

BBH Workbook p. 15 #3

שָׁמַיִם

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שָׁמַיִם is Hebrew's dual ending.

MORPHOLOGY

We see the dual ending שָׁמַיִם in such forms as:

שְׁנַיִם	two years	
פְּעַמַּיִם	two times, twice	
יוֹמַיִם	two days	(BBH Workbook p. 16 #20)

Several Hebrew nouns are dual in form but are nevertheless usually considered to be singular in meaning. Common examples are:

מַיִם	water
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	Jerusalem (usually spelled יְרוּשָׁלַם)
מִצְרַיִם	Egypt
שָׁמַיִם	sky, heaven(s)

TRANSLATION

While שָׁמַיִם is often translated as a singular noun (“heaven”), it may sometimes be translated as a plural (“heavens”), especially when it is preceded by the definite article (i.e., “the heavens”).

COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

If you know Greek, compare שָׁמַיִם (dual in form, usually singular in meaning) with τῶν οὐρανῶν in, for example, the expression ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, “the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 11:12; *passim*). Like שָׁמַיִם, τῶν οὐρανῶν here is plural in form but not in meaning.

Summary

שָׁמַיִם is masculine in gender and dual in number