

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

WHAT DOES 'AMEN' MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF PRAYER AND IS IT QURANIC?

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Albeit the word '**Amen**' (**Ameen**) is never found in text form in the Quran as a **culmination to prayer**, there is also no prescription in the Quran that only Quranic words can be recited in prayer. In fact, in formal prayers, many prayers are recited which are not found in the Quran, such as the Tashahhud.

Therefore, rather than dismissing the term 'Amen' as non-Quranic, it is far better to understand what it means or implies and to make an '**informed**' decision whether to make use of it in one's prayer or not.

The word 'Amen / Ameen' means 'So be it', 'Verily' and 'Truly'. It is usually used as an expression which declares a statement as true.

We note a long tradition with those that align themselves with the faith of Abraham making use of such a term as a culmination to a prayer.

For example, we note in the Old Testament textual references to 'Amen'.

Deuteronomy 27:17

"Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, **Amen.**" [1]

Deuteronomy 27:18

"Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, **Amen.**" [2]

Deuteronomy 27:19

"Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, **Amen.**" [3]

The usages of 'Amen' in the above contexts are well known to mean "So be it"; "verily" and "truly".

We note similar expressions in the New Testament. For example:

Matthew 6:13

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. **Amen**" [4]

Here the meaning of 'Amen' follows a similar rendering as 'verily', 'truly' or 'so be it'. This understanding is also attested by etymology sources.

"O.E., from L.L. amen, from Ecclesiastical Gk. amen, from Hebrew amen "truth," used adverbially as an expression of agreement (e.g. Deut. xxvii.26, I Kings i.36; cf. Mod.Eng. verily, surely, absolutely in the same sense), from Sem. root a-m-n "to be trustworthy, confirm, support." Used in O.E. only at the end of Gospels, otherwise translated as Soðlic! or Swa hit ys, or Sy! As an expression of concurrence after prayers, it is recorded from early 13c." [5]

Although we find no mention of 'Amen/Ameen' in the context of prayer in the Quran, it is well known to retain the same meaning as '**so be it**', '**truly**' or '**verily**' as in its Hebrew equivalent. All renderings of the expression retain the essence of the word as an affirmation of a statement. Muslims recite this at the end of prayer, in particular the Quranic prayer of Surah Fateha.

it is a word used immediately after a prayer, or supplication : (Ş,* M :) [it is best expressed, when occurring in a translation, by the familiar Hebrew equivalent Amen :] El-Fárisee says that it is a compound of a verb and a noun ; (M;) meaning *answer Thou me ;* [i. e. *answer Thou my prayer ;*] (M, Mgh ;*) or *O God, answer Thou :* (Zj, T, Mşb, K :) or so be it : (AHát, Ş, Mşb, K :) or *so do Thou,* (K, TA,) *O Lord :* (TA :)

FINAL THOUGHTS

We noted that the word Ameen / Amen carried the meaning of "So be it", "Truly" or "Verily", in the Old and New Testament as well as in the general Arabic parlance with reference to prayer.

There are no prescriptions or prohibitions as to what should or should not be recited in prayer. Meaningful prayer which draws from Quranic narratives and supplements it with personal prayer does not contravene any verse of the Quran. However, with any recitation, one should always make use of meaningful, goodly words which have purpose and touch the core of one's spiritual faculties.

Recitation should be understood, as utterance without meaning is in breach of the Quran (4:43) and the underlying wisdom not to approach prayer - hatta ta 'lamu ma taqulun (until you know what you are saying).

It is far better to understand the words we make use of in our prayer and to make **an informed decision** as to whether we deem it appropriate to make use of them or not.

I would humbly assert that this measured '**approach**' is actually Quranic.

REFERENCES

[1] The Bible, King James Version

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Online Etymology Dictionary [online]

http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=amen&searchmode=none [Accessed 29th November 2011]

[6] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 1, Page 102

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

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