

Arabic Lesson 3: The Declension of Nouns

Notes on Lesson & Translating Exercise

Take note of following definitions & grammatical rules:

1. Declension means the way in which noun change to show number and case.
2. Case: the ending which indicates the role of a noun or its equivalent. There are 3 cases: nominative (*raf'*), accusative (*naSb*) & genitive (*jar*).
3. Nouns and adjectives ending with *dammatayn* _ are said to be in the nominative case. Of course, if the noun or adjective is definite, then *tanwin* will disappear and there will be only one *damma*. A noun is in the nominative case when: (i) it is the subject (i.e. doer) in a verbal sentence. Examples from the Qur'an: جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ *a messenger has come to you* (44:17). Here *messenger* is the subject in indefinite form, so it ends with *dammatayn*. Another example: – وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ – *Allah has promised the believers* (9:72). Here *Allah* is the subject in definite form, so it ends with one *damma*. (ii) It is the subject (or the first part – *mubtada*) of a non-verbal sentence, and when (iii) it is a compliment (*khabar*, i.e. giving information about the first part) in non-verbal sentence. The oft-repeated *takbir* is a good example of subject & its compliment: ^{اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ} i.e. Allah is Great. Here Allah is subject & *Akbar* is its compliment. In the Qur'anic verse ^{وَالْأَذْرُ الأَخْرَةُ خَيْرٌ} *and the next abode is better* (7:169), the subject is *al-darul'l-akhiratu* and *khayrun* is its compliment.
4. Nouns and adjectives ending with *fathatayn* are said to be in the accusative case. All Arabic letters besides *taa marbutah* (ة) has an added alif after *fathatayn* (ا_). A noun is in the accusative case when (i) it is the object (i.e. on which an action is being done) of a verbal sentence. Example: أَقْتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً – *Did you kill an innocent person/soul?* (18:74). Here *nafsan* is the object of the sentence, and *zakiyyatan* is the adjective of *nafsan*. Note there is an added alif after sin *fathahtayn* but there is no alif after *taa marbutah* *fathatayn*. (ii) It is controlled by particles like ^{إِنْ، أَنْ، & لَكِنْ}. These mean: indeed, that & but respectively. Example from the Qur'an: إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلِّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ *Indeed, Allah and His angels bless the Prophet* (33:56). (iii) It is used as an adverb.
5. Nouns and adjectives ending with *kasratayn* (ا_) are said to be in genitive case. A noun is in genitive case when (i) controlled by a preposition such as ^{مِنْ، فِي، عَلَى} on, in, from, etc. (ii) we wish to indicate possession. As in the verse ^{وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا} *and the word of Allah is the highest* (9:40). Here, Allah is genitive because it indicates possession (i.e. word of Allah). In the verse ^{لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ} *the night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months* (97:3) *al-qadri* is genitive on account of possession & *alfi* is genitive because it is controlled by particle *min*.
6. Line 3 فِتْنَةٌ 3 (2:102) in the Exercise (p.28) has been translated as: we are a test (AQQ), we are for a trial (AYA), we are a trial (MHS), we are a temptation (MMP).