural of the feminine noun עִיר, "city," is עָרִים.

The suffix יָם occurs not only on plural nouns, but also on plural adjectives and plural Participles. Although יָם can indicate both the masculine plural and (less commonly) the feminine plural when it is found on nouns, it always indicates the masculine plural when it is found on adjectives and Participles.

MORPHOLOGY

The addition of םִי to some nouns causes propretonic reduction. When םִי is added to a two-syllable noun with an unchangeable long vowel in the first syllable, however, propretonic reduction cannot occur. In such cases pretonic reduction sometimes occurs. For example,

םִי + שֵׁפֶט → שֵׁפֶטִים

םִי + כֹּהֵן → כֹּהֲנִים

(The Holes in the preceding examples are defectively written Holem Waws and are therefore unchangeable long.)

The Tserere in the singular forms of שֵׁפֶט and כֹּהֵן reduces in the plural forms (to Vocal Shewa and Hateph Pathach, respectively) because the preceding unchangeable long vowel (Holem Waw) cannot reduce. (Cf. BBH Workbook p. 23 #4.)

The addition of םִי to כּוֹכַב causes neither propretonic reduction (this is normal) nor pretonic reduction (this is unexpected). In the formation of the plural of כּוֹכַב we observe an exception to the tendency that pretonic reduction occurs in nouns whose propretonic cannot reduce.

Excursus: Translation

We are now in a position to translate the entire phrase **וְהָאֹר וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים**. A literalistic rendering would yield “and the light and the moon and the stars.” When we look at the context of this phrase (Eccl 12:2), however, we realize that the previous translation ought probably to be changed into more felicitous English.

Looking at Eccl 12:2, we notice that **הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ** (“the sun”) appears before our phrase. Thus, with the addition of **הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ**, our phrase might be rendered (still somewhat woodenly) as follows: “The sun and the light and the moon and the stars.” This is certainly comprehensible, but with all the *ands* it is not very good English (at least not in most contexts).

In English, we usually create a series of nouns by placing a comma after each (except the last one) and by placing the word “and” before the last item in the list. Thus, we would normally write or say “the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars.” (Note that most of the Waws in the Hebrew of this sentence have made their way into the English equivalent as commas.)

In Hebrew, a list is created (often, though not always) by attaching the conjunction Waw to *every* item in the list (except the first one).

Thus, what is good Hebrew style is sometimes bad English style, and *vice versa*. This general principle will become more apparent, as well as more important, as we study further. It is helpful to start thinking about it now, however, because we want always to be trying our best to communicate the meaning of the Hebrew we are dealing with as effectively as possible to our non-Hebrew-speaking audience.

Final Translation

(and) the light, (and) the moon, and the stars