

Arabic Lessons 2: Plurals

Notes on Lesson & Translating Exercise

1. The sound masculine plural of nouns and adjectives is formed by suffixing **وْنَ** in nominative case and adding **يْنَ** in accusative and genitive cases. Examples are: **رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُونَ** (48:25) and **إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ** (2:91, 93, 248, etc.). [We will inshaa Allah discuss ‘cases’ in Lesson 3].
2. Limited use of sound plural: it is primarily used for male human beings. Besides this, there are a very few exceptions, two of which are: **سَنَةٌ**, year, the plural is **سِنُونَ** or **سِنَوَاتٌ**, and **أَرْضٌ**, earth - its plural is **أَرْضُونَ** or **أَرَاضٍ**. Even these two exceptions have alternatives plural forms. Also, note that many nouns and adjectives cannot form sound masculine plural, and for them the Broken Plural is used to form plural.
3. The sound plural **أَرْضُونَ** is rarely seen in prose. In the Holy Qur'an the word **أَرْضٌ** appears 462 times but not once in its sound plural form. Allah repeatedly reminds us that He is the creator of the earth & the heavens and to Him belongs whatever lies in them and whatever is found between them. Additionally, since the Holy Qur'an is the Divine message to the dwellers of this earth – they are reminded rise to heavenly realms through spirituality and not to get attached to the earth. Meanings of **أَرْضٌ** are: that which rotates, earth, city, country, ground, and terrestrial globe.
4. The word **سَنَةٌ** appears 7 times and its sound plural **سِنِينَ** has been used 12 times. Another Arabic word for ‘year’ is **عَامٌ** which appears 9 times in the Holy Qur'an. It is also used in Islamic history such as **عَامُ الْفِيلِ**, the Year of Elephant and **عَامُ الْحُزْنِ**, the Year of Grief.
5. When translating phrases in verses 6:47 & 12:87 (Nos. 10 & 11 on p. 20 in the text) AQQ writes ‘the wrongdoing lot,’ and ‘the faithless lot;’ AYA: ‘those who do wrong,’ and ‘those who have no faith;’ and MHS: ‘the unjust people,’ and ‘the unbelieving people.’
6. The phrase **الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرِينَ** in verse 56:49 has been rendered into English as: ‘the first and the last’ (author of the text on p.270), ‘the former and the later generations’ (AQQ), ‘those of old and those of later times’ (AYA) and ‘those of old and those of later time’ (MMP). In our opinion, AQQ is nearer to the original text.
7. The phrase **الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ** in verse 33:35 has been translated as: ‘the *muslim* men and the *muslim* women’ (AQQ), ‘Muslim men and women’ (AYA), ‘the men who submit and the women who submit’ and ‘men who surrender unto Allah and women who surrender’ (MMP). The author’s key to this sentence in the exercise is: ‘The Muslim men and the Muslim women.’ Do you notice how various translators have understood such a simple and straight forward phrase differently? This shows the necessity of knowing the original language in order to comprehend the Divine message found in the Holy Qur'an.
8. Try to find the cause of revelation of verse 33:35. It shows the status of women with Almighty Allah. Asma bint Umayy (and some say Umm Salamah) said to the Prophet, “Why is it that we are not mentioned in the Qur'an as men are?” Allah (swt) responded to the protest by repeating the masculine and feminine gender within a verse 10 times.