

Nahw - The Anatomy of a Sentence - Part 1

In this post I will give a few examples from *القصص النبوية* (*Qasas-un-Nabiyyeen - Stories of the Prophets*) which is the text which we are reading at the [Toronto Shariah Program](#). The purpose here is to see how some of the grammatical terms which we have learned so far fit into an Arabic sentence. This will help in identifying the correct terms and how they can be properly used while constructing longer Arabic sentences. We will also learn a few new grammatical states and will fit each of them in the [table which we built](#) in the previous Nahw post.

كانَ في قريةٍ رجلٌ مشهورٌ جداً (In a town there was a very famous man) Note the order of Noun, Adjective, and Adverb here. In English we put Adverb + Adjective + Noun (*very + famous + man*); in Arabic this order is reversed (*man + famous + very*). *جداً* is the adverb here, called the *normal adverb* or *مفعول مطلق* and it goes into *نصب* therefore you see the two *fathas* at the end. In addition to this *قرية* is in *جر* since it is preceded by a preposition, *في*. Also notice *رجلٌ مشهورٌ*: they have a *صفة، موصوف* relationship and thus the following rules apply to them, as explained in [this](#) post:

1. Definiteness: no *ال* in front of either
2. Plurality: both are singular
3. Gender: both are masculine
4. Grammatical state: both are in *رفع* (double *dhamma* at the end). Why they are in *رفع* is because

رجلٌ is the *إسم* of *كان* and *مشهورٌ* has to agree with it in grammatical state because of the *صفة، موصوف*

relationship. One important thing to note here is that there is *no* rule which says that the

word immediately following **كَانَ** is its subject. We have already stated in a previous [post](#) that no such rule of sequence exists in Arabic and in this sentence we see that **جَبَلٌ** is *not* the word which immediately follows **كَانَ**

كَانَ اسْمُهُ هَذَا الرَّجُلِ أَزَرَ (*The name of this man was Azar*) Let's take **أَزَرَ** first: it is in **نَهْضَبٌ** as can be seen by the *fatha* at the end. This is because **أَزَرَ** is the **خَبَرٌ** of **كَانَ** therefore it goes into **نَهْضَبٌ**. Also, note the one *dhamma* on **اسْمُهُ** which means that it is in the state of **رَفْعٌ**. This is because it is **إِسْمٌ** of **كَانَ** so it goes in the state of **رَفْعٌ**. Also, **الرَّجُلِ** is the **مُضَافٌ إِلَيْهِ** of **اسْمُهُ** therefore it goes into **جَرٌّ** as our [Grammatical State Table](#) shows. (Note: the final *kasra* may not show properly on the web page)

وَكَانَ فِي هَذَا الْبَيْتِ اصْنَامٌ (*And in this house there were idols*): **اصْنَامٌ** is the **إِسْمٌ** of **كَانَ** so it is in the state of **رَفْعٌ**, thus the double *dhamma* at the end. The whole phrase **فِي هَذَا الْبَيْتِ** is termed to be *in place of* **نَهْضَبٌ**. This is necessary since this whole phrase, rather than just a single word, is the **خَبَرٌ** of **كَانَ**. However, **الْبَيْتِ** itself is in **جَرٌّ** because of **فِي**, a preposition. This concept of *being in a grammatical state* is important since most of the time it is a whole phrase which will need to take up a specific grammatical state rather than a single word. Because we cannot put *dhamma*, *fatha*, or *kasra* on the entire phrase therefore we consider the whole phrase into that specific grammatical state. This will become more clear, Insha Allah, when I give more examples involving complex sentences.

وكانَ زَارٌ يُعْبُدُ الأَصْنَامَ (And Aazar would worship these idols): The combination of كانَ and المضارع verb (يُعْبُدُ in this case) gives the meaning of *would*. In other terms, this combination depicts the past continuous tense and is used whenever the idea of a general habit or an action occurring over and over again is to be conveyed. Notice the *fatha* at the end of الأَصْنَامَ: it is the مفعول به of يُعْبُدُ thus it goes into

نَصَبٌ

I hope that these simple examples would be an easy primer to the application of the concept of Grammatical States in Arabic Language. Insha Allah, I will soon post more example with more complex sentences.