

## The Hebrew Noun – Lesson 13

### The Construct State

In many languages, cases are used to define how a noun relates to the rest of the sentence. Nouns tend to play certain roles, and cases are used to define each noun's role in the sentence. In English, case is usually either defined by the noun's position in the sentence, or by using a preposition with the noun. But in many languages, the noun itself is changed slightly.

Hebrew does change its nouns, but it does so by combining them with pronouns and prepositions. However, the genitive case can cause some special changes to the noun, using what is called the construct state. The construct state is the rough equivalent of the English word “of” (which English often uses to denote the genitive case). The genitive case is used for nouns that are describing another noun in some way, such as “day of reckoning” or “house of David”.

In the phrase “horses of David”, the approach in Hebrew would be to put “horses” in the construct state: “horses-of David”. The word “David” would be in the absolute state, and the two words would be in what is called the construct relation. This pairs “horses” and “David” together.

In a construct relation, the governing word (horses of) is:

- 1) Always first
- 2) Never has a definite article
- 3) Is always in the construct state

Meanwhile, the governed word (David) is:

- 1) Always immediately after the governing word

2) Is always in the absolute state

Sometimes the two words are also joined by a makkeph.

In the previous lesson we learned the endings of the absolute state (These endings are what are normally used). The construct state is usually accompanied by different endings. These endings differ depending on the number of the noun:

Masculine singular and feminine plural do not change

Feminine singular uses the old ending תַּ instead of הַ

Dual and masculine plural use יֵ instead of their normal endings

The construct state also can often cause some of the vowels within the word to change, generally by being shortened.

### Exercises

וְהָאָרֶץ

דָם־הַבְּרִית

דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית

בֵּית אֱלֹהִים

שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם

דְּבָרֵי הַנְּבִיא

מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ

וּמִלְכַת־שָׂבָא