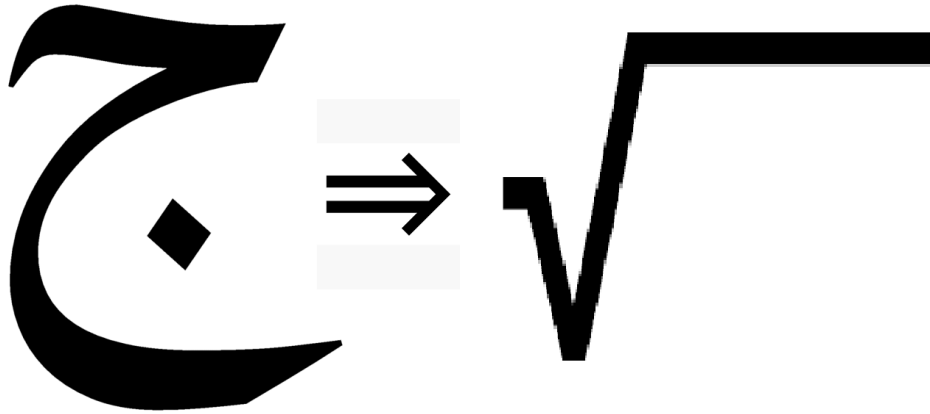


Where does the square root symbol come from?

Süleyman Ediz

Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Türkiye



In Arabic, the word جذر is used to mean the square root word (See page 194 in Oaks, 2009). During the Middle Ages in Spain, the first letter of this word, jīm, was used as a square root sign and numbers were written in it. Through books that were later translated into Latin and Italian, this symbol was transformed into the square root symbol we now use.

In the figure below, the beginning, middle, end and separate spellings of the letter jīm are shown.

Final	Medial	Initial	Isolated
			

Reference

Oaks, Jeffrey A. 2009. "Polynomials and Equations in Arabic Algebra." *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 63:169–203.