

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

SALAMUN ALAIKUM (PEACE BE UPON YOU) - WHAT IS AN ISLAMIC GREETING?

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There are many opinions as to what constitutes an 'Islamic greeting'. Understandably, there remains a desire amongst believers to follow a greeting that is most apt and closely emulates the salutations offered by the Prophets of God.

What is though, commonly overlooked, is the fact that the greeting 'Aslamu-alaikum' is an Arabic greeting. All Prophets of God simply spoke in the language of their people and therefore greeted each other with their own parlance.

014:004

"And We did not send any messenger **but with the language of his people**, so that he might explain to them clearly; then God makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases and He is the Mighty, the Wise"

However, from a Quranic perspective, there does appear to be an underlying theme to greet another with salutations of 'peace'.

In the following verse, we note a conversation between Prophet Abraham^(pbuh) and his honoured guests. Prophet Abraham^(pbuh) never spoke Arabic but communicated in a language which was common to his people. However, the Quran translates the dialogue with the salutation into Arabic so that the immediate Arab audience could understand. The salutation of 'Peace' is clearly indicated.

051.024-25

Has the story reached you of the honoured guests of Abraham? Behold, they entered his presence, and said: "**Peace! (Arabic: Salaman)**" He said, "**Peace!**" (Arabic: Salamun) (and thought, "These seem) unusual / unknown people."

Therefore, regardless of the language, it appears that the sentiment of 'peace' was carried in the salutations made by previous prophets. One also notes that Prophet Abraham^(pbuh) returned the same greeting that was offered to him. This is again, in line with the guidance which the Quran imparts with regards salutations.

004:086

"And when you are greeted with a greeting, then greet with a better than it or return it. Indeed! God takes count of all things.

Here the guidance from the Quran is clear. Note that there is no mention of what the greeting should entail, other than the response should be one that is better or at least the same in kind. We noted in verse 51:25 above that Prophet Abraham's^(pbuh) greeting was one that he returned in kind, in his own language.

WHAT IS THE ARABIC GREETING FROM THE QURAN?

If there is a desire to emulate a greeting with which the Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh) would have been familiar with in Arabic, then the Quranic usage of the salutation should be studied. One notes that the greeting of 'Peace be upon you' in the Quranic text is 'Salamun Alaikum'.

006:054

"When those come to thee who believe in Our signs, Say: **"Peace be on you (Arabic: Salamun Alaikum):** Your Lord has inscribed for Himself (the rule of) mercy: verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented, and amend (his conduct), lo! He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful"

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum

007.046

"Between them shall be a veil, and on the heights will be men who would know every one by his marks: they will call out to the Companions of the Garden, **"Peace on you (Arabic: Salamun Alaikum)"**: they will not have entered, but they will have an assurance (thereof)"

وَنَادَوْا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْنَا

Salamun Alaikum

013.023-24

“Gardens of perpetual bliss: they shall enter there, as well as the righteous among their fathers, their spouses, and their offspring: and angels shall enter unto them from every gate (with the salutation): **"Peace unto you (Arabic: Salamun Alaikum)** for that ye persevered in patience! Now how excellent is the final home!”

سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْنَا بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

Salamun Alaikum

016.032

“Those whom the angels cause to die in a good state, saying: **Peace be on you (Arabic: Salamun Alaikum)**: enter the garden for what you did”

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْنَا

Salamun Alaikum

028.055

“And when they hear vain talk, they turn away from there and say: "To us our deeds, and to you yours; **Peace be to you (Arabic: Salamun Alaikum)**: we seek not the ignorant.”

لَنَا أَعْمَلْنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَلْتُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ

Salamun Alaikum

039.073

“And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds: until behold, they arrive there; its gates will be opened; and its keepers will say: "Peace be upon you (Arabic: Salamun Alaikum)! well have ye done! enter ye here, to dwell therein.”

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ

Salamun Alaikum

Illustrations above - Joseph Islam

WHEN ADDRESSING AN INDIVIDUAL THE FORM WOULD BE 'SALAMUN ALAIK'

The suffix 'a' is added if the address is to a singular male, or 'i' if it is to a singular female.

019:047

He said, 'Peace be upon you. I will ask forgiveness for you from my Lord. Indeed he is to me ever gracious

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا

Salamun Alaika

Illustrations above - Joseph Islam

FINAL THOUGHTS

The best Islamic greeting is one that contains the salutations of peace. This is independent of what language this greeting is offered as long as it is imparted with sincerity. 'Aslamo-alaikum' is merely the common Arabic greeting. 'Salamun Alaikum' is the Quranic form which closely emulates the greeting that Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh) and his community would have been familiar with.

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