

Glossary Of Islamic Terms

A

Adhan(أذان)

The call to prayer.

Ahadith (أحاديث) [sing. Hadith (حديث)]

The sayings and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Ahkam (أحكام)

Rulings and orders derived from the Qu’ran and Sunnah. Five kinds of orders: Wajib, Mustahab, Mubah, Makruh, and Haram.

Ahl al-Kitab (أهل الكتاب)

“People of the Scripture,” or followers of pre-Islamic monotheistic religions with some form of scripture believed to be of divine origin. It refers to Jews, Christians and Sabians.

Akhirah (آخرة)

Hereafter.

Alayhi As-Salaam (عليه السلام)

“Peace be upon him.” This expression follows after naming a prophet (other than Muhammad), or one of the noble Angels (i.e. Jibreel (Gabriel), Mikaeel (Michael), etc.)

Alhamdulillah (الحمد لله)

“Praise be to God!”

Allah (الله)

God; the only deity worthy of worship. It derives from the word “Ilah” which means “the One deserving all worship,” the One to whom all hearts submit in love, fear, reverence, trust and sincerity.

Allahu Akbar(الله أكبر)

“God is the Greatest.”

Alim (عالم) [pl. `Ulama' (علماء)]

A scholar in any field of knowledge. In the context of Islamic Discussions, it has the connotation of a religious scholar.

Ansar (أنصار)

Literally means “helpers.” In Islamic history, the Ansar were the supporters of the Prophet Muhammad who welcomed the Muslims in Madina.

Aqeedah (عقيدة)

The Islamic creed, or the six article of faith, which consists of the belief in God, Angels, Prophets, Scriptures, the Day of Judgement, and Destiny.

As-Salamu Alaykum (السلام عليكم)

The Islamic greeting, which translates “Peace be upon you.” In addition, wa RaḥmatulLahi wa BarakatuHu (ورحمة الله وبركاته) means “and the Mercy of God and His blessing.” The response to this greeting is wa Alaykum as-Salam wa RaḥmatulLahi wa BarakatuHu (وعليكم السلام ورحمة الله وبركاته), which means “And on you be the Peace and Mercy of God and His Blessing.”

Astaghfir Allah (أستغفر الله)

“I seek forgiveness from God.”

A`udhubillLah (أعوذ بالله)

“I seek refuge in God.”

Ayah (آية) [pl. Ayat(آيات)]

Literally means “a sign.” A verse of the Holy Quran.

B

Barak Allahu Feekum (بارك الله فيكم)

“May Allah bless you.”

Bid`ah (بدعة)

Innovation in religion. Bad Bid`ahs in Islam are considered a deviation and a serious sin by many Muslims.

BismilLah (بسم الله)

“In the name of Allah.”

BismilLahi Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem (بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم)

“In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.”

D

Da`wah (دعوة)

The call to Islam.

Dhikr (ذكر)

The remembrance of God; spiritual exercise; Muslims believe that the primary function of Prophets is to remind people of God.

Deen (دين)

Religion; The way of life based on Islamic revelation; the sum total of a Muslim's faith and practice.

Du`a (دعاء)

A personal prayer and supplication; Invoking Allah for whatever one wants.

Dunya (دنيا)

The physical Universe, as opposed to the Hereafter.

E**Eid** (عيد)

Festival or celebration.

Eid ul-Adha (عيد الأضحى)

“The Festival of Sacrifice.” The four day celebration starting on the tenth day of Dhul-Hijja. This feast commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's obedience to Allah by being prepared to sacrifice his only son Ismail.

Eid ul-Fitr (عيد الفطر)

“The Festival of Breaking Fast.” This celebration marks the end of Ramadhan, a holy month in which Muslims are required to fast from food, drink and bad habits from dawn until sunset for 30 days.

F**Faqih** (فقيه)

An Islamic scholar who can give authoritative legal opinion or judgment.

Fard (فرض)

An act which is obligatory upon Muslims. Neglecting a fard will result in a punishment in the hereafter.

Fatwa (فتوى)

A legal verdict given on a religious basis. The sources on which a fatwa is based are the Qur'an and authenticated ahadeeth.

Fiqh (فقه)

Literally means “deep understanding,” refers to understanding the Islamic laws. Islamic jurisprudence based directly on the Qur'an and Sunnah that complements Shariah with evolving rulings and interpretations of Islamic Jurists.

Fitrah (فطرة)

An innate disposition towards virtue, knowledge, and the oneness of God. Muslims believe every child is born with fitrah.

G

Ghayb (غيب)

The unseen, unknown.

H

Hadith (حديث) [pl. Ahadith (أحاديث)]

Literally means "speech." A saying or tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Hajj (حجّ)

The pilgrimage to Mecca and it is the fifth Pillar of Islam.

Halal (حلال)

Lawful; Permitted, good, and praiseworthy. [Antonym: Haram]

Haram (حرام)

Unlawful, forbidden. An individual is rewarded for keeping away from haram done out of obedience. [Antonym: Halal]

Hijab (حجاب)

Literally means "cover." It describes the self-covering of the body for the purposes of modesty and dignity; broadly, a prescribed system of attitudes and behaviour regarding modesty and dignity. In contemporary context, the hijab refers to a head covering donned by Muslim women as an indication of modesty and self-dignity.

I

Ibadah (عبادة)

Submission, acts of worship, but not limited to ritual. All expressions of servitude to Allah, including the pursuit of knowledge, living a pious life, helping, charity, and humility, can be considered ibadah.

Ijma` (إجماع)

Literally means "consensus." It refers to the consensus of the Muslim scholars on a specific matter. Ijma` is divided into two types: "Ijma` jaliy" is when all scholars explicitly agree on a matter. The second type is "Ijma` sukuti," where a scholar knows of a specific matter and did not speak against it so it is considered a silent agreement.

Ijtihad (اجتهاد)

Literally means "exertion." The effort of a qualified Islamic jurist to interpret or reinterpret sources of Islamic law in cases in which no clear directives exist to derive an Islamic decision.

Imaam (إمام)

Literally means "leader." Often used to address the man leading prayer or a religious leader.

Iman (إيمان)

Faith.

Insha Allah (إن شاء الله)

God willing. This phrase is used when discussing events which are planned for the future, in recognition that they will only happen by God's will.

Isnad (إسناد)

Literally means "support." The chain of narrators and transmitters of any given hadith.

J**Jahannam** (جهنم)

Hell-fire; Hell.

Jahiliyyah (جاهليّة)

Literally means "ignorance." Usually refers to pre-Islamic Arabia in which people lived in a pagan and lawless society.

Jannah (جنة)

Paradise, Heaven, the Garden.

Jazak Allahu Khayran (جزاك الله خير)

"May God reward you for the good." Islamic expression of gratitude.

Jihad (جهاد)

Literally means "struggle." Any earnest striving in the way of God, involving personal, physical, for righteousness and against wrong-doing. There are different forms of jihad. There is jihad an-nafs (i.e. striving to resist temptations and purify oneself from negative traits). There is also physical jihad against transgressors and oppressors who pose a religious or physical threat to Muslims.

Juz' (جزء)

A part of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is divided into 30 parts.

K**Ka`bah** (كعبة)

The cube-shaped building in Mecca toward which Muslims pray.

Khushu` (خشوع)

Humility, devotion, concentration (especially in prayer).

Khutbah (خطبة)

The sermon at Jumu'ah prayer or a general Islamic lecture.

Kufr (كفر)

The disbelief in God and denial of the truth.

L

La ilaha ila Allah (لا إله إلا الله)

“There is no god other than Allah.” This is the most fundamental belief in Islam and is a portion of the first pillar of Islam. It was the message of all the Prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

M

Madhhab (مذهب) [pl. Madhahib (مذاهب)]

A school of religious jurisprudence and thought.

Makruh (مكروه)

Means “detested” but not haram; something that is disliked. If a person commits the Makruh, he does not accumulate sin but avoiding the Makruh is rewarded. [Antonym: Mustahab]

Masha’Allah (ما شاء الله)

Literally means “Allah has willed it” and is used as a phrase indicating appreciation for an individual or event. It is used to show joy and praise.

Masjid (مسجد) [pl. masajid (مساجد)]

The place of prayer; mosque

Mubah (مباح)

Literally means “permissible;” neither forbidden or recommended. Neutral.

Mufti (مفتى)

An Islamic scholar who is an interpreter or expounder of Islamic law (Shari`ah), capable of issuing a fatwa.

Mu’min (مؤمن)

A righteous Muslim who observes the commandments of Allah.

Munafiq (منافق) [pl. Munafiqeen (منافقين)]

A hypocrite.

Mustahab (مستحب)

Commendable or recommended. [Antonym: Makruh]

Q

Qadar (قدر)

Predestination.

Qur'an (قرآن)

The literal word of God and the culmination of God's revelation to mankind, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

R

Rabb (ربّ)

Lord, Sustainer, Cherisher, Master.

RadiAllahu `anhu/`anha/`anhuma/`anhum (رضي الله عنه)

May Allah be pleased with him/her/them. This term is most commonly used whenever the name of a companion of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.

Rahman (رحمن)

Merciful.

Raheem (رحيم)

Compassionate.

Raka`ah (ركعة) [pl. Rak`at (ركعات)]

One unit of Islamic prayer. Each daily prayer is made up of a different number of raka'at. A unit of prayer, a complete series of standing, bowing, two prostrations and sittings.

Ramadhan (رمضان)

The holy month of fasting when the Qur'an was first revealed. The ninth month of the Islamic calendar in which Muslims fast from dawn to sunset from food, drink, sexual relations, and bad habits.

S

Sadaqah (صدقة)

Charity; voluntary alms above the amount for zakat.

Sahabah (صحابه) [sing. Sahabi (صحابي)]

Companions of Muhammad.

Sahih (صحيح)

Literally means "correct." A technical attribute applied to the isnad (chain of narrators) of a valid and authentic hadith.

Sahih Bukhari (صحيح بخاري)

A book of authentic ahadeeth compiled by Imam Bukhari.

Sahih Muslim (صحيح مسلم)

A book of authentic ahadeeth compiled by Imam Muslim.

Salah (صلاة)

Prayer. This is the second Pillar of Islam and there are five mandatory daily prayers. Their timings are fajr(dawn), duhr (noon), 'asr (afternoon), maghrib (sunset) and `isha (late evening).

Shahadah (شهادة)

The testimony of faith. "There is no god but Allah. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun rasulullah (لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله). This is the first Pillar of Islam.

Shaykh/Sheikh (شيخ)

A spiritual leader or Muslim clergy.

Shari`ah (شريعة)

The Islamic system of law and the totality of the Islamic way of life based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Shaytan (شيطان)

Satan, the Devil.

Shirk (شرك)

Polytheism; the sin of believing in any divinity except God and associating anything or anyone with God. [Antonym: Tawheed]

Shura (شورى)

Consultation.

Subhan'Allah (سبحان الله)

"Glory to God." This phrase is often used when praising God or exclaiming awe at His attributes, bounties, or creation.

Subhanahu wa ta`ala (سبحانه وتعالى)

"May He be glorified and exalted." An expression commonly used after the name of God, Allah, is mentioned. It is a way of glorifying Allah.

Sunnah (سنة)

Literally means the "path." All the traditions and practices of the Prophet Muhammad. He is considered by Muslims to be the best human moral example.

Surah (سورة)

Chapter; the Qur'an is composed of 114 Chapters.

T

Tafseer (تفسير)

Exegesis, particularly commentary on the Qur'an.

Tajweed (تجويد)

A special manner of reciting the Qur'an according to prescribed rules of pronunciation and intonation.

Taqwa (تقوى)

Righteousness; goodness; Piety; A state of God-Consciousness and fear of Allah.

Tawheed (توحيد)

Monotheism; affirmation of the Oneness of Allah. [Antonym: Shirk]

Tazkiyah (تزكية)

Purification of the Soul.

Thawab (ثواب)

Reward; Good deeds.

U

Ulama' (علماء) [sing. `Alim (عالم)]

Religious Scholars; Islamic Jurists.

Ummah (أُمَّة)

The global community of all Muslim believers.

Usul (أصول)

Principles.

Usul al-Fiqh (أصول الفقه)

The study of the origins and principles of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh).

W

Wa Alaykum As-Salaam (وعليكم السلام)

“And peace be upon you. Response to As-Salamu `Alaykum.

Wajib (واجب)

Obligatory or mandatory.

Wudhu (وضوء)

Ablution for ritual purification from impurities before prayer.

Z

Zakat (زكاة)

A tax that is the duty and social obligation of every Muslim. This is the fourth Pillar of Islam.

ACRONYMS:

A.H.

“After Hijra.” An abbreviation that denotes the Islamic calendar. It follows the lunar calendar system and starts from the time when Muhammad left Mecca and travelled to Medina (an event known as the Hijra).

A.S.

“Alayhi As-Salaam.” This acronym evokes a blessing and is appended to the names of the prophets who came before Muhammad and the noble angels.

P.B.U.H.

“Peace be unto him.” A blessing which is affixed to Muhammad’s name whenever it is written. The Arabic version is S.A.W.S.

R.A.

“Radi Allahu `anhu/`anha/`anhum/`anhuma.” May Allah be pleased with him/her/them. This term is most commonly used whenever the name of a companion of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.

S.A.W.S.

“Sallallahu alayhi wa sallam.” May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This is said whenever the name or title of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.