Chapter Three

The Hebrew Noun

Vocabulary

אָב	father		הַר	mountain (m)
אָדָם	man		כֹּהֵן	priest (m)
אֲדָמָה	ground, earth (f)		לֵב	heart (m)
אָדוֹן אֲדֹנָי	lord (m)		מַיִם	water (m)
אָח	brother		נֶפֶשׁ	life, soul (f)
אִישׁ	man		נָבִיא	prophet (m)
אִשָּׁה	woman		סֵפֶר	book, scroll (m & f)
בַּת	daughter		עַיִן	eye, spring (f)
גּוֹי	nation, people (m)		עִיר	city (f)
דֶּרֶךְ	way, road (m & f)		קוֹל	voice, sound (m)

The Noun

Hebrew words are normally built upon three consonants known as the three consonant root; however, a few are formed with only two consonants, called a two consonant root word. Before the addition of the vowels, it was normal to place an "a" sound with verbs, and an "e" sound with its corresponding noun. For example, מָלַךְ "he ruled," is the verb, and מֶלֶךְ "king," is the noun. However, this rule is by no means universal and exceptions abound.

Hebrew nouns are derived from three sources: they may be primitive, derived from verbs, or derived from nouns.

1. *Primitive nouns*. Primitives have no known derivation and their number is small. Examples of primitives are:

    - אָב   father
    - אֵם   mother
    - דָּם   blood
    - שֵׁם   name
    - יָד   hand

2. *Nouns derived from verbs*. The vast majority of nouns are derived from verbs. Examples are:

- דָבָר "word," from דִּבֵּר "he spoke."
- זֶרַע "seed," from זָרַע "he sowed."

3. *Nouns derived from nouns*. Nouns may also be derived from other nouns. Examples are:

- בּוֹקֵר "a herdsman," from בָּקָר "a herd."
- כֹּרֵם "a vine dresser," from כֶּרֶם "a vineyard."

Gender

Hebrew nouns are either masculine or feminine. There are no neuter nouns in Hebrew.

Masculine nouns. Masculine nouns have no distinct endings and are thus harder to identify with certainty. The only way to determine a masculine noun with certainty is to look it up in the lexicon.
1. Nouns that are uniquely male will be masculine. An example is: אָב father (m).

Feminine nouns. Feminine nouns can be identified in the following way:
1. Feminine nouns will normally be augmented with an ending of either הָ or ת. Examples are:

אֲדָמָה	(f) ground, earth	אָחוֹת	(f) sister
שָׁנָה	(f) year	בַּת	(f) daughter

2. Nouns that refer to female persons will be feminine. An example is: אֵם mother (f).

3. Masculine nouns can be made feminine by the addition of הָ . Examples are:

	Masculine			**Feminine**
מֶלֶךְ	(m) king	→	מַלְכָּה	(f) queen
נָבִיא	(m) prophet	→	נְבִיאָה	(f) prophetess
שַׂר	(m) prince	→	שָׂרָה	(f) princes

4. Nouns that refer to parts of the body existing in pairs are usually feminine. Example are:

יָד	(f) hand	עַיִן	(f) eye	רֶגֶל	(f) foot

Number

Hebrew nouns can be singular, dual, or plural. The rules for identification are as follows.

1. *Singular*. Singular nouns have no endings.
2. *Dual*. There are certain nouns that naturally occur in pairs like eyes and ears. For these nouns the dual is used and can be identified by the ending ־ַיִם (patah + yod + hireq + final mem). Examples are:

אָזְנַיִם	(f) ears	יָדַיִם	(f) hands
כְּנָפַיִם	(f) wings	עֵינַיִם	(f) lips
מַיִם	(m) water	שָׁמַיִם	(m) heavens, sky

3. *Plural*. The Hebrew plural noun means three or more. Plural endings generally correspond to their gender, but are not always consistent. The singular forms sometimes undergo changes when augmented with their plural endings. These changes have to do with the language's vocalization.

   a. *Masculine plural endings*.
      - Most masculine plural nouns end with ־ִים (hireq-yod, followed by mem).

Singular			**Plural**	
סוּס	horse	→	סוּסִים	horses
הַר	mountain	→	הָרִים	mountains
דָּבָר	word	→	דְּבָרִים	words
מֶלֶךְ	king	→	מְלָכִים	kings
אִישׁ	man	→	אֲנָשִׁים	men
יוֹם	day	→	יָמִים	days
בֵּן	son	→	בָּנִים	sons

      - Some masculine plural nouns end with וֹת (holem-vav, followed by tov), which is the normal ending for the feminine plural noun.

Singular			**Plural**	
אָב	father	→	אָבוֹת	fathers
קוֹל	voice	→	קוֹלוֹת	voices
שֵׁם	name	→	שֵׁמוֹת	names

   b. *Feminine plural nouns*.
      - Most feminine plural nouns end with וֹת (holem-vav, followed by tov).

Singular			**Plural**	
תּוֹרָה	law	→	תּוֹרוֹת	laws
מִצְוָה	commandment	→	מִצְוֹת	commandments

רוּחַ	spirit	→	רוּחוֹת	spirits
אֵם	mother	→	אִמּוֹת	mothers
בַּת	daughter	→	בָּנוֹת	daughters
נֶפֶשׁ	living being	→	נְפָשׁוֹת	living beings
אֶרֶץ	earth, land	→	אֲרָצוֹת	lands

- A few feminine plural nouns end with יִם (hireq-yod followed by final mem).

Singular			**Plural**	
אִשָּׁה	woman	→	נָשִׁים	women
עִיר	city	→	עָרִים	cities

c. A few plural nouns can have a masculine or feminine ending.

Singular					**Plural**	
דּוֹר	(m) generation	דּוֹרִים		→	דּוֹרוֹת	generations
שָׁנָה	(f) year	שָׁנִים		→	שְׁנוֹת	years

Summary

Noun Structure		
Number	**Gender**	
Three classifications	**Masculine**	**Feminine**
Singular	no ending	ת or הָ
Dual	יִם	יִם
Plural	יִם (some וֹת)	וֹת (some יִם)

Letter Changes

Irregular stem changes. Some words undergo a consonantal change when made plural. These words are few in number and are referred to as irregular. Examples are: אִישׁ man changes to אֲנָשִׁים men; אִשָּׁה woman changes to נָשִׁים women.

Vowel changes in nouns with endings. The majority of changes to the word occur with the vowels when adding pluralization. These changes can result in reduction or contraction.
1. *Unchanged*. Some nouns take the pluralization without changing their fundamental vowels. These nouns:
   (a) possess long vowels and are monosyllabic - e,g., אוֹת sign → אוֹתוֹת signs.
   (b) possess two syllables with sheva (ְ) or hatef - pathah (ֲ) in the first syllable, and an unchangeable long vowel in the second syllable – e.g., חֲלוֹם dream → חֲלוֹמוֹת dreams.

2. *Reduction.* Two syllable nouns possessing long ā qamets (ָ) or long ē tsere (ֵ) in the first syllable reduce to a sheva (ְ) – e.g., דָּבָר word → דְּבָרִים words. Two syllable nouns possessing sᵉgol (ֶ) are reduced to sheva or one of the half-vowels – e.g., מֶלֶךְ king → מְלָכִים kings; and סֵפֶר book → סְפָרִים book.

The Noun Sentence
A noun sentence is formed in Hebrew by placing two or more nouns together without a verb. In this case, the verb is added. An example is, יוֹסֵף אָח "Joseph [is] a brother."

Practice
A. Identify the gender and number following nouns (e.g., סוּסִים : Mas. Pl., from סוּס horse).
　1. אֲדָמָה
　2. דְּבָרִים
　3. דְּרָכִים
　4. נְבִיאִים
　5. עֵינַיִם
　6. סְפָרִים

B. Make the following nouns plural.
　1. אֲדָמָה (f)
　2. אָב (m)
　3. כֹּהֵן (m)
　4. קוֹל (f)
　5. אִשָּׁה (f)