

# Learning Hebrew: Prepositions

## PREPOSITIONS

In Hebrew prepositions function like prepositions in English . that is, they describe relationships between words. There are three types of prepositions in Hebrew . independent, Maqqef, and inseparable.

Independent prepositions . the majority of Hebrew prepositions . stand alone.

(Example: לְפָנַי הַמִּלָּךְ).

The Maqqef prepositions are always joined to their objects (the word after the preposition) with a Maqqef. (Example: עַל - הָאֶבֶן).

The inseparable prepositions ( בְּ , לְ , בִּי ) are prefixed directly to their objects. They never occur independently.

Before most consonants, the inseparable preposition will appear with a vocal sheva. (Example: בְּמִלָּךְ).

Before a chataf vowel, the inseparable preposition takes the corresponding short vowel of the chataf vowel. (Example: בְּאַמֶּת).

Before consonants with a vocal sheva, the inseparable prepositions are spelled with a chirek. (Example: לְבִרְיֹת).

Nouns with a definite article retain the dagesh forte and the vowel but the consonant of the preposition replaces the ה of the definite article. (Example: הַמִּלָּךְ becomes בְּמִלָּךְ).

When the בְּ preposition is inseparably prefixed to a word beginning with a beged kefet, the dagesh lene becomes a dagesh forte. (Example: בְּבֵית becomes בְּבֵית). The dagesh forte in the bet represents the assimilated nun of the preposition.

When the בְּ preposition is inseparably prefixed to a word beginning with a guttural letter, the preposition changes to בִּי (Example: בִּיאִי).

When the בְּ preposition is inseparably prefixed to a word with the definite article, the ה is retained and preposition changes to בִּי (Example: בִּיהָאָרְץ).

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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