

## Section One

### PRONUNCIATION OF ARABIC LETTERS

In order to acquire the proper pronunciation of Arabic sounds it is imperative that one hears them repeatedly and then practices until precision is attained. This is true even for Arabic speaking people when they undertake the study of *tajweed*, since modern dialects have deviated from the pure classical Arabic of the Qur'aan, and since some letters have taken on different pronunciations in colloquial speech. The teacher, therefore, must be one who himself has learned correct pronunciation, not depending solely on a knowledge of modern written Arabic.

No attempt has been made here to give approximate phonetic equivalents to Arabic letters in other languages. That method, although acceptable as an aid to the student of ordinary modern Arabic, does not give the accuracy required for *tajweed*.

As a supplement to audio-vocal training, *tajweed* studies include both pinpointing the *makhraj* (the point of articulation of each letter [plural *makhaarij*]) and defining certain qualities or characteristics (*sifaat*) of each letter which distinguish it from other sounds.

#### MAKHAARIJ (المَخَارِج)

In the human body, the area of speech is divided into five main sections:

- |                         |             |                              |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>al-jawf</i>       | الجَوْف     | (the interior or chest area) |
| 2. <i>al-halq</i>       | الحَلَق     | (the throat)                 |
| 3. <i>al-lisaan</i>     | اللِّسَان   | (the tongue)                 |
| 4. <i>ash-shafataan</i> | الشَّفَتَان | (the lips)                   |
| 5. <i>al-khayshūm</i>   | الْخَيْشُوم | (the nasal passage)          |

These are further subdivided into a total of seventeen subsections which are the actual points of articulation. They are listed in order (from innermost to outermost) below, along with the letters which are formed in each *makhraj*:

**The interior is one *makhraj* for three letters:**

1. الجَوْف - The interior is one *makhraj* in itself and includes the empty area of the open mouth. From it emerge the vowel sounds of ا (alif) pronounced "aa," و (waaw) pronounced "oo" and ي (yaa), pronounced "ee."

This *makhraj* is an estimated or approximate one (تقديري) while all others are true or actual (حقيقي) because they apply to consonant sounds and can be pinpointed more accurately.

**The throat section contains three *makhaarij* for six letters:**

2. أَقْصَى الْحَلْق - The deepest part of the throat is the *makhraj* of ء (hamzah), a glottal stop (pronounced in English at the beginning of words that start with vowels such as: ate, eat, out). It is a true written consonant in Arabic and must be pronounced clearly whether it occurs at the beginning, middle or end of a word.

From this section of the throat also, but slightly higher, emerges ه (haa).

3. وَسْطُ الْحَلْق - The mid-throat is the *makhraj* of ع ('ayn) and just above it, ح (ḥaa), a sharper "h" sound than ه.
4. أَدْنَى الْحَلْق - The nearest part of the throat (to the mouth) is the *makhraj* of غ (ghayn) followed by خ (khaa).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>A common error in the pronunciation of *ghayn* and *khaa* is caused by allowing them to emerge from the mouth rather than the throat.

**The tongue contains ten *makhaarij* for eighteen letters:**

5. أَقْصَى اللِّسَانِ مِمَّا يَلِي الْحَلْق - The innermost part of the tongue next to the throat along with what corresponds (i.e. is opposite) to it from the roof of the mouth. This is the *makhraj* of ق (qaaf).
6. أَقْصَى اللِّسَانِ مِمَّا يَلِي الْفَم - The innermost part of the tongue toward the mouth and what corresponds from the roof of the mouth is the *makhraj* of ك (kaaf).
7. وَسْطُ اللِّسَان - The middle of the tongue: the upper surface (ظَهْرُ اللِّسَان) with what corresponds from the roof of the mouth is the *makhraj* of ج (jeem), ش (sheen) and ي (yaa) when it begins a syllable as the consonant "y."<sup>4</sup>
8. حَافَةُ اللِّسَانِ أَوْ حَافَتَاه - One or both edges of the tongue along with the upper back molars (more often on the left side) is the *makhraj* of ض (dhaad).
9. حَافَةُ اللِّسَان - Between the edge of the tongue (usually the right side) and the gums of the upper front molars, canine teeth and incisors is the *makhraj* of ل (laam).
10. رَأْسُ اللِّسَان - Between the tip of the tongue and the gums of the two upper central incisors is the *makhraj* of ن (noon).
11. رَأْسُ اللِّسَانِ مِمَّا يَلِي ظَهْرَهُ - Between the upper part of the tip of the tongue and the gums of the two upper central incisors emerges the letter ر (raa).

<sup>4</sup>When occurring as a vowel (i.e. "ee") yaa emerges from *al-jawf* (the interior).

12. رَأْسُ اللِّسَانِ مَعَ ظَهْرِهِ - Between the tip including a portion of the upper surface of the tongue and the roots of the two upper central incisors is the *makhraj* of ط (taa), د (daal) and ت (taa).
13. رَأْسُ اللِّسَانِ مَعَ قَرِيبٍ مِنَ الثَّنَائِيَا - The tip of the tongue near the inner plates of the upper central incisors is the *makhraj* of ص (saad), س (seen) and ز (zaay).
14. ظَهْرُ اللِّسَانِ مِمَّا يَلِي رَأْسَهُ - Between the upper surface of the tongue near the end and the tips of the two upper central incisors is the *makhraj* of ط (thaa), ذ (dhaal) and ث (thaa).

**From the lips come four letters:**

15. بَيْنَ الشَّفَتَيْنِ - Between the two lips is the *makhraj* of ب (baa), م (meem) and و (waaw) when it begins a syllable as the consonant "w."<sup>5</sup>
16. بَطْنُ الشَّفَةِ السُّفْلَى - Between the inside of the lower lip and the tips of the upper incisors is the *makhraj* of ف (faa).

**The nasal passage:**

17. الْخَيْشُومُ - The nasal passage, which like the interior is a single *makhraj*, is the *makhraj* of الْغُنَّة (al-ghunnah). Al-ghunnah is not a letter, but a quality belonging to the letters ن (noon) and م (meem), a sound coming from the

nose in which the tongue has no part. It is said to resemble the voice of a female gazelle if her child is lost. It will be dealt with further in sections on *noon* and *meem*.

NOTE: In order to feel the *makhraj* of a given letter, pronounce that letter with *sukoon* preceded by *hamzah* - for example, say: أَقْ , أَصْ , أَخْ.

The instructor will help if any adjustment of the *makhraj* is necessary.

<sup>5</sup>When occurring as a vowel (i.e. "oo"), waaw emerges from *al-jawf* (the interior).