

**BBH Workbook p. 51 #2**  
**(Gen 22:17)**

כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם

כְּכּוֹכְבֵי

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כְּכּוֹכְבֵי, "as the stars of," consists of

- the preposition כְּ, "as"
- כּוֹכְבֵי, the construct plural form of the masculine noun כּוֹכֵב, "star"

MORPHOLOGY

The absolute plural form of כּוֹכֵב is כּוֹכְבִים. When כּוֹכְבִים enters the construct state, its plural ending ים is replaced by the plural construct ending י:

ABSOLUTE FORM

כּוֹכְבִים

CONSTRUCT FORM

כּוֹכְבֵי\*

Not only does the ending of כּוֹכְבִים change when the word enters the construct state, but the Qamets under the second Kaf reduces to (Vocal) Shewa because the word has lost its primary accent:

ABSOLUTE FORM

פּוֹכְבִּים

(LAST SYLLABLE ACCENTED)

CONSTRUCT FORM

פּוֹכְבֵי

(NO SYLLABLE ACCENTED)

A construct chain is considered one accentual unit. The only primary accent in a construct chain lies on the last word:

[ פּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם ]

In the construct chain פּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, the second syllable of פּוֹכְבֵי is located four syllables before the accent:

[	פּוֹ	כְּ	בֵּי		הַ	שָׁ	מַ	יַ	יִם	]
	ACCENT	1	2					3	4	

Qamets and Tseret in open syllables two or more syllables before the accent tend to reduce. Propretonic reduction is simply a specific case of this general rule.

The general rule is important to keep in mind when dealing with construct chains because a construct chain is treated as one accentual unit and thus in the chain there may be many syllables before the accent.

When the preposition כִּי is prefixed to כּוֹכְבֵי, the first Kaf of כּוֹכְבֵי loses its Daghesh Lene because it is now preceded by a vowel (Vocal Shewa):

כּוֹכְבֵי

## הַשָּׁמַיִם

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The absolute noun in the construct chain כּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם is הַשָּׁמַיִם, "heaven."

הַשָּׁמַיִם consists of

- the definite article
- the dual noun שָׁמַיִם, "heaven"

### TRANSLATION

שָׁמַיִם is grammatically dual but may usually be translated as a singular: "heaven."

### TRANSLATION

English style rarely allows the article "the" to precede the word "heaven." Thus הַשָּׁמַיִם (though articular in Hebrew) may simply be translated "heaven."

### GRAMMAR

Because the absolute noun in the construct chain כּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם is definite, the entire chain is definite: “*the stars of heaven.*”

Construct nouns cannot take the definite article. The definiteness or indefiniteness of the construct noun(s) in a construct chain is determined by the definiteness or indefiniteness of the chain’s absolute noun.

## **Final Translation**

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*as the stars of heaven*