

BBH Workbook p. 52 #7

(Ex 1:1)

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

וְאֵלֶּה

וְאֵלֶּה, “now these,” consists of

- the conjunction Waw
- the plural demonstrative pronoun אֵלֶּה, “these”

TRANSLATION

וְ, often translated “and,” can sometimes be translated with the English conjunctions “now” and “but.” For example,

וַיִּמָּלֵט וַיִּרְוֹד בְּרַח וַיִּמָּלֵט **Now** David fled and escaped.
(1 Sam 19:18)

וַהֲאֲנָשִׁים יִנְחָשׁוּ **Now** the men took this as an omen.
(1 Kgs 20:33)

וַיִּנְחַם מֵצָא חֵן
בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה **But** Noah found favor
in the eyes of the Lord.
(Gen 6:8)

Which translation is best can usually be determined through an analysis of syntax and context.

Note that the conjunction “now” is to be distinguished from the adverb “now,” which means “at the present time.” For example,

וְעַתָּה כְּרַתּוּ-לָנוּ
בְרִית
And **now**, make (lit. cut) with us
a covenant.
(Josh 9:6)

GRAMMAR

The plural demonstrative אֵלֶּה refers to things nearby, or in close proximity. (Contrast הֵם/הֵנָּה, “those (m.),” and הֵן/הֵנָּה, “those (f.),” which are demonstratives referring to things in distant proximity.)

אֵלֶּה has common gender; that is, its form remains the same whether it refers to masculine or feminine nouns.

שְׁמוֹת

שְׁמוֹת, “the names of,” is the construct plural form of the masculine noun שֵׁם, “name.”

GRAMMAR

The construct noun שְׁמוֹת is definite here (“*the* names of”) because the absolute noun in the construct chain of which it is a part is definite. (See further below.)

MORPHOLOGY

On the morphology of שְׁמוֹת, see further below.

בְּנֵי

בְּנֵי, “the sons (or, children) of,” is the construct plural form of the masculine noun בֵּן, “son.”

GRAMMAR

The construct noun בְּנֵי is definite here (“*the* sons of”) because the absolute noun in the construct chain of which it is a part is definite. (See further below.)

MORPHOLOGY

On the morphology of בְּנֵי, see further below.

Excursus: The Morphology of שְׁמוֹת and בְּנֵי

MORPHOLOGY OF שְׁמוֹת

The absolute plural form of שֵׁם is שְׁמוֹת. When שְׁמוֹת enters the construct state, nothing happens to its plural ending תֹּם. The Tserere under the Shin, however, reduces to (Vocal) Shewa because the word has lost its primary accent:

ABSOLUTE FORM	CONSTRUCT FORM
שְׁמוֹת	שְׁמוֹת
(LAST SYLLABLE ACCENTED)	(NO SYLLABLE ACCENTED)

MORPHOLOGY OF בְּנֵי

The absolute plural form of בֵּן is בְּנֵים. When בְּנֵים enters the construct state, its plural ending יִם is replaced by the plural construct ending יִי:

ABSOLUTE FORM	CONSTRUCT FORM
בְּנֵים	*בְּנֵי

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

ABSOLUTE FORM	CONSTRUCT FORM
בְּנֵים	בְּנֵי
(LAST SYLLABLE ACCENTED)	(NO SYLLABLE ACCENTED)

MORPHOLOGY OF שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

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

[שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל]

In the construct chain שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, the first syllable of בְּנֵי is located four syllables before the accent:

[שְׁ | מוֹת | בְּ | נֵי | יִשְׁ | רָ | אֵל]
ACCENT 1 2 3 4

The first syllable of שְׁמוֹת is six syllables before the accent:

[שְׁ | מוֹת | בְּ | נֵי | יִשְׁ | רָ | אֵל]
ACCENT 1 2 3 4 5 6

Qamets and Tserere 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.

יִשְׂרָאֵל

The absolute noun in the construct chain **שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** is the proper noun **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, "Israel."

GRAMMAR

Because **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is definite, every noun in the chain of which it is a part is definite: "*the names of the sons of Israel.*"

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.

Summary: **אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**

This clause consists of a pronoun followed by a noun phrase (i.e., the construct chain **שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**); it contains no verb.

שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

NOUN PHRASE

the names of the sons of Israel

אֵלֶּה

PRONOUN

these

When translating the verbless clause אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, we must supply a form of the verb *to be*, namely, “are”:

*These **are** the names of the sons of Israel.*

Final Translation

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel.