

LESSON VII

17. Nouns: Derivation

According to their origin or derivation, Hebrew nouns may be divided into three classes.

17.1 *Primitive nouns are those for which no known derivation exists. The number of such nouns is very small.*

Examples:

אב	father	אם	mother	דם	blood
יום	day	לילה	night	פה	mouth
בן	son	יד	hand	שם	name

17.2 *The vast majority of Hebrew nouns are derived from verbs.*

דבר	"word," from דִּבֵּר "he spoke"
זרע	"seed," from זָרַע "he sowed"
מלך	"king," from מָלַךְ "he ruled"
עבד	"servant," from עָבַד "he served"
עוף	"bird," from עָוַף "to fly"
פתח	"door," from פָּתַח "he opened"
תקנה	"hope," from קָנָה "he hoped, waited"

17.3 *A few Hebrew nouns are derived from other nouns. The very first word in Genesis falls within this category. It is the word ראשית "beginning," from the noun ראש "head." Other examples include the following:*

בוקר	"a herdsman," from בָּקָר "a herd"
כרם	"a vinedresser," from כָּרַם "a vineyard"
ישראל	"Israelite," from יִשְׂרָאֵל "Israel"
מצרי	"Egyptian," from מִצְרַיִם "Egypt"

18. Nouns: Gender

18.1 *Hebrew nouns are either masculine or feminine. The only absolute way to determine the gender of a noun is to look it up in a dictionary. Masculine nouns are the most difficult to identify since they do not follow any set pattern.*

18.2 Feminine nouns are somewhat easier to identify. The following guidelines will provide assistance in this task.

(1) *Nouns referring to female persons or animals will be feminine.*

Examples:

אִם	(f) mother	אִשָּׁה	(f) woman	
בַּת	(f) daughter	מַלְכָּה	(f) queen	סוּסָה (f) mare

(2) *Nouns ending in הָ will normally be feminine in gender.*

Examples:

אֲדָמָה	(f) ground, earth	אֲכָלָה	(f) food	שָׁנָה (f) year
בַּהֲמָה	(f) cattle	יַבֵּשָׁה	(f) dry land	תּוֹרָה (f) law, instruction

(3) *A few nouns are made feminine by the addition of הָ to the masculine form of the noun.*

Examples:

מֶלֶךְ	king	מַלְכָּה	(f) queen
נָבִיא	prophet	נְבִיאָה	(f) prophetess
נָעַר	youth, lad	נַעֲרָה	(f) maiden
סוּס	horse	סוּסָה	(f) mare
שָׂר	prince	שָׂרָה	(f) princess

(4) *Nouns ending in ת will ordinarily be feminine.*

Examples:

אָחוּת	(f) sister	אֱמֶת	(f) truth	בְּרִית	(f) covenant
בַּת	(f) daughter	דֶּלֶת	(f) door	דְּמוּת	(f) likeness
דַּעַת	(f) knowledge	חַטָּאת	(f) sin	מַלְכוּת	(f) kingdom
עֵת	(f) time	קֶשֶׁת	(f) bow	שְׁאֵרִית	(f) remnant

(5) *Nouns that refer to parts of the body that exist in pairs are usually feminine.*

Examples:

יָד	(f) hand	עֵין	(f) eye	רֶגֶל	(f) foot
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19. Nouns: Number

There are three categories of number to be considered in connection with Hebrew nouns. They are singular, plural, and dual.

19.1 Most *singular nouns* are not identifiable by their endings, as can be seen from the examples cited earlier under the discussion of gender.

19.2 *Plural nouns* have special endings that generally correspond to their gender. Unfortunately, plurals are not formed simply by adding special endings to singular forms, but singular forms themselves often undergo changes when plural endings are added. These changes may seem arbitrary to the beginning student but they will become easier to understand as more is learned about the laws that govern the vocalization of words.

(1) *Masculine Plural Endings*

(a) *Most masculine nouns have plurals that end in ים* (*hireq-yod, followed by mem*). The following examples will demonstrate the types of changes that singular forms undergo when plural endings are added.

<u>Singular</u>		<u>Plural</u>	
סוס	horse	סוסים	horses
עץ	tree	עצים	trees
הר	mountain	הרים	mountains
דבר	word	דברים	words
ספר	book	ספרים	books
מלך	king	מלכים	kings
איש	man	אנשים	men
יום	day	ימים	days
בן	son	בנים	sons

(b) *A few masculine nouns have plurals that end in ות* (*holem-vav, followed by tav*), which is the ending normally used for feminine plurals.

Examples:

<u>Singular</u>		<u>Plural</u>	
אב	father	אבות	fathers
מקום	place	מקומות	places
קול	voice	קולות	voices
שם	name	שמות	names

(2) *Feminine Plural Endings*

(a) *Most feminine nouns have plurals that end in ות* (*holem-vav, followed by tav*).

Examples:

Singular		Plural	
סוּסָה	(f) mare	סוּסוֹת	(f) mares
תּוֹרָה	(f) law	תּוֹרוֹת	(f) laws
מִצְוָה	(f) commandment	מִצְוֹת	(f) commandments
רוּחַ	(f) spirit	רוּחוֹת	(f) spirits
אִם	(f) mother	אִמוֹת	(f) mothers
בַּת	(f) daughter	בָּנוֹת	(f) daughters
נֶפֶשׁ	(f) living being	נֶפְשׁוֹת	(f) living beings
אֶרֶץ	(f) earth, land	אֶרְצוֹת	(f) lands

(The vav in מִצְוֹת serves as the initial consonant in the final syllable, and its vowel is *holem*.)

(b) A few feminine nouns have plurals that end in **ים** (*hireq-yod*, followed by final *mem*), which is the ending normally used for the masculine plurals.

Examples:

Singular		Plural	
אִשָּׁה	(f) woman	נָשִׁים	(f) women
עִיר	(f) city	עָרִים	(f) cities

(3) Nouns with both Masculine and Feminine Plural Endings

A few nouns have two plural endings, one is **ים**, and one is **ות**.

Examples:

Singular		Plural	
דּוֹר	generation	דּוֹרִים or דּוֹרוֹת	generations
שָׁנָה	(f) year	שָׁנִים or שָׁנוֹת	years

19.3 Dual Nouns

The third number classification for Hebrew nouns is the dual. It is used to designate things that occur in pairs, especially the organs of the body.

(1) The dual ending is normally written as **יִם־** (accented *pataḥ*, plus *yod*, plus *hireq*, plus final *mem*).

VII EXERCISES

Examples:

Singular		Dual	
אָזְן (f)	ear	אָזְנִים	ears (a pair of)
יָד (f)	hand	יָדַיִם	hands (a pair of)
כַּנָּף (f)	wing	כַּנְּפִים	wings (a pair of)
(no singular)		מֵאֲזָנִים	balances (a pair of)
נֶעֱל (f)	shoe	נֶעֱלַיִם	shoes (a pair of)
עֵיִן (f)	eye	עֵינָיִם	eyes (a pair of)
קֶרֶן (f)	horn	קֶרְנִים	horns (a pair of)
רֶגֶל (f)	foot	רֶגְלַיִם	feet (a pair of)
שִׁפָּה (f)	lip	שִׁפְתַּיִם	lips (a pair of)

(2) For reasons that are no longer clear, some nouns appear to have a dual ending but without any dual meaning. Included here are the following:

מַיִם	water	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	Jerusalem
שָׁמַיִם	sky, heavens	מִצְרַיִם	Egypt

EXERCISES

1. Add the plural endings to the following words and indicate the gender of each.

(1) אָב	(5) דְּבַר	(9) סוּסָה
(2) אִשָּׁה	(6) הָר	(10) סֵפֶר
(3) בֶּן	(7) מֶלֶךְ	(11) רוּחַ
(4) בַּת	(8) סוּס	(12) שֵׁם

2. Translate the following:

- (1) הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַסּוּסִים
- (2) הַמַּצּוֹת אֲשֶׁר בַּסֵּפֶר
- (3) הַנָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בַּבַּיִת
- (4) הַמְּלָכִים וְהַנְּבִיאִים

- (5) הַבְּהֵמָה בַּשָּׂדֶה
- (6) הָעָרִים וְהַהָרִים
- (7) הַבָּנוֹת וְהָאֲמוֹת
- (8) הַבָּתִּים בָּעָרִים
- (9) הַדֶּרֶךְ מִן־הָעִיר
- (10) הַיָּדִים וְהַרְגָּלִים

3. Add the plural or dual endings to the following words and translate each plural or dual form.

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| (1) אִישׁ | (6) כָּנָף |
| (2) אִם | (7) עֵין |
| (3) אֶרֶץ | (8) עִיר |
| (4) יָד | (9) עֵץ |
| (5) יוֹם | (10) תּוֹרָה |

4. Translate the following:

- (1) הַמַּיִם בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם
- (2) הָעוֹף בַּשָּׁמַיִם
- (3) הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהָעֵצִים
- (4) הַבְּרִית עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ
- (5) בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת
- (6) הַמִּצּוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה
- (7) עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה
- (8) בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה
- (9) הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ
- (10) הַמְּלָכִים מִירוּשָׁלַיִם
- (11) הַנָּשִׁים וְהָאֲנָשִׁים
- (12) הַסּוּסִים וְהַסּוּסוֹת

VII VOCABULARY

5. Circle the word that seems to be out of place in each of the following groups.

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| (1) סוס בן אב | (10) אור חשך חרב |
| (2) נפש לילה יום | (11) לא אין לפני |
| (3) מן פרי בין | (12) אצל מאד עם |
| (4) ערב בקר עין | (13) דרך קול דבר |
| (5) עפר עין יד | (14) אשר היכל חג |
| (6) ים יבשה מים | (15) תורה בתוך מצוה |
| (7) שדה שמים אדמה | (16) יהודה ישראל לב |
| (8) אלהים יהוה אדם | (17) רוח עין ראש |
| (9) היכל אשה עיר | (18) אדם איש שם |

VOCABULARY

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| (1) אדמה (f) ground, earth | (10) כי for, that, because |
| (2) אדני Lord (pronounced 'ădō-nāy) | (11) כל all, every |
| (3) יהוה LORD (also pronounced 'ădō-nāy) | (12) כן thus, so |
| (4) בהמה (f) cattle | (13) מאד very, exceedingly |
| (5) בשר flesh | (14) מצוה (f) commandment |
| (6) בתוך in the midst of | (15) נפש (f) soul, living being |
| (7) גם also | (16) עפר dust |
| (8) דרך (m. and f.) way | (17) שדה field |
| (9) יבשה (f) dry ground | (18) שמים heavens, sky |