

Nouns

Nouns

A noun is a word that refers to a person, place, thing, or idea.

This reference can be specific or general, real or imaginary, concrete or abstract.

Hebrew Nouns

Hebrew can be described in terms of their number (singular, plural, and dual) and gender (masculine or feminine).

Logos will identify these qualities for us.

Number

Just as English has singular (horse) and plural (horses) nouns, so does Hebrew.

סוּם

horse

סוּמִים

horses

Gender

Grammatical gender can follow natural gender, though often the two are not related.

Unlike English, Hebrew nouns have a grammatical gender. The masculine nouns (which tends to be the default gender) are “unmarked.” Feminine nouns often end in either *he* or *taw*.

Noun Examples

מֶלֶךְ

king

(masc)

מַלְכָּה

queen

(fem)

נֶעָר

young boy

(masc)

נֶעָרָה

young girl

(fem)

Grammatical Gender ≠ Natural Gender

שָׁמַיִם

heavens

(masc)

אֶרֶץ

earth

(fem)

There is nothing inherently “masculine” about the heavens, nor is there anything inherently “feminine” about the earth.

Singular and Plural Nouns

סוּם horse

סוּסִים horses

תּוֹרָה law

תּוֹרוֹת laws

Definite Article

English has two types of articles:

- Definite (the)
- Indefinite (a, an)

Hebrew has only a *definite* article. A noun lacking the article is generally considered indefinite.

Use of the Definite Article

The definite article is appended to the front (ie. the right) of a noun.

הַ

שָׁמַיִם

heavens

הַשָּׁמַיִם

the heavens

Use of the Definite Article

You will see some difference in the vowels in certain circumstances (eg. a word beginning with a guttural), but Logos will be your guide.

אֶרֶץ

earth

הָאֶרֶץ

the earth

Other Definite Nouns

If a noun lacks the article, it might still be definite if:

- It is a proper noun
- It has a pronominal suffix (modified by a possessive pronoun – his, her, etc.)
- It is in construct with a definite noun

Parsing

When we **parse** a word, we give a detailed description of its constituent parts. This is what we have already done with nouns.

Parsing a noun includes identifying its gender, number, and lexical form.

Ex. תּוֹרוֹת would be parsed as a feminine plural noun from תּוֹרָה.

Lexical Form

When we look a noun up in a lexicon, we look for it based on its singular form. For instance, if we wanted to look up הַסּוּסִים, we would look under the entry for סוּס.

If a word does have a gendered binary pair (eg. מִלְכָּה and מִלְכָּד), often both will have an entry.

Lexicons

One further note on gender: because the “default” gender is masculine, lexicons generally only note if nouns are feminine *and* only do so if they are unmarked (ie. do not end in *he* or *taw*).

Of course, Logos will be your most immediate guide.

Function of Nouns

Nouns function in one of three ways:

- Nominative
 - As subject, predicate nominative, vocative, pendant nominative
- Genitive
 - Possessive, descriptive
- Accusative
 - Object of the verb

Function of Nouns

Unlike Greek or Latin (or Akkadian), Hebrew nouns do not have case markers. Function is normally determined by *syntax*, much like English.

Noun function in English

Jacob's sons went down the hill.

Each noun – highlighted in red – is performing a different function in the sentence

Noun function in Hebrew

אֶת-הַהַר

the hill

יַעֲקֹב

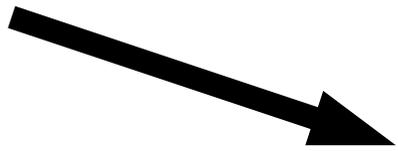
of Jacob

בָּנָי

sons

יָרְדוּ

they went
down



Jacob's sons went down the hill.

Nominative Nouns

Primarily function as the Subject of a clause

Gen 3:13

הַנָּחַשׁ הַשִּׁי אֵנִי

“The *serpent* deceived me”

Nominative Nouns

Gen 1:1

בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים “...God created...”

Gen 3:8

וַיִּתְחַבְּאוּ הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ

“...and the man and his wife hid themselves...”

Genitive Nouns

A noun is genitive if it follows a preposition or a word in the construct state (more on that in a bit).

Genitive Nouns

Very often this is represented as possession:

1 Kings 9:10

בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ

“house of the **king**” or “the **king's** house”

בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

“Sons of **Israel**” or “Israelites”

Genitive Nouns

Genitive nouns can represent other qualities besides possession:

1 Kings 10:25

כֶּסֶף כְּלֵי “vessels of silver”

Psalm 2:6

הַר-קֹדֶשׁי “mountain of my holiness”

Accusative Nouns

Accusative nouns function most often as the direct object of the verb, but have several other uses as well.

A direct object will often, though not always, be marked by the direct object marker, or accusative marker.

את

Accusative Nouns

Gen 1:1

בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

“God created the **heavens** and the **earth**”

יָרְדוּ בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב אֶת-הַהַר

“Jacob's sons went down the **hill**”

Conjunction

A conjunction signifies some type of relationship between words, phrases, or clauses.

English has many: and, but, also, even, then, etc. Hebrew has fewer, and one in particular stands out:

The conjunction *waw*

ו

The most commonly used word in the Hebrew Bible – over 50,000 uses, which is roughly 2.5 uses per verse.

The conjunction in action

זֶה וְהוּא “this and that”

טוֹב וְרָע “good and bad” (cf. Gen 2:17)

If a word in the Hebrew Bible begins with *waw*, there is a 99.9% chance it is a conjunction

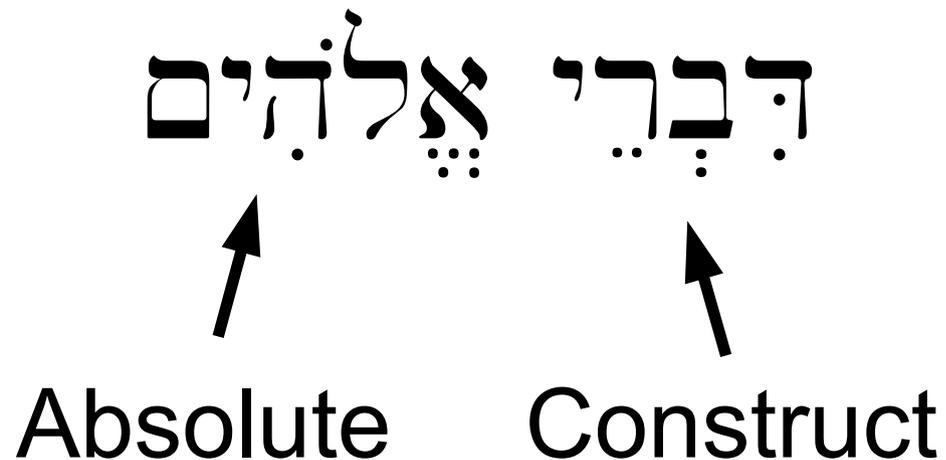
The conjunction in action

The conjunction *waw* can serve to connect

- Coordinating ideas (and)
- Alternatives (or)
- Adversatives (but)
- Explicatives (even)
- Comparatives (as)

Construct Chain

A noun in the construct state combined with an absolute noun is considered a construct chain.



Construct Chain

Jer 39:3

כָּל-נְשֵׂאֵרֵי־יְת שְׂרֵי מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל

“all of the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon”

Gen 28:5

אִם יַעֲקֹב וְעֵשָׂו

“The mother of Jacob and Esau”

A reminder on Definiteness!

Jer 39:3

כָּל-נְשֹׂאֵרֵית שְׂרֵי מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל

“all of **the** rest of **the** princes of **the** king of
Babylon”

Note the translation... do you remember why all
the nouns are translated as definite?

Adjectives

Adjectives function in Hebrew much as they do in English – though they most often follow rather than precede the word they are describing. Logos will do most of the heavy lifting for you.

Gen 21:8

מִנְשֵׂתָה גְדוֹלָה

“a **great** feast”

Prov 14:14

אִישׁ טוֹב

“a **good** man”

Adjectives

An adjective will agree with the noun it describes in number and gender. If it is *attributive* (as the two previous examples), it will also agree in definiteness. If it does not agree in definiteness, it is *predicative*.

אִישׁ טוֹב

“a good man”

הָאִישׁ טוֹב

“The man is good.”