

Al-Ājurrūmiyya

in English

Translated and taught by Sh. Sibghatullah

4 of 30 lessons translated so far. This file grows as the course is written; the rest is not finished yet, and this page will say so until it is.

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What speech is, and its three kinds

الكَلَامُ: هُوَ اللَّفْظُ الْمُرَكَّبُ الْمُفِيدُ بِالْوَضْعِ.
وَأَقْسَامُهُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: اِسْمٌ، وَفِعْلٌ، وَحَرْفٌ جَاءَ لِمَعْنَى.
فَالِإِسْمُ يَعْرِفُ بِالْخَفْضِ، وَالتَّنْوِينِ، وَدُخُولِ الْأَلِفِ وَاللَّامِ،
وَحُرُوفِ الْخَفْضِ، وَهِيَ: مِنْ، وَإِلَى، وَعَنْ، وَعَلَى، وَفِي،
وَرُبَّ، وَالْبَاءُ، وَالْكَافُ، وَاللَّامُ.

Al-kalāmu huwa l-lafzu l-murakkabu l-mufidu bi-l-waḍ'. Wa-aqsāmuhu thalāthatun: ismun, wa-fi'lun, wa-ḥarfun jā'a li-ma'nā. Fa-l-ismu yu'rafu bi-l-khaḍi, wa-t-tanwīni, wa-dukhūli l-alifi wa-l-lāmi, wa-ḥurūfi l-khaḍi.

Speech is the utterance that is composed, that conveys a complete sense, and that is so by convention.

Its divisions are three: a **noun**, a **verb**, and a **particle** that has come for a meaning.

The noun is recognised by *khaḍ*, by *tanwīn*, by the entry of *alif-lām*, and by the particles of *khaḍ* — which are: *min*, *ilā*, *'an*, *'alā*, *fī*, *rubba*, the *bā'*, the *kāf*, and the *lām*.

READING NOTES

Four conditions, and each one is excluding something. *Lafz*, an utterance, excludes writing and gesture — grammar here describes sound. *Murakkab*, composed, excludes the single word: *Zayd* alone is not *kalām*. *Mufid* excludes a string that does not complete a thought: “if *Zayd* stood...” leaves the listener waiting.

The fourth condition is disputed, and this lesson does not settle it. *Bi-l-waḍ'* is read by some commentators as *by the convention of the Arabs*, which excludes intelligible speech in another language, and by others as *intentionally*, which excludes the words of a sleeper. Both readings are old and both are defended. Left open on purpose.

“Kalām” here does not mean what it means elsewhere. In grammar it is a technical term for a complete predicative sentence — not the ordinary word for talk, and not *'ilm al-kalām*, the discipline of theology.

Three parts of speech, not eight. Arabic has no separate category for adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, demonstratives or relatives. They are all *ism*, and they behave like nouns.

The signs are tests, not requirements. A noun need carry none of them; any one settles it. And *tanwīn* and *alif-lām* can never appear on the same word, so no noun ever displays the full list.

How you tell a verb — and what is left over

وَالْفِعْلُ يُعْرَفُ بِقَدْ، وَالسِّينِ، وَسَوْفَ،
وَتَاءِ التَّانِيثِ السَّكِينَةِ.
وَالْحَرْفُ: مَا لَا يَصْلُحُ مَعَهُ دَلِيلُ الْإِسْمِ
وَلَا دَلِيلُ الْفِعْلِ.

Wa-l-fi'lu yu'rafu bi-qad, wa-s-sīni, wa-sawfa, wa-tā'i t-ta'nīthi s-sākina. Wa-l-ḥarf: mā lā yaṣluḥu ma'ahu dalīlu l-ismi wa-lā dalīlu l-fi'li.

The **verb** is known by *qad*, by the *sīn*, by *sawfa*, and by the quiescent *tā'* of the feminine.

And the **particle** is that with which neither the mark of the noun nor the mark of the verb will serve.

READING NOTES

The four signs are **tests**, not requirements. A word is a verb if it *can* take one of them; it does not have to be carrying one at the moment you meet it. Half of the verbs in any page of hadith show no sign at all.

The signs sort verbs by tense as a by-product. *Sa-* and *sawfa* attach only to the *muḍāri'*; the quiescent *tā'* only to the *māḍī*. *Qad* takes both — and changes meaning depending on which: with the *māḍī* it confirms (*qad qāma*, “he has indeed stood”), with the *muḍāri'* it reduces to “sometimes” or “perhaps”.

The *tā'* that counts is the quiescent one — *kānat*, *sākina*, carrying no vowel. The *tā'* of *anta* or *katabtu* is a pronoun, not this sign, and the *tā'* in a noun like *bint* is part of the word.

The particle is defined **negatively**, and Ibn Ājurrūm does this deliberately. There is no positive test for a *ḥarf*; you reach it by elimination. That is not a gap in the definition — it is what a *ḥarf* is: a word with no meaning of its own until it is attached to something else.

Between lesson 1 and this one you can now classify every word in Arabic into one of three kinds, using nothing but eight signs and a process of elimination. That is the whole of Bāb al-Kalām, and it is the foundation the next twenty-eight lessons stand on.

Why the ends of words move

الإِعْرَابُ: هُوَ تَغْيِيرُ أَوَاخِرِ الْكَلِمِ
لِاخْتِلَافِ الْعَوَامِلِ الدَّاخِلَةِ عَلَيْهَا لَفْظًا أَوْ تَقْدِيرًا.
وَأَقْسَامُهُ أَرْبَعَةٌ: رَفْعٌ، وَنَصْبٌ، وَخَفْضٌ، وَجَزْمٌ.
فِلِلْأَسْمَاءِ مِنْ ذَلِكَ: الرِّفْعُ، وَالنَّصْبُ، وَالْخَفْضُ،
وَلَا جَزْمَ فِيهَا.
وِلِلْأَفْعَالِ مِنْ ذَلِكَ: الرِّفْعُ، وَالنَّصْبُ، وَالْجَزْمُ،
وَلَا خَفْضَ فِيهَا.

Al-i'rābu huwa taghyīru awākhirī l-kalimi li-khtilāfi l-'awāmili d-dākhilati 'alayhā lafẓan aw taqdīran. Wa-aqsāmuhu arba'atun: raf'un, wa-naṣbun, wa-khaḍun, wa-jazmun. Fa-li-l-asmā'i min dhālika: ar-raf'u, wa-n-naṣbu, wa-l-khaḍu, wa-lā jazma fihā. Wa-li-l-af'ālī min dhālika: ar-raf'u, wa-n-naṣbu, wa-l-jazmu, wa-lā khaḍa fihā.

I'rāb is the changing of the ends of words because of the different governing agents that come upon them — whether in *pronunciation* or in *estimation*.

Its divisions are four: **raf'**, **naṣb**, **khaḍ** and **jazm**.

Of these, nouns take raf', naṣb and khaḍ, and there is no jazm in them.

And verbs take raf', naṣb and jazm, and there is no khaḍ in them.

READING NOTES

This is the payoff of the first two lessons. You learned to say whether a word is a noun, a verb or a particle. Now you learn that the end of the word moves, that it moves for a reason, and that the reason is always something else in the sentence acting on it. Nothing in Arabic grammar after this chapter is about anything else.

The cause is always external. *Li-khtilāfi l-'awāmili d-dākhilati 'alayhā* — because of the different governors *entering upon* the word. A word does not change its own ending. Something arrives and does it to the word. In lesson 1 you saw the *bā'* put *al-niyyāt* into khaḍ; the *bā'* is an *'āmil*, and that is the whole mechanism.

Two of the four are diagnostics, and you have already met one. Khaḍ happens only to nouns. Jazm happens only to verbs. So if you see khaḍ you are looking at a noun before you know what it means — which is exactly why khaḍ was listed in lesson 1 among the signs of the noun. The chapter you are reading now is where that sign came from.

Lafẓan aw taqdīran — pronounced, or estimated. This is the line beginners skip and then trip over for a year. Some words cannot show their ending: *Mūsā*, *al-fatā*, anything ending in a

fixed alif. They are still in *rafʿ* or *naṣb* or *khafḍ*; the vowel is simply not pronounceable there, so it is *estimated* — it is present grammatically and absent audibly. A word with no visible ending is not a word with no case.

Particles have no iʿrāb at all. Notice what the matn does not say. It gives the shares of nouns and the shares of verbs, and stops. The ḥarf is not in the distribution because its end never moves — it is *mabnī*, fixed. Three kinds of word in lesson 1, and only two of them are in this chapter.

Do not translate these four as English cases yet. *Rafʿ* is not quite “nominative” and *khafḍ* is not quite “genitive”. They are names for what happens to an ending, and the ending has several possible signs — which is lesson 4. Learn them as Arabic terms now and the next chapter will make sense.

The four ways a word says "raf"

لِلرَّفْعِ أَرْبَعُ عَلَامَاتٍ: الضَّمَّةُ، وَالْوَاوُ، وَالْأَلِفُ، وَالنُّونُ.
 فَأَمَّا الضَّمَّةُ فَتَكُونُ عَلَامَةً لِلرَّفْعِ فِي أَرْبَعَةِ مَوَاضِعَ:
 فِي الْإِسْمِ الْمَفْرَدِ، وَجَمْعِ التَّكْسِيرِ، وَجَمْعِ الْمُؤَنَّثِ السَّلَامِ،
 وَالْفِعْلِ الْمُضَارِعِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّصِلْ بِآخِرِهِ شَيْءٌ.
 وَأَمَّا الْوَاوُ فَتَكُونُ عَلَامَةً لِلرَّفْعِ فِي مَوْضِعَيْنِ:
 فِي جَمْعِ الْمَذَكَّرِ السَّلَامِ، وَفِي الْأَسْمَاءِ الْخَمْسَةِ،
 وَهِيَ: أَبُوكَ، وَأَخُوكَ، وَحَمُوكَ، وَفُوكَ، وَذُو مَالٍ.
 وَأَمَّا الْأَلِفُ فَتَكُونُ عَلَامَةً لِلرَّفْعِ فِي ثَنِيَةِ الْأَسْمَاءِ خَاصَّةً.
 وَأَمَّا النُّونُ فَتَكُونُ عَلَامَةً لِلرَّفْعِ فِي الْفِعْلِ الْمُضَارِعِ
 إِذَا اتَّصَلَ بِهِ ضَمِيرٌ ثَنِيَّةٌ أَوْ ضَمِيرُ جَمْعٍ
 أَوْ ضَمِيرُ الْمُؤَنَّثَةِ الْمُخَاطَبَةِ.

Li-r-rafi' arba'u 'alāmātin: aḍ-ḍammatu, wa-l-wāwu, wa-l-alifu, wa-n-nūn. Fa-ammā ḍ-ḍammatu fa-takūnu 'alāmātan li-r-rafi' fī arba'ati mawāḍi'a: fī l-ismi l-mufradi, wa-jam'i t-taksīri, wa-jam'i l-mu'annathi s-sālimi, wa-l-fi'li l-muḍāri'i l-ladhī lam yattaṣil bi-ākhirihī shay'. Wa-ammā l-wāwu fa-takūnu 'alāmātan li-r-rafi' fī mawḍi'ayni: fī jam'i l-mudhakkari s-sālimi, wa-fī l-asmā'i l-khamsati, wa-hiya: abūka, wa-akhūka, wa-ḥamūka, wa-fūka, wa-dhū mālin. Wa-ammā l-alifu fa-takūnu 'alāmātan li-r-rafi' fī tathniyati l-asmā'i khāṣṣatan. Wa-ammā n-nūnu fa-takūnu 'alāmātan li-r-rafi' fī l-fi'li l-muḍāri'i idhā ttaṣala bihi ḍamīru tathniyatin aw ḍamīru jam'in aw ḍamīru l-mu'annathati l-mukhāṭabah.

Raf' has four signs: the ḍamma, the wāw, the alif, and the nūn.

As for the **ḍamma**, it is a sign of raf' in four places: in the singular noun, in the broken plural, in the sound feminine plural, and in the present-tense verb to whose end nothing has been attached.

As for the **wāw**, it is a sign of raf' in two places: in the sound masculine plural, and in the Five Nouns — which are *abūka*, *akhūka*, *ḥamūka*, *fūka*, and *dhū mālin*.

As for the **alif**, it is a sign of raf' in the dual of nouns only.

As for the **nūn**, it is a sign of raf' in the present-tense verb when a dual pronoun, a plural pronoun, or the pronoun of the feminine addressee has been joined to it.

READING NOTES

A case is not a vowel. This is the correction the chapter exists to make. Lesson 3 named four cases and you were probably picturing four vowels. Raf‘ alone has *four* signs, and only one of them is a vowel — the other three are whole letters. Naṣb, khafḍ and jazm are the same. Get this now and the rest of the book is bookkeeping; miss it and every later chapter reads as arbitrary.

The sign tells you the shape of the word. Read the list backwards and it becomes a diagnostic, exactly like lesson 1's signs. A final *alif* marking raf‘ means you are looking at a dual. A final *wāw* means a sound masculine plural or one of the Five Nouns. A *nūn* means a verb with a pronoun stuck to it. The sign is doing two jobs at once — case *and* number.

The ḍamma is the default, and its four places are worth memorising as a set. Singular noun, broken plural, sound feminine plural, and the bare muḍāri‘. Notice that three of the four are nouns and one is a verb — which is the first time in the book that a noun-sign and a verb-sign are the same mark.

“To whose end nothing has been attached.” That clause is doing real work. *Yaḍribu* takes a ḍamma; *yaḍribūna* does not, because a *wāw* has been joined to it and the sign of its raf‘ becomes the *nūn* at the end. The condition and the fourth sign are two halves of one rule.

The Five Nouns are a closed list and they are listed in construct. *Abūka* not *ab* — because these five behave this way only when annexed to something. Say the five aloud until they are one item in your memory; they return in every later chapter on i‘rāb.

A warning about the nūn. The *nūn* is the sign of raf‘ in those verbs — so when it *disappears*, that is naṣb or jazm. Deletion as a grammatical sign is coming in lesson 6, and it is the idea beginners find strangest: the absence of a letter carrying meaning.

This is as far as the translation goes. 4 of the 30 lessons are written; the remaining 26 are not, and nothing has been filled in to make this look finished. Each one is added here as it is taught. — Sh. Sibghatullah, Alyph Academy