

## LESSON VI

### 15. Prepositions With Nouns

In comparison with other languages, Hebrew has relatively few prepositions. Some Hebrew prepositions are inseparable and are prefixed to nouns, somewhat like the definite article. Others are independent and function more like English prepositions.

#### 15.1 Hebrew has three inseparable prepositions:

- בְּ in, by, with (plus other meanings)
- כְּ as, like, according to (plus other meanings)
- לְ to, for, at (plus other meanings)

These are prefixed to nouns according to the following rules:

(1) *They are written with a simple sheva before consonants that have full vowels, except in some of the instances where they stand before the tone syllable of a word (cf. [5] below).*

Examples:

בְּשֵׁם	in a name	כְּדָבָר	according to a word	בְּרוּיָהּ	by a spirit
לְשָׁלוֹם	for peace	בְּאָב	with a father	בְּבֵן	with a son

(2) *They are written with a hireq\* before consonants that have simple (vocal) shevas.* This is because two vocal shevas cannot stand together. The sheva of the preposition, being the first of two vocal shevas in this instance, is changed to hireq.

Examples:

לְפָרִי	for fruit
כְּבְּרִית	according to a covenant
בְּשִׁאוֹל	in Sheol
בְּדְבָרִים	with words

Note, however, that if the preposition is prefixed to a noun whose initial consonant is yod supported by a simple sheva (יְ), other changes also become necessary. First, the sheva of the preposition changes to hireq, as in the examples above. This hireq then combines with the yod to form a hireq-yod. This in turn causes the yod to lose its consonantal value, and the sheva beneath it drops out.

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\*In the following lessons, for simplicity's sake, most of the diacritical marks on transliterated words will be omitted. Only marks necessary for correct pronunciation will be retained.



Examples:

בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם plus בְּ = בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם in Jerusalem  
 יְהוּדָה plus בְּ = בְּיְהוּדָה in Judah

(3) When an inseparable preposition is prefixed to a noun whose initial consonant is supported by a compound sheva, the preposition will take the short vowel that corresponds to that of the compound sheva. Before ḥaṭef-pataḥ, it will take pataḥ; before ḥaṭef-sēgol, it will take sēgol; before ḥaṭef-qameṣ, it will take qameṣ-ḥaṭuf. The vowel before the compound sheva will ordinarily be written with a meteg.

Examples:

כַּאֲשֶׁר according to which, בְּאֵמֶת in truth, לַחֲלִי for sickness

Note, however, that occasionally before an א that has a ḥaṭef-sēgol ( אֲ ), the preposition receives a sere and the ḥaṭef-sēgol of the א drops out.

Examples:

לְאֱלֹהִים (לְ) = לְאֱלֹהִים for God  
 לְאָמַר (לְ) = לְאָמַר to say, saying

(4) When an inseparable preposition is prefixed to a noun that has the definite article, the ה of the article drops out and is replaced by the consonant of the preposition.

Examples:

(a)	אִישׁ	a man	לְאִישׁ	for a man
	הָאִישׁ	the man	לְאִישׁ	for the man
(b)	בְּרִית	a covenant	כְּבְּרִית	according to a covenant
	הַבְּרִית	the covenant	כְּבְּרִית	according to the covenant
(c)	הֵיכָל	a temple	בְּהֵיכָל	in a temple
	הַהֵיכָל	the temple	בְּהֵיכָל	in the temple

(5) When the inseparable preposition is prefixed to the tone syllable (accented syllable) of a noun, the vowel of the preposition will often be qameṣ. This rule applies especially to one-syllable words with “a” class vowels.

Examples:

לְעֶד to eternity, לְמֵיִם to water

**15.2** There are other prepositions, which are referred to as unattached or independent. They function much like prepositions in English. Some of the more common among these are:

אֶל to, into, toward      לִפְנֵי before, in front of

## VI.15 PREPOSITIONS

עַל	upon, above, about	מִן	from, out of
עִם	with	תַּחַת	under, instead of
בֵּין	between	אַחֲרַי	behind, after
עַד	until, unto	אַצֵּל	beside, near

**15.3** The preposition מִן, "from, out of," requires further explanation. The rules for writing it are different from the rules for the other independent prepositions.

(1) Before nouns with the definite article, in the majority of cases the preposition מִן appears in its full form and is normally joined to the following word by a maqqef.

Examples:

מִן־הָאָרֶץ	from the earth	מִן־הַיּוֹם	from the day
מִן־הַבַּיִת	from the house	מִן־הָעֵץ	from the tree

(2) Before indefinite nouns (nouns without the article) that have a non-guttural as their initial consonant, the preposition מִן is written mem, plus hireq, plus dagesh forte in the following consonant.

Examples:

מִן	before	בֵּית	becomes	מִבֵּית	, from a house
מִן	before	מֶלֶךְ	becomes	מִמֶּלֶךְ	, from a king
מִן	before	יוֹם	becomes	מִיּוֹם	, from a day

Note, however, that מִן before a yod pointed with a simple sheva contracts to מִי, as in מִיהוּדָה, "from Judah," and מִירוּשָׁלַיִם, "from Jerusalem."

(3) Before indefinite nouns whose initial consonant is a guttural, the preposition מִן is written as mem plus sere. In this case, hireq is lengthened to sere to compensate for the guttural's refusal to be doubled.

Examples:

מִן	before	אִישׁ	becomes	מִאִישׁ	, from a man
מִן	before	הָר	becomes	מִהָר	, from a mountain
מִן	before	חֶרֶב	becomes	מִחֶרֶב	, from a sword
מִן	before	עִיר	becomes	מִעִיר	, from a city
מִן	before	רֹאשׁ	becomes	מִרֹאשׁ	, from a head

(4) The preposition מִן may also be used to express the comparative.

Examples:

טוֹב	מִן־הַחֹשֶׁךְ	better (is) the light than the darkness
טוֹב	הַבֹּקֶר מִן־הָעֶרֶב	better (is) the morning than the evening



## 16. The Vav Conjunction

The conjunction “and” does not stand alone in Hebrew but is prefixed to the following word. It closely resembles the inseparable prepositions in that its form is determined by the consonants that stand at the beginning of the word to which it is prefixed. The rules for writing the vav conjunction are the following:

**16.1** *It is usually written וְ (vav plus simple sheva) before consonants pointed with a full vowel, unless the consonants are ב, מ, or פ.*

Examples:

וְהָאָרֶץ and the earth, וְחֹשֶׁךְ and darkness, וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ and to the darkness

**16.2** *It is written as וּ (šureq) before the labials ב, מ, and פ (consonants articulated by the lips), and before all consonants pointed with a simple sheva, except when this consonant is a yod.*

Examples:

וּנְקֵבָה and female      וּבְרִית and a covenant  
וּבֵין and between      וּפְרִי and fruit  
וּמִן and from

**16.3** *Before י (yod plus simple sheva) the וְ contracts with י to form וִי (vav plus hireq-yod).*

Examples:

וִירוּשָׁלַיִם becomes וִירוּשָׁלַיִם and Jerusalem  
וִיהוּדָה becomes וִיהוּדָה and Judah  
וִיהִי becomes וִיהִי and let there be

**16.4** *Before a consonant pointed with a compound sheva, the vav conjunction takes the short vowel that corresponds to that of the compound sheva. Note that a meteg is usually placed beside the vowel that immediately precedes a compound sheva.*

Examples:

וְאֲנִי and I (Gen. 6:17)      וְחֲלִי and sickness (Eccl. 6:2)  
וְאֵמֶת and truth (Gen. 24:49)

**16.5** *Before monosyllabic words or before the accented syllable of words with two or more syllables, the vav conjunction will often be written וְ (vav plus qameṣ). וְ usually joins two words of the same class (nearly always nouns) and tends to reflect a close relationship between the two.*



Examples:

טוב ורע	good and evil (Gen. 2:9)
תהו ובהו	without form and void (Gen. 1:2)
בהמה ורמש	cattle and creeping things (Gen. 1:24)

### 16.6 Special rules apply when the vav conjunction is prefixed to divine names.

The two most frequently used designations for deity in the Hebrew Bible are **אלהים** *ʾēlōhîm*, "God," and **יהוה**, YHVH, "LORD."

**אלהים** is plural in form, but normally functions as a singular noun. However, it may also function as a plural noun, accompanied by plural modifiers and plural verb forms. This usually occurs when reference is being made to the "gods" of the nations. **אלהים** may occur with or without the definite article (**האלהים**).

When the vav conjunction is prefixed to **אלהים** (**ואלהים**), the **א** becomes quiescent (ceases to function as a consonant) and loses its compound sheva, resulting in the form **ואלהים**. Since **א** never closes a syllable, the preceding vowel, which now stands in an open, unaccented syllable, must be lengthened (sêgol to šere). The resultant form is **וַאלהים**, "and God."

**יהוה** is the covenant name for Israel's God. At a very early date in Jewish history, it came to be regarded as too sacred to be pronounced. Pious readers avoided pronouncing it by substituting for it the word **אדני** *ʾādō-nāy*, meaning "my Lord." When Masoretic scholars began to supply vowel points to the consonantal text of biblical books, they applied the vowels of **אדני** to the consonants of **יהוה**. With the modification of compound sheva to simple sheva under the non-guttural yod, the resultant form was **יהוה** (or simply **יהוה**), which was always pronounced as *ʾādō-nāy*.

If there had been no need to avoid pronouncing **יהוה**, it would most likely have been pointed as **יהוה** and thus read as *Yāhvēh*. The curious attempt to transliterate the hybrid form **יהוה** as "Yehovah" (or "Jehovah," since "y" was missing in the German language) was not made until the time of the Protestant Reformation.

Occasionally the two divine names **אדני יהוה** appear together in the Hebrew text (see Amos 1:8). Since it would have been awkward to read the pair of names as *ʾādō-nāy ʾādō-nāy*, Masoretic scholars chose to point **יהוה** with the modified vowels of **אלהים**. This resulted in the form **יהוה**, later simplified to **יהוה**, which should be pronounced as though it were written **אלהים**, *ʾēlōhîm*. Thus **יהוה** (pointed with the modified vowels of **אדני**) is translated in English versions as "LORD" (note the capital letters), while **יהוה** (pointed with the modified vowels of **אלהים**) is translated as "GOD" (again with capital letters), and **אדני יהוה** is translated as "Lord GOD." Translators, therefore, consistently render any form of **יהוה** with capital letters, thereby alerting readers to its presence in the Hebrew text.

When the vav conjunction is prefixed to **יהוה**, it is written as **ויהוה** (see Gen. 19:24), and pronounced as if it were written **וַאדני**, *vā-dō-nāy* (see 2 Kgs. 7:6).

## EXERCISES

1. Prefix the preposition לְ to the following words, first without the article, then with it. Make the necessary changes where BeGaD KeFaT letters are involved. Translate both forms of each word.

Example: לְבֵן - בֵּן to a son    לְהֵן - הֵן to the son

- (1) שְׁלוֹם
- (2) דְּבַר
- (3) רוּחַ
- (4) אִשָּׁה
- (5) פְּרִי
- (6) בְּרִית
- (7) מְקוֹם
- (8) אֲמַת
- (9) הִיכָל

2. Prefix the preposition מִן to the following words.

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| (1) בֵּית         | (10) רֹאשׁ    |
| (2) הַבַּיִת      | (11) אֶרֶץ    |
| (3) אֲמַת         | (12) הָאֶרֶץ  |
| (4) אִשָּׁה       | (13) חֶשֶׁד   |
| (5) יְרוּשָׁלַיִם | (14) הַחֶשֶׁד |
| (6) אֱלֹהִים      | (15) הָעִיר   |
| (7) פְּרִי        | (16) הַהִיכָל |
| (8) יָד           | (17) רוּחַ    |
| (9) הָר           | (18) הָרוּחַ  |

3. Place the vav conjunction on the following words or phrases and give a translation of each completed form.

Example: בְּשֵׁם, וּבְשֵׁם "and by a name"

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| (1) בְּשֵׁם  | (5) לְבְרִית   |
| (2) כְּדָבָר | (6) יְהוּדָה   |
| (3) כְּדָבָר | (7) בִּיהוּדָה |
| (4) בְּרִית  | (8) אֲמַת      |



## VI EXERCISES

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| (9) מאַמַּת      | (14) פֿרי      |
| (10) לאַשֶׁה     | (15) לְשָׁלוֹם |
| (11) בַּהִיכֹל   | (16) אֱלֹהִים  |
| (12) מִמְּלֶךְךָ | (17) בִּלְבַב  |
| (13) מִן־הָעֵץ   | (18) הַשָּׁנָה |

### 4. Translate the following phrases:

- (1) אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה
- (2) שְׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ
- (3) הָאוֹר וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ
- (4) בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ
- (5) יוֹם וְלַיְלָה
- (6) בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה
- (7) אָדָם וְאֱלֹהִים
- (8) מִים וּמֵאֶרֶץ
- (9) אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
- (10) פֿרי מִן־הָעֵץ
- (11) בְּעִיר וּבַהִיכֹל
- (12) בְּאָדָם וּבְאֱלֹהִים
- (13) אֶצֶל הַהָר
- (14) עַד־הָעֶרֶב
- (15) יָד וְשֵׁם
- (16) שְׁלוֹם וְאַמֶּת
- (17) טוֹב וְרָע
- (18) מִבֶּן וּמִבַּת

### 5. Translate the following clauses.

Example:

אֵין פֿרי בַּגֶּן "There is no fruit in the garden."

- (1) אֵין אִשָּׁה בְּבֵית
- (2) אֵין אִישׁ בְּעִיר
- (3) אֵין בֶּן לְאָדָם
- (4) אֵין בְּרִית עִם־הָעָם

- (5) אֵין שְׁלוֹם בְּאַרְצֵן  
 (6) הָעִיר עַל-הָהָר  
 (7) אֵין בֵּת לְאִשָּׁה  
 (8) אֵין אֹר לְעַם  
 (9) הָגֵן אֶצֶל הַבַּיִת  
 (10) טוֹב הָאֹר מִן-הַחֲשֶׁךְ  
 (11) טוֹב הַיּוֹם מִן-הַלַּיְלָה  
 (12) אֵין מַיִם בַּמָּקוֹם

## VOCABULARY

- |             |                                     |              |                          |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| (1) אַחֲרֵי | ʾă-hārê after, behind               | (11) בֹּקֶר  | bô-qēr, morning          |
| (2) אֶל     | ʾēl, to, into, toward               | (12) יָד     | yād, (f) hand            |
| (3) בֵּין   | bên, between                        | (13) יוֹם    | yôm, day                 |
| (4) לְפָנַי | lî-fenê, before, in the presence of | (14) יֵשׁ    | yěš, there is, there are |
| (5) מִן     | mîn, from, out of                   | (15) לֹא     | lô, not                  |
| (6) עַד     | ʾād, until, unto                    | (16) לַיְלָה | lâ-yelāh, night          |
| (7) עִם     | ʾim, with                           | (17) מָקוֹם  | mā-qôm, place            |
| (8) עַל     | ʾāl, upon, above, about             | (18) עֵץ     | ʿēs, tree                |
| (9) תַּחַת  | tâ-hât, under, instead of           | (19) עֶרֶב   | ʿê-rēv, evening          |
| (10) אֵין   | ʾên, there is not                   | (20) פֶּרִי  | perî, fruit              |