THE NOUN

1) Noun formation

Nouns -- like adjectives and verbs -- are constructed from roots. If you know the meaning of a root -- particularly the three consonantal and quadrilaterals -- you should be able to figure out its sense [whether the word being analyzed is a noun or an adjective or a verb]. This is distinctive of Semitic languages and a great aid in learning vocabulary: so learn your roots! [Roots are examined in the section on verbs.]

Here we follow Kaddari’s *Dikduk*.1

a) Nouns of two-consonant roots:

- אָב - father (I.6b)  אָדו - letter (I.13b)  בר - son (II.206a)  קָל - voice (I.1b)

b) Nouns of three-consonant roots are the majority:

- יִנ - wine (ZH 22c)  בָּרֵא - old man (I.7b)  קָר - verse (I.2a)

c) Nouns formed by repeating two consonants of the root:

- יַנ - wheel (I.12a)  יִד - grammar (III.169a)  לָיָל - night (I.4b)

d) Quadrilateral roots:

- נַק - naked [pl.] (I.14b)  יִנ - accusation (I.11b)

[For Foreign nouns and for Neologisms -- words first found in the Zohar -- see 5) and 6) below.]

As in Hebrew, the -מ suffix is often used to form nouns:

- מַד - desert I.14b  מַפְּנ - altar I.6b  מַפְנ - departure I.14b

As is -ת:

- מַת - food I.139b  מַת - student II.190a

2) Gender

Aramaic has two genders: masculine [m.] and feminine [f.] ; there is no neuter. Most nouns are masculine and there is no special ending for gender:

- אָב - father (I.6b)  ספר - book (I.76a)  אָדו - eagle (I.9b)

The feminine noun endings are: נ - , אָדו - , and sometimes א - [instead of the נ - ]:

- נַק - fifth (I.12b)  מַפְנ - word (I.2a)  לָיָל - night (I.4b)

- נ - inheritance (II.101a)  נ - Shekhinah (I.9a)  נ - time (I.11a)

Some nouns are feminine from a grammatical viewpoint, and no final form indicates gender:

- א - earth (I.12a)  א - mother (I.2a )  נ - shore (I.1b)

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Aramaic has three numbers: singular [s.], plural [pl.], and dual.
The plural ending for masculine nouns is וּ- or מַ- or מַ- / מָ- -
אָלְלָנִים (l.5b) - trees (l.7a)
יִמְנָא (l.1a) - trees (l.7a)
אָלְלָנִים (l.10b) (l.13b)
אָלְלָנִים (l.1b)
For feminine nouns the plural ending is מ-:
- fingers (l.1a)
- praises (l.7a)
But sometimes the plural masculine ending is added to a feminine noun:
- Sabbaths (l.34a)
- praises (l.144b)
- offspring (l.3b)
- souls (l.147b) [but also: מָ- (l.90b)]
and the plural feminine ending to a masculine noun:
- Patriarchs (l.1b)
- names (l.5b, 12a)

Some nouns have an expanded form of the plural:
- letters (l.1a)
- goodness [good things] (l.206a)
- nights (l.198b)
- lips (l.177a SdTs)

Some plurals are irregular:
- Patriarchs (l.2b)

The Dual denotes objects which naturally occur in pairs:
- hands (l.10b)
- eyes (l.98a)
- legs (l.172a)

Some nouns are always plural -- the collective nouns.
- life (l.12b)
- compassion (l.1a)
- love (l.7a)
- the heavens (l.1b)

The plural may be indicated by repetition of a word:
- at all times (l.206a)

4) The Absolute, Construct, and Determined/Emphatic State

The Aramaic of the Zohar has three states: the Absolute, the Construct, and the Determined or Emphatic.
The Absolute state is the most basic form of the noun. It is used for an indeterminate noun ["a voice"].
For emphasis, the numeral "one" may be added:
- a certain mountain (I.7a)  - one day (I.1b)
- a fish (I.6a)

The **Construct** state mainly indicates possession, like a genitive. But the possessed changes form while the possessor does not. The Aramaic word order is:
- the Books of the Ancients (I.10a)
- the fish of the sea (III.60b)
- the voice of children (I.1b)

It also indicates a close relationship -- roughly like English compound words:
- the fish of the sea (III.60b)
- the First Temple (I.6b)

Plurals in the **construct** state take two forms:
a) The first term has a possessive suffix and agrees with the second term in number and gender:
- by a person’s hair (III.129a)
- the end of the verse (II.96b)
- the voice of voices (I.161b)

or the possessive suffix does not agree with the second term in number and gender:
- Masters of Mishnah (ZH 15b)

b) The first term may occur in the determined form:
- Master of the world (I.8a)
- locks of hair (III.128b)

The **divided construct** has a -ְ between the possessed/described and the possessor/descriptor; this is the most common form.

The described [the first term; it is before the -ְ] is in the **Absolute** form [which is usually plural]:
- the voice of voices (I.161b)
- the secret of secrets (III.128a)

The **Determined or Emphatic** state is the most widespread form of the noun. Functioning like the prefixed definite article in Hebrew (ְ), in Aramaic it occurs as a suffixed ְ. However, the Determined state is often used in the Zohar instead of the Absolute, even when the definite article is neither required nor intended.
This Determined/Emphatic state is unique to Aramaic.

5) Foreign nouns
The Zohar contains nouns borrowed from other cultures.

From Greek:
- נאום - air (I.6a)
- אֲרָכְלִיטִים - troops (I.8a)
- קִרְבָּה - proclamation (I.5b) herald (III.13a)

From Latin:
- אֵלֶּה - guardian (I.8b)
-Miller - consort (I.48b)
- פוּלָה - host (III.173a)

From Castilian:
- מְלֵא - guardian (III.63a)

6) New nouns (Neologisms)
   a) The author of the Zohar often derived new nouns from known Aramaic and Hebrew roots. The author had a preference for using the ending אֲש - to form abstract nouns:

   - אֲשִׁיָּה - clarity (I.20a)
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   - קִרְבָּה - kingdom (I.10a)
   - קִרְבָּה - sparkling (II.97b SdM)
   - קִרְבָּה - quarrel (I.66a)
   - קִרְבָּה - security (I.184b)
   - קִרְבָּה - power (I.5a)
   - קִרְבָּה - permission (I.8a)
   - קִרְבָּה - authority (I.13a)

   And for the ending אֲש:

   - אֲשִׁיָּה - faith (I.11b)
   - אֲשִׁיָּה - command; calling (II.122b)
b) But the author excels, and has vexed centuries of readers, with a predilection for certain letters when forming new words. There are five: כ,ק,ר,ס,ט.

For example, Yehuda Liebes has found over 120 instances in which כ is closely followed by ט:

(The following translations, when not drawn from Daniel Matt*, are tentative.)

- כנט - point (ZH 18d) כנט - cluster (II.49b)
- כנט - castle (II.77a) כנט - shelter (I.201b)
- כנט - ploughshare (II.176b SdTס) כנט - absorption (III.288α IZ)
- כנט - stubborness (?) כנט - spiced wine (III.39α)
- כנט - fortress/castle (I.30α) כנט - silver/garment/light (I.168α)
- כנט - rope (III.62b) כנט - bundle (II.183b) כנט - resin (I.217α)
- כנט - key (II.5α MhN) כנט - luster (I.151α)
- כנט - ray (III.283b) כנט - jailer; quaestor (III.88b)
- כנט - tunic (II.83α) כנט - groat cake (II.81b) כנט - bond, cluster (III.143α IР)

And at least 15 instances of ט closely followed by כ:

- טנט - topaz (III.141b IР) טנט - configuration (I.96b)
- טנט - verdict, punishment (I.220α) טנט - equilibrium (III.36α)
- טנט - potfuls (II.26b) טנט - slip; overseer of cutting (III.15α)

Matt’s diligence in the Pritzker edition documents his translations with references to previous commentaries, dictionaries, and contemporary research. His footnotes will be your most fruitful source for understanding the neologisms formed with כ,ק,ר,ס,ט.

*References will be available in the rubrics of our dictionary.