

Plural Nouns

Oral Review Exercise

Read and translate the following sentences orally.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. מי אתה? | 2. אני משה. |
| 3. מי את? | 4. אני לאה. |
| 5. מי זאת? | 6. זאת שרה. |
| 7. מי המלך? | 8. משה המלך. |

Vocabulary

Abraham	אַבְרָהָם
these <i>m</i> and <i>f</i>	אֵלֶּה
word, thing <i>m</i>	דְּבָר
they <i>m</i>	הֵם
they <i>f</i>	הֵן
and	וְ
Leah	לֵאָה
Torah <i>f</i>	תּוֹרָה

Masculine nouns are indicated by *m*, feminine nouns by *f*.

Masculine and Feminine Plurals

Masculine nouns are usually made plural by adding the ending

ים.

מְלָכִים
kings

מֶלֶךְ
king

דְּבָרִים
words, things

דְּבָר
word, thing

Feminine nouns are usually made plural by adding the ending

ות

אֲרָצוֹת
lands

אֶרֶץ
land

שַׁבָּתוֹת
Sabbaths

שַׁבָּת
Sabbath

The Plural Noun

In both English and Hebrew, nouns are made plural by adding endings to their singular forms. Hebrew nouns are always either masculine or feminine. Masculine nouns are usually made plural by adding the ending **ִים**. Feminine nouns are usually made plural by adding the ending **ֹת**.

Unusual Plurals

Many Hebrew nouns are exceptions to the basic rules of forming plurals. Look at the plural of the Hebrew word **אב** father:

fathers **אבות** father **אב**

אב takes the feminine plural ending **ֹת**, even though it is a masculine noun. Masculine nouns sometimes take the feminine plural ending **ֹת**, and feminine nouns sometimes take the masculine plural ending **ִים**. However, masculine nouns are always masculine, and feminine nouns are always feminine, no matter what plural ending they have. The word **אבות** fathers is still masculine even though it has the ending **ֹת**.

Many nouns gain or lose letters when plural endings are attached:

mothers **אמהות** mother **אם**

blessings **ברכות** blessing **ברכה**

There are many feminine nouns like **ברכה** that end in **ֶה**. These nouns always lose the letter **ה** when the feminine plural ending **ֹת** is attached.

Whenever new nouns appear in the vocabulary lists of each chapter, we will give you the singular and the plural form of the noun. You must learn both these forms.

Below is a list of all the nouns you have learned that have plural forms.

kings	מְלָכִים	king	מֶלֶךְ
words	דְּבָרִים	word	דָּבָר
nations	עַמִּים	nation	עַם
Sabbaths	שַׁבָּתוֹת	Sabbath	שַׁבָּת
lands	אֲרָצוֹת	land	אֶרֶץ
blessings	בְּרָכוֹת	blessing	בְּרָכָה
mothers	אִמּוֹת	mother	אִם
fathers	אֲבוֹת	father	אָב

You can see that the vowels of many of these nouns change when plural endings are added. You do not need to memorize these vowel changes. You do need to be able to recognize the plural forms.

And in Hebrew

The English word and is not a separate word in Hebrew. Instead, the letter ו is attached to the beginning of a word.

וְאָב
and a father

אָב
a father

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ
and the king

הַמֶּלֶךְ
the king

וְאֲנִי
and I

אֲנִי
I

The ו and usually has the vowel וּ underneath it. You will also see it with the vowels וְ, וֶ, וֹ, or וֻ. Sometimes the ו and is written וּ. This is pronounced oo, not voo.

a father and a king אָב וְמֶלֶךְ

a word and a blessing דְּבַר וּבְרָכָה

They in Hebrew

In the vocabulary list of this chapter, two words were introduced which both mean they: הֵם and הֵן. הֵם is used when referring to males. הֵן is used when referring to females.

They are fathers. הֵם אָבוֹת.

They are mothers. הֵן אִמֹּהוֹת.

They are Abraham and Moses. הֵם אַבְרָהָם וּמֹשֶׁה.

They are Sarah and Leah. הֵן שָׂרָה וְלֵאָה.

When referring to a group that includes both males and females, the masculine form is used.

They are the father and the mother. הֵם הָאָב וְהָאִם.

They are Moses and Leah. הֵם מֹשֶׁה וְלֵאָה.

In both Hebrew and English, the word they can refer to things as well as people. In Hebrew, the masculine they הֵם is used when referring to masculine nouns. The feminine they הֵן is used when referring to feminine nouns.

They are the words. הֵם הַדְּבָרִים.

They are the lands. הֵן הָאָרְצוֹת.

The word אֱלֹהֵי these is used with masculine and feminine nouns.

These are the nations. אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים.

These are the blessings. אֱלֹהֵי הַבְּרָכוֹת.

Exercises

1. Translate the following sentences into English.

1. הוא המלך. 7. זאת הברכה.
2. הם המלכים. 8. אלה הברכות.
3. היא האם. 9. אני ומשה אבות.
4. הן האמהות. 10. שרה ואף אמהות.
5. זה העם. 11. הוא המלך והם הדברים.
6. אלה העמים. 12. אלה המלכים והן הארצות.

2. Change the plural forms to singular. Translate.

Example: הם מלכים. הוא מלך.

1. אלה הארצות. 5. אלה העמים.
2. מי המלכים? 6. אלה הברכות.
3. אלה השבתות. 7. הם אמהות ואבות.
4. מי האמהות? 8. אלה דברים.

3. Change the singular forms to plural. Translate.

Example: הוא מלך. הם מלכים.

1. זאת השבת. 5. זאת הארץ.
2. זה עם. 6. המלך אב.
3. מי המלך? 7. זאת ברכה.
4. מי האב? 8. זה הדבר.

4. Translate these sentences into English.

1. אלה הארצות, וזה העם.
2. אברהם ואני אבות.
3. הן האמהות והם המלכים.
4. היא אם, ומי אף?
5. אף האב והמלך.
6. זאת התורה, ואלה הדברים.
7. אני האם והיא לאה.
8. האמהות שרה ולאה והאבות משה ואברהם.
9. זאת הארץ, ואלה העמים.
10. ישראל העם והעם אחד.
11. הם האבות, ומי האמהות?

5. Replace the underlined word with the word in parentheses.

Change the rest of the sentence if needed. Translate.

1. אף אם. (אב)
2. הוא המלך. (הם)
3. אברהם ומשה אבות. (הם)
4. הם מלכים. (אמהות)
5. זאת השבת. (התורה)
6. הם האם והאב. (המלך)
7. הן ארצות. (זאת)
8. אני לאה. (אברהם)

The Beginning of Sim Shalom

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה חֵן וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים
 mercy loving grace goodness peace grant
 kindness

Sim Shalom is the final prayer of the Shemoneh Esreh, or Amidah prayer, in the morning service. Notice the typical feminine ending אָה of the nouns בְּרָכָה and טוֹבָה. Notice the repeated use of וְ, meaning and. The word רַחֲמִים is a noun in the plural form in Hebrew, but is translated with a singular meaning as mercy or compassion.

“Grant peace, welfare, blessing, grace, lovingkindness and mercy . . .”

Daily Prayer Book, Hertz, 1975, p. 155

The Shehecheyanu

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מְלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 שְׁהַחֲיֵנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה.
 to this season brought us sustained us who has
 made us live

Shehecheyanu is said on the first day of all festivals, and at many other celebrations. Notice the use of וְ, meaning and.

“Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast granted us life and sustenance and permitted us to reach this season.”

Daily Prayer Book, Birnbaum, 1977, p. 710