

## Noun Plurals

### The Easy Cases

The easiest noun plurals require only the addition of a suffix of ים (for masculine words) or ות (for feminine words).

בְּכוֹר > בְּכוֹרִים (first-born, masculine)

חֵלֹם > חֵלֹמוֹת (dream, feminine)

In some cases, masculine nouns take the ות ending and feminine nouns take the ים ending.

These have to be learned as they come up.

אָב > אֲבוֹת (father, masculine)

עִיר > עָרִים (city, feminine)

### Important Terms

When suffixes are added to words, it can change the distance between the accent and existing syllables. For example, when we form the plural of כּוֹכַב (yielding כּוֹכְבִים) the first syllable goes from being next to the accent to the second syllable in front of the accent. It is very useful to have terms to describe syllables by their distance from the accent.

**tonic** The accented syllable. This is usually the last syllable, and is always the syllable with the trope mark.

**pretonic** The syllable just before the accent.

**propretonic** The second syllable before the accent.

## Propretonic Vowel Reduction

Vowels tend to change when the plural suffix adds a new syllable, moving existing syllables away from the accent. A common change comes when the new syllable moves an existing syllable two places from the accent. For ease of speech, the vowel in the propretonic syllable may be reduced by replacing the vowel with a sheva.

For example, take the following case:

דְּבַר > דְּבָרִים (word or thing, masculine)

Originally, there were two syllables, and the first was pretonic (immediately in front of the accented syllable). But when the suffix is added, the first syllable becomes propretonic, and the  $\text{ְ}$  is reduced to  $\text{ֶ}$ . Reduction happens when the vowel in the propretonic syllable is either a  $\text{ְ}$  or a  $\text{ֶ}$  and the syllable is open. (A syllable is open if it does not end with a consonant, and the following syllable does not start with a doubled consonant (one with a dagesh hazak)). Other examples:

זָקֵן > זָקֵנִים (old man, masculine)

מָקוֹם > מְקוֹמוֹת (place, feminine)

## Pretonic Vowel Reduction

The form of vowel reduction discussed above applies when the propretonic syllable is open and has  $\text{ְ}$  or  $\text{ֶ}$  as the vowel. A different type of vowel reduction happens when the propretonic syllable is closed or has a non-reducible vowel. In these cases, if the syllable before the accent (the pretonic syllable) has  $\text{ְ}$  or  $\text{ֶ}$  for a vowel, two things can happen. When the pretonic vowel is  $\text{ְ}$ , it is usually retained unchanged, and the plural ending is just added.

מִשְׁפָּט	>	מִשְׁפָּטִים	(judgement, masculine)
מַלְאָךְ	>	מַלְאָכִים	(messenger, masculine)

But when the pretonic vowel is .. that vowel reduces to a sheva.

מִזְבֵּחַ	>	מִזְבְּחוֹת	(altar, feminine)
אֵיב	>	אֵיבִים	(enemy, masculine)
כֹּהֵן	>	כֹּהֲנִים	(priest, masculine)

### Single Syllable Nouns

Monosyllabic nouns with vowels וּ and יִ have no change in the plural stem:

שִׁיר	>	שִׁירִים	(song, masculine)
אוֹת	>	אוֹתוֹת	(sign, feminine)
סוּס	>	סוּסִים	(horse, masculine)

Monosyllabic nouns with the vowel טְ usually have no change in the plural stem:

דָּם	>	דָּמִים	(blood, masculine)
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Monosyllabic nouns with the vowel .. can behave in two ways. The stem may not change:

עֵץ	>	עֵצִים	(tree, masculine)
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Or, the final stem consonant may be doubled and the .. replaced with . :

חֵץ > חֲצִים (arrow, masculine)

Nouns with the vowel   have two cases. If the final stem consonant is a guttural or ׀ the stem vowel is lengthened to  :

הַר > הַרְיִם (mountain, masculine)

Otherwise, the final consonant is doubled and the stem vowel is unchanged:

עַם > עַמִּים (people, masculine)

Monosyllabic nouns with the vowel   usually have the stem vowel replaced by   and the final stem vowel is doubled:

חֵק > חֲקִים (statute, masculine)

However, beware. Sometimes words normally spelled with   are defectively spelled with  . Such words have no stem change before the plural ending, as explained above.

### A Special Case - Two Syllable Words With The Accent On The First Syllable

There is a special class of two-syllable words with the accent on the first syllable, such as the following:

מֶלֶךְ > מְלָכִים (king, masculine)

זֶבַח > זְבָחִים (sacrifice, masculine)

סֵפֶר > סְפָרִים (book, masculine)

עֶבֶד	>	עֲבָדִים	(servant, masculine)
דֶּלֶת	>	דְּלָתוֹת	(door, feminine)

Note that the vowel patterns are the same in all but the last example, which has the usual replacement for a vocal sheva when dealing with a guttural. Gutturals cannot take a vocal sheva.

### Feminine Nouns Cases

Most feminine nouns ending in הַּ, simply have the feminine plural ending added in place of הַּ.

שָׁנָה	>	שָׁנִים	(year, feminine)
תּוֹרָה	>	תּוֹרוֹת	(teaching, feminine)
בְּרָכָה	>	בְּרָכוֹת	(blessing, feminine)

However, when feminine words ending in הַּ have two syllables and the first syllable is closed the plural has a different stem. Note the regular vowel change.

מַלְכָּה	>	מַלְכוֹת	(queen, feminine)
גְּבֻעָה	>	גְּבֻעוֹת	(hill, feminine)
חֲרֻפָּה	>	חֲרֻפוֹת	(reproach, feminine)

Feminine nouns that end in תּ, תַּ, תֵּ, תִּ, תְּ, ית, ות or ות have a variety of forms, and have to be memorized as you encounter them.

בַּת	>	בָּנוֹת	(daughter, feminine)
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עֵת	>	עֵתִים	(time, feminine)
מִשְׁמֶרֶת	>	מִשְׁמֶרוֹת	(office, feminine)
חַטָּאת	>	חַטָּאוֹת	(sin, feminine)
חֶנֶּיֶת	>	חֶנֶּיִתִים	(spear, feminine)
מַלְכוּת	>	מַלְכוּוֹת	(kingdom, feminine)

## Two Syllable Words With The 'ֵ' Vowel Pattern

Two syllable words with the 'ֵ' vowel pattern have a regular contraction in the plural stem.

זַיִת	>	זַיִתִּים	(olive tree, masculine)
אַיִל	>	אַיִלִּים	(ram, masculine)

## Irregular Noun Plurals

There are many common words with irregular plurals that have to be learned as they come up. Most of the irregular plurals are very common words because uncommon words do not come up often enough for speakers to remember the deviations. See page 43 of the text.

אָב	>	אָבוֹת	(father, masculine)
אִישׁ	>	אִנְשִׁים	(man, masculine)
אִשָּׁה	>	נָשִׁים	(woman, feminine)
בַּיִת	>	בָּתִּים	(house, masculine)
עִיר	>	עָרִים	(city, feminine)

ראש > ראשים (head, masculine)

יום > ימים (day, masculine)

## The Dual Plurality

Hebrew also has a dual plurality. It is used mostly for things that come in pairs, like hands.

יד > ידים (hand, feminine, dual)

אין > אינים (ear, feminine, dual)