Learning Hebrew: Adjectives

ADJECTIVES

In Hebrew adjectives function like adjectives in English . that is, they modify, characterize, classify, or describe nouns. Hebrew adjectives change their form to indicate gender and number. There are four forms: masculine singular, masculine plural, feminine singular, and feminine plural. The change in the forms are the same as those you already learned for nouns.

There are two additional rules that you need to know regarding Hebrew adjectives. Hebrew adjectives agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify (Example: סוּס טוֹב). Adjectives that are plural in form are singular in translation value. If the noun is plural, the adjective is also written plural but translated singular (Example: מְלָכוֹת טוֹבוֹת).

There are three ways adjectives modify or relate to nouns: attributive, predicative, and substantive.

In Hebrew, attributive adjectives come after the nouns they modify. These adjectives must agree with the noun in gender, number, and definite articles (Example: הָאֲנָשִׁים הַטּוֹבִים).

In Hebrew, predicative adjectives do not directly modify the nouns they modify. They may either follow or precede the nouns. These adjectives must agree with the noun in gender and number, but not the definite articles (Example: הָאֲנָשִׁים טוֹבִים or טוֹבִים הָאֲנָשִׁים).

Clauses without verbs and with predicative adjectives should be translated only with the English present tense of the verb .to be. (is, are) (Example: צַדִּיק הַנָּבִיא).

Clauses without verbs can be translated with the past tense of .to be. (was, were) but only if a past tense verb form is present or if it is warranted by the context.

In Hebrew, substantive adjectives may be used independently as nouns (Example: חָכָם).

DIRECTIONAL ENDING

In Hebrew, the ending הָ indicates motion toward someone or something (Example: הָהָרָה).

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