

# Unit 17

## The verb: past tense - active & passive

A verb is **active** when its subject is the doer of the action.

A verb is **passive** when its subject is acted upon.

Verbs are either active or passive.

So far we have been dealing with Arabic verbs in the past tense which are active. A verb is active when its subject is the doer of the action.

A verb is passive when its subject is acted upon.

In the following sentence,

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْأَرْضَ - God created the earth

the verb خَلَقَ is active. The subject, اللَّهُ, is the doer of the action.

In the following sentence,

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ - The human being was created.

the verb خُلِقَ meaning 'was created' is passive. The subject, الْإِنْسَانُ, is acted upon.

The verb in English is easily recognized as passive because it is a combination of 'was' + 'created'. The verbs in sentences like 'I am created', 'We are created', 'They were created' are all passive.

The passive of the past tense simple verb in Arabic is on the pattern of خُلِقَ .

The first root letter takes a dammah and the second takes a kasrah.

**Active** قَتَلَتْ she killed

ذَكَرَ he mentioned

**Passive** قُتِلَتْ she was killed

ذُكِرَ he was mentioned

The suffixes or endings of passive verbs are the same as those of past tense active verbs given in the previous Units.

**Note:** The word إِبِلٌ in line 10 opposite is normally taken to mean 'she-camels'.

Muhammad Asad (*The Meaning of the Qur'an*, p. 949) has pointed out that the word has a rarer meaning of 'clouds bearing rain-water'. This better fits the context which refers to the skies, mountains and the earth.

weak	ضَعِيفٌ
female child	الْمَوْءُودَةُ
to ask	سَأَلَ
to tremble	وَجَلَ
fasting	صِيَامٌ
Stand firm!	اسْتَقِمْ

### Unwanted

المَوْءُودَةُ refers, in line

7 opposite, to the 'unwanted' girl child who is murdered by parents or others and who in the hereafter will point its accusing finger at its murderer. The Qur'an condemns this practice of infanticide. Those who are responsible for this heinous crime will be brought to account on the day of judgment. The appalling practice is not just of the past. In fact, as a result of genetic screening and social engineering, and the rampant spread of abortions worldwide through the 'pro-choice' lobby, this practice is now on a far vaster scale than it has even been in the past.

He created the human being. 55: 3

1 خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ

The human being was created weak. 4: 28

2 خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

He gathered wealth. 104: 2

3 جَمَعَ مَالًا

So the sorcerers were gathered. 26: 38

4 ■ فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ

And Dawud killed Jalut. 2: 251

5 وَ قَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ

And whoever has been killed unjustly... 17: 33

6 وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا

And when the female babe is asked: for what sin was she killed? 81: 9

7 وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

Perish the human being! How ungrateful is he!  
80: 17

8 ■ قُتِلَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ

Permission (to fight) has been given to those who are being fought because they were wronged. 22: 39

9 أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا

Do they not look at the clouds - how they were created? 88: 13

10 أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

When Allah is mentioned, their hearts tremble.  
22: 35

11 ■ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ

Fasting has been prescribed for you (lit. on you).  
2: 183

12 كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ

And if you were killed in the path of God or were to die...

13 ■ وَلَئِن قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مِتُّمْ

...then forgiveness from God and His grace is better than whatever (wealth) they amass. 3: 157

14 لَمَغْفِرَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

And stand firm as you were commanded. 32: 15

15 وَأَسْتَقِمَّ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

#### Notes for text above

■ **Line 4:** The verb, whether active or passive, is singular when it is the first word in a sentence. This is so whether the subject of the sentence is singular, dual or plural. For example, the subject السَّحَرَةُ the sorcerers, is plural but the verb جَمَعَ is singular.

■ **Line 8:** The verb قُتِلَ is used to express a wish. The past tense of the verb in Arabic, whether active or passive, is sometimes used to express a wish. An

example of this - not from the Qur'an - is رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ - may God have mercy on him.

The construction مَا أَكْفَرَهُ is used to express the exclamation: *How ungrateful is he!* It is made up of مَا + comparative adjective + the pronoun هُ (For comparative adjectives, see Unit 18.)

■ **Line 11.** This is a conditional sentence (see Unit 40) introduced by the particle إِذَا, meaning 'if' or 'when'.

■ **Line 13.** لَ + إِنَّ = لَئِن