The Islamic Glossary: An Explanation of Names, Terms and Symbols

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Hasnain Kassamali

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Article

Authors(s):

Hasnain Kassamali [1]

You might have noticed unfamiliar Arabic terms or English abbreviations/titles/names. An attempt at explaining them follows. If there is still some term that is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact us through the Site Information section of Al-Islam.org/

The definitions are by no means comprehensive, and serve as an introduction to the term. A full definition of each term would surely require more disk space than available in all the world.

- **Aaron** see Harun

- **Abar Ali** the name of a place where Masjidu Shajarah is situated, 7 km. outside of Medinah.

- **Abbas** b. Ali b. Abi Talib was the brother of Imam Hussein (A.S.). His mother was Umm al-Banin. Abbas was killed at Karbala.

- **Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari (Jundub b. Junada)** was a companion of the Prophet (S.A.W.) who was loyal to Imam Ali (A.S.) He died in 32 (A.H.) 651 (A.D.) after being expilled by Uthman.

- **Abu Talib** was the father of Ali (A.S.). He looked after the Prophet (S.A.W.) when the latter was a child.

- **'Adl** is Justice

- **Adam** was the first man and the first prophet of Allah.

- **Adhan** is the call for daily ritual prayers (Salat).

- **Ahlul-Bayt** refers to the Household of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

- **Ahwat** is a precaution. This can be obligatory or optional as ruled by the Mujtahid.

- **Akhirah** is the Hereafter

- **A'lam** is the top ranking jurist

- **Ale Muhammad** Blood kin, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

- **Ali** b. Abi Talib (A.S.) is the first Imam (A.S.), the cousin and son-in-law of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.). He is referred to as *Ameer al-Mu'mineen*, the Leader of the Faithful. He was poisoned in 661 A.D.

- **Ali** b. al-Husayn b. Ali b. Abi Talib (A.S.) is the fourth Imam.

● **Ali** b. Muhammad b. Ali b. Musa al-Hadi, Abu al-Hasan (A.S.) is the 10th Imam.

● **Ali** b. Musa al-Rida, Abu al-Hasan (A.S.) is the eighth Imam.

● **'Alim** is a scholar

● **Allah** refers to God, glory be to Him, there is no god but He. Allah is a Divine name of God. It is the perfect name for God as it truly denotes the absolute Oneness of God. The name has no plural and no feminine form.

● **A'maal** is an act of worship.

● **Amirul Mu'mineen** The commander of the faithful, Imam Ali (A.S.).

● **Amr bil Ma-roof** ordering to goods

● **Arafah** is the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah.

● **Arafat** is the area about 25 km. away from Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

● **A.H.** refers to After Hijrah.

● **A.S.** refers to *'Alayhis-salaam*, (God's) peace be with him. It is said after the names of all previous prophets, their mothers (e.g. Bibi Maryam [Mary] A.S.), the twelve divine Imams from the household of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and Bib i Fatima (A.S.). It will change to *'Alayhas-salaam* (peace be with her) if it follows a lady's name. After any two names we say 'Alayhimas-salaam and after more than two names or when referring a group of people we say 'Alayhimus-salaam. Thus, we sa y Imams Hasan and Husayn (A.S.=*'alayhimas-salaam*) and the Ahul-Bayt (A.S.*'alayhimus-salaam*).

● **Ashura** the day Iman Hussai (sa) was killed in Karbala land

● **'Asr** is the afternoon, and the prayer of the afternoon

● **Ayah** is a sign of Allah or a verse of the Qur'an (pl. Ayat)

● **Ayatul Kursi** Verse No. 255 in Suratul Baqarah

● **Baab-al-Salaam** is one of the famous gates of Masjidul Haraam.

● **Baligh** is one who is an adult

● **Batil** is void

● **Bilal** was a companion of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

● **Bismillah** means *In the Name of Allah* or *I begin in the Name of Allah*

- **Bulugh** is puberty
- **David** see Dawood
- **Dawood** was a Prophet of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an and the Old Testament.
- **Deen** is religion
- **Dhikr** is remembrance, the recitation of special invocations during and after ritual prayers.
- **Dhuhr prayers** are the afternoon prayers
- **Dhul Hijjah** is the last month (12th) of the Islamic calendar.
- **Dhul Qidah** is the 11th month of the Islamic calendar.
- **Du'a** is supplication
- **Ehtiaat** see Ahwat
- **Ehtiaat-Mustahabbi** is a preferable precaution
- **Ehtiaat-Waajib** is an obligatory precaution which must be followed
- **Eid** is an Islamic holiday. The four Eids are listed below.
  - **Eid ul-Adha** falls on the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah.
  - **Eid ul-Fitr** falls on the 1st day of Shawwal.
  - **Eid-e Ghadeer**
  - **Eid-e Mubahala**
- **Fajr** is dawn, and denotes Subhe-Sadiq, the prime time for prayer
- **Farsakh** is a distance of five and a half kilometers
- **Fatiha** is the opening chapter of the Holy Qur'an.
- **Fatima or Fatema** (A.S.), the Chief of the women of the worlds, is the daughter of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the wife of Ali b. Abi Talib (A.S.), the mother of Hasan and Hussein (A.S.)
- **Fatwa** is a verdict, especially of a Mujtahid
- **Fidyah** is a sacrifice of an animal for expiation

● **Fiqh** is a science of religious jurispudence

● **Fitrah** is the charity due on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, on the night after Ramadhan.

● **Foroo-e-Din** are the branches of Islam

● **Ghadeer** is the name of a place near Mecca, and the great holiday named after the event that occurred at that place.

● **Ghasbi** is usurpation

● **Ghusl** is a spiritual bath required after sexual intercourse, menstruation, seminal discharge, and other conditions.

● **Hadath-Akbar** is something that needs wudhu or ghusl

● **Hadath-Asghar** is a minor hadath that needs wudhu

● **Hadeeth** is a narration/tradition reported from the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a)

● **Hajarul Aswad** is the Black Stone.

● **Hajj** is the Islamic pilgrimage

● **Hajjatul Tamatu** is the secnod session of the Hajj for those who are not resident in Mecca or its vicinity.

● **Halal** is something that is lawful and permissible to use/consume in Islam

● **Halq** is to shave off the hair from the head (during Hajj)

● **Hamza** was an uncle of the Prophet who became a Muslim and was martyred at the battle of Uhud.

● **Haq** is the right or claim to something

● **Haram** is that which is unlawful in Islam. It is necessary to abstain from the acts which are haram.

● **Harun** was the brother of Musa (Moses) and Prophet of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an.

● **Hasan** b. Ali b. Abi Talib (A.S.) was the secnd Imam.

● **Hasan** b. Ali b. Muhammad, Abu Muhammad al-Askari (A.S.) was the 11th Imam.

● **Hijab** is the screening between non-mahram men and women

● **Hijra** is the day the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) left Mecca for Medina. In particular, it was the Prophet's

(S.A.W.) abandoning Mecca because of its mounting hostility, and transferring himself and his followers to Yathrib (200 miles north) whose people had invited him. He arrived on the 20th of September 622 AD, and the city proudly changed its name to Medinatu'l-Nabi (the Prophet's (S.A.W.) city). On Imam Ali's (A.S.) advice, Omar, reproached for not dating documents, took this event as the start o f the Muslim era, dubbing the year of the Hijrah year as Year 1 and starting it on the Lunar New Year's Day, the 1st of Muharram 622 AD.

● **Hijr-e-Ismaaeel** is a small wall in an arc shape adjoining the Ka'ba on one side

● **Hira** is the cave wherein Prophet Muhammad (S) sat for worshipping Allah

● **Husain** b. Ali b. Abi Talib (A.S.) was the third Imam.

● **Ibadah** is devotion or worship

● **Ibrahim**

● **Iftar** is the breaking of the fast

● **Ihram** is the state in which every pilgrim in Hajj has to perform his/her Hajj, consisting of two modest clothes and 25 restrictions.

● **Ihtiyat** is a precautionary action which usually requires repetition.

● **Ihtiyat Wajib** means precautionarily obligatory. Its significance is the same as that of wajib with the difference that in the problems where a mujtahid says it is "precautionarily obligatory", one has the option of leaving his taqlid in this particular problem and following the rulings of the second-best mujtahid in that problem.

● **Imam** means Leader in Arabic. The term is generally applied to religious leaders. However, there are 12 infallible and noble Imams, the descendants of Muhammad (S.A.W.).

● **Iman** is full, deep belief or faith.

● **Injil** is the New Testament.

● **Inshallah** means with the will of Allah

● **Iqamah** is the announcement of the beginning of prayer.

● **Isa** was the son of Mariam (Mary). He is a prophet of Allah.

● **Isha** is the commencement of darkness, and the prayer of that time.

● **Ishmael** see Ismaeel

● **Islam** was revealed to the Prophet (Sura III: Ali-Imran--The Family of Imran, verse 19) "The Religion of Allah is Al-Islam," and again (Sura V: Ma'idah--The Table Spread, verse 3) "This day I have approved al-Islam for you as a religion." Islam is the verbal noun of "asalama"--to submit oneself to God.

● **Ismaeel** was the son of Abraham, Prophet of Allah and the father of the Arabs.

● **Istighfar** is to seek the forgiveness of Allah

● **Ja'far** b. Muhammad b. Ali b. al-Husayn, al-Sadiq, Abu Abd Allah (A.S.) was the 6th Imam.

● **Ja'iz** see Halal

● **Jacob** see Yaqub

● **Jama'at** is a group or a congregation

● **Jesus** see Isa.

● **Jihad** is a holy war (striving or fighting in the way of Allah) by the order of the Imam.

● **Jinn** is a type of creature having, like humans, free will

● **Joseph** see Yusuf

● **Jum'ah** is Friday

● **Ka'bah** is the cubic house built by Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) and his son Ismaeel (A.S.) more than 3000 years ago in Mecca, towards which all Muslims face for their Salat. It contains the Hajarul Aswad or the Black Stone.

● **Kafa** is the shroud for the dead

● **Kaffarah** are alms to be given as penance on different occasions.

● **Karbala** a holey city In Iraq where Imam Hussain (sa) was killed there in day Ashura

● **Khadija** was the daughter of Khuwaylid and the wife of the Prophet (S.A.W.). She was the mother of Fatima (A.S.).

● **Khums** is "a fifth", obligatory tax-like charity

● **Kifie** is an obligatory Islamic rule. If one person performs the act, then it is not required for others to perform. For example, the burial of a deceased Muslim is obligatory on any one person to perform.

● **Labbaik** literally means a response to the call

● **Madina** means city, and Medinatu'l Nabi (the city of the Prophet) was the name taken by the citizens of Yathrib, the town to which the Prophet (S.A.W.) and his companions migrated during Hijrah.

● **Maghrib** is sun-down and the prayer associated with it

● **Mahram** is a person with whom marriage is forbidden

● **Makruh** is something abominable

● **Maqame-e-Ibrahim** is a place near the Ka'bah, where there is a stone bearing the footprint of Prophet Ibrahim (a)

● **Marwah** is a remnant of a mountain in Mecca.

● **Masjid** is a mosque, a place of Islamic worship.

● **Masjid-u-Shajarah** is a mosque outside Madinah, where most of the Hajis go there for wearing Ihram; a Meeqat

● **Masjid-ul-Haram** is the Grand mosque in Makkah, where the Holy Ka'ba is situated

● **Mayyit** is a corpse, a dead body of a human being

● **Mecca** is a holy city in Arabia

● **Medina** see Madina

● **Meeqat** are appointed places for wearing Ihram before entering Makkah

● **Mina** is an area about 12 km. from Mecca.

● **Moses** see Musa

● **Muhammad** (S.A.W.) is the Last of the Messengers of Allah to mankind.

● **Muhammad** b. Ali b. al-Husayn al Baqir, Abu Ja'far (A.S.) is the 5th Imam.

● **Muhammad** b. Ali b. Musa, al-Jawad, is the 9th Imam.

● **Muhammad** b. al-Hasan al-Askari (A.S.) is the 12th Imam.

● **Muharram** is the first month of the Islamic calendar.

● **Mujtahid** is s specialist on the deduction of the Islamic rules from four major sources: the Qur'an, Hadith, conscience of the community, and reasoning.

● **Mu'min** is a believer, one who has Iman (pl. Mu'mineen)

● **Muqallid** is a follower of a qualified specialist on religious matters.

● **Musa** was a Prophet of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an and the Old Testament.

● **Musa** b. Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Kadhim, Abu al-Hasan (A.S.) is the 7th Imam.

● **Muslim** is one who believes in Allah, his Prophet (S.A.W.), the day of Resurrection (Qiyamat), recites the Kalemah, and accepts the commandments of Allah and His Prophet (S.A.W.) as the Truth.

● **Mustahab** or Sunnat is something that is recommended and performed in desire for (divine) love

● **Muzdalafah** (also called Mash'ar) is the area between Mina and Arafat, about 20 km. form Mecca.

● **Nabi** is a Prophet

● **Nabuwwat** is prophet-hood

● **Nadhr** is one of the three types of vows to Almighty Allah.

● **Nafilah** are the recommended prayers after or before the daily obligatory Salat.

● **Nahi anil Munkar** interdicting from ugly (sin)

● **Najasat** is an impurity

● **Najis** is something that is impure

● **Naar** is the fire of Hell

● **Nikah** is a pronouncement of marriage according to Shari'ah

● **Niyyah** is an intention to perform an activity.

● **Noah** see Nuh

● **Non-mehram** is one with whom marriage is permitted

● **Nuh** was a prophet of Allah mentioned in the Qur'and and the Old Testament

● **Pak** is something that is clean, not najis

● **Prophet** refers to a Messenger sent by Allah to mankind, such as: Adam, Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus)(A.S.), and the Last Messenger, the Seal of the Prophethood, Muhammad (S.A.W.).

● **Qadha** is the duty that is required for a missed ritual activity, such as prayers or fasting.

● **Qamar** is the moon

● **Qiblah** is the direction of Salat (towards the Ka'bah).

● **Qira-at** is the reading of the prayer

● **Qiyam** is the standing during the Salat for recitation of Suratul Hamd and the second Surah, and the standing after the Ruku'.

● **Qiyamat** is the day of Resurrection

● **Qunut** is the act of raising both palms in fornt of the face while praying in the second Rakat of Salat.

● **Qur'an** is the Holy Book, the Living Miracle, revealed from Allah as a guidance to mankind.

● **Quraysh** is the tribe of Mecca to which Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) belonged. All his descendants are also called Qurayshi.

● **Qurbani** is a sacrifice

● **Qurbat** is the niyyah of nearness to Allah

● **Rajab** is the seventh month of the Islamic calendar.

● **Ramadhan** is the ninth and the holiest month of the islamic calendar. It is the month of fasting from sunrise to sunset.

● **Rasool** is messenger

● **Rukn** literally means a "pillar". It is also a basis of the prayer.

● **Ruku'** is the act of bowing in the Salat

● **S.A.W.** stands for *Sallal-lahu 'alayhi wa-alihi wa-sallam* in Arabic, and means Blessings and peace of God be with him and his household. It is a prayer which is said after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

● **Sadaqah** is the charity given to the poor.

● **Saee** means walking between the rocks of Safa and Marwah

● **Safa** is the part of a mountain in Mecca.

● **Saheefa-Kamila** is a collection of supplications by our 4th Imam (a), Zainul Abideen.

● **Sajdah** is the act of prostration in the Salat, when seven portions of the body touch the earth: the forehead on pure ground, two palms, two knees, and the two big toes. The two Sajdahs together are called **sajdatain**.

● **Salam** is a salutation. It is also the last recitation at the end of Salat.

● **Salat** are the obligatory prayers

● **Salawat** are invocation of blessings, specifically the recitation of *Allahumma Sali 'Ala Muhammadin Wa Aali Muhammad*, meaning *O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad*.

● **Salman** (al-Farsi) was the Persion Companion of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

● **Sawm** is the act of fasting

● **Sayyid** is a descendant of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)

● **Shaabaan** is the eighth month of the Islamic calendar.

● **Shahadah** is declaration

● **Shaheed** is a martyr in the way of Islam (pl. Shuhada).

● **Shaitan** is Satan, the enemy of mankind

● **Shari'ah** are the rules and regulations of Islam, the divine Law. Shari'ah is the totality of of Allah's Commandments relating to man's activities.

● **Shams** is the sun

● **Shawwal** is the 10th month of the Islamic calendar.

● **Shi'a** is a follower of the twelve Imams (A.S.).

● **Sunnat** or Mustahab means recommendable, desirable. The acts whose neglect is not punished, but whose performance is rewarded, e.g., the call for prayers (adhan).

● **Surah** is any chapter of the 114 in the Holy Qur'an. It literally means a sign, or a revelation. Each Surah in the Qur'an is named from some subject or word which is particularly striking.

● **Tabarra** opposite of Tawalla, avoiding and eluding enemies of Allah and prophet and Imams

● **Tafseer** is a term used for a commentary of any book, specifically the Holy Qur'an.

● **Taharat** is the state of being clean and not impure

● **Tahur** is the cave wherein Prophet Muhammad (S) stayed before finally migrating to Madinah

● **Takbirah** is saying "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is the Greatest).

● **Talbiyah** is the formula of response to the Call of Allah, which must be pronounced immediately after Niyyah of Ihram

● **Tawaf** is part of the worship of Hajj and Umrah

● **Tawalla** is loving and supporting and following (Allah and prophet and Imams and their allies)

● **Tawbah** is repentance

● **Tawheed** is Divine Unity

● **Tayammum** means spiritual cleansing which is sometimes a substitute for wudhu and ghusl

● **Thawab** is a Divine blessing

● **Turbah** is earth, especially from the shrines of the Holy Imams (A.S.), on which Muslims place their heads during Sajdah

● **Umm Kulthum** see Zaynab

● **'Umra** is the "little" pilgrimage, performed in ritual purity wearing the Ihram, the seamless ceremonial garments consisting of a white sheet from the navel to the knees and a white sheet covering the left shoulder, back and breast, knotted on t he right.

● **Usule Din** are the principles of Islam.

● **Wafat** is a death

● **Wajib** is obligatory (pl. Wajibat). An act which must be performed.

● **Wudhu** is a spiritual wash of the face and hands before Salat

● **Yaqub** was a prophet of Allah, mentioned in the Qur'an and the Old Testament.

● **Yusuf** was a prophet of Allah, mentioned the Qur'an and the Old Testament.

● **Zakat** is an obligatory charity

● **Zamzam** is the name of a well at Makkah

● **Zaynab** (Umm Kulthum) was the younger daughter of Ali and Fatima (A.S.).

● **Ziyarat** is to visit and/or to recite special salutations for the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his household (A.S.).

With contributions from Br. Hasnain Kassamali . Many definitions adapted from

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