Learning Hebrew: Construct Chain

CONSTRUCT CHAIN
Hebrew expresses the possessive (“of”) relationship between two nouns by a construct chain. The relationship is created by placing two or more nouns side by side.

קֹל הָאִיש

BASIC GRAMMAR OF THE CONSTRUCT CHAIN
The first of the two nouns is called the construct noun and is in a construct state. There may be multiple construct nouns in a construct chain.

The second of the two nouns is called the absolute noun and is in an absolute state. There may only be one absolute noun in a construct chain.

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Absolute Noun Construct Noun

The construct noun will not take the definite article. If the absolute noun is definite, so are all the construct nouns linked to it. (שׁ) If the absolute noun is indefinite, so are all the construct nouns linked to it. (שׁ)

When multiple construct nouns appear, each construct noun is translated with the possessive “of” and they all depend upon the absolute noun to determine if they are definite or indefinite.

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The nouns of a construct chain are sometimes joined by a Maqqef.

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CONSTRUCT CHAINS WITH ADJECTIVES
When an adjective modifies either the construct or absolute noun, it must follow the entire construct chain. The adjective must agree in gender, number, and definiteness with the modified noun. (שׁ)

When an adjective is used as a noun, it appears in the construct state just like a noun.

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CONSTRUCT NOUNS WITH INSEPARABLE PREPOSITIONS

Construct chains may appear with one of the inseparable prepositions (ב, ל, ד) as in בְבֵית דָוִד.

Sources:
*The First Hebrew Primer, Third Edition* by Simon, Resnikoff, and Motzkin
*Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* by Pratico and Van Pelt

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