

Oded Amit

Judeo Arabic beginners course(1)

Transliteration conversion table

The purpose of transliteration is: pronouncing and writing texts in a “new” language, using letters of a different “known” language, in order to bypass the time-consuming task of learning the alphabet of that “new” language.

This is not an always an easy task. Not all of the letters used in the new language are always present in the known language. In the case of spoken Judeo Arabic (J”A), this is even more difficult: some of the letters do not exist in English, or even in classical Arabic!

There are many different “complicated academic” transliteration conversion methods. Since our objective is focused only on phonetics and not on grammar, I put together a simpler to use method.

These are some remarks regarding the table of transliterating J”A letters into English letters. I am making this table readily available.

1. It was necessary to add apostrophes to some English letters, in order to cover for J”A letters that do not exist in the English language.
2. Emphasized single letters will be written twice. Emphasized double letters: th, kh, th’,sh, dh, gh, sh, will be put in parenthesis.
3. This method allows typing in J”A, using a regular English keyboard. It also can be used when handwriting in block letters.
4. I added letters in Arabic & Hebrew to the table, hoping that it might help participants of this course, to pronounce letters correctly.
5. We are free to use hyphens in the middle of long or difficult words, in order to make reading them easier.

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| Judeo Arabic | Arabic | Hebrew | Remarks |
|--------------|--------|--------|--|
| a | ا | א | |
| b | ب | ב | |
| t | ت | ת | |
| th | ث | ת' | *As in think . |
| j | ج | ג' | As in jar |
| h' | ح | ח | As when you are panting |
| kh | خ | ח' | *As when you are clearing your throat |
| d | د | ד | |
| th' | ذ | ד' | *As in this |
| r | ر | ר | |
| z | ز | ז | |
| s | س | ס | |
| sh | ش | ש | *As in shoes |
| s' | ص | צ | As in tzadik in Hebrew |
| dh | ض | ט' | *As a high d |
| t' | ط | ט | As a high t |
| dh | ظ | ט' | *As a high d |
| a' | ع | ע | As a high a |
| gh | غ | ע' | *As when you say Rose in French |
| f | ف | פ | |
| q | ق | ק | As a high k |
| k | ك | כ | |
| l | ل | ל | |
| m | م | מ | |
| n | ن | נ | |
| h | ه | ה | |
| w | و | ו | When a consonant |

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| | | | |
|-----|----|------|--|
| y | י | ' | When a consonant |
| a'' | א | א | As a mute a |
| v | | 'ו | |
| j' | | 'ז | As in bonjour in French |
| ch | | 'צ | *As in chin |
| p | | 'פ | |
| g | | ג | As in gun (never as the j sound) |
| aa | אָ | אָאָ | A long a vowel as in hand |
| i' | | אִ | As in Italy |
| ei | | 'אֵ | As in neighbor . e, as in bird |

*Should be put in parenthesis, when emphasized.