Lesson 8

The Scales of Words

1. In Arabic, the original letters of nouns and verbs are not less than three. The maximum number of letters in a noun is five, and four in a verb. Together with the original letters, extra letters can also be attached. At such a time, the noun and the verb can have more than five letters.

Note 1: The original letter or root letter is the one that remains in all the forms and derivations. Only in some exceptions is it deleted or changed to another letter.
The extra letter is the one that is found in one word-form but not in another, e.g. in the word (حَمْدٌ), all three letters are root letters while in (حَامِدٌ), the alif and in (مَحْمُوْدٌ), the first (م) and the (و) are extra letters.

2. Words having three root-letters are called (ثُلاَثِيٌّ), e.g. (ضَرَبَ) and (فَرَسٌ).

If they have four root-letters, they are called (رُبَاعِيٌّ), e.g. (دَحْرَجَ) and (فِلْفِلٌ).

If they have five root-letters, they are called (خُمَاسِيٌّ), e.g. (سَفَرْجَلٌ).

Words made up of only root-letters are called (مُجَرَّدٌ) while those having extra letters as well are called (مَزِيْدٌ فِيْهِ), e.g. (ثُلاَثِيٌّ مُجَرَّدٌ) – three root-letters without any extra letters. (كَبُرَ) is (ثُلاَثِيٌّ مُجَرَّدٌ) – three root-letters without any extra letters.

(ثُلاَثِيٌّ مَزِيْدٌ فِيْهِ) - three root-letters with extra letters (تَكَبَّرَ) is (ثُلاَثِيٌّ مَزِيْدٌ فِيْهِ) because the (ت) and (ب) are extra.

Note 2 : To distinguish whether verbs (أفعال), derived nouns مَزِيْدٌ) or (مُجَرَّدٌ) are [36](مَصَادِر) and verbal nouns (أَسْمَاءٌ مُشْتَقَّةٌ)[35] or (مَزِيْدٌ) word-form of the perfect tense (واحد مذكر غائب), the (فِيْهِ), (الماضي) has to be examined. If that word-form is free of extra letters, then its derivatives and verbal noun will also be regarded as (مُجَرَّدٌ), e.g. (نَصَرَ) is (ثُلاَثِيٌّ مُجَرَّدٌ). Hence, the

---

[35] These are nouns that are derived from the verb, e.g. (فَاعِل) and (مَفْعُوْلٌ) are derived from the verb (فَعَلَ).

[36] Plural of (مَصْدَرٌ), the infinitive.

imperfect tense (المضارع) which is (يَنْصُرُ), the (اسم فاعل) - نَاصِرٌ, the (اسم مفعول) - مَنْصُوْرٌ and the verbal noun (نُصْرَةٌ) will also be regarded as (ثُلَاثِيٌّ مُجَرَّدٌ) although these forms have extra letters.

Similarly, in a paradigm, extra letters appear in a (مُجَرَّدٌ) word which will still remain (مُجَرَّدٌ). For example, the word (رَجُلٌ) is (مُجَرَّدٌ). Therefore, (رَجُلَانِ) and (رِجَالٌ) will also be (مُجَرَّدٌ).

However, (كَبَّرَ) and (أَكْرَمَ) are (ثُلَاثِيٌّ مَزِيْدٌ فِيْهِ). The former has one extra (ب) while the latter has an extra alif.

3. In order to determine the scales of words and to distinguish the root letters from the extra letters, the scale (مِيْزَان) of (ف ع ل) is used. In triliteral words (words with 3 root letters), the (ف) represents the first radical (letter) of the word, the (ع) represents the second radical of the word and the (ل) represents the third radical of the word.

Examples:

قَلَمٌ	كَتِفٌ	عَضُدٌ	كَلْبٌ
↓	↓	↓	↓
فَعَلٌ	فَعِلٌ	فَعُلٌ	فَعْلٌ

The letter that corresponds to the (ف) of the (ميزان) is called the (فَاءُ الْكَلِمَةِ), like the (ق) of (قَلَمٌ), that which corresponds to the (ع) is called the (عَيْنُ الْكَلِمَةِ), like the (ل) of (قَلَمٌ) while the letter corresponding to the (ل) is called the (لَامُ الْكَلِمَةِ), like the (م) of (قَلَمٌ).

When intending to determine the scale of (رُبَاعِيٌّ) - quadriliteral (four letter) words, add two lāms instead of one after (ف) and (ع). In words with five root letters, add three lāms.
Examples:

جَعْفَرٌ	سَفَرْجَلٌ
↓	↓
فَعْلَلٌ	فَعَلَّلٌ

4. At the time of determining the scale, the alphabets (ف),

(ع) and (ل) will take the place of the original letters while the other extra letters will remain as they are in their places. Examples:

تَـكْـبِـيْـرٌ	أَكْـبَـرُ	كَـبِـيْـرٌ	كِـبْـرٌ
تَـفْـعِـيْـلٌ	أَفْـعَـلُ	فَـعِـيْـلٌ	فِـعْـلٌ

However, when a letter is increased by repeating the (عَيْنُ

الْكَلِمَةِ) or the (لَاَمُ الْكَلِمَةِ), the (ع) or the (ل) is repeated in the

scale. For example, in the word (كَبَّرَ = كَـــبْ بَـــرَ), the first

(ب) is the (عَيْنُ الْكَلِمَةِ) while the second one is extra.

According to the rule, the scale should have been (فَعْبَلَ).

Instead its scale is (فَعَّلَ). Similarly, in the word (إِحْمَرَّ), the

final (ر) is extra. Its scale will be regarded as (إِفْعَلَّ).

5. A great benefit of recognizing the scales of words is that by knowing the meaning of the root letters of a word, it becomes very easy to recognize the meanings of all its paradigms and derivatives.

Exercise No. 7

What are the scales of the following words:

(3) شَرِيْفٌ	(2) شَرَفٌ	(1) رَجُلٌ
(6) مُلُوْكٌ	(5) مَلِكٌ	(4) أَشْرَافٌ
(9) رَحْمَانُ	(8) رَحِيْمٌ	(7) رَحْمٌ
(12) كِرَامٌ	(11) كَرِيْمٌ	(10) كَرُمٌ
(15) عُلَمَاءُ	(14) عَالِمٌ	(13) عِلْمٌ
(18) غَضَنْفَرٌ	(17) عَقْرَبٌ	(16) عَالِمُوْنَ
(21) تَعْلِيْمٌ	(20) عَلَّمَ	(19) عَلاَّمَةٌ
(24) اِكْرَامٌ	(23) مُتَكَبِّرٌ	(22) تَكَبُّرٌ