

פְּנִים

hebrew

Meaning:

- Face
- Presence
- Front or surface

Noun. Masculine. Although it looks plural in form (ending in -ים), it is almost always used as a singular in meaning - a type of plural of intensity or plural of form common in Hebrew for body parts that come in pairs or have multiple aspects.

Uses in Scripture

Literal Face

The physical face of a person or creature.

Genesis 32:20 (21) - "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face (פְּנֵיָיו); perhaps he will accept me." → "Face" here is literal but also relational — it represents encounter and favour.

Countenance or Expression

Reflecting mood, emotion, or attitude.

Genesis 4:5 - "But for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain's face (פְּנֵיָיו) fell." → The face mirrors the inner state.

Presence (especially God's)

The word פְּנִים is sometimes used to indicate the presence of God, showing His nearness or relational favour.

Exodus 33:14-15 - "My presence (פְּנֵי) will go with you, and I will give you rest." → Literally, "My face will go with you." → The idiom "before the face of Yahweh" (לְפָנֵי יְהוָה) means "in the presence of the LORD."

This is one of the most sacred uses: to be before God's face is to stand in His presence and favour; to have His face hidden is to experience His withdrawal or displeasure (consider Psalm 13:1).

Front / Surface / Direction

Used spatially for the “front of” or “surface of” something.

Genesis 1:2 - “Darkness was upon the face (פָּנֵי) of the deep.” → Here it means “surface.”

Genesis 23:3 - “Abraham rose up from before (מֵעַל פְּנֵי) his dead.” → Spatial sense: “in front of” or “from before.”

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