

Unit 38

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns are used to refer to the nouns or pronouns which have already been used earlier in a sentence. They are very useful for joining two sentences together.

Examples of relative pronouns in English are: **who, whom, which, that.**

The noun or pronoun to which a relative pronoun refers is called an **antecedent**.

In Arabic, relative pronouns agree with their antecedents in **number** and **gender**. In the dual, they also agree in **case**.

Worship your Lord Who created you.

In the above sentence, the word 'Who' is a relative pronoun. It relates to the word 'Lord' which is called the '**antecedent**'. Antecedent means the word you refer back to.

In Arabic relative pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number and gender. The relative pronouns are:

Plural	Dual	Singular	
الَّذِينَ الَّذِي	الَّذَانِ/الَّذَيْنِ الَّتَانِ/الَّتَيْنِ	الَّذِي الَّتِي	m. f.

الَّذِي and الَّتِي may mean 'who, whom, that, which, the one who'.

الَّذِينَ may mean 'who, those who, those whom, the ones who'.

الَّذِي and الَّتِي are the forms occurring most frequently in the Qur'an.

The '**relative clause**' refers to the part of the sentence coming after the relative pronoun.

In Arabic, the relative clause must be a complete sentence on its own.

The relative clause must therefore contain a stated or implied pronoun which refers back to the antecedent. We shall call this stated or implied pronoun the '**referent**'. The relative clause in the following is underlined.

1. اَعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ

Worship your Lord / Who / He created you.

2. اتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

Beware of the fire / which / its fuel is people and stones.

3. صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

The path / of those whom / You have favoured them.

In sentence 1 above, the relative clause is 'He created you'. The referent is 'He' which is implied in the verb خَلَقَ and this refers back to the antecedent رَبِّ which is masculine singular.

In sentence 2, the referent is the attached pronoun هَا which is feminine because it refers back to النَّارَ which is feminine. The relative pronoun الَّتِي must of course be feminine.

In 3, the referent is the attached pronoun هُمْ which is masculine plural to agree with the relative pronoun الَّذِينَ. The pronoun هُمْ is needed in the Arabic to make the relative clause a complete sentence on its own. However, in English the referent 'them' will be left out in translation.

Two special nouns

Genitive	Accusative	Nominative	
أَبِي ذِي ذَاتِ	أَبَا ذَا ذَاتَ	أَبُو ذُو ذَاتُ	(father) m. s. (possessor of) f. s. (possessor of)

The word ذُو and ذَاتُ have dual and plural forms as well. See line 13.

The words أُؤُلُوا (m.p.) and أُؤَلَاتُ (f.p.) mean 'possessors of'. These nouns and the various forms of ذُو are always part of an إِضَافَةٌ construction.

Respond with that which is better

The context of this verse (line 3 opposite) is that the best speakers are the ones who not only call to the way of God but who do righteous deeds and who say, 'I am one of those who submit (to God alone).'

A person in this frame of mind and behaviour is urged not to respond to provocation and abuse in kind but to repel evil with a good word. This is not a sign of weakness but requires vision, calmness and courage.

The result of such calmness under fire may be quite startling. The one who at one time bitterly hated you could one day become your bosom friend. This is the promise and method of the Qur'an. Islam is both a message and a method.

He is the One Who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth. 48: 28

About the awesome news on which they disagree. 78: 2 - 3

Repel (evil) with that which is better. 41: 34

What are these images to which you are devoted? 21: 52

And those who had rejected faith will say: 'Our Lord! Show us both those (among jinn and humans) that have led us astray. 41: 29

Their mothers are none but those who gave birth to them. 58: 2

Our father is an old man. 28: 23

Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is God's messenger.. 33: 40

And indeed your Sustainer is full of forgiveness for people despite their evil-doing. 13: 6

And let him who has ample means spend of his amplitude. 65: 7

And give the close relative his due. 17: 26

And (you shall be) good to parents and close relatives, to orphans and the needy. 2: 83

And he gives wealth - despite his love for it, to close relatives and the orphans... 2: 177

And every woman pregnant (lit: having a burden) will put down her burden. 22: 2

Only those who have minds will take heed. 39: 9

1 هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ

2 عَنِ النَّبَاِ الْعَظِيمِ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ

3 أَدْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

4 مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ

5 وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّنَا أَرْنَا الَّذِينَ ضَلَّانَا

6 إِنْ أُمّهَاتِهِمْ إِلَّا اللَّائِي وَلَدْنَهُمْ

7 أَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ

8 مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

9 وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ

10 وَلَيَنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِنْ سَعَتِهِ

11 وَءَاتَ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ

12 وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ

13 وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ

14 وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتٍ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا

15 إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

Notes for text above

- **Line 4:** تَمَثَّالٌ is the broken plural of تَمَثَّلٌ and so is grammatically feminine singular. Its relative pronoun الَّتِي is therefore feminine and the attached pronoun هَا is of course also feminine.
- **Line 9:** The preposition عَلَى in عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ and in عَلَى حُبِّهِ line 13 has the sense of 'despite'.

■ **Line 14:** تَضَعُ she puts down/she will put down, is from the weak verb وَضَعَ, to put down or to give birth.

■ **Line 15:** The word أَلْبَاب is plural of لُب which means *mind* or *heart* and connotes *insight* and *wisdom*.