

Islamic Terms and Definitions

1. Ali - Son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad; married the prophet's daughter Fatima; first imam of the Iranian Shiites; fourth caliph in the Sunni tradition.
2. Allah - Arabic name for God; means "the God." (Allahu Akbaer means Greater is God.)
3. Aya - A verse of the Quran; a chapter is sura.
4. Ayatollah - A religious leader among the Shiites who is given high authority.
5. Bismalah - The general Islamic invocation to God: "In the of the merciful Lord of mercy," which prefaces every chapter (sura) of the Quran except sura 9.
6. Dar al-Harb - "House of War"; the areas of the world that are still ignorant and disobedient and unsubdued by Islam.
7. Dar al-Islam - "House of Islam"; the geographical realm of the world in which Islam is in full devotional, political and legal actuality. In Islamic constitutional law, the world is divided into Dar al-Harb (territory not under the rule of Islam) and Dar al-Islam (territory under the rule of Islam); Dar al-Harb should be brought under Islam either by surrender or warfare.
8. Dawah - "Call"; missionary organization for the missionary activity of Islam.
9. Doa - Nonritual prayer as distinct from salat, which is formal prayer.
10. Fatima - Daughter of the prophet Muhammad; wife of Ali the first Imam.
11. Gabriel - The angel through whom Allah revealed the Quran to Muhammad.
12. Hadith - "Tradition"; reports of the words, actions and attitudes of the prophet Muhammad, constituting a body of literature second only to the Quran in authority for Muslims.
13. Haj - Pilgrimage to Mecca and its environs; one of the pillars (required practices in the Quran) for Muslims.
14. Hijra - Hegira; the flight or emigration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622; the Islamic lunar calendar begins with this date as A.H. 1 (After the Hegira).
15. Husain - Son of Ali; grandson of prophet Muhammad; third Imam of the Shiites; Iranian Shiites revere him with the narrative and drama of his death.
16. Id al-Fitr - The feast and celebration of ending the fasting month of Ramadan which is required of Muslims and is one of the pillars of Islam.
17. Id al-Adha - The feast that celebrates the conclusion of the pilgrimage to Mecca; a lamb other animal is sacrificed by the pilgrims in Mecca as well as by Muslims world-wide.

18. Imam - A general term among all Muslims for leader of the congregational prayer in the mosque; also among Sunni Muslims, it is the Caliph; among Shiite Muslims, it is one of the descendants of Ali recognized by Allah as supreme ruler of the world.
19. Injil - "Gospel"; revelation or book given by Allah to Jesus (Isa); Muslims believe that since Jesus the Gospel has been corrupted in its present form in the Bible.
20. Islam - The faith, obedience and practice of peoples who follow the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of prophet Muhammad; the final, perfect religion of Allah; "submission to Allah."
21. Jihad - The concept of extraordinary effort in the belief and practice of Islam; often understood as a militancy in defending and/or extending the interests of Islam.
22. Jinn - Invisible spirits referred to in the Quran.
23. Kaba - "Cube"; the central sanctuary in the great house of pilgrimage in Mecca made of grey stone and covered by a black curtain; pilgrims circumambulate it in the pilgrimage rituals; Muslims are required all over the world to face Mecca and the kaba for their daily prayers.
24. Kafir - Infidel; unbeliever.
25. Khadija - A wealthy widow who became the first wife of prophet Muhammad; great encourager and first follower in establishment of Islam.
26. Khums - "1/5"; a religious tax; 1/5 of actual income paid to religious authorities.
27. Madrasa - A school designated for Islamic studies; generally associated with a mosque.
28. Mahdi - "The divinely guided One"; often associated with the Twelfth and Hidden Imam of the Iranian Shiites.
29. Masjid - "Place of prostration"; a mosque, the building in which Muslims pray and gather for religious and social occasions; its major features are the minaret, the mihrab and the mimbar.
30. Mecca - The holy city of Islam; birthplace of prophet Muhammad; Muslims face Mecca in daily prayers; the city of the required pilgrimage.
31. Medina - The second holy city of Islam; Muhammad fled to the city in 622; the city in which the Muslim religious community (umma) was established; place of tomb of Muhammad.
32. Muhammad - Prophet of Islam (570-632); born in Mecca; buried in Medina.
33. Mujahidun - Soldiers of Allah.
34. Muslim - One who believes in, belongs to and performs Islam; "one who submits."
35. Quran - The holy book of Islam; the revelation of Allah through angel Gabriel to prophet Muhammad; 114 chapters (suras); "recitation."
36. Ramadan - The ninth month of the Muslim calendar; the month obligatory fasting as required in the Quran; the 27th of Ramadan concludes the fast.

37. Rasul - Messenger; apostle; title of Muhammad.
38. Salam - Peace; the greeting Muslims exchange with one another.
39. Salat - Ritual prayer performed five times daily; one of the required pillars of Islam in the Quran; different from doa prayer, which is voluntary and informal. Salat al Fajr (dawn prayer); Salat al Zuhr (midday prayer); Salat al Asr (afternoon prayer); Salat al Maghrib (evening prayer after sunset); Salat al Isha (late evening prayer).
40. Shahada - Witness or confession; the first required pillar of Islam; "there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God."
41. Sharia - Sacred and canon law based on the Quran (God's revelation), Hadith (sayings and traditions of prophet Muhammad), Ijma (consensus decision by the Muslim authorities), and Qiyas (reasoning by analogy); the path of duty both ritual and general behavior for Muslims.
42. Shiite - "Partisan"; follower of the branch of Islam that accepts Ali as the legitimate successor to Muhammad; believe the descendants of Muhammad should rule the Islamic community; Iran is the primary Shiite Muslim state.
43. Shirk - "Association"; the act (sin) of regarding anything as equal with Allah; idolatry, polytheism or attributing divinity to anyone; Muslims view Christianity as idolatrous for equating Jesus (as Son of God and member of the Trinity) with God.
44. Sufi - A Muslim mystic; Sufism is Islamic mysticism. It seeks direct experience with God; it has leaders called Sheikhs and communities called brotherhoods.
45. Sunna - The path of tradition or orthodoxy followed by Muslims.
46. Sunni - Term which means those who follow tradition of reliance on the Quran and the Hadith and are called Sunnis; approved leader to follow prophet Muhammad by consensus rather than the Shiite idea of family succession.
47. Sura - A chapter of the Quran; the Quran has 114 chapters
48. Ulama - Scholars of Islamic theology or law; singular is Alim.
49. Umma - The community of Islam; the solidarity of faith and prayer; the political incorporation of the Islamic religion.
50. Zakat - Almsgiving; a required pillar of Islam in the Quran.

