

Unit 23

The subjunctive

Slight changes are made to the indicative of the present tense Arabic verb to form **the subjunctive**.

- The subjunctive is used after the main verb in a sentence.
- One common use of the subjunctive is after verbs of commanding, wishing, fearing and the like. For example, the Arabic verb translating 'to eat' in line 1 opposite is in the subjunctive, after the main verb 'we want'.
- Subjunctive verbs are linked to or controlled by preceding particles. We will call these particles 'controllers'.

In English a verb in the subjunctive may sometimes be recognised by having 'should', 'would', 'may' or 'might' as part of the verb.

The verb in the present form has three moods: **the indicative** (مَرْفُوع), **the subjunctive** (مَنْصُوب), and **the jussive** (مَجْزُوم).

We saw in Unit 21 that present tense verbs in the indicative mood which end with a root letter has a dammah on that letter. For example, the words يَعْلَمُ and يَنْزِلُ in the sentence below are in the indicative mood. They each end with a dammah.

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ He knows what descends from the sky.

When the present form of the verb is controlled by certain words or particles, the endings or suffixes of the verb are affected.

In the clause below, the particle لِ so that, controls the verb يَعْلَمُ causing it to end in a fat-hah instead of the dammah:

لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ So that Allah may know who helps Him.

The word يَعْلَمُ is said to be in the subjunctive mood (مَنْصُوب). The subjunctive is used after the following particles, which we will call 'controllers'.

أَنَّ	that	أَنَّ لَا = أَلَّا	that not
لَنْ	will not, never	لئَلَّا	so that not
لِ	in order to, so that	كَيْ	in order to, so that
حَتَّى	until, so that	كَيْلَا	so that not

The conjugation of كَتَبَ in the subjunctive is as follows:

Plural	Dual	Singular	Controllers
يَكْتُبُوا	يَكْتُبَا	يَكْتُبَ 3.m.	
يَكْتُبْنَ	تَكْتُبَا	تَكْتُبَ 3.f.	
تَكْتُبُوا	تَكْتُبَا	تَكْتُبَ 2.m.	
تَكْتُبْنَ	تَكْتُبَا	تَكْتُبِي 2.f.	
نَكْتُبَ	نَكْتُبَا	أَكْتُبَ 1.m.&.f.	

So that they may worship Me

The human being's reason for existence (line 7) is to 'worship' his or her Creator. This is also the purpose of other creatures. Worship ('ibadah) is Prayer and supplications. And it is much more. It is to seek useful knowledge; it is honest work; it is relaxation and lawful pleasures; it is acts of kindness and charity and resisting evil; it is concern for the earth on which we live - all done in tune with our natural disposition, in obedience to God alone, in the hope of His pleasure and in dread of His displeasure.

You will notice that for the subjunctive:

(i) The forms of the verb which have no added letters after the last root letter, change the final dammah of the indicative to a fat-hah, e.g. يَكْتُبَ

(ii) The forms of the verb which end with ن preceded by a long vowel after the last root letter, lose their ن. An alif is then added after the long vowel 'u' of the 2nd and 3rd person masculine plural, e.g. يَكْتُبُوا

(iii) The second and third person plural feminine forms stay the same in the indicative, subjunctive and jussive moods.

They said: We want to eat (*lit.* that we should eat) of it. 5: 113

1 ■ قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا

Do you want to kill (*lit.* that you should kill) me as you killed someone yesterday. 28: 19

2 ■ أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ

They want to get out of the fire. 5: 37

3 ■ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُخْرَجُوا مِنَ النَّارِ

So that Allah may know who helps Him and His messengers. 57: 25

4 ■ لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرَسُولَهُ

That (is) so that you may know that Allah knows...

5 ■ ذَلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ

...whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. 5: 97

6 ■ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

I have not created jinn and human beings except that they should worship Me. 51: 56

7 ■ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And if they had been patient until you come out to them...

8 ■ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ

it would certainly have been better for them. 49: 5

9 ■ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ

So that we may glorify You much and remember You much. 20: 34

10 ■ كَى نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا

And indeed, we will not enter it until they get out from it. 5: 22

11 ■ وَإِنَّا لَنَنذِرُكَ بِهَا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ مِنْهَا

Your relatives will not benefit you, nor will your children on the Day of Resurrection. 60: 3

12 ■ لَنْ تَنْفَعَكَ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

And they say: He shall not enter Paradise except whoever has been a Jew or a Christian. 2: 111

13 ■ وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرِي

Does he think that noone shall have power over him? 90: 5

14 ■ أَيْحَسِبُ أَنْ لَنْ يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ

And what is wrong with you that you do not spend in the way of God. 57: 10

15 ■ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Notes for text above

■ **Line 1:** أَنْ نَأْكُلَ literally means 'that we should eat'; it is translated simply as 'to eat'. A similar use of the subjunctive is in line 2 and line 3.

■ **Line 7:** The final نِ in لِيَعْبُدُونِ is short for the attached pronoun نِي - Me. The alif at the end of

the 3.m.p. subjunctive is dropped after the waw because of the attached pronoun.

■ **Line 14:** Lit. 'that anyone shall not have power over him'.

■ **Line 15:** تُنْفِقُوا is present subjunctive of the Form IV verb - (see Unit 32).