

# Learning Hebrew: Definite Articles

## DEFINITE ARTICLES

In English there are indefinite articles (a book, a bike) and definite articles (the book, the bike).

In Hebrew there is no indefinite article. מֶלֶךְ can be translated as king or a king. Due to this, except where indicated, words without the definite article should be considered indefinite articles.

In Hebrew, a noun is made definite by prefixing the noun with the definite article (הַ) plus a dagesh forte in the first consonant of the noun. This means that מֶלֶךְ (king or a king) would become הַמֶּלֶךְ (the king).

The beged kefet consonants that appear at the beginning of a word take the dagesh lene (as in בֵּית). When adding the definite article, the dagesh lene is replaced by a dagesh forte. (This does not change the spelling of the word.) The guttural letters can never have a dagesh so there are two rules regarding guttural letters and the definite article.

When a definite article is placed before a word that begins with the letter א, נ, or ע, the noun is changed from a patach to a kamets. For example: אֵשׁ would become אֵשׁהַ with a definite article

In the case of a word that has an unaccented ה, ו, or ח, the definite article's vowel is changed from a patach to a segol. For example: חָכָם would become חָכָםהַ with a definite article.

With few exceptions, words that begin with י or יוּ, give up the dagesh forte when a definite article is present. For example: יוֹדֵי would become יוֹדֵיהַ with a definite article

## CONJUNCTION VAV

The conjunction וְ (and, but, also, even) is always prefixed to another word. For example אֵשׁ is written אֵשׁוֹ with the conjunction. This conjunction has four basic spelling possibilities, depending upon the vocalization of the word to which it is prefixed.

Before most consonants, the conjunction will appear as וְ. Example: אֵשׁוֹ

There are two circumstances when the conjunction is written as a shurek (וּ). It is spelled with a shurek before the consonants מ, ב, or פ. In this case, note that the beged kefet letters will lose their dagesh lene. (Example: בֵּית becomes בֵּיתוֹ) It is spelled with a shurek before the consonants with a vocal sheva. (Example: אֵשׁוֹ becomes אֵשׁוֹ)

Before a chataf vowel, the conjunction is spelled with the corresponding short vowel of the chataf Vowel.

וְאֲנָשִׁים becomes וְאֲנָשִׁים

וְאֲמַתְּ becomes וְאֲמַתְּ

וְחָלִי becomes וְחָלִי

The conjunction may also be spelled with a kamets before words with one syllable and certain words with an initial accent.

וְצֵאן becomes וְצֵאן

וְלָחֶם becomes וְלָחֶם

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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