

## SQ21™

## Islam Glossary

**Belief System:** A spiritual or philosophical belief system is a worldview that explains the origin of the universe, how to live a good life, and the meaning of life. Everyone participates in a belief system, whether it is a traditional religion, a secular worldview, or something else. Once made conscious, we can choose to adopt a belief system that fosters the growth of our spiritual intelligence.

**Blessings: (Niaam)** Events or experiences that are unexpected and helpful, gifts from Allah. Relationships, jobs, material, opportunities, teachers, etc. appear when Allah determines the timing is right for us and when we are open to receiving these gifts.

**Boundaries: (Huduod)** Limits or guidelines, as in setting a limit on other people's behavior toward us. We teach other people what is "not okay" with us by setting limits on how they treat us. One of the key jobs of the Ego is to create and preserve boundaries which keep us healthy. Insufficient Ego development can lead to an inability to set proper boundaries with others.

**Centered: Jam'; (mutamakin,mutazin)** collectedness. Feeling balanced, in touch with our Higher Self and with Allah, grounded, stable, not easily upset. In sports, an athlete or dancer learns to operate "from their center" so that they are not easily knocked about and do not lose their balance. To "feel centered" is to have this sensation emotionally and spiritually. You might prefer the terms feeling strong, anchored, or connected.

**Conflicting: (mutaaridh)** Two things that seem on the surface to disagree, but are both true; paradox. For example, "I am unique, beautiful and sacred beyond words" and "I am an infinitely small piece of history and insignificant." You can lean too far toward either truth and become unbalanced. The wisest, most complex thinkers can hold both things as equally true simultaneously.

**Effortless "Dance":** When who we are is what we do. This is the state in which the Ego and Higher Self are working in complete harmony with each other. The Higher Self is in direct connection with Allah and our behavior is inspired directly by Him. This is constant, effortless *dhikr*. Our sense of who we are is continuous with our actions and the activities of the world around us, thus all of our actions flow from us in a spontaneous way requiring no effort. Although we can "peak experience" this state for short periods of time, it can also be more lasting. Synonyms: flow, being in the zone, inspiration, when we feel like we're truly alive.

**Ego self:** The *nafs*’; the sense of being a separate, individual person, the process of making meaning in the world, and the part of us which is self-concerned. The Ego is an integral part of the human being because it helps us to fulfill our basic human physical and emotional needs, but it is only a small part of the totality of who we are. When we live primarily from the Ego we often feel and act with selfishness, fear, or anger. Allah has placed upon Muslims a test to satisfy the needs of our *nafs*’, though only in limited ways, while also following our *ruh*, our spirit or Higher Self. Ideally we can bring our *nafs*’ into balance with the *ruh*, so that we are Centered and have inner consistency in our motivations, values, and devotion to *Allah*.

**The Golden Rule:** “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” – this rule appears in some form in all the major religious traditions and in many philosophies.

**Higher Power:** *Allah*; the creative power behind the manifest world. Synonyms from other religions: God, spirit, Brahman, YHWH, the Tao, Jesus Christ, nature.

**Higher Self:** The *ruh*, or spirit. The part of me concerned for all living beings, unselfish, compassionate, and wise. The Higher Self is devoted to and guided by Allah. Synonyms: spirit self, the light of the Divine within me, Christ consciousness, Buddha-nature, Atman.

**Humility:(Tawadu)** The honest recognition of our own Strengths and Weaknesses and the willingness to stay open-minded and learn from the opinions of others. Humility is a necessary component in the development of spiritual intelligence. Asking for help when we need it, reflecting on our limited in relation to the greatness *Allah*, and recognizing that we are always growing and developing are all ways to strengthen a healthy humility.

**Integrity: (Nazahah)** Honesty, truthfulness, authenticity, “I walk my talk.” Aligning our words and actions to the values of our Higher Self. When our inner life is not in accord with our outer life in this way, we live in disharmony and confusion. For example, if our regular prayer is merely an unreflective bodily habit, or if we have only an intellectual understanding of Islam, then our spiritual practice will be purposeless and devoid of any true meaning or usefulness. Instead, we must apply the Spiritual Principles we learn through practice to our daily lives in practical ways.

**Intelligence:** The ability to respond skillfully in real situations. A latent aptitude, such as a natural talent for music, does not become “musical intelligence” until you study and practice and develop the skill to actually play music well. Similarly we are all spiritual beings, but we are not all spiritually intelligent until we study and practice and develop our spiritual skills.

**Intuition:** Knowing something and yet not necessarily knowing HOW you know it. *Dhawq (Heds)*, direct, experiential spiritual insight, is an example. Synonyms: hunch; gut feeling; bodily response; direct knowing; inner wisdom.

**Larger Reality / Larger Perspective:** (*al waqiee al akhbar*) Since the human perceptual process is limited, a fully inclusive perspective on what is real includes that which human eyes may not be able to see. With regards to spiritual development, adopting a larger perspective requires learning to see beyond the surface of things through intuition, spiritual insight, and grace. Our understanding of ourselves and the world expands with the help of spiritual practices such as prayer, the wisdom of a community, worldly experts, and the guidance of the *Qur'an*, the prophets, the *ulema*, and other elders and learned teachers.

**Law of Consequences:** (*kanoon al awakib*) The actions you take always have an impact on you and others, whether you realize it or not, either immediately or in the future. Just as clapping your hands produces a sound in the physical realm, your actions have metaphysical results as well. Different spiritual traditions have interpreted this principle in different ways: as completely impersonal, like gravity, or as being operated by a personal Higher Power who records our good and bad motivations and actions. Within Islam, too, there have been multiple understandings of divine reward and punishment, and while a full understanding of Heaven and Hell is known only by *Allah*, we have been assured that there will be repercussions of our actions in the next life. Synonyms: karma, divine justice, heaven and hell. (See Spiritual Principles for more information.)

**Meanings:** (*magza,murad*) Interpretations, purposes, reasons.

**Mission:**(*biytha*) Based on your Higher Self, your Mission explains how you wish to contribute to the world. Synonyms: life's work, life purpose, calling, higher purpose, vocation, reason for being, soul contract.

**Mysticism:** In every religion, there are groups of people who pursue interior development for the sake of communion, identity, or intimate relationship with an ultimate reality, spiritual truth, or God. Mysticism deals especially with the *batin*, or esoteric aspects, of religion and is often, though not always, a private activity practiced under the guidance of a teacher. In Islam *tasawwuf*, or Sufism, is the mystical branch. In Judaism, one major source of mystical thought and practice is Kabbalah. In Christianity it occurs in multiple denominations as the journey through the Dark Night of the Soul to "The Cloud of Unknowing."

**Non-judgmental:** (*mutafahim,mutaatif*) Keeping an open mind and heart. Being deeply understanding while maintaining discernment and the ability to take appropriate action as needed. At the highest level of compassion and non-judgment we see that we too might share another person's thoughts, beliefs, emotions and behaviors if we were in his or her situation. This enables wise and compassionate responses.

**Objective:** Neutral, detached, evaluating something without preconceptions or filters.

**Peak Experiences:** *Hal (lahthat Tharwat al Khibrah)*. There are many different types of peak experiences, but they are all temporary. Peak experiences often involve a moment of awe and wonder, an experience of being connected to, and part of everything, an expanded sense of self beyond the Ego, or a feeling of timelessness accompanied by joy. Peak experiences feel “different” from everyday perception. Some people report that colors are much more vivid and that everything – rocks, trees, clouds – seems “alive”. There is often a sense of profound peace and joy, and a sense of “everything is okay.” There is often a sense of deep compassion for and connection to all living things...a sense of being “at one” with everything. Sometimes people may feel transported outside of their body and sense themselves as Spirit independent of physical form. After a peak experience it can be a bit depressing or feel limiting to “snap back” into ordinary experiences.

**Religion:** *Din*. A faith tradition, a specific set of teachings, beliefs, rituals, practices which belong to a group of people. These teachings and practices are designed to help the seeker connect with the Divine, in this life and/or the next. They will typically teach about how to live an ethical life; usually there is a founder and a sacred text(s). Hinduism has no known founder but many sacred texts. Most of the major religions have subgroups, denominations, or sects. For example, within Islam, the Sunni and Shia are two such sects, each with their own further sub-branches. (See the related definitions for Spirituality below, and Belief System above.)

**Signals:** A sign, things that change to alert me to a situation; *ayat (alamat)*.

**Significant Others:** (*almuqarabin ladeik*) Individuals you are close to whose happiness or sadness quickly affect you such as a spouse, children, relatives, or close friends.

**Spirituality:** *Ma'nawiyah, ruhaniyyah*; the human need to be in connection with something larger than our Ego self, something sacred and timeless. Spirituality contributes to a fulfilling life and manifests in two ways: 1. with a “vertical” desire to be in relationship with the Higher Power, and 2. a “horizontal” desire to be of service to other people, creatures, or the planet.

**Spiritual Principles / Spiritual Laws / Universal Truths:** Spiritual guidelines, rules, teachings or ideas that explain the right way to live, how human beings can achieve happiness and inner peace, how our inner life shapes our experiences, or how things work in the world. Examples: “As you give to others – so you will receive” or “What you believe is what you will create.” Spiritual Principles are different from the laws of physics in that we cannot – at this time – easily measure them in typical scientific ways. Yet we can experiment with them in our own lives and see if they appear to work as taught. For example: Do moral behaviors create better relationships and more inner peace? Deep Change teaches that there are basically two levels of these: 1. simpler ones like the Golden Rule or various ethical teachings which explain what to DO in the world. 2. more complex ones that explain how to BE in the world, such as “live in the ever-present moment of Now,” or “what I focus on expands.” Synonyms: sage advice, life lessons.

**Spiritual Principles - Basic:** Deep Change defines a “basic” spiritual principle as one that is outer-world focused. Two examples are the Golden Rule and the Law of Consequences. The Golden Rule, for example, occurs in some variation in every major faith tradition and most philosophies. As recorded in a *hadith*, Muhammad said ““None of you believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself!”\* Outer-world focused spiritual principles discuss the consequences of our actions and whether they are ethical or not. The Law of Consequences says that *Allah* (or whatever the Higher Power may be in other religions) “keeps track” of our intentions and actions and we will see consequences from these choices eventually. In Islam, the consequences of our actions will come to fruition on the Day of Judgment. Basic principles are usually taught before Complex Principles because they are more concrete and thus easier to understand.

\* Homerin, Th. Emil. “The Golden Rule in Islam,” in Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton (ed.) *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions*. London: Continuum, 2008.

**Spiritual Principles - Complex:** Deep Change defines “complex” spiritual principles as those that are inner-world focused. Because of this, the value of Complex Principles is generally more difficult to demonstrate than of Basic Principles, so it is important that we validate these principles for our selves, experimenting in our own experience. A complex spiritual principle that applies to everyone, including Muslims, is that we often internalize and begin to mimic what we deeply expose ourselves to. In order to support our spiritual development we should surround ourselves with people and teachings that are pure and helpful; if we surround ourselves with the impure, then our environment will work to sway us from the straight path. The foundation of Complex Spiritual Principles is the effort to understand the inner world and the “rules” that govern the connection between the inner world and outer world.

**Spiritual Topics:** Discussions of spirituality. For example, explanations or descriptions of the origin, meaning, or purpose of life and the universe, or of how to be a virtuous human being.

**Strengths: (nukat al quah)** The things we have a natural talent for or have learned to do well. An area of comfort, confidence, expertise, or mastery, including in the skills of spiritual intelligence. Part of the spiritual exploration is discovering our particular natural gifts and talents and developing them. Knowing your strengths may help you discover your Mission.

**Suffering: (Muaanaa)** Mental or emotional distress. Suffering is created by our resistance to what is. We resist unchangeable facts (like our age) or we resist what is happening around us or to us. Suffering is somewhat avoidable, while pain, which is biological or neurological, may not be. Some challenges in life are inevitable. We can meet these challenges more effectively by not getting lost in upset (optional suffering). When we do experience pain or suffering we can turn it to good by developing compassion for our self and others.

**Transcendent Timelessness:** (*al khayal*) The experience of stepping out of our normal perceptions of time and change and into the perception of eternity, or that which never changes. Paradoxically, this may also feel like being totally present in the now. Transcendent Timelessness may be one aspect of a Peak Experience, or it may be more stable. Repeated familiarization with this perception can dramatically alter our sense of ourselves and our relationship to life.

**Values:** (*qium*) Things, qualities, or principles that are important to me and influence the decisions and actions I take. Examples: family, health, work, success, honesty, trustworthiness, humility, piety, loyalty, generosity, devotion.

**Weaknesses:** (*nukat Al duuf*) The things I don't do very well, haven't learned how to do yet, or have no natural talent for. We all have skills that are underdeveloped, but we also have the ability to cultivate these skills and improve.

**Worldview:** (*manthur al hayah*) This literally means "the way I see the world." Any worldview is made up of what we believe is "right" or "wrong", how we think things "should be," and what we think is true and false. People may agree with all, some, or none of someone else's worldview. Worldviews are shared by communities of people and based partly on geography, religion, age, culture, national citizenship, level of education, life experiences, and biological realities such as how our brains work. Our Worldview profoundly affects our perception of reality. We filter all the data we receive through our senses and through our Worldview so that we can make sense of it. Our filters inherently "leave stuff out" (especially what we don't understand or don't want to see), so each worldview excludes some information. Worldviews also "add stuff" by interpreting and making meaning out of what is being observed. Thus, by leaving out and adding in each of us can reach amazingly different interpretations of the same events. Worldviews, once made conscious, can be adjusted to be as accurate as possible. Synonyms: philosophy of life, belief system, personal filters, lens through which I see the world, my window on the world.

If you have suggestions about how to improve this SQ21 Islam Glossary please email [cindy@deepchange.com](mailto:cindy@deepchange.com)