

BBH Workbook p. 37 #3 (second list)
(Deut 1:1)

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה

אֵלֶּה

אֵלֶּה, “these,” is Hebrew’s plural demonstrative which modifies nouns in (close) proximity. This proximity, or closeness, may be spatial, temporal, grammatical, or otherwise.

GRAMMAR

The demonstratives הֵמָּה/הֵם and הֵנָּה/הֵן (all translated “those”) modify nouns in *distant proximity*.

We speak of אֵלֶּה as having *common* gender because its form is the same when it refers to masculine nouns and when it refers to feminine nouns. Consider the following examples:

הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה

these men (*masc.*)

(Gen 34:21)

הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה

these abominations (*fem.*)

(Lev 18:26)

GRAMMAR

Recall that in both English and Hebrew demonstratives may function as either pronouns or adjectives. To determine which function **אֵלֶּה** has in our sentence, we must read on.

תִּדְבָּרִים

תִּדְבָּרִים, “the words,” consists of three elements:

- the definite article (הַ)
- the noun דְּבָר, “word”
- the plural ending יִם

MORPHOLOGY

דְּבָר is made plural by the addition of יִם, as are most other masculine nouns. Recall, however, that some feminine nouns are also made plural by the addition of יִם, and that some masculine nouns are made plural by the addition of ם.

MORPHOLOGY

When יִם is suffixed to דְּבָר, the syllable דְ changes from an (open) pretonic (דְ|בָר) to an (open) propretonic (דְ|בָ|רִים) syllable; therefore, in the plural form the Qamets of this syllable reduces to Shewa.

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים

To determine the relationship between the demonstrative אֵלֶּה (is it functioning as an adjective or a pronoun?) and the noun הַדְּבָרִים, we may make the following observations:

- אֵלֶּה has common gender (that is, it can modify both masculine and feminine nouns) and הַדְּבָרִים is masculine; therefore, the two agree with respect to gender.
- אֵלֶּה and הַדְּבָרִים agree in number: both are plural.
- אֵלֶּה and הַדְּבָרִים do not agree with respect to definiteness: הַדְּבָרִים has the article and אֵלֶּה does not.
- אֵלֶּה precedes הַדְּבָרִים.

GRAMMAR

Like the article, demonstratives point toward the nouns they modify and give them specificity. For example, in the phrases “this day” and “these garments,” the demonstratives “this” and “these” make it clear that a specific day and specific garments are in view.

In English, a demonstrative adjective replaces an article (e.g., “the day” becomes “this day,” not *“the this day”). In

Hebrew, on the other hand, both a demonstrative adjective and the noun it modifies take the definite article (e.g., **הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה**, “this day” [lit., “the day the this”]).

GRAMMAR

In Hebrew, a demonstrative adjective (like any other attributive adjective), *follows* the noun it modifies and agrees with it in gender, number, and definiteness. Consider the following:

הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל	the high priest	(Hag 1:14)
	(noun הַכֹּהֵן and attrib. adj. הַגָּדוֹל)	
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה	this day	(Exod 13:3)
	(noun הַיּוֹם and demonst. adj. הַזֶּה)	

In Hebrew, a demonstrative pronoun (unlike demonstrative adjectives and other attributive adjectives, but like predicate adjectives), *precedes* the noun it modifies and agrees with it in gender and number, but *not in definiteness*. Consider the following examples:

יְשָׁרִי יְהוָה	the Lord is upright	(Ps 92:16 [15])
	(pred. adj. יְשָׁרִי and noun יְהוָה)	
אֵלֶּה הָאֲנָשִׁים	these are the men	(Ezek 11:2)
	(demonst. pronoun אֵלֶּה and noun הָאֲנָשִׁים)	

Because the demonstrative אֵלֶּה in our example precedes הַדְּבָרִים and does not agree with it in definiteness, it is functioning as a pronoun.

GRAMMAR

Inasmuch as demonstrative pronouns follow the nouns they modify and disagree with them in definiteness, they resemble predicate adjectives. A predicate adjective, however, may either precede or follow the noun it modifies, whereas a demonstrative pronoun *a/ways* precedes the noun it modifies.

TRANSLATION

In order to indicate that a pronoun (demonstrative or otherwise) is the predicate of a noun, English joins the pronoun and the noun with a form of the linking verb “to be.” For example,

These *are* the words

Here the demonstrative pronoun “these” is the predicate of the (articular) noun “the words.”

Hebrew, on the other hand, expresses such a relationship by placing the pronoun in apposition to (i.e., next to) the noun of which it is the predicate. For example,

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים

Here the demonstrative pronoun **אֵלֶּה** is the predicate of the (articular) noun **הַדְּבָרִים**.

When translating a phrase such as **אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים**, therefore, we must supply a form of the verb “to be,” namely *are* (or *were*, if the context indicates that the past is in view).

אֲשֶׁר

אֲשֶׁר is Hebrew’s most common relative pronoun (there are a few others, but they are rare). On its translation, see below.

MORPHOLOGY

אֲשֶׁר resembles **אֲשֵׁר**, “(the tribe of) Asher,” but the two are etymologically unrelated.

דִּבֶּר

דִּבֶּר is a verb form which may be translated “he spoke.”

The proper noun מֹשֶׁה is transliterated "Moses."

Excursus: אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר מֹשֶׁה

English has a number of relative pronouns (*who, whom, that, which, etc.*); which one is used in any given situation is determined by two factors:

- (1) the case of the pronoun (subjective or objective), which is determined by its function in its relative clause, and
- (2) whether the pronoun's antecedent (that is, the noun the pronoun refers back to) is a person or a thing.

Consider the following examples:

I will bring you to the man
whom you seek. (2 Kgs 6:19)

("whom" refers back to a person – "the man" – and is the
object in the relative clause "whom you seek")

the captives *who* had been exiled (Est 2:6)

("who" refers back to people – "the captives" – and is the
subject in the relative clause "who had been exiled")

They took the ox *which* was given them. (1 Kgs 18:26)

("which" refers back to a thing – "the ox" – and is the subject in the relative clause "which was given them")

Nineveh, the great city in *which*

there are more than 120,000 persons (Jon 4:11)

("which" refers back to a thing – "city" – and is an object [of a preposition] in the relative clause "in which there are more than 120,000 persons")

Like English, Hebrew has several relative pronouns, but it almost always employs one of them: **אֲשֶׁר**. **אֲשֶׁר** stands behind the English relative pronouns "whom," "who," "which," and "which" in the previous four examples.

In English, the form of a relative pronoun tells us whether the pronoun is functioning as subject or object in its relative clause (e.g., who vs. whom), and whether its antecedent is a person or thing (e.g., who vs. which). In Hebrew, the form of the relative pronoun **אֲשֶׁר** never changes; therefore, we must decide from context whether **אֲשֶׁר** is functioning as subject or object in its relative clause, and whether its antecedent is a person or a thing.

CASE OF **אֲשֶׁר**: SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE?

Because the relative clause **אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה** already contains a subject (namely, **מֹשֶׁה**), **אֲשֶׁר** must be functioning as an object.

ANTECEDENT OF **אֲשֶׁר**: PERSON OR THING?

The antecedent of **אֲשֶׁר** is the noun which precedes it, **הַדְּבָרִים**, “words,” which refers to things, as opposed to people.

English has a few relative pronouns that are in the objective case and refer to things: “which” and “that.”

אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה is thus “which/that Moses spoke.”

Final Translation

These are the words which/that Moses spoke.