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. יֵלֵךְ 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 (ך) plus a dagesh forte in the first consonant of the noun. This means that יֵלֵךְ (king or a king) would become יֵלֵךְךָ (the king).

The beged kefet consonants that appear at the beginning of a word take the dagesh lene (as in בְַיִת). 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 ע, א, or ר, the noun is changed from a patach to a kamets. For example: שׁאָי would become שׁאָי with a definite article.

In the case of a word that has an unaccented ע, א, or ח, the definite article’s vowel is changed from a patach to a segol. For example: שׁאָאָל would become שׁאָאל with a definite article.

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

CONJUNCTION VAV
The conjunction (ו) (and, but, also, even) is always prefixed to another word. For example שׁאָאָל is written שׁאָאָל 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 (ו). Example: שׁאָאָל

There are two circumstances when the conjunction is written as a shurek (ו). It is spelled with a shurek before the consonants נ, ב, or ב. In this case, note that the beged kefet letters will lose their dagesh lene. (Example: וּבֵין becomes וּבֵין) It is spelled with a shurek before the consonants with a vocal sheva. (Example: וּניֵלָדִים becomes וּניֵלָדִים)
Before a chataf vowel, the conjunction is spelled with the corresponding short vowel of the chataf Vowel.

אֲנָשִׁים becomes אָנָשִׁים

אֱמֶת becomes אֵמֶת

חֳלִי becomes חָלִי

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

צֹאן becomes צָאן

לֶחֶם becomes לֶחֶם

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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