

## The Differences Between Sunni and Shia Islam

	Sunni	Shia
<b>Adherents called</b>	Sunnis	Shiites, Shi'i
<b>Meaning of name</b>	"well-trodden path" or "tradition"	"party" or "partisans" of Ali
<b>Current adherents</b>	940 million	120 million
<b>Percentage of total Muslims</b>	90%	10%
<b>Primary locations</b>	most Muslim countries	Iran, Iraq, Yemen
<b>Subjects</b>	None, but four major schools of Muslim law are recognized	Ithna 'Ashariyah (Twelvers; the largest), Isma'iliyah and Zaydiyyah
<b>Origins</b>	c. 632 CE; theology developed especially in 10th cent.	c. 632-650 CE; killing of Ali's son Husayn in 680 CE
<b>Did Muhammad designate a successor?</b>	No	Yes
<b>True successor of the Prophet</b>	Abu Bakr, father of the Prophet's favoured wife, 'A'ishah (elected by people of Medina)	'Ali ibn Abi Talib, husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatimah (designated by the Prophet)
<b>Qualifications for ruler of Islam</b>	Tribe of the Prophet (Quraysh); later, any qualified ruler	Family of the Prophet
<b>Current leaders</b>	Imams	Mujtahids
<b>Identity of imams</b>	Human leaders	Infallible manifestations of God and perfect interpreters of the Qur'an
<b>Al Mahdi</b>	Will come in the future	Was already on earth, is currently the "hidden imam" who works through Mujtahids to interpret Qur'an; and will return at the end of time
<b>Religious authority other than the Qu'ran</b>	ijma' (consensus) of the Muslim community	Infallible imams
<b>Concealing faith for self-protection (taqiya)</b>	Affirmed under certain circumstances	Emphasized
<b>Temporary marriage (mut'ah)</b>	Practiced in the Prophet's time, but now rejected	Still practiced
<b>Holy cities</b>	<a href="#">Mecca</a> , <a href="#">Medina</a> , <a href="#">Jerusalem</a>	<a href="#">Mecca</a> , <a href="#">Medina</a> , <a href="#">Jerusalem</a> , <a href="#">Najaf</a> , <a href="#">Karbala</a>
<b>Major holidays</b>	<a href="#">Eid al-Adha</a> , <a href="#">Eid al-Fitr</a>	<a href="#">Eid al-Adha</a> , <a href="#">Eid al-Fitr</a> , <a href="#">Ashura</a>
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