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יָמִים

יָמִים : Number and Gender

We might at first be inclined to think that יָמִים is the plural of יָם, “sea,” but in fact it is the plural of יוֹם, “day” (masc.).

יָמִים is an irregular plural; we cannot predict from the form of יוֹם that its plural is יָמִים (unless we have studied the history of vowel shifts in Semitic languages). We must simply memorize that יָמִים is the plural of יוֹם.

MORPHOLOGY

What, incidentally, is the plural of יָם if it is not יָמִים?

The plural of יָם is formed via the addition of יָם to the singular. יָם + יָם yields יָמִים, which syllabifies as follows: יָמִים .

Because the first Mem of יָמִים is doubled, the word’s first syllable (יָמִ) is closed and unaccented. This syllable must therefore take a short vowel. Accordingly, the long *a*

(Qamets) of the singular form יָם becomes a short *a* (Pathach) in the plural form יַמִּים.

Summary

יַמִּים is masculine in gender and plural in number