

# Unit 11

## Root words, root letters

The **root letters** of an Arabic word are sometimes called **radicals**.

The root word is sometimes referred to simply as **the root**.

Most Arabic words have three main letters. These are called **root letters**. The simplest word from these three root letters has the meaning of **he + the past tense**.

The word **خَلَقَ** means 'He created'.

The root letters in **خَلَقَ** are **خ ل ق**. **خَلَقَ** is a **root word**. It only has root letters.

New words grow like a tree from the root words. Letters are added to the root and vowels and signs are added or changed to form new words.

Letters may be added:

- i. before the first root letter, as in: **يَخْلُقُ**
- ii. between the root letters **خَالِقٌ**
- iii. after the last root letter **خَلَقُوا**
- iv. by doubling letters (using a shaddah) **خَلَّاقٌ**
- v. by a combination of the above. **إِخْتِلَاقٌ**

Letters used for adding to the root word are:

أ ت ة س ل م ن ه و ي

These letters, apart from the **ta'** **marbutah** ة, are contained in the word

**سَأَلْتُمُونِيهَا** which means 'You asked me about them'. Soon we hope you will understand how one word in Arabic can mean so much.

Words are formed from the root word according to a variety of word patterns.

You can often tell the meaning of a word from the word pattern. We will see how this happens as we go along. But let us go back to **خَلَقَ**.

**خَلَقَ** means 'He created'.

The pronoun 'He' is built into the form of the verb **خَلَقَ**. So usually there is no need for a separate word for 'He'.

Arabic is a language of patterns and if you can match one pattern to another, you can get some idea of the meaning of a word. Other verbs with different root letters but which have the same pattern as **خَلَقَ** may also mean 'He + the past tense'. Therefore:

**جَعَلَ** He made.      **دَخَلَ** He entered.      **خَرَجَ** He went out.

The middle root letter in **خَلَقَ** has a fat-hah.

In some root words, the middle root letter has a kasrah, for example:

**عَمِلَ** He worked.      **عَلِمَ** He knew.      **سَمِعَ** He heard.

In a few cases, the middle root letter has a dammah, for example:

**كَبُرَ** It was great      **كَثُرَ** It was plentiful.

### Precision

بَدَأَ - بَرَأَ - خَلَقَ

فَطَرَ - جَعَلَ

There are a few words in the Qur'an meaning 'to make' or 'to create'. Each has a precise meaning which is often not conveyed in English translations.

**bada'a** - means to begin or originate;

**bara'a** - means to bring into existence from nothing;

**khalafa** - has the sense of to bring into existence for the first time and define the nature and disposition of what is created.

**fatara** - means to originate. It has the basic meaning of to break or to split.

**ja'ala** - has the sense of to make and has a wide variety of meanings including to appoint or to change something.

The following words

بَرَأَ - خَلَقَ - فَطَرَ

are used only for Allah.

Read the following from right to left, starting from the root words in Arabic.

In the column 'Words from Root Words', note the letters which are added to the root words.

Added Letters	Words formed from Roots Words	Root Words
م و	eaten مَأْكُولٌ	أَكَلَ he ate
ت و ن	you (pl.) command تَأْمُرُونَ	أَمَرَ he commanded
ة	congregation جُمُعَةٌ	جَمَعَ he gathered
و	leaving, exit خُرُوجٌ	خَرَجَ he went out
ا	Creator خَالِقٌ	خَلَقَ He created
ي و ن	they (pl.) enter يَدْخُلُونَ	دَخَلَ he entered
م	place of prostration مَسْجِدٌ	سَجَدَ he prostrated
ل doubled	he taught عَلَّمَ	عَلِمَ he knew
ي س ت و ن	They ask forgiveness of Him يَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ	غَفَرَ he forgave
م س ت + ي	straight مُسْتَقِيمٌ	قَامَ he stood
ا	book, scripture كِتَابٌ	كَتَبَ he wrote
ف ا	disbelievers كُفَّارٌ	كَفَرَ he disbelieved
م	place مَكَانٌ	كَانَ he was
و turned to ا	death مَوْتٌ	مَاتَ he died
ا ا	helpers أَنْصَارٌ	نَصَرَ he helped

Note: The alif in مَاتَ is turned into a و in مَوْتٌ

The alif in قَامَ is turned into a ي in مُسْتَقِيمٌ