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 ים (as in סוסים). Masculine dual nouns generally end in יים (as in סוס יים)

FEMININE NOUNS
Feminine singular nouns are usually marked with distinctive endings. The most common ending isה (as in תורה). The endingת (as in ברית) is also distinctly feminine. Feminine plural nouns generally end inות (as in מלכות). Feminine dual nouns generally end in ים (as in סוסים) – this is the same as the masculine noun.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES
Some feminine singular nouns have no distinctive endings (such as ארצ). 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 אב is feminine plural (אבוות) and the feminine word שנת is masculine plural (שנים).

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

| שָמִים | מִצְרִים | סַפּוֹת |
Some Hebrew nouns will alter their actual original combination of consonants when they add plural endings (such as יָם - singular = יְמֵי – 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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