

Learning Hebrew: Nouns

NOUNS

Nouns in the Hebrew language can be singular, plural, or dual (i.e. plurality of two – such as two eyes). Hebrew nouns also have a gender – either masculine or feminine. The gender of a noun does not change its meaning, only its pattern of pluralization.

MASCULINE NOUNS

Masculine singular nouns have no distinctive endings. Masculine plural and dual nouns are distinct.

Masculine plural nouns generally end in ם' (as in סוּטִים׳). Masculine dual nouns generally end in םֹׁ (as in סוּטִיםֹׁ)

FEMININE NOUNS

Feminine singular nouns are usually marked with distinctive endings. The most common ending is ה (as in תּוֹרָה). The ending ת (as in בְּרִית) is also distinctly feminine. Feminine plural nouns generally end in ות (as in מְלָכוֹת). Feminine dual nouns generally end in םֹׁ (as in סוּטִיםֹׁ) – this is the same as the masculine noun.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES

Some feminine singular nouns have no distinctive endings (such as אֶרֶץ). The only way to be certain of any noun's gender is to look it up in the Hebrew lexicon.

In some instances, singular nouns of one gender take the plural endings of the other gender. For example – the masculine word אָב is feminine plural (אֲבוֹת) and the feminine word שָׁנָה is masculine plural (שָׁנִים).

There are three Hebrew words that are always dual in form.

שְׁמַיִם	מְצָרִים	מַיִם
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Some Hebrew nouns will alter their actual original combination of consonants when they add plural endings (such as אֵל - singular = אֱלֹהִים – plural).

Sources:

The First Hebrew Primer, Third Edition by Simon, Resnikoff, and Motzkin

Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar by Pratico and Van Pelt

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