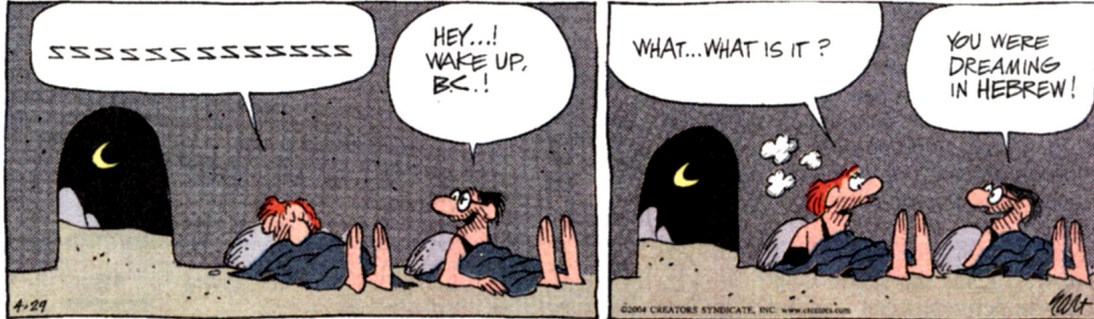


Section B



Grammar

B.C.



“As a hawk flieth not high with one wing,
even so a man reacheth not to excellence with one tongue.”

— Roger Ascham

Frank and Ernest



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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| BH | Biblical Hebrew. |
| BHS | <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . |
| MNK | <i>A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i> by van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze. |
| PHK | <i>Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar</i> , by Page H. Kelley. |
| JAH | <i>A Basic Introduction To Biblical Hebrew</i> by Jo Ann Hackett. |
| JW | <i>A Practical Grammar For Classical Hebrew</i> by J. Weingreen. |
| PDSBH | <i>Pocket Dictionary For The Study Of Biblical Hebrew</i> by Todd J. Murphy. |
| VP | <i>Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide</i> by Miles V. Van Pelt. |
| YO | <i>The Essentials Of Biblical Hebrew</i> by Kyle M. Yates, edited by John Joseph Owens. |

Special Vowels

Patah Furtive

Normally, a vowel sign appearing under a word is read *after* the consonant above it. This rule has an exception: if the final consonant of a word is a guttural and follows a full accented vowel, then a ַ (patah) under that final consonant is *furtive* and is read *first*. The word רֹאֵחַ, for example, is pronounced roo/ach, not roo/cha.

Qamatz Qatan (Qamets Hatuf)

Written identically to the normal qamatz (*qamatz rachabh*), ָ, the qamatz qatan is a short vowel and is recognized by the fact that **it appears in a closed, unaccented syllable**. By contrast, the regular qamatz appears in an open syllable, or in a closed *and* accented syllable. Qamatz Qatan occurs in כָּל (Gen 1.21), הַכְּמֹהַר, אֶבְלָהֶן (Gen 2.17) and שְׁמֵרָהּ (Psa 121.7). In some of these instances, whether or not the qamatz appears in an open or closed syllable depends upon whether the associated sheva is vocal or silent, and vice versa!

Shuruq (Shureq)

The ֵ sign can function either as a *shuruq* or as a doubled *vav* (with dagesh). If it follows a consonant, it is a *shuruq* (e.g. בְּרֹאֵי); if it follows a short vowel, it is a doubled *vav*, and should have a vowel following (וַיִּזְרַח). In the word וַיִּקְרָא (Isa 51.5) the first ֵ follows a *patah* and so is a doubled *vav*; the second ֵ thus follows a *vav* and so is a *shuruq*.

Hebrew Diphthongs

| Name | Sign | Notes |
|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| Patah Yod | יַ | Patah Yod functions as a long vowel in that a sheva following it will be vocal. |
| Qamatz Yod | יָ | A as in father but held slightly longer toward ou in ought or ai in aisle. |
| Holam Yod | יֹ | oy |
| Qamatz Vav | וָ | av |
| Qamatz Yod Vav | וֹ | Silent yod , so pronounced av . |
| Tsere Yod | יֵ | ey as in they |
| Segol Yod | יִ | ei |
| Hiriq Gadol (Hirik Male) | יִ | i as in think |
| Shuruk Yod | יֵי | oo-ie or ü-ie as in bouy |
| Qamatz Hey (Qa- matz Male) | הָ | ah |
| Vav with furtive Patah | וַ | oo-ah |

NOTE: The vowel signs consist of the marks in regular black tone. The grayed-out ׀ and ׀ are only provided to show the position of the vowel marks. **Also, the h's (and ch's) in vowel names are gutturals, except in Shuruq and Seghol and Qamatz Hey.**

Hebrew Prepositions

There are three kinds of Hebrew prepositions: (1) those which stand alone (separable), like אצל, meaning “near, next to,” (2) those joined to a following word with a *maqeph* (also considered separable), like על in על-סוס, and (3) the more common inseparable prepositions that must be prefixed to a nominal, an infinitive construct, or a pronomial suffix, forming a single word.

The inseparable prepositions are:

| | |
|-----|------------|
| בְּ | in, on, at |
| לְ | to, for |
| כְּ | like, as |

The inseparable prepositions are pointed with a vocal shewa, except when they fuse with the definite article. When joined to a noun with the definite article, the ה drops out, and the preposition takes the vowel that normally would have accompanied the missing ה. Thus, *for the horse* is לְסוּס, and *for the woman* is לְאִשָּׁה.

The preposition מִן, meaning *from*, also prefixes to its object, but behaves differently from the other inseparable prepositions because when ך occurs immediately before another consonant it tends to assimilate to that consonant: the ך disappears, and the next consonant is doubled. Thus, for a phrase like “from the king,” which one would expect to be written מִןמֶלֶךְ, the ך drops out because the silent shewa would force the ך to be pronounced immediately before the ך. Therefore, the phrase is correctly written: מִמֶּלֶךְ.

Because doubling occurs with the prefixing of מִן, when the object begins with a guttural or *resh*, none of which can be doubled, the *chiriq* of מִן is lengthened instead to a *tsere*, as in מִמֶּשָׁה. The definite article, since it begins with a guttural will cause compensatory lengthening or cause the whole preposition to be attached with a *maqeph* as in מִןהַסוּס.

The Guttural Consonants

The guttural consonants are a group of letters that are articulated at the back of the throat, namely: א, ה, ח, ע and ק. These letters cannot take a *dagesh forte*. This is why the definite article (which is normally spelled with a following *dagesh forte*) is spelled differently when it precedes a guttural letter.

The gutturals always take a compound sheva (*hataf* vowel) instead of a simple vocal sheva. Usually, guttural letters take a *hataf patah* (ֿֿ). Initial aleph, however, often takes the *hataf segol* (ֿֿֿ), and in rare instances a guttural will take a *hataf qamatz* (ֿֿֿֿ).

A guttural letter will often require a *furtive patach* when immediately following an accented full vowel, as in קִיָּהּ.

Reading the Sheva

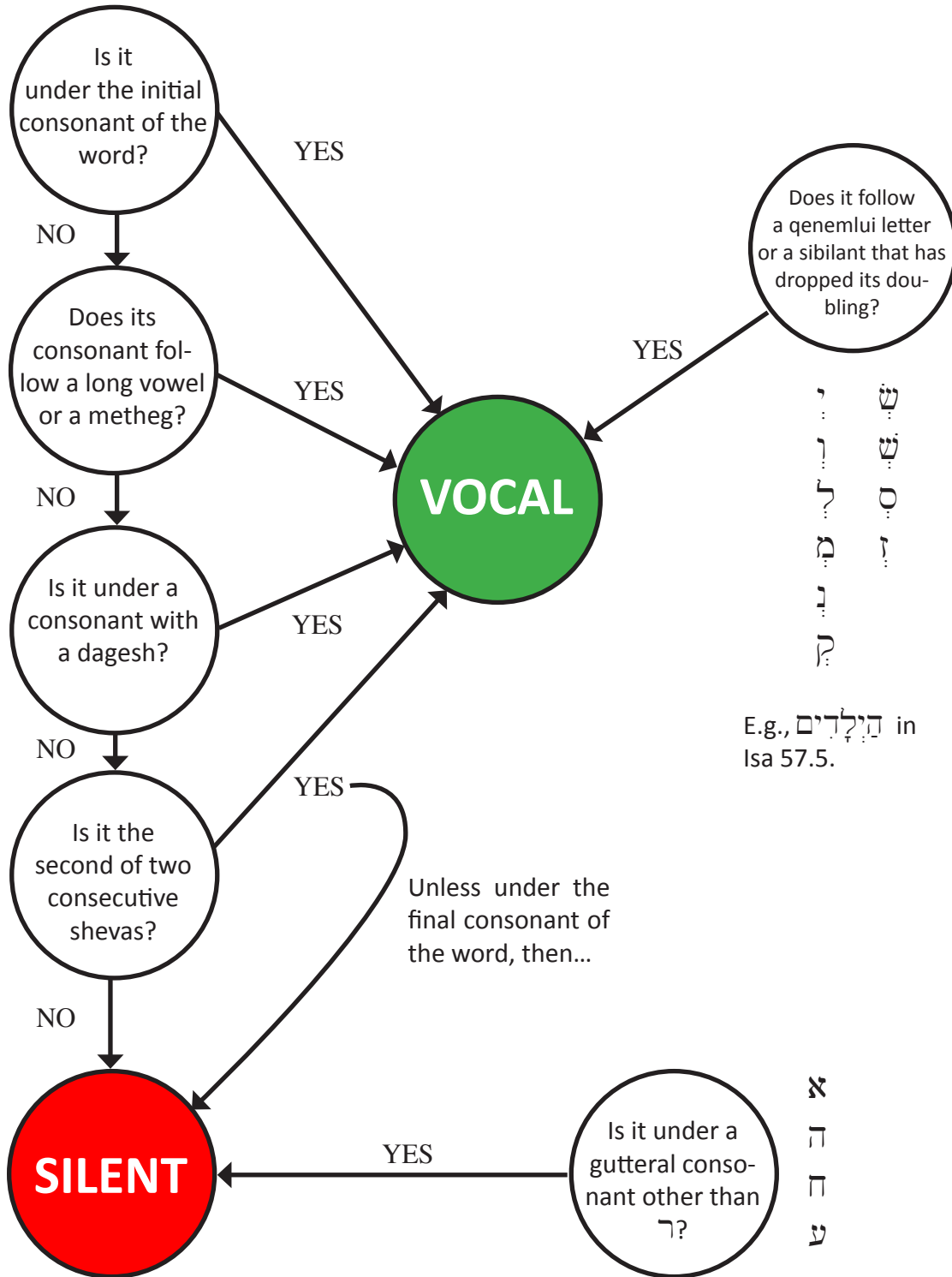
The Sheva is vocal when:

- It is the beginning vowel in a syllable, whether at the beginning or in the middle of a word.
- In the middle of a word (but not at the end), it is the second of two shevas together, or under a letter which is doubled (which is the equivalent) with a dagesh forte (the dagesh forte is distinguished by the fact that it is preceded immediately by a vowel, regardless of whether it appears in a “b^eged k^efet” letter).
- In the middle of a word, it follows a syllable with a long vowel or a syllable with an accent.

The Sheva is silent when:

- It appears at the end of a word or of a closed syllable.
- In the middle of a word, it follows an unaccented short vowel (unless it appears under a doubled consonant, and thus becomes a double sheva).
- In the middle of a word, it is the first of two shevas together.
- There is a dagesh lene in the consonant immediately following the sheva (as in מְדַבֵּר).

Vocalizing the Sheva



Hebrew Syllables

Every syllable in Hebrew begins with a consonant; closed syllables also end with a consonant (sometimes accompanied by a silent sheva, i.e., a syllable divider).

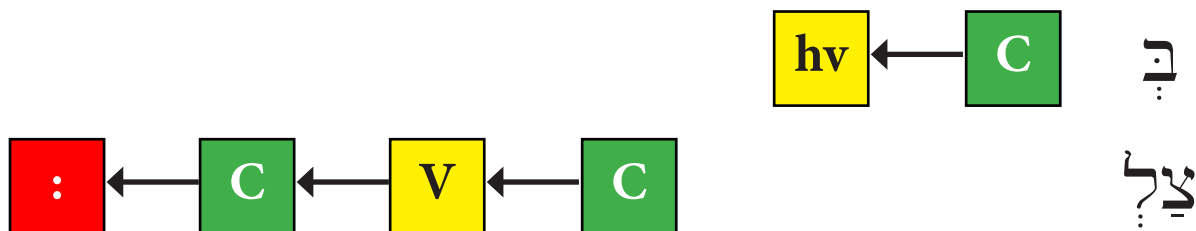
Authorities differ as to whether the reduced vowels (with preceding consonant) can constitute a syllable, or whether a full vowel must be present to constitute a syllable.

PHK, YO and PDSBH agree that **the Hebrew syllable never has less than one full vowel** (e.g., NOT אֵל ^{PDSBH pp. 152-153}), **nor more than one full and one reduced vowel** (NOT אֵלֶּהּ ^{YO, pp. 17-18}). **In other words, the Hebrew syllable can have two distinct vowel sounds, though one will be very lightly pronounced.** According to this system of syllabification, a complex Hebrew syllable could look like this (Using the beginning of בְּצִלְמֶנִי in Gen 1.26):



That is, it could consist of a Consonant + Reduced Vowel + Consonant + Full Vowel + Consonant + Silent Sheva.

JAH, MNK and VP, on the other hand, see the reduced vowels (or at least the simple sheva) as sufficient to constitute an open syllable (i.e., a syllable lacking a closing consonant), and thus would break the above example into two syllables:

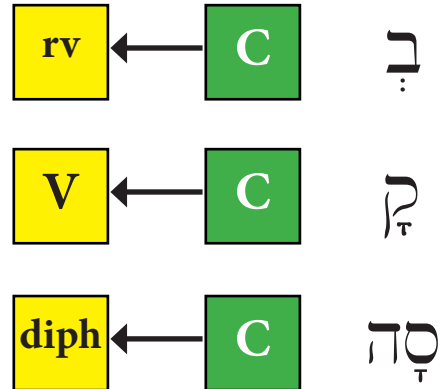


This system of syllabification is consistent with the English approach in which a syllable consists of only one uninterrupted segment of speech.

The two differing systems of Hebrew syllabification do not seem to affect the rules for vocalizing the *sheva* nor for identifying the *qamatz qatan* (*qamets hatuf*).

Hebrew syllables are of two kinds: open and closed.

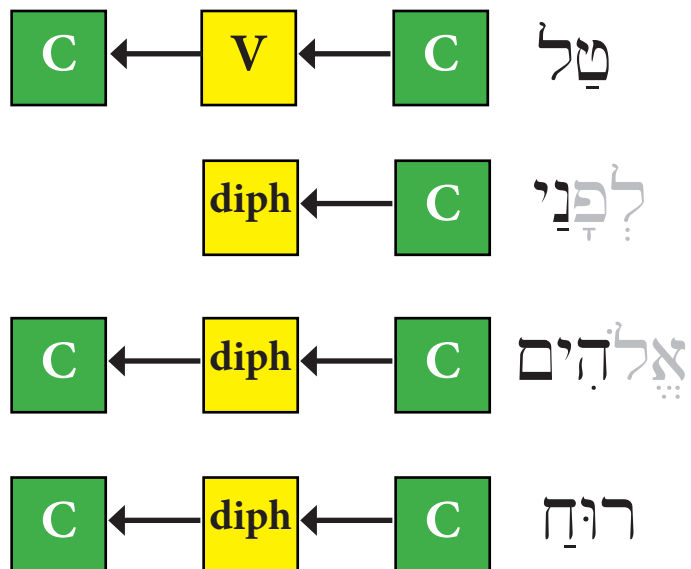
An **open syllable** ends in a vowel or diphthong:



Aside from reduced vowels, an **open syllable takes a long vowel**, but if accented may take either a long or a short vowel (as in רָטָה in which the first syllable is open but accented, and so can take a short vowel). Rarely, an *unaccented open syllable will take a short vowel* (YO, p. 18) as in the middle syllable of רַבִּיזִי.

In a **closed syllable**, the full vowel is **enclosed** between two consonants, or “included” within a diphthong following a consonant (JAH, p. 20). Alternatively, a *diphthong* is enclosed between two consonants, including the case of syllables with a furtive patach where the preceding vowel with the patach creates a diphthong before the final consonant (MNK, p. 33). A closed syllable may conclude with a silent *sheva*.

A **closed syllable takes a short vowel**, but if accented may take either a short or a long vowel (as in מֵאֲרָם where the final syllable is closed but accented and so can take a long vowel).



The Definite Article

In Hebrew, all proper nouns are considered definite. Other nouns can be made definite by addition of the definite article, consisting of ה attached to the beginning of the word with a doubling of the first letter of the noun itself. Thus, horse, סוס, becomes *the horse*: הַסּוּס (note the dagesh that doubles the first ס).

The Definite Article & Initial Gutturals

The following note and diagram is from Christo Van der Merwe, Jackie Naudé, Jan Kroeze et al, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, electronic ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), §24.4.2:

The form of the article

The basic form of the article is ה. The article is directly attached to the front of the relevant noun resulting in the doubling of the first consonant of that word.

ה + מֶלֶךְ the + word

הַמֶּלֶךְ the word

The following exceptions occur:

The gutturals (א, ה, ח, ע) and ר (as a rule) cannot be doubled.

When a definite noun begins with one of these consonants, the / - / of the *article changes or lengthens to compensate* for the doubling that can no longer occur.

These changes may be presented systematically as follows:

| <i>The first vowel is not a qāmeṣ.</i> | | | <i>The first vowel is a qāmeṣ.</i> | | |
|--|---|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| אִישׁ | א | ה | אָדָם | א | ה |
| רֹאשׁ | ר | | רִשָּׁע | ר | |
| עִיר | ע | | עָפָר | ע | |
| הִיכָל | ה | ה | הָרִים | ה | ה |
| חָרֵב | ח | | חָכָם | ח | |

The Vav-Conjunctive

The Hebrew conjunction is called *vav-conjunctive*. It can mean *and, then, also, now* or *but*. It is always prefixed to its following word. It is spelled, ׀, but it changes its form for phonological reasons:

Think of a doo-wop song for which the background singers sing, *BuMP sheva, ooh!* That will remind you that for words beginning with the labials ב, מ, or פ, and for words whose first vowel is *sheva*, the attached conjunction becomes ׀.

However, if a word begins with a *yod* and *sheva* (׀), the combination with the conjunction becomes ׀י. For words whose first vowel is a *hateph* vowel, the vowel of the conjunction will mirror the *hateph* vowel. Thus, the conjunction joined to the noun *fool* (אִיִּיל) becomes ׀אִיִּיל.

Furthermore, before a monsyllabic word or before an accented syllable, vav-conjunctive is written ׀, as in ׀בְּהָרִי (Genesis 1.2).

The Vav-Relative

The *vav-relative* (traditionally called a *vav-consecutive* or *vav-conversive*; also called *sequential-vav*) is a special form of the conjunction prefixed to an imperfect Hebrew verb to express past action. It is called the *vav-relative* because it **relates** the action of a new clause to that of the preceding one. A passage narrating consecutive events in past time will often begin with a perfect verb, and then continue with a series of imperfects that have the prefixed *vav-relative*. The *vav-relative* can be interpreted as either sequential (“and then”) or consequential (“and so”).

The *vav-relative* is written as a *vav* + *patah* + *dagesh forte* in the following consonant (׀). However, when an imperfect verb begins with א, the *dagesh forte* of the *vav-relative* is rejected, and the *patah* under the *vav* is lengthened to a *qamatz*.

The Definite Direct Object Marker

In BH the untranslatable word **את** is written directly before a definite direct object (e.g., **בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם**). There are exceptions to this rule; the marker is often not used when the direct object is a body part.

את is not to be confused with the preposition **אֵת** (with, along with) which is written identically.

Rather than written as a separate word, the definite direct object marker is usually connected to its following definite direct object with a *maqeph*: **אֶת־הָאוֹר** (*the light*, Gen 1.4). Notice that the *maqeph* causes the long *tsere* of the direct object marker to reduce to a *segol*.

The Direct Object Marker With Personal Pronoun

| | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| אֶתִּי | me | אֶתָּנוּ | us |
| אֶתְּךָ | you (ms) | אֶתְכֶם | you (mp) |
| אֶתְּךָ | you (fs) | אֶתְכֶן | you (fp) |
| אֹתוֹ | him, it | אֹתָם | them (m) |
| אֹתָהּ | her, it | אֹתָן | them (f) |

Noun Cases In Hebrew

Nominative.

Hebrew has no specific ending for nominative nouns, but generally indicates the nominative noun by its position in a sentence. Generally the subject follows the finite verb.

Accusative

The direct object is indicated by word position in the sentence. Generally the direct object follows the subject of the verb. A direct object which is definite is generally introduced with the direct object marker (see preceding page), except in poetry. There is an old accusative ending, הַ, which is still used to express direction or motion toward a place, as in הַהָרָה *toward the mountain*, or אֶרֶץ *to the ground*.

Ablative.

The case expressing separation, or movement or direction *from* is formed using the preposition מִן.

Dative.

The case expressing intention *toward* or movement *to* is formed using the preposition לְ.

Locative.

The case expressing position is shown by the use of the prepositions בְּ *in*, עַל *upon*, תַּחַת *below*, בֵּין *between*, אֶצְל *beside*, לְפָנַי *before*, and others.

Instrumental.

The instrumental case is indicated with the prepositions בְּ and עִם. The locative and instrumental cases are distinguished by context.

Genitive.

The case expressing possession and a wide variety of other relationships is expressed with a special combination of words which is called a construct chain (see the following page).

The Construct State

The genitive case is expressed in Hebrew by combining words in what is called the construct relation. The construct relation is formed by annexion, i.e. by joining with a preceding substantive in the construct state. Thus while Greek would express the idea “king’s son” by saying “son **of-the-king**,” i.e., by putting the noun *king* in the genitive case (υἱος τοῦ βασιλέως), Hebrew would express the same thing by saying “**son-of** the-king,” i.e., by writing the word *son* in its construct form, and putting it in the construct state by annexing it to the phrase *the king* (בֶּן־הַמֶּלֶךְ).

Notice that the word *son* is בֶּן in the absolute state (dictionary form), but בֶּן־ in the construct state. This is because when the construct relation is formed, the substantive in the construct state loses its accent, and the long vowels of the open syllables (unless characteristic) are reduced to hateph vowels (volatilized), and the long vowels of the closed syllables are shortened. In the case of בֶּן־, the long *tseré* of the closed syllable is shortened to *segol*.

The construct forms of various kinds of nouns are formed differently (see Hackett pp. 50-51). Generally, the construct is recognized by its position in a chain of nouns, and by the reduction (volatilization) of vowels as compared to the absolute form of the noun.

In Hebrew, the genitive has a very wide application, expressing almost any relation between two nouns, “corresponding often to the semi-adjectival use of nouns in our own language, as tree-fruit, fruit-tree, seed-corn, water-pot, except that the order of words is reversed, fruit of tree, tree of fruit.”¹

1 A. B. Davidson, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar Hebrew Syntax*. 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), p. 31.