

Lesson Five: The Present Tense Verb in the State of *Rafa'* [رَفْع]

INTRODUCING GRAMMATICAL STATES

Like people, Arabic words experience states. Human emotional states occur as a result of our daily interactions and are indicated by our facial expressions. For example, meeting a friend makes us happy, which is then expressed on our faces by smiling.

Arabic words behave in a similar manner. In a sentence they interact with surrounding words and, as a result, experience *grammatical states*. These *grammatical states* are then expressed on the end of the word. Just as a person's face indicates his emotional state, the last letter of a word reveals its *grammatical state*. While people experience many emotional states, Arabic words experience only four *grammatical states*:

- 1) *rafa'* (رَفْع)
- 2) *nasb* (نَصْب)
- 3) *jarr* (جَرّ)
- 4) *jazm* (جَزْم)

PRINCIPLE ONE

Of the four *grammatical states*, Arabic *verbs* only experience three¹⁸:

- 1) *rafa'* (رَفْع)
- 2) *nasb* (نَصْب)
- 3) *jazm* (جَزْم)

¹⁸ The fourth state, *jarr* (جَرّ), is experienced only by nouns.

PRINCIPLE TWO

All *present tense verbs*, active and passive voice, are in the *state of rafa'* (رَفْع). Conjugations of the *present tense verb* end with either (1) a *dammah* (ُ) on the last letter or (2) a *nūn* (ن) as the final letter (table 4.2). Both of these endings are signs of the *grammatical state of rafa'* (رَفْع).

PRINCIPLE THREE

When considering the *grammatical states* of words in general, and verbs in particular, three questions must be asked.

- 1) What is the *grammatical state* of the word?
- 2) What *caused* it to enter this *grammatical state*?
- 3) How does it *reflect* its *grammatical state*?

Asking these three questions helps illustrate the principles of this lesson. Consider for example, *يَفْعَلُ* (*he does*):

1. What is the *grammatical state* of the verb?
The verb *يَفْعَلُ* is in the *state of rafa'* (رَفْع).
2. What *caused* it to enter this *grammatical state*?
Rafa' (رَفْع) is the *default state* of *present tense verbs*.
3. How does it *reflect* its *grammatical state*?
The *state of rafa'* (رَفْع) is *reflected* by the *dammah* (ُ) on the last letter of *يَفْعَلُ*.

As a second example, consider the verb تَفْعَلُونَ (you [masculine, plural] do):

1. What is the *grammatical state* of the verb?

The verb تَفْعَلُونَ is in the *state* of rafa' (رَفْع).

2. What *caused* it to enter this *grammatical state*?

Rafa' (رَفْع) is the *default state* of *present tense verbs*.

3. How does it *reflect* its *grammatical state*?

The *state* of rafa' (رَفْع) is *reflected* by the *nūn* (ن) at the end of تَفْعَلُونَ.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

As an exception to the principles of this lesson, a subset of Arabic words never enter *states*. These are called *stateless* (مَبْنِي) and are similar to a stoic person who is indifferent to emotional situations. Just as such a person does not experience emotion, *stateless* (مَبْنِي) words do not enter *grammatical states*.

PRINCIPLE FIVE

By definition, two conjugations of the *present tense verb* are *stateless* (مَبْنِي). They are the third person feminine plural (يَفْعَلْنَ) and the second person feminine plural (تَفْعَلْنَ). The final *nūn* on each of these conjugations is not a reflection of *grammatical state*; instead, it indicates the subject of the verb (i.e., a group of women). The importance of recognizing these two conjugations as *stateless* (مَبْنِي) will become apparent in the next lesson where changes in *grammatical states* are discussed.

PRINCIPLE SIX

All *past tense verbs* (lesson three) are also classified as *stateless* (مَبْنِي).