

## **Biblical Hebrew Grammar for Beginners**

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### **The Conjunction “and”**

The conjunction “and”, which takes the form of a prefixed *vav* ו, figures prominently in Biblical Hebrew. In addition to connecting parallel elements within a sentence and parallel sentences within a larger unit of discourse, the conjunction plays a major role in defining the organization of the narrative sequence. It appears, therefore, in abundance in the Biblical text, and its meaning is much broader than “and”. This explains why, when the Biblical text is translated from the original Hebrew, ו is rendered in different ways (e.g., *and, but, however, that, now*) or, occasionally, is not translated at all.

Like other prefixes, the conjunction is affected by the word to which it is prefixed, and, in turn, may affect that same word. In the following verses, the conjunction is highlighted.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ. וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תְהוֹ וְבֵהוּ  
וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם; וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם. (Genesis 1:1-2)

*In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,[] the earth was nothingness and chaos and darkness over the face of the deep; and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב; וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין  
הַחֹשֶׁךְ. (Genesis 1:4)

*[]God saw the light, that it was good; and God separated between the light and the darkness.*

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרְקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם  
אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לָרְקִיעַ; וַיְהִי-כֵן. (Genesis 1:7)

*Now, God made the vault, and separated between the waters which were below the vault and the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.*

וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׁא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה-פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ-בוֹ  
לְמִינֵהוּ; וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב. (Genesis 1:12)

[] The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, **and** trees bearing fruit with seeds in them after their kind; **and** God saw that it was good.

וַיְהִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים. (Genesis 11:1)

**Now** the whole earth was of one language **and** uniform words.

וַיָּבֹא חֲנָנִי אֶחָד מֵאֲחֵי הוּא וְאַנְשֵׁים מִיְהוּדָה ; וְאֶשְׁאֲלֵם עַל-הַיְהוּדִים  
הַפְּלִיטָה אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁאַרוּ מִן-הַשָּׁבִי וְעַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם. (Nehemia 1:2)

**Then** came Hanani, one of my brothers, he **with** other people from Judea; **and** I asked them about the Jewish remnant that remained after the captivity, **and** about Jerusalem.

וְאֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, מֵאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם ; וְאֱלֹהִים זֹלָתִי לֹא תִדַע, וּמוֹשִׁיעַ אִין  
בְּלָתִי. (Hosea 13:4)

**But** I am the Lord your God, from the land of Egypt. []A God other than me you should not know, **for** there is no Savior except me.

וְאָמַרְתֶּם הִנֵּה מִתְלַאֵה וְהִפְחַתֶּם אוֹתוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְהִבַּאתֶם גְּזוּל  
וְאֶת-הַפֶּסֶח וְאֶת-הַחֹלָה וְהִבַּאתֶם אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה ; הָאֲרָצָה אוֹתָהּ מִיָּדְכֶם  
אָמַר יְהוָה. (Malachi 1:13)

**And** you have said: "What a nuisance!" **and** you have snorted at it", says the Lord of hosts. "**And** you have brought the injured, [the lame, or the diseased animal, so you would bring the offering--should I accept it from your hands?" says the Lord.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ עַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה וְגַם-אֲגָרוֹת כָּתַב עַל-אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה  
לְבֹא לְבֵית-יְהוָה בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם לַעֲשׂוֹת פֶּסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
(2 Chronicles 30:1)

**Now**, Hezekiah sent word to all Israel **and** Judah **and** also wrote letters to Ephraim **and** Manasseh, to come to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel.

As the examples above illustrate, the conjunction has many variants, but while they sound different, the variant forms do not have any particular meaning. For the time being it would suffice to note that when the conjunction is used purely as a connecting element, primarily with nouns, it may appear in any position within the sentence, and its most common forms are ׀ and

1. When the conjunction serves the purpose of organizing the narrative sequence, it is prefixed to a verb at the beginning of the sentence, with ו as its primary rendition.

[The Conjunction “and”: Exercises 1 and 2](#)

**Want to Know More?**

1. [Variants of the conjunction](#): The conjunction has many variants, depending on its function and on the word to which it is prefixed.
2. [Perfective and Imperfective](#): The conjunction plays a major role in structuring the Biblical narrative.