

id-dars¹ il-'awwal

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The First Lesson <the lesson the first>

Let's begin by getting to know a few words, then we'll dive straight into a simple conversation. After you've read it we can summarize what you've learned from it.

Vocabulary

mīn	who?	šū, šu	what?
wēn	where?	hōn	here
bint	daughter, girl	bēt	house
'ana	I	miš, muš	not, [is] not
'ā / 'aywa	yes	la'	no
na ^{cam}	yes	ḥilu	beautiful
hal-	this, these; that, those (used before both m and f nouns)		
hāda	this/that ^m	kbīr	big
hāy / hādi	this/that ^f	sāken	lives / living ^m (in a place)
'inte ('inta ^J)	you ^{m sing}	sākne	lives / living ^f (in a place)
'inti	you ^{f sing}	kamān	also, too, as well; else
il- / l-	the	mudīr	manager, boss
u- / w-	and	fī	in, inside; at
ya / yā	oh...! hey...! used before the name or title of the person you're talking to, as in <i>Oh George, could you tell me...</i>)		

Conversation

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| – mīn hāda? | – Who [is] that ^m ? |
| – hāda Jōrj, il-mudīr. | – That [is] George, the manager. |
| – u-mīn hāy? | – And who's that ^f [with him]? |
| – hāy Maryam binto. | – That's Maryam, his daughter. |
| – hāy bint il-mudīr? – 'ā. | – That's the manager's daughter? – Yes. |
| – šū hāda? – hāda bēt. | – What's that? – That's a house. |
| – bēt mīn? | – Whose house <house [of] who>? |

1. Why not il-dars? You'll find out why in Lesson 2.

Lesson 1

- bēt Jōrj, bēt il-mudīr. – [It's] George the manager's house
<[the] house-of George, the house-of the manager>
- mīn sāken fi hal-bēt – Who lives in that house?
- Jōrj sāken hōn fi bēto. – George lives there <here> in his house.
- mīn kamān sāken fi bēto? – Who else <who also> lives in his house?
- Maryam kamān sākne hōn. – Maryam lives there <here> too.



The next day George is standing alone in front of his house:

- ya Jōrj, Maryam fi bētak? – Hello, George <oh George>, is Maryam at home <Maryam in your house>?
- la', Maryam 'issa² / halqēt muš hōn. – No, Maryam's not here at the moment <Maryam now not here>.
- hal-bēt³ ekbīr³! – It's a big house <this house big>.
- 'ā, ekbīr u-ḥīlu. – Yes, big and very nice <beautiful>.
- ya Jōrj, hāda bētak? – George, [is] that your house?
- na'am hāda bēti. – Yes, that's my house.
- bētak ḥīlu w-^ekbīr kamān. – It's a nice house, and big, too <your house is beautiful and big too>
- hāda bēt^ejdīd? – Is it a new house <this is a new house>?

2. In Galilee the word 'issa is used for *now*, while in Jerusalem people say *halqēt*. In Lesson 6 we'll learn a word that's used all over the country.

3. *il-bēt* + *kbīr* = *il-bēt^ekbīr*. A helping vowel is added here between the final -t of the word *bēt* and the -kb at the beginning of the word *kbīr*. When exactly does this happen? We'll find out in the next lesson.

- 'aywa, u-**inte**, wēn **bēt**ak? – Yes. And where do **you** live?
<and you, where's your house>
- 'ana? **bēti** fi **hēfa**. – Me <I>? My home's in Haifa.
- 'inta^J **sāken** fi **hēfa**? – Do you live <you live> in Haifa?
- 'aywa, 'ana **sāken** fi **hēfa**. – Yes, I live in Haifa.
- **hēfa** **madīne** **kbīre**
u-**hīlwe** **kamān**. – Haifa's a big town, and it's beautiful, too
<and beautiful too>.
- **ṭayyeb**, **bikaffi**. – OK <good>, that's enough.

Explanations

1. The verb *to be*

Let's start with some good news: you don't have to learn the **present tense** of the verb *to be* in Arabic, because it doesn't exist (though it does exist in the past and future tenses). Instead of saying, as you would in English, *That's good, I'm here, What's that?* or *You're tired*, in Arabic you just say *That good, I here, What that?* and *You tired*. If you take another look at the conversation above you'll see that the sentence **hēfa madīne kbīre** <Haifa town big> translates into English as *Haifa's a big town*.

2. The indefinite article

There is no indefinite article in Arabic:

bēt = *house / a house* **bēt_ekbīr** = *a big house*

3. Masculine and feminine

In Arabic, objects, as well as people, can be either masculine or feminine. Nouns ending in -e (**madīne**) are feminine, and both the adjective and some verbal forms change to agree with a feminine noun by adding -e:

kbīr + -e = **kbīre^f** (*big*)

hīlu + -e = **hīlwe^f** (*beautiful, nice*)

sāken + -e = **sākne^f** (*live, living*). Note that the -e between the -k and the -n drops when the feminine ending is added. We'll explain later why this happens.

Note: There is no need for you to memorize explanations like the one above, as they are provided merely to satisfy your curiosity. With practice you will find that all the grammatical peculiarities described above become second nature.

Lesson 1

4. The adjective

In Arabic the adjective is placed **after** the noun:

bēt_ʿjdīd	<i>a new house</i>
madīne kbīre	<i>a big town</i>

5. The personal pronouns

Note that the second person (*you*) has both a masculine and a feminine form:

I	'ana
you ^{m sg}	'inte, or 'inta ^J
you ^{f sing}	'inti
he	huwwe, hū
she	hiyye, hī

6. The attached pronouns

If you look at the conversation again, you'll see that the word *my* is expressed in Arabic by adding -i to the end of a word: **bēti** means *my house*. *Your*, *his* and *her* are expressed in the same way. Note that *your* has two forms, one for addressing a male, the other for addressing a female. The following are the appropriate suffixes:

my ^{m/f}	-i
your ^{m sing}	-ak
your ^{f sing}	-ek
his	-o
her	-ha

7. Negation

The word *la'* means *no* (Jōrj sāken hōn? – **la'**!).

The word *muš / miš* means *not*.

<i>Do you live here?</i>	– 'inte sāken hōn?
<i>No, I don't (= do not) live here.</i>	– la' , 'ana muš sāken hōn.
<i>Is the manager's house beautiful?</i>	– bēt il-mudīr ḥīlu?
<i>No, the manager's house isn't (= is not) beautiful.</i>	– la' , bēt il-mudīr miš ḥīlu.

Note: Because Arabic has no present tense of the verb *to be*, *muš / miš* often translates into English as *am not*, *isn't* or *aren't*. It can also mean *don't* or *doesn't*.

Note: Although **la'** can nearly always be translated as *no* and *muš / miš* as *not*, there are a few exceptions to this, e.g.,

'ana la'! = *I'm not* < I no >!

The basic rule is that *muš / miš* is used to negate a noun (*not a child*), an adjective (*not nice*), an adverb (*not quickly*) or a pronoun (*not you*), while **la'** usually stands alone or, as in the example above, with just one other word.

8. Possessives

English expresses the possessive by using the word *of* or by adding the suffixes *'s* or *s'* (*the house of the prince / the prince's house; the princes' house*). Arabic has no special words or suffixes to express possession: it simply puts the noun denoting the thing possessed immediately in front of the noun denoting the possessor:

bēt Jōrj	<i>George's house</i>
bēt il-mudīr	<i>the manager's house</i> <[the] house [of] the manager>

Note that when the definite article is used in this possessive construction it appears **only before the second of the two nouns**.

9. Questions

English often reverses the order of words or adds the word *do / does* to turn a statement into a question:

That's (that is) your house → *Is that your house?*

Colloquial Arabic doesn't do this. It relies on the intonation of the voice to indicate whether a sentence is a statement or a question:

hāda bēti	<i>That's <that> my house.</i>
hāda bētak?	<i>Is that your house <that [is] your house>?</i>
'ana sāken fi ḥēfa	<i>I live in Haifa.</i>
'inte sāken fi ḥēfa?	<i>Do you live in Haifa?</i>

10. Pronunciation

As we said in the Preface, it is very important to try to pronounce Arabic properly from the outset. In this lesson, you should pay special attention to the following points:

A long vowel is indicated by a line over the top of the vowel:

sāken is pronounced s^ā-ken and not sa-ken.

Lesson 1

Be sure to distinguish between **ā** and **α**

- 'ā ≠ 'aywa – ṭayyeb ≠ sāken (see page [12])

Take care to ensure that doubled consonants really do sound double: in the word 'issa the -s is doubled, i.e., longer and louder. Listen to the recording to hear exactly how it should sound. Practice by pronouncing English combinations such as *Miss Soames, got time, bed down*.

Now would be a good time to reread the lesson or listen to the recording, before you move on to the exercises



Exercises

A. Translate into English:

1. hāda bēt_ējdīd u-hāda kamān bēt_ējdīd.
2. mīn sāken fi bētak?
3. 'inte kamān sāken hōn?
4. hāda muš_ekbīr.
5. mīn kamān sāken hōn?

B. Complete the sentences:

(Replace the English words with the appropriate expression in Arabic):

6. 'inte sāken fi ḥēfa? 'ana (too) sāken fi ḥēfa.
7. Jōrj fi bētak? – (No), Jōrj (isn't) fi bēti.
8. hāda (is new)? – (No), hāda muš (new).
9. binto (lives) fi bēt_ējdīd, u-bintak (also) sākne (in a new house).

C. Translate into Arabic:

10. I live at the manager's house.
11. You^{f sing} don't live here.
12. The house isn't nice.
13. Who's that^{f sing?}
14. Isn't that your^{m sing} daughter <this not your daughter>?
15. No, that's not my daughter.
16. Maryam, where's your daughter?
17. The boss isn't at your^{m sing} house.
18. This is a beautiful town.
19. His daughter isn't beautiful.
20. That's not new!

To make sure you've got everything right, look up the **Key to the Exercises** on page 111.

Don't be content with just writing out the exercises! Read your translations out loud – after you've corrected them, of course!