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## Interpretation of the Quran- Surat Al-Nisa' (4)- Ayah (86)- Lesson (40): The Rulings on As-salam (Islamic Greeting)

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of Creations, and Peace and blessings be upon our prophet Muhammad, the faithful and the honest.

Oh, Allah, we know nothing but what You teach us. You are the All- Knower, the Wise. Oh Allah, teach us what is good for us, and benefit us from what You taught us, and increase our knowledge. Show us the righteous things as righteous and help us to do them, and show us the bad things as bad and help us to keep away from them.

O Allah our Lord, lead us out from the depths of darkness and illusion, unto the lights of erudition and knowledge, and from the muddy shallows of lusts unto the heavens of Your Vicinity.

### **The Muslim's motto is to take the lead in greeting people:**

Dear brothers, this is the lesson No. forty of Surat An-Nisaa', and we will continue with the ayah No. eighty six in which Almighty Allah says:

**(And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it; surely Allah takes account of all things.)**

(An-Nisa': 86)

The Muslim's motto is to initiate the greeting to people whenever he meets them. He greets both the people he knows and the ones who he does not using the Qur'anic form of greeting. A Muslim refuses to use other forms of greeting which are used by people who are far from Islam to preserve his Islamic moral character. Allah the Almighty says:

**(Their salutation on the day that they meet Him shall be, Peace)**

(Al-Ahzab: 44)

The word Salam (peace) means As-Salamah (safety) in its absolute sense; the safety of religion, the safety of health, the safety of honor ...etc. Thus, when you say to your fellow Muslim brother: 'Assalamu Alaikom (may the Peace of Allah be upon you,)' you invoke Allah to grant all kinds of safety to him, starting from the safety of religion and belief, to the safety of health, honor and reputation.

Moreover, As-Salam (The Giver of Peace) is one of the ninety nine Beautiful Names of Almighty Allah, so if you apply His Method, you will be granted the blessing of this Name, and you will live a happy life. Almighty Allah says:

**(Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life,)**

(An-Nahl: 97)

You will live a happy life in this world, and in the Hereafter you will enter Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth.

**The wisdom behind having the ayat of peace interconnected with the ones of war:**

You are in peace in the worldly life as long as your treatment with Allah is in peace. Furthermore, Allah invites us to the abode of peace, namely, Paradise. Thus, if you enter paradise, you will be in the abode of peace. I told you earlier that this word has a very wide sense.

Let me move to another essential issue concerning the word Salam. There is a profound wisdom behind having the ayat of peace interconnected with the ones of war. Whoever you fight is a human being, so if he greets you, he will be asking you to treat him kindly. In this case you should not kill him; if someone asks you for protection (since the word Salam has the meaning of protection and safety,) you should stop fighting him at once. He may embrace Islam because of your kindness. The Beloved Prophet Muhammad, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, got upset with our master Usama ibn Zaid, the beloved, and the son of the beloved. One day, Usama was on the battlefield engaged with the enemy. During the heat of the battle one of the enemies slipped and fell, so Usama lifted his sword to strike him. At that very moment, the enemy shouted out:

"La ilaha illa I-Lah, Muhammad rasulu I-Lah (There's no god but Allah Alone and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.)" Yet, Usama struck and killed the man. When the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, got heed of this he condemned Usama, with anger visible on his face, he asked, "Did you kill him after he said that!?" Usama replied, "O Messenger of Allah, he only said it out of fear of the sword." But the Prophet, may Allah have peace and lessings upon him, quickly replied, "Did you look into his heart, O Usama!?"

The wisdom which is extracted from the interconnectivity of peace and war ayat is that the purpose of fighting against the infidels is to guide them to Allah. Fighting the disbelievers is not indented to destroy or kill them, rather it is intended to lead

them to Almighty Allah. Al-Jihad (a war against infidels undertaken by Muslims in defence of the Islamic faith.) should pass through the following steps:

First: you should tell the infidel you fight against about Islam in a very clear way. Your talk should be supported with rigorous evidences.

Some scholars said: "Those who tell the infidels about Islam in a very shallow way, and give them an inconsistent picture of Islam which is neither solid nor firm, and which is based on dreams and miracles, actually do not use the educational and scientific methodology of making the infidels acquainted with Islam. If the infidel finds that the one who calls him to Islam is not honest or faithful, he will not be convinced of Islam and he will not be considered informed. Hence, the person who calls him for Islam will be one of the reasons behind his deviation from Allah's Method."

Peace means that you first tell the infidels who you are intended to fight against about Islam, so if they accept to embrace it, they will be part of you and they will share you your duties and rights.

Second: if the infidels refuse to embrace Islam, they should pay al-Jizyah instead. Jihad is obligatory on Muslims because it is ideological not profitable. Whoever fights in the Cause of Allah, should have a great faith, believe in the pillars of Islam and aim at making the Word of Allah elevated high.

Third: if the infidels refuse to embrace Islam and they refuse to pay al-Jizyah, they should be fought against. Now I will repeat the three steps in brief: the infidel should be informed about Islam before he is fought against, if he accepts to embrace Islam, he will be protected and saved. If he refuses to embrace Islam, he should pay al-Jizyah, but if he does not accept Islam nor does he accept to pay al-Jizyah, he should be fought until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah) and (all and every kind of) worship is for Allah (Alone.)

### **The methodology of Jihad:**

I would like you to keep in mind that when you fight against an infidel, your intention should not be killing him. Fighting against the infidels is not intended to annihilate the disbelievers, because this religion is humanitarian, so it is against committing genocides. Some countries in the Western world care about their people, but when it comes to other peoples, they commit the most hideous crimes against them, steal their wealth and make them in a big mass. We should look down on them because they lack what make them human beings. Narrated Anas: The Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, said:

**((None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.))**

(Al-Bukhari)

Who is his brother? The scholars have disagreements concerning this issue; some of them say that he is the lineage brother, and others say he is the brother in

faith, but the correct sense is that he is the brother in humanity. Your faith will not be accepted by Allah unless you treat people the way you like to be treated. Therefore, beware of misrepresenting Islam, lest the infidels will use your misbehavior against you.

When are you supposed to fight against your brother in humanity? When you inform him about Islam, and you are honest in introducing it in a very clear way using a proper scientific and educational method that is supported with proofs. Only then, this infidel will be considered informed, so if he rejects embracing Islam, he is supposed to pay al- Jizyah. In case he refuses to pay it, you should fight against him. However, this fighting should not be meant to kill the infidel. Your mission while fighting against infidels should be to guide them to Almighty Allah, so they should be taken as captives. Those captives should be sent to live with Muslims in order to be taught the Islamic teachings in a practical way; those who are narrow-minded and refuse to embrace the theoretical Islam might be convinced to embrace Islam by the kind treatment of Muslims.

Dear brothers, there are many amazing stories about how companions used to apply the instructions of the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, to treating the captives. The companions used to favor the captives over themselves in food, drink and clothes. When the infidel captives notice how kind the Muslims are with them, they will love Islam and will embrace it. The minute they do so, they will share us our responsibilities. This is the true methodology of Jihad. In some cases the Muslim fighters are so enthusiastic that they may not pay attention to that fact those who they fight against may decide to embrace Islam and be guided to Allah, so they greet them saying: Assalamu Alaikom. Fighting against such people should be stopped as soon as those words are uttered. These facts explain why the ayat of war come together with the ones of peace; those ayat indicate that the reason behind war should not be killing, but rather, it should be guiding the infidels to Almighty Allah. Allah has not sent the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, to kill infidels. On the contrary, He has sent him to guide them. Listen to the following ayah in which Almighty Allah says:

**(And if one of the idolaters seek protection from you, grant him protection till he hears the word of Allah.)**

(At-Taubah: 6)

You should call the other party (the infidels) to hear the word of Allah:

**(Then make him attain his place of safety.)**

(At-Taubah: 6)

## **The obligation of spreading greeting as mentioned in the Prophetic Sunnah:**

Dear brothers, there are many Ahadeeth about the obligation of spreading greeting, and I would like to mention some of them.

Muawiya bin Suwaid that Al Bara' bin 'Azib, may Allah be pleased with them said:

**((Allah's Apostle orders us to do seven things and forbade us to do other seven, he orders us to follow the funeral procession. to visit the sick, to accept invitations, to help the oppressed, to fulfill the oaths, to return the greeting and to reply to the sneezer: (saying, "May Allah be merciful on you," provided the sneezer says, "All the praises are for Allah" ...))**

(Al-Bukhari)

In another Hadith reported by Abu Huraira: The Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessing be upon him, observed:

**((You shall not enter Paradise so long as you do not affirm belief (in all those things which are the articles of faith) and you will not believe as long as you do not love one another. Should I direct you to a thing which, if you do, will foster love amongst you: (i.e.) give currency to (the practice of paying salutation to one another by saying) as-salamu alaikum.))**

(Muslim)

Habituate yourself to pay salutation to one another. Some of the companions used to pay salutation to one another whenever they met. They even greeted each other again when a tree came between them. Can you believe that? If you sit in the company of some people and you leave them for something to do, get yourself used to greet the attendants when you come back. Whenever you leave a meeting for some reasons, say Assalamu Alaikum upon your return. These words are pregnant of so many meanings. Let alone, that they are derived from the Beautiful Name of Allah As-Salam. They mean safety and protection in their wider sense as I said earlier.

Abdullah Bin Salam, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

**((The people hurried quickly to meet the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) when he arrived in Al-Madinah. They cried, 'The Messenger of Allah has arrived! The Messenger of Allah has arrived!' I came out along with the people to see him. When his face was clear to me, I realized that his face was not that of a liar. The first thing I heard him saying was, 'O people, spread Salam (the greeting of peace: peace be upon you), give food, join the ties of the wombs, and pray**

**(at night) while people are sound asleep (negligent), and you will enter Paradise in peace.')**

(At-Tirmidhi)

This is an authentic Hadith. Now listen again, please:

**((O people, spread Salam (the greeting of peace: peace be upon you), give food, join the ties of the wombs, and pray (at night) while people are sound asleep (negligent), and you will enter Paradise in peace.))**

### **Some forms of Quranic greeting:**

Now I will mention some forms of Quranic greeting:

**(It was said: O Nuh! descend with peace from Us)**

(Hud: 48)

Almighty Allah says about Ibrahim, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him:

**(He said: Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you;)**

(Maryam: 47)

It means; you are in peace from us or peace be on you. Almighty Allah says while mentioning the story of Lut, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him:

**(They said: Peace. Peace, said he, a strange people.)**

(Ad-Dhariyat: 25)

He talks about Yahya saying:

**(And peace on him on the day he was born, and on the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life.)**

(Maryam: 16)

Listen what Almighty Allah says about Prophet Mohammad, all Prayers and Blessings of Allah be upon him:

**(Say: Praise be to Allah and peace on His servants whom He has chosen.)**

(An-Nahl: 59)

Almighty Allah says about the angels:

**(And the angels will enter in upon them from every gate (saying)\*:("Salamun Alaikum" (Peace be on you))**

(Ar-Ra'd: 23-24)

The following ayah is about Allah the Almighty:

**(Peace: a word from a Merciful Lord.)**

(Ya-Sin: 58)

**(Say: Peace be on you.)**

(Al-An'am: 54)

### **One of the greeting forms mentioned in the Noble Quran:**

**(And peace is on him who follows the guidance.)**

(Taha: 47)

There is an important hint in this ayah; if a Muslim is obliged to greet an infidel for the interest of all Muslims, he has to say these words:

**(And peace is on him who follows the guidance.)**

If this infidel accepts to be guided, then he is intended by those words, but if he does not, then he is not intended.

Almighty Allah says about Isa, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him:

**(And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life.)**

( Maryam: 33)

It is up to you to greet by saying either Salamu Alaikum (without the definite article) or Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmato Allahi wa Barakatoh (May Allah Peace, Mercy and blessings be upon you.)

### **Greeting other people is optional but returning it is obligatory:**

Let me repeat the ayah which I mentioned in the very beginning of our lesson:

**(And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it.)**

Greeting other people is (Sunnah) optional but returning it is (Wajib) obligatory, so those who do not return the greeting are considered sinful because of this

behavior. It is up to you to greet people, but when other people greet you, you should return the greeting.

Imran bin Husein said:

**((A man came to the Prophet peace be upon him and said: 'Assalam Alaikom (peace on you),' then the Prophet peace be upon him said: 'Ten.' Another one came and said: 'Assalam Alaykom wa rahmato Allah (peace and Allah's mercy be upon you),' then the Prophet peace be upon him said: 'Twenty.' Another man came and said: 'Assalamu Alaikum wa rahmato Allah wa barakatoh (peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you),' then the prophet peace be upon him said: 'Thirty.'))**

( At-Tirmidhi)

They are thirty (hasanah) good deeds. At-Termidhi said that this Hadith is good (Hasan)

The same Hadith is narrated by Abu Dawood:

**((A man came to the Prophet and said, 'assalaamu alaykum!' The Prophet returned his greeting and when the man sat down, the Prophet said: 'Ten.' Another man came and said: 'assalaamu alaykum wa rahmatullah,' to which the Prophet also responded, and when the man sat down, He said 'Twenty.' Another man came and said: 'assalaamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.' The Prophet returned his greeting, and after the man sat down, he said: 'Thirty.' Another man came and said: 'assalaamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh wa maghfiratuh (forgiveness.)' ' The Prophet returned his greeting, and after the man sat down, he said: 'forty.'))**

(Abu Dawood)

Because Allah the Almighty says:

**(And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it.)**

If a non-Muslim greets you, you return it, but if a Muslim greets you, you should greet with a better than it.

In another Hadeeth; Imran bin Husein said:

**((A man came to the Prophet peace be upon him and said: 'Assalam Alaikom (peace on you),' then the Prophet peace be upon him said: 'Ten.' Another one came and said: 'Assalam Alaykom wa rahmato Allah (peace and Allah's mercy be upon you),' then the Prophet peace be upon him said: 'Twenty.' Another man came and said: 'Assalamu Alaikum wa rahmato Allah wa**



**barakatoh (peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you),' then the prophet peace be upon him said: 'Thirty.')**

( At-Tirmidhi)

### **The ruling on greeting in a meeting:**

In another narration Ibn Hibban in his authentic Hadith from Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him:

**((A man passed by the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he was in a gathering and said, "Salaamun 'alaykum." He (the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)) said, "Ten hasanahs." Another man passed by and said, "Salaamun 'alaykum wa rahmat-Allaahi (Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allaah)." He said, "Twenty hasanahs." Then another man passed by and said, "Salaamun 'alaykum wa rahmat-Allaahi wa barakaatuhu (Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allaah and His blessings)." He said: "Thirty hasanahs." A man got up and left the gathering and did not say salaam...))**

Concerning greeting others in a meeting of a religious lesson, it has a specific ruling. If attend such a meeting, you don't have to pay greeting. The lesson will be disturbed every time a new attendant greets the other attendants, because they will return the greeting and they will be distracted. Thus, a new attendant does not have to greet the others.

Narrated by Ibn Hibban in his authentic collection from Abu Huraira may Allah be pleased with him:

**((A man passed by the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he was in a gathering and said, "Salaamun 'alaykum." He (the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)) said, "Ten hasanahs." Another man passed by and said, "Salaamun 'alaykum wa rahmat-Allaahi (Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allaah)." He said, "Twenty hasanahs." Then another man passed by and said, "Salaamun 'alaykum wa rahmat-Allaahi wa barakaatuhu (Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allaah and His blessings)." He said: "Thirty hasanahs." A man got up and left the gathering and did not say salaam. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "How soon your companion has forgotten. When one of you comes to a gathering and says salaam, if he wants to sit down then let him do so. Then when he wants to leave, let him say salaam, for the one is not more important than the other."))**

Whoever comes in a meeting should greet the attendants, and if he intends to stay, then let him be seated. If he wants to leave this meeting, he should greet the other attendants before he leaves. Everyone should greet the others upon his arrival to the meeting and upon his leaving as long as the meeting is not of a

religious lesson. Whenever you come in a house where there are guests or a banquet, say Aaalamu Alaikum, and before you leave the house say it again.

Abu Huraira may Allah be pleased with him reported that Allah's Messenger peace be upon him said:

**((When one of you comes to a gathering and says salaam, if he wants to sit down then let him do so. Then when he wants to leave, let him say salaam, for the one is not more important than the other.))**

(At-Tirmidhi)

It means that when you leave you have to pay greeting. Actually, there are some instructions for greeting people: when you come in, greet other people and shake their hands one by one, but before you leave you greet them without shaking their hands; the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, said:

**((The most miserly of all people is one who is miserly with greetings.))**

(Ad-Dailami from Abu Huraira)

How stingy he is the one who meets another man in the elevator face to face and does not say Salam. He may just stare at you and sometimes frown at you and never say Assalamu Alaikum.

### **The instructions of the Prophet regarding greeting:**

One of the signs of the Hour is that you only greet those who you know. In the following Hadith the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, said:

**((The Most miserly who becomes stingy in his greeting))**

(Ad-Dailami from Abu Huraira)

In another Hadith he said:

**((If the believer meets [another] believer, and gives him the salaam, and takes hold of his hand and shakes it, their sins fall off as the leaves of a tree.))**

(At-Tabarani from Hudhaifa)

The Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, said:

**((If two believers meet and one of them offers salaam to the other, and they shake their hands, the more beloved to Allah will be he who offers heartier salaam to the other, and Allah will bestow one hundred mercies upon them;**

**ninety mercies to the one who initiates salaam, and ten mercies to the shaker.))**

(Al-Baihaqi)

Greet him heartily with a smile in your face, and you will be loved by Almighty Allah:

(Al-Baihaqi)

Narrated Abu Umama, Allah's Messenger, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, said:

**((The person nearest to Allah is one who is the first to offer greeting.))**

(Abu Dawood)

The closest to Allah is he who starts As-Salam (greeting.)

One of the instructions of the Prophet concerning Salam is that if your friends and you come across one person or a group of people, it is enough for one of you to greet that person or that group on the others' behalves. Also, it is enough for one of the group that you greet to return the greeting. Hence, greeting and returning it in the case of the group are considered a collective duty; one person of each group can do on behalf of the whole group. One of the morals of the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, is that he used to return the greeting if someone told him that such a person sent you his greetings. We have to follow the example of the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings, and do the same; if someone sends you his greetings with someone else, you should say: May Allah's Peace be upon you and him.

Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported: the Messenger of Allah, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, said to me:

**((This is Jibril (Gabriel) who is conveying you greetings of peace.) I responded: "Wa 'Alaihis-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu (may he be safe from evil, and the Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be upon him".))**

(Agreed upon)

Some of the rulings on greeting:

Narrated Ghalib Al-Qattan: Ghalib quoted a man who stated on the authority of his father that his grandfather reported:

**((They lived at one of the springs. When Islam reached them, the master of the spring offered his people one hundred camels if they embraced Islam. So they embraced Islam, and he distributed the camels among them. But it occurred to him that he should take the camels back from them. He sent his son to the Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him) and said to him: Go to the Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him) and tell him: My father extends his greetings to you.**

**He asked his people to give them one hundred camels if they embraced Islam, and they embraced Islam. He divided the camels among them. But it occurred to him then that he should withdraw his camels from them. Is he more entitled to them or they? If he says: Yes or no, then tell him: My father is an old man, and he is the chief of the people(monitor) living at the water. He has requested you to make me chief after him. He came to him and said: My father has extended his greetings to you. He replied: On you and you father be peace...))**

(Abu Dawood)

Dear brothers, one of the Islamic rulings on greeting is that when you meet one of your brothers in faith, you greet him, and if a tree, a wall or a block separates you from each other while you are walking, you should greet him once again after you pass whatever separates you. Moreover, one of the good conducts in Islam is that when a person gets in a car in which his friends are sitting and waiting for him, he should greet them, but if he gets out of it to bring something and then comes back, he should greet the people in car once again upon his return. Narrated Abu Huraira:

**((When one of you meets his brother, he should salute him, then if he meets him again after a tree, wall or stone has come between them, he should also salute him.))**

( Abu Dawood)

Furthermore, it is preferable to greet a person while you are far from him, and to greet him again when you come closer to him. In the following Hadith which was narrated by Abu Huraira the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, mentioned some of the etiquettes of exchanging Salam:

**((The person who is riding should offer salaam to 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 one.))**

( Al-Bukhari)

Listen to one of the morals of greeting the group: narrated by Anas:

**((The Prophet, all Allah's Blessings be upon him, passed by us when we were playing and he said: "o boys Assalamu Alaikom."))**

(Ahmad)

## **Avoiding the non-Muslim greeting forms and sticking to the Prophetic one:**

We are still talking about the instructions of the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, concerning exchanging Salam. He said:

**((If the people of the Scripture salute you, then you should say (in reply): Wa alaikom (and upon you).))**

If one of the people of the Scripture greets you, you should return it by saying: "The same to you" or "Upon you." Sometimes you meet a gathering while you are in the market, so you say Assalamu Alaikum regardless of the non-Muslims who the gathering may include. Narrated by Urwah that Usamah bin Zaid reported him:

**(( The Prophet, all Blessings of Allah be upon him, passed by an assembly containing a mixture of Muslims and Jews, he offered them salaam.))**

( At-Tirmidhi)

Dear brothers, I repeat in brief what I mentioned earlier regarding the ruling in exchanging Salam: it is optional to greet other people, but it is obligatory to return the greeting. All of the scholars have agreed on this ruling which is based on the following ayah:

**(And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it; surely Allah takes account of all things)**

Allah takes account when you did not return Salam. Also, Almighty Allah takes account when you kill an infidel in the battlefield although he says Assalamu Alaikum. When the infidel utters those words, he seeks protection, surrenders himself to you and submits to your religion. Beware; your objective in fighting against the infidels is guiding them to Almighty Allah, not killing them.

Dear brothers, some people mistakenly think that using non-Muslim forms in greeting and farewell makes them prestigious and upper-class. We should avoid using words such as; Hi, bye ...etc, and use the Islamic forms instead. We should follow the steps of the Prophet, may Allah have peace and blessings upon him, in our greetings and use the Beautiful Name of Allah; As-Salam. Also, we should heartily initiate As-Salam to the people we know and those who we do not.

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