

As-salamu alaykum

As-salāmu ‘alaykum (Arabic: السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ [æ.sæˈlæːmu ʕæˈləjkʊm]) is a greeting in Arabic that means "peace be upon you". The greeting is a religious salutation among Muslims, whether socially or within worship and other contexts.^[1] The typical response to the greeting is *wa ‘alaykumu s-salām* (وَعَلَيْكُمْ السَّلَام [wæ ʕæˈləjkʊmu s.sæˈlæm]) "and peace be upon you".

This greeting appears in greatly abbreviated forms in many languages from Malagasy to Urdu as some variant of *salām* (سَلَام; cf. Persian سلام [sæˈlɒːm]).

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Pronunciation

The phrase is normally pronounced according to localdialects of speakers and is very often shortened.

For example:

- In Egypt: [sæˈlæːmu ʕæˈleːku, we ʕæˈleːkom es.sæˈlæːm].
- By native English speaking Muslims/səˈlæmu əˈlaɪkʊm[ⓘ], wɑː əˈlaɪkʊm ʊsəˈlæm[ⓘ]

Grammatical variants

The expression uses the second person plural masculine, even when used to address one person. It may be modified by choosing the appropriate enclitic pronoun to address a person in the masculine and feminine singular form, the dual form, or the feminine plural form. The conjugations are as follow (note: according to the standard pronunciation rules of Classical Arabic, the last short vowel in each word is not pronounced unless it is followed by another word):

- masculine singular: *as-salāmu ‘alayka* (عَلَيْكَ)
- feminine singular: *as-salāmu ‘alayki* (عَلَيْكِ)
- dual: *as-salāmu ‘alaykumā* (عَلَيْكُمَا)
- feminine plural: *as-salāmu ‘alaykunna* (عَلَيْكُنَّ)

A third-person variant, *‘alayhi as-salām* "peace be upon him", is often used for divine figures.

In Islam

It is also preferred to use the greeting when arriving and also while leaving. It was reported that Abu Hurairah said "When one of you joins a gathering, let him say 'Peace'. When he wants to get up and leave, let him say 'Peace'. The former is not more important than the latter" (Hasan hadith reported in Jāmi' at-Tirmidhi).^[2]

- According to hadith, Muhammad was asked who should begin the greeting and he said, "The one who is riding should greet the one who is walking and the one who is walking should greet the one who is sitting and the smaller group should greet the larger group" Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6234; Muslim, 2160).^[3]
- It is also stated that one should give the Salam greeting upon entering a house. This is based upon a verse of the Quran: "But when you enter the houses, greet one another with a greeting from God blessed and good" Al-Nur 24:61).^[4]
- Shortening the greeting to acronyms, such as A.S., *As'kum* (in Malaysia), or AsA is becoming common amongst Internet users in chat rooms and by people using SMS. This trend is similar to writing (S) or SAVS in place of ṣallā līlāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam.

Usage by non-Arabic speakers

- In India, the greeting mostly among Muslims is accompanied by raising the right hand to the chest (arz hai "regards" adaab "respect") or a simple handshake or hug, the shorter greeting "Salam" is used in informal situations. Goodbye is supplanted by a "Khuda hafiz" (secular/less formal or to an acquaintance) or "Allah hafiz" (less secular/generally to strangers, formal), both of which mean "May God keep you safe".
- In Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran, *Salām* is used.
- In Albania and Kosovo, a diminutive form in the Albanian language *Selamun Alejkem* or *Selamun Alejqum* is rarely used, the 'q' being a voiceless palatal stop typical of Balkan Turkish and Thracian Turkish phonology.^[5]
- In Amharic, the native Amharic term *Selam* is used in place of *Tadias*, which is the equivalent of "What's up".
- In Turkey and Kazakhstan, many religious people use this statement and shake hands and it is the same for saying "goodbye"; more secular and non-religious people say *Selam* as an equivalent to "Hello" or "Hi". However many Turks pronounce it differently as "Selamün aleyküm".
- In Pakistan, the greeting is also associated with shaking right hands and is also often accompanied with a hug when meeting infrequently (only between the same gender). In some places, people put a hand on their heart as they shake your hand and greet. Also, the full greeting is preferred versus the shorter greeting, "salam".
- In Bangladesh, Assalamu alaykum is a simple greeting.
- In Uzbekistan, Assalomu aleykum is used as an informal greeting.
- In Indonesia, the greeting is usually accompanied with a kind of two-handed "handshake", whereby the shaker's palms remain closed, and the fingers alone open to admit the other's proffered hand – which briefly touches the proffered's fingers or fingertips alone. In this way more adherent males and females may greet though touching – but remain true to the Islamic or cultural teachings forbidding physical contact between the genders. Occasionally the right hand will touch the left breast or heart area after this. In Indonesia's Javanese/Sasak culture, a remnant of feudalism is retained, where an elder's proffered right hand is taken and pressed briefly against the forehead. Some may instead briefly kiss the hand or the main ring. This is very common for young children to greet older relatives (of their parents' age, though, on occasion, if very polite children, younger).
- In Chechnya and other parts of Caucasus, Salam Aleykum is used to say hi.
- In Senegal which has a majority of Islam with Sufi-orientation, it is a common greeting. Spelled and pronounced in Wolof: "(a)sala maaleykum", and the reply "maa lekum salaam."
- In Xinjiang, China, "Essalam eylekum" is used as a greeting by Uyghurs, and the reply is "Ve'eylekum essalam".

See also

- Shalom aleichem (a similar Hebrew phrase)
- Names of God in Islam
- Pax (liturgy)
- Salam Pax
- Š-L-M

References

1. ""As-Salaamu-Alaikum" and "Wa-Alaikum-as-Salaam"" (<http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/mxp/notes/5140.html>). Ccnmtl.columbia.edu Retrieved 2013-07-27.

2. Sheikh Muhammad Salih Al-Munajjid "Is it *mustahabb* for one who gets up to leave a gathering to say *salaam* to those who are still sitting?" (<http://islamqa.info/en/ref/4052>) [IslamQA.info](http://islamqa.info).
3. "As Salaamu Alaikom?" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20101120155617/http://www.inspiredmindsunlimited.com/as-salaamu-aylaykom.html>) Archived from the original (<http://www.inspiredmindsunlimited.com/as-salaamu-aylaykom.html>) on 2010-11-20.
4. "Surat An-Nur [24:61] - The Noble Qur'an القرآن الكريم" (<http://quran.com/24/61>) Quran.com. Retrieved 2013-07-27.
5. <https://humstatic.uchicago.edu/slavic/archived/papers/Friedman-TrkEncyc.pdf>

External links

- [Audio clip for Salam](#)
 - [A brief illustrated guide to understanding Islam](#)
 - [LivingHalal.com Islamic audio project](#)
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