

BBH Workbook p. 16 #17

עֲבָדִים

עֲבָדִים : Number

עֲבָדִים consists of

- the masculine noun עֲבָד, "servant, slave"
- the plural suffix יָם

MORPHOLOGY

Note that not only nouns (such as עֲבָד), but also adjectives and participles, are made plural by means of the suffix יָם.

MORPHOLOGY

Why do the vowels of עֲבָד change when the suffix יָם is added?

עֲבָד is a Segholate noun. A Segholate noun is defined by two characteristics:

- (1) It has two syllables (e.g., עֲבָד), and
- (2) Its accent lies on the first of these two syllables (עֲבָד).

The plural of a Segholate noun is formed in the following manner, regardless of what vowels the singular form contains:

- (1) The ending ים or ות is added, and
- (2) The vowels under the consonants of the original singular Segholate become ם .

Here are a few Segholate nouns in their singular and plural forms:

<i>Sing.</i>		<i>Pl.</i>	
מֶלֶךְ	→	מְלָכִים	king(s)
אִישׁ	→	אִישׁוֹת	person(s)
סֵפֶר	→	סִפְרִים	book(s)
אֶרֶץ	→	אֶרְצִים	land(s)
שַׁעַר	→	שַׁעְרִים	gate(s)
פְּעֹלָה	→	פְּעֻלִים	deed(s)

As we remarked earlier, no matter what the vowels of a Segholate noun are in its singular form (and they may be of any vowel class: a, e, i, o, or u), the plural is either of the pattern ים or ות .

The first of these patterns is close to what we see in עֲבָרִים, but what shall we make of the ם under the Ayin?

Gutturals, remember, cannot usually take a Vocal Shewa; in lieu of a Vocal Shewa, they usually take a compound Shewa, or Hateph vowel (◌ְ, ◌ֶ, or ◌ֹ).

Moreover, gutturals often prefer a-class vowels (we shall come across this phenomenon frequently later on). In עֲבָדִים, the Ayin (a guttural) cannot take the Vocal Shewa characteristic of plural Segholate nouns (◌ִ) and so it takes the a-class compound Shewa, Hateph Pathach (◌ֶ).

עֲבָדִים : Gender

If we haven't memorized the gender of עֲבָדִים, the ים on the plural tells us that it is *probably* masculine. We can verify that this is indeed the case by looking up עָבַד in a lexicon.

MORPHOLOGY

Remember that the plurals of some feminine nouns are also formed by the addition of the suffix ים; e.g.,

<i>Sing.</i>		<i>Pl.</i>	
אִשָּׁה	→	נָשִׁים	woman/women
עִיר	→	עָרִים	city/cities

Summary

עֲבָדִים is masculine in gender and plural in number