

⌘ Biblical Hebrew Grammar for Beginners

Adjectives

When an adjective modifies a noun and combines with it to form a phrase, it follows the noun and agrees with it in gender, number, and definiteness.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַמְשְׁלַת הַיּוֹם

וְאֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשְׁלַת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים. (Genesis 1:16)

So God made the two great lights: The greater light for governing the day, the lesser light for governing the night, and the stars.

The noun מְאֹר *luminary, light* appears three times with the adjectives גָּדֹל *large* and קָטָן *small*: twice in the singular, and once in the plural. In all three instances, both the noun and the following adjective are definite (note the definite article prefixed to both), and since the noun is masculine, the adjectives too take a masculine form. When the noun appears in the singular, the adjective is in the singular, and when the noun is plural, so is the adjective.

When an adjective serves as a predicate (the part that tells us something about the subject—what he does, what he is, etc.), combining with a noun to form a clause, it either precedes the noun or follows it. The adjective agrees with the noun in gender and number, but **not** in definiteness.

וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עֲרֻמִּם הֵם. [...] (Genesis 3:7)

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked. [...]

In the clause *they were naked*, the noun *they* and the adjective *naked* are both in the masculine plural form.

וַיִּקְחֵהוּ וַיִּשְׁלְכֵהוּ אֶתוֹ הַבְּרֶחַ; וְהַבּוֹר רֶק אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם. (Genesis 37:24)

So they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

In the clause *the cistern was empty*, the noun *cistern* and the adjective *empty* are both in the masculine singular. The noun is definite, but the adjective is not.

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲתָן מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא-טוֹב הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה. (Exodus 18:17).

Moses' father-in-law said to him: "*The thing that you are doing is not good.*"

In the clause *The thing that you are doing is not good*, the noun *thing* and adjective *good* are both in the masculine singular. The noun is definite, but the adjective is not.

[The Adjective: Exercise](#)