

BBH Workbook p. 85 #11

(Gen 47:4)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה
לְגֹזֵר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן כִּי־אֵין מִרְעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעִבְדֶיךָ
כִּי־כִבֵּד הָרַעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

וַיֹּאמְרוּ

A footnote indicates that this verb form may be translated “and they said.” (The “they” here refers to five of Joseph’s brothers.)

MORPHOLOGY

Although we do not yet know how to parse וַיֹּאמְרוּ, we may observe that its root is אָמַר.

אֶל־פַּרְעֹה

אֶל־פַּרְעֹה, “to Pharaoh,” consists of

- the preposition אֶל, “to”
- the proper noun פַּרְעֹה, “Pharaoh”

TRANSLATION

The Egyptian royal title *pr.*^o came into Hebrew as פִּרְעָה, into Greek as Faraw, and into English as “Pharaoh.”

לָגוּר

A footnote indicates that the verb form לָגוּר may be translated “to sojourn.”

בְּאֶרֶץ

בְּאֶרֶץ, “in the land,” consists of

- the preposition בְּ, “in”
- the definite article (the He of which has been replaced by the Bet of the preceding preposition)
- the feminine noun אֶרֶץ, “land”

בָּאוּ

בָּאוּ, “we have come,” is the Qal Perfect 1cp of בוא.

TRANSLATION

לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ בָּאֵנוּ may be translated “we have come to sojourn in the land.” That לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ (“to sojourn in the land”) precedes the verb בָּאֵנוּ indicates that the former may be being emphasized. If so, the translation “it is (in order) to sojourn in the land that we have come” probably better reflects the sense of the Hebrew.

כִּי

כִּי has a number of functions and possible translation values; here it is a conjunction equivalent to English “for” or “because.”

GRAMMAR

Remember that the English word “for” is (a) sometimes a conjunction meaning “because” or “since,” and (b) sometimes a preposition:

(a) “FOR” AS CONJUNCTION

for we are brothers

(Gen 13:8)

for I have spoken

(Ezek 28:10)

for the people will not eat until he comes

(1 Sam 9:13)

(b) "FOR" AS PREPOSITION

the Lord is a refuge **for** the oppressed

(Ps 9:9 [10])

an ordinance **for** you and your children

(Exod 12:24)

that they might be . . . **for** renown, **for** praise, and
for glory

(Jer 13:11)

Note that in the examples under (a) above the Hebrew word behind each "for" is כִּי, whereas in the examples under (b) the Hebrew word behind each "for" is לְ.

אין מרעה

אין, "there is no," is the construct form of אֵין, which negates nominals and is thus sometimes called a "particle of non-existence."

MORPHOLOGY

In the Bible the form אין is much more common than אֵין.

The masculine noun מְרֵעָה means "pasture." אֵין מְרֵעָה may therefore be translated "there is no pasture."

לְצֹאן

לְצֹאן, "for the flocks," consists of

- the preposition לְ, "for"
- the definite article (the He of which has been replaced by the Lamed of the preceding preposition)
- the collective noun צֹאן, "flock(s)"

אֲשֶׁר

The relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר refers back to the preceding noun (צֹאן, "flocks"). Because צֹאן refers to non-persons, אֲשֶׁר here may be translated "that" or "which."

לְעִבְדֶיךָ

לְעִבְדֶיךָ, lit. "to your servants," consists of

- the preposition לְ, "to"

- the plural noun עֲבָדִים, “servants”
- the 2ms pronominal suffix ׀יָ, “your”

TRANSLATION

אֵין מְרֻעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעֲבָדֶיךָ translates literally “there is no pasture for the flocks which to your servants.”

The preposition לְ prefixed to עֲבָדֶיךָ indicates possession; that is, אֲשֶׁר לְעֲבָדֶיךָ means “which (belong) to your servants.” This thought may be expressed more idiomatically in English as “your servants’ flocks.”

We may therefore translate אֵין מְרֻעָה לְצֹאן אֲשֶׁר לְעֲבָדֶיךָ “there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks.”

Consider also the following examples:

כֹּל-אֲשֶׁר-לָהּ

all that she has
(lit., all that [is] to her)
(Josh 6:22)

יֵשׁ-לִי תִקְוָה

I have hope
(lit., there is to me hope)
(Ruth 1:12)

יְהִיָּה לָכֶם הַפֶּסַח

you will have the Passover
(lit., the Passover will be to you)

(Ezek 45:21)

MORPHOLOGY

When the pronominal suffix יָם־ is added to עֲבָרִים , the ים־ ending is elided, yielding עֲבָרַיָם .

MORPHOLOGY

When the preposition לְ is prefixed to עֲבָרַיָם , the Lamed of the preposition is pointed with Pathach, the short vowel which corresponds to the Hateph Pathach under the following Ayin: לְעֲבָרַיָם .

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כִּי

The form כִּי is ambiguous. It might be either

- (1) the Qal Perfect 3ms of כָּבֵד, meaning "(it) is heavy, severe"
- (2) a ms adjective meaning "heavy, severe"

If כָּבֵד is (1) above, כִּי־כָבֵד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן is a verbal clause:

for	the famine	is severe	in the land of Canaan
	SUBJECT	VERB	PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

If כָּבֵד is (2) above, כִּי־כָבֵד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן is a verbless clause:

for	the famine	(is) severe	in the land of Canaan
	SUBJECT	ADJECTIVE	PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

In the latter case, the verb "is" must be supplied based on the context.

In Gen 47:4 it is perhaps likely that כָּבֵד is an adjective and not a Perfect verb form because it describes a present ("is severe") as opposed to past situation.

MORPHOLOGY

The Kaf of כָּבֵד has no Daghesh Lene because the preceding word ends in a vowel:

כִּי-כָבֵד

הַרְעָב

הַרְעָב, "the famine," consists of

- the definite article
- the masculine noun רָעָב, "famine"

בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

The prepositional phrase בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, "in the land of Canaan," consists of

- the preposition בְּ, "in"
- the (feminine) construct noun אֶרֶץ, "the land of"
- the proper noun כְּנָעַן, "Canaan"

GRAMMAR

אֶרֶץ is definite here because the absolute noun which follows, כְּנָעַן, is definite.

MORPHOLOGY

In Gen 47:4 כְּנַעַן comes at a major break in the verse and is therefore said to be a “pausal form” or “in pause.” This is marked in printed Bibles with the accent athnach: כְּנַעַן.

The non-pausal form of כְּנַעַן is כְּנֹעַן. When כְּנַעַן becomes pausal, the Pathach in the word’s accented syllable lengthens to Qamets.

Final Translation

And they said to Pharaoh, “It is (in order) to sojourn in the land that we have come. For there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks, because the famine is severe in the land of Canaan.”