

LESSON 2: Arab and Islamic Names

Most Arab names really mean something in Arabic--many are pleasant or desirable qualities--they are real words in Arabic and so can be used as names or adjectives--for example....

Aḥmad--most praiseworthy

Maḥmuud--commendable

Sa^ḥiid--happy

Su^ḥaad--happiness

Widaad--love, friendship

Amal--hope

Arab names also found in the Bible and their English equivalents

Old Testament

Ibrahiim--Abraham

Muusa--Moses

Da'uud--David

Mikha'iil--Michael

Yuusuf--Joseph

Saara--Sarah

Nuuḥ--Noah

Ya^ḥquub--Jacob

Sulaymaan--Solomon

New Testament

Yaḥya--John

^ḥIsa--Jesus

Butrus--Peter

Bulus--Paul

Maryam--Mary

Girgis--George

Prophet Muhammad's family and early leaders of Islam:

Muḥammad--means praised, commendable

Khadiija--Prophet's first wife

^ḥAli--Prophet's son-in-law--means lofty or exalted

Faaṭima--Prophet's daughter, married to ^ḥAli

^ḥAa'isha--one of Prophet's wives--means prosperous

Ḥasan--Prophet's grandson, son of ^ḥAli --beautiful, handsome

Ḥusayn--Prophet's grandson, son of ʿAli --little beauty

ʿUmar--second Caliph-(succeeder to Prophet Muḥammad as leader of Islamic community)

ʿUthmaan--third Caliph

Bilal--first Muezzin (caller of Muslims to daily prayers)

Peoples' names based on Names of God

Another class of Muslim names is based on the names of God in Arabic. Allah means The God--The same God whom Jews and Christians worship

The 99 Names of God--called The Most Beautiful Names--have to do with God's many attributes: such as, All-Seeing, All-Knowing, All-Powerful

We do this as well--example we say "The Almighty" to refer to God

ʿAbd--is an Arabic word meaning servant or slave

Not all of the 99 names of God are used as names for people. Some of the most popular ones are:

ʿAbd Allah --Servant of God

ʿAbd al-ʿAziiz --Servant of The Almighty

ʿAbd al-Raḥmaan --Servant of The Merciful

ʿAbd al-Raḥiim --Servant of The Compassionate

ʿAbd al-Ḥakiim --Servant of The Wise

ʿAbd al-Kariim --Servant of The Generous

ʿAbd al-Jabbaar --Servant of The Compeller

ʿAbd al-Majiid --Servant of The Glorious

ʿAbd al-Malik --Servant of The King, The Ruler of All

ʿAbd al-Qaadir --Servant of The All-Powerful

There is no such name as "Abdul" by itself--it would mean "servant of the.....", that is, "Abdul" would be only half a name...

As first names, these are all for males, but they can be used as last names for anyone. In fact, many Arab names can be used as both first and last names. This is partly because many Arabs take their father's first name as their own last name.

You may also hear the words Abu, Umm, Ibn, or Bint in people's names. Abu means father, Umm means mother, Ibn means son, and Bint means daughter. So if a man is named Muḥammad, you would call his father Abu Muḥammad and his mother Umm Muḥammad. You would call his son Ibn Muḥammad, and his daughter is Bint Muḥammad.

When Arab women get married, they usually keep their own family name.