

Unit 13

The verb:
past tense,
singular

Tense refers to the time of an action. The term Past Tense is used to refer to the Arabic *Madi*. In many grammar books, *Madi* is also referred to as the Perfect Tense since it refers to actions which are 'perfect' or complete. It is important to remember that the *Madi* in Arabic does not always refer to actions in the past. It may be used for making a wish or in 'conditional sentences' (see Unit 40). The actual tense of a verb must be determined by its context.

A car - سَيَّارَةٌ

In modern Arabic, *sayyarah* is a car. In Surah Yūsuf, *sayyarah* refers to the caravan or the company of travellers that found Yūsuf in a well after he had been taken away and abandoned there by his jealous brothers. They went back to their father and said that a wolf had eaten Yūsuf, a story which the father, Prophet Ya'qub - peace be on him, did not believe. The caravan travelled on to Egypt and sold Yūsuf to the ruler of Egypt in whose household he grew up. The amazing story of Yūsuf is told at some length in the Qur'an.

The word *sayyarah* comes from the verb *sara* which means to go, to move or to travel.

The verb كَتَبَ is a root word. It is a verb in the past tense. It means 'He wrote'. The word 'He' is built into the word كَتَبَ. If you add the letter ت with a sukun to the root word, you form the new word كَتَبْتَ. The suffix ت with a sukun tells you that كَتَبْتَ means 'She wrote'. A letter or letters added after a word is called a suffix.

Verbs having the suffix ت will mean 'she + the past tense'. Thus:

سَمِعَ	he heard	عَلِمَ	he knew
سَمِعَتْ	she heard	عَلِمَتْ	she knew

From كَتَبَ we also get other words by adding different suffixes:

كَتَبْتَ you (m.s.) wrote, كَتَبْتِ you (f.s.) wrote, كَتَبْتُ I wrote.

(Abbreviations: m.s. = masculine singular; f.s. = feminine singular)

In the three words above, notice that a sukun is placed on the last root letter.

The suffix or added ending in all the above words is the letter ت. But each ت has a different vowel.

In the word كَتَبْتَ, the last ت with the fat-hah stands for 'you' masculine singular (m.s.).

In the word كَتَبْتِ, the last ت with the kasrah stands for 'you' feminine singular (f.s.).

In the word كَتَبْتُ, the last ت with the dammah stands for 'I'.

Other singular verbs in the past tense will have the same endings. Thus:

you (m.s.) went out	خَرَجْتَ	دَخَلْتَ	you (m.s.) entered
you (f.s.) went out	خَرَجْتِ	دَخَلْتِ	You (f.s.) entered
I went out	خَرَجْتُ	دَخَلْتُ	I entered

Below is a chart with the singular forms of two verbs in the past tense. Read from the right and then down.

Singular		Singular		
he did	فَعَلَ	كَتَبَ	he wrote	3.m.
she did	فَعَلَتْ	كَتَبْتِ	she wrote	3.f.
you did	فَعَلْتَ	كَتَبْتَ	you wrote	2.m.
you did	فَعَلْتِ	كَتَبْتِ	you wrote	2.f.
I did	فَعَلْتُ	كَتَبْتُ	I wrote	1.m. & f.

God has heard. 58: 1

1 سَمِعَ اللَّهُ

So when she heard about their gossip. 12: 31

2 فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ

She bore a burden. 7: 189

3 حَمَلَتْ حَمَلًا

So she watched over him from afar. 28: 11

4 فَبَصُرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جَنْبٍ

And a caravan came. 12: 19

5 وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةً

And indeed Our messengers came (to) Ibrahim with the good news. 11: 69

6 ■ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى

You created me from fire... 7: 12

7 خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ

and You created him from clay. 7: 12

8 وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

Have you seen the one who has rejected/disbelieved in Our signs? 19: 77

9 ■ أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِنَا

And you killed someone. 20: 40

10 وَكَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا

They said: O Maryam! Indeed you have come (with) an amazing thing. 19: 27

11 ■ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا

He said: My Lord! Indeed I have killed someone from among them. 28: 33

12 ■ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا

And I made for him wealth extensive. 74: 12

13 وَجَعَلْتُ لَهُ مَالًا مَمْدُودًا

I saw eleven planets and the sun and the moon... 12: 4

14 رَأَيْتَ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ

I have not created jinn and mankind except that they may worship Me. 51: 56

15 ■ مَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

Notes for text above

■ **Line 6:** The word رُسُلٌ messengers, is a broken plural of رَسُولٌ and is here considered to be feminine singular. The verb جَاءَتْ is therefore feminine singular. • The word الْبُشْرَى means 'the good news'.

■ **Line 9:** The particle أ introduces a question.

• بِآيَاتِنَا = بِ + آيَاتٍ + نَا in Our signs

■ **Line 11:** يَا مَرْيَمُ = يَا + مَرْيَمُ - O Maryam!

■ **Line 12:** The preposition مِنْ is translated as 'from among'.

■ **Line 15:** لِيَعْبُدُونِ = لِ + يَعْبُدُونَ + نِ - so that + they may worship + Me. The نِ is short for نِي.

فَرِيًّا	amazing	مَكْرٌ	plot, gossip
أَحَدَ عَشَرَ	eleven	طِينٍ	clay
كَوْكَبٍ	planet	الَّذِي	the one who