

The greeting of salam

It is a prayer, not a pleasantry: peace asked for the person in front of you. The Qur'an makes answering it an obligation and traces it back to Adam.



Answer it, or better

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا

"When you are greeted with a greeting, greet with something better than it, or at least return it." Returning it is the floor, not the aim.

Qur'an 4:86

A blessed greeting

فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّتُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبْرَكَةً طَيِّبَةً

"When you enter houses, greet one another with a greeting from Allah, blessed and good." The verse calls it a gift, not a custom.

Qur'an 24:61

The greeting of Paradise

وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ

"And their greeting therein is peace." The same word is used for the people of Paradise as for a neighbour at your door.

Qur'an 10:10

Spread it

أَفْشُوا السَّلَامَ بَيْنَكُمْ

"You will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Spread the salam among yourselves."

Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Iman

Known and unknown

تُطْعِمُ الطَّعَامَ، وَتَقْرَأُ السَّلَامَ عَلَى مَنْ عَرَفْتَ وَمَنْ لَمْ تَعْرِفْ

Asked which Islam is best: "That you feed people, and give the salam to those you know and those you do not know."

Sahih al-Bukhari 28 • 12

It began with Adam

اذْهَبْ فَسَلِّمْ عَلَى أَوْلِيكَ النَّفَرِ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ

"Go and greet that group of angels, and listen to how they greet you — for that is your greeting and your offspring's." They added: and the mercy of Allah.

Sahih al-Bukhari 6227

Who greets whom

يُسَلِّمُ الرَّكَّابُ عَلَى الْمَاشِي، وَالْمَاشِي عَلَى الْقَاعِدِ، وَالْقَلِيلُ عَلَى الْكَثِيرِ

"The rider greets the one walking, the walker greets the one sitting, and the smaller group greets the larger." Elsewhere: the younger greets the older.

Sahih al-Bukhari 6232 • 6231

Ten, twenty, thirty

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Three men greeted him in turn. To the first: "Ten." To the second, who added wa rahmatullah: "Twenty." To the third, who added wa barakatuh: "Thirty."

Sunan Abi Dawud 5195 • Sunan at-Tirmidhi 2689 • sahih

Children too

مَرَّ عَلَى صِبْيَانٍ فَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ

Anas passed a group of boys and greeted them, then said: the Prophet ﷺ used to do that.

Sahih al-Bukhari 6247