

Handout #8 - Interrogative Heh

FORMS OF THE INTERROGATIVE HEH

Normally: הַ

If the first consonant of the word is	a guttural	a non guttural followed by a shewa
and (1) that consonant DOES NOT have a QAMATS or QAMATS QATAN after it:	הַ	הַ
and (2) that consonant DOES have a QAMATS or a QAMATS QATAN after it:	הֶ	הֶ

SITUATIONS WHERE THE INTERROGATIVE HEH LOOKS LIKE A DEFINITE ARTICLE:

- the word –**which must be a noun or adjective**– begins with a ע, ה, ח, followed by a qamats.
 - If ח : it doesn't matter whether that first syllable of the word is accented. The definite article AND the interrogative heh will have the form הַ. This could lead to cases of ambiguity where there is an interrogative heh on a word beginning with ח.
 - Example: הַחֲזֵה
 - If ה or ע: the first syllable of the word needs to be unaccented for there to be ambiguity. In this case the definite article AND the interrogative heh will have the form הֶ. (If the first syllable of the word is accented, the form of the definite article is הַ for ה and הֶ for ע.)
 - Examples:
 - הַעֲפָרָה (ambiguous)
 - הֶעָב (is a cloud...?) ; הֶעָב (the cloud)
- the word –**which must be a noun or adjective**– begins with a ה or ח, and is not followed by a qamats.
 - In this case the definite article and the interrogative heh will both have the form הַ
 - Examples:
 - הַחֵץ (ambiguous; “the arrow” or “is an arrow...?”)
- the word –**which must be a noun or adjective**– begins with a non-guttural consonant followed by a shewa.
 - In very rare cases (only 5x) the first root letter of the word is doubled and the form looks identical to the definite article.
 - Example: הַדְּבָרִים (ambiguous; “the words” or “are words...?”)

NOTE: Biblical Hebrew usually places verbs first in a sentence; these ambiguities will rarely be an issue!