

Unit 15

The verb:
past tense,
number &
gender

اللَّهِ

The word 'Allah' is grammatically masculine singular but it has no gender connotations. Also, the word Allah does not have any plural form - unlike the word 'god' in English or 'ilah' in Arabic.

Number (continued)

Feminine plural past tense verbs end with **نَ** which is a short vowel. For example:

دَخَلْنَ they (f.) entered كَتَبْنَ they (f.) wrote.

However, first person plural verbs end with **نَا** which is a long vowel:

دَخَلْنَا we entered كَتَبْنَا we wrote.

Be careful when reading to keep short vowels short and lengthen the long vowels. Meanings change when you lengthen vowels. You can see that the endings of words are very important in Arabic.

Gender

Verbs, like pronouns, in Arabic may be either masculine (m.) or feminine (f.). There is no neuter gender. Study the following:

جَاءَ He has come	جَاءَ It has come.
جَاءَ رَجُلٌ A man came	جَاءَ الْحَقُّ The Truth has come.
جَاءَتْ She came	جَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ A caravan came.

A masculine singular noun takes a verb in the masculine. The noun **الْحَقُّ** is masculine and the verb **جَاءَ** is also masculine.

A feminine singular noun takes a verb in the feminine. The noun **سَيَّارَةٌ** is feminine because it ends with **ة** marbutah. Its verb **جَاءَتْ** is also feminine - it ends with **ت**.

More on the agreement of subjects and verbs

- When a verb comes first in a sentence and its subject is 3rd person, it is always singular - even if the subject is singular, dual or plural. (See lines 12 - 15.)
- When a verb comes first in a sentence, it can be masculine even if the subject is grammatically feminine. In line 14, the subject **الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ** is feminine plural but its verb **جَاءَ** is masculine singular.
- The verb occurring first in a sentence is singular even if the subject is plural. But a following verb with the same plural subject will be plural. In line 15, the first verb **جَاءَ** is singular but the second verb **دَخَلُوا** is plural. The subject of both verbs is **إِخْوَةٌ**, the brothers.

Hint on translating into English:

First identify the subject of the Arabic sentence. If the subject is a noun, it must be in the nominative case. For example, in line 13 opposite, the subject must be **رَسُولَنَا** which is nominative. In line 14, the subject of the verb **جَاءَ** is **الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ** which is nominative.

مِيثَاقٌ	pledge, covenant
غَلِيظٌ	solemn, strong
طَهْرٌ	pure
بَيِّنَاتٌ	clear teachings

الْمَاءُ

The verse in line 4 opposite, expresses a profound truth: that water is necessary for the emergence and development of life. Life depends on water. Read this verse with the previous amazing verse of the Qur'an, 21: 29.

They (f.) took from you a solemn pledge. 4: 21	أَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا 1
So when they (f.) saw him... 12: 31	فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ 2
We created the heavens and the earth. 50: 16	خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ 3 ■
And We made from water every living thing. 21: 30	وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ 4 ■
We sent down from the sky pure water. 25: 48	أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا 5 ■
We have heard and we have obeyed. 2: 285	سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا 6
Indeed We did send our messengers with clear teachings. 57: 25	لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ 7 ■
And indeed We did send <u>Musa</u> with our signs. 11: 96	وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا 8 ■
A man came. 28: 20	جَاءَ رَجُلٌ 9
The Truth has come. 17: 81	جَاءَ الْحَقُّ 10
A caravan came. 12: 19	جَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ 11
Messengers before me have come to you. 3: 183	قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ قَبْلِي 12
And indeed Our messengers came (to) <u>Ibrahim</u> with the good news. 11: 69	وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى 13 ■
O Prophet! When the believing women come (to) you... 60: 12	يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ 14
And the brothers of <u>Yusuf</u> came and entered unto him and he recognized them. 12: 58	وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ 15 ■

Notes for text above

- **Lines 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8:** The words 'We' and 'Our' refer to Allah. In the Qur'an, Allah frequently refers to Himself as 'We' but this does not in any way affect the fact that Allah is One.
- **Lines 7, 8 and 13:** لَقَدْ is a combination of the ل of emphasis and قَدْ. To emphasize that an action is complete, the particle قَدْ or لَقَدْ is placed before the past tense verb. قَدْ with the past tense of the verb

sometimes conveys the sense of the Past Perfect in English - as in قَدْ كَتَبَ - he had written.

قَدْ is one of the many particles which control verbs in Arabic and help to convey precise tenses. The actual tense of a verb, however, has to be determined by the context in which it is used.

- **Lines 15:** The word يُوسُفَ is genitive. See Note for line 2, Unit 16.