



# Seeking the Source of Peace: Allah's Name as-Salām

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## Author Biography

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Verily, Peace (*al-Salām*) is among the Names of Allah He has placed on the earth, so spread it between yourselves.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

We all gravitate towards peace or what appears to give us tranquility and calm, even without realizing it. Some may do the obvious things, such as walk in a park or by the sea. Some may attempt to seek a state of inner peace through meditative practices or physical activities such as exercise or yoga. Others, however, seek a state of inner peace through prayer and their spiritual connection with God. And others still may gravitate towards destructive behavior in order to forget about or escape the lack of internal peace. While the external practices may vary, in essence, we are all seeking the same thing.

Though this is a state that most of us desire to be in, it may be hard to understand what it is exactly (a feeling? a state of mind? a journey?). This is part of the reason we seek peace in so many different ways and may, at times, get disappointed. We may work towards something in order to gain internal peace but once we get it, that peace is fleeting and temporary.

True peace can only come from its source. We seek peace because something in our soul recognizes the divine nature of this attribute. As Allah knows us better than we know ourselves and is intimately aware of our needs as our Creator, He tells us that He is *al-Salām*; the Flawless, the Source of Peace. So when we seek peace, we should know exactly where we need to turn.

The word ‘flawless’ is important. The reason why the things of this world disturb our peace is precisely because they are not perfect: they contain flaws and defects and blemishes. When we seek peace, we sometimes try to seek that ‘flawlessness’ in what contains many flaws. And so, peace becomes elusive.

But Allah, *al-Salām*, shows us where to look and what to seek: He is the Flawless Source of Peace, teaching us where to turn when we are faced with both internal

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, no. 989, declared authentic by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-jāmi‘*, no. 1638.

and external stressors in this world, and He guides us to the abode of peace in the next world. Allah tells us:

...And peace (*salām*) will be upon whoever follows the guidance.<sup>2</sup>

## The Meaning of *al-Salām*

### *Al-Salām* in the Qur'an and Hadith

This name of Allah is mentioned once in the Qur'an, in Sūrat al-Ḥashr:

He is Allah, besides Whom there is no god; the King, the Holy, the Giver of peace, the Granter of security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of every greatness. Glory be to Allah from what they set up (with Him).<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the hadith mentioned at the start of this article, the Prophet ﷺ affirmed this name when he corrected the companions (ra) who would say, “*Salām* upon Allah.” He said to them, “Allah is *al-Salām*,”<sup>4</sup> meaning we do not say *salām* upon Allah because He is *al-Salām* and from Him is *salām*.

Other than these direct references to His name, the Qur'an and Hadith are replete with references to spreading peace—*salām*—as well as the Home of Peace: Paradise.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, for all of us seeking to connect to Allah and worship Him by knowing His names, it is important to understand the many dimensions of this beautiful name.

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<sup>2</sup> Qur'an 20:47.

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 59:23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 831.

<sup>5</sup> Qur'an 6:126–27.

## Flawless Peace

The word *salām* comes from the three-letter root *sīn-lām-mīm*, which means to be faultless, safe, and secure.<sup>6</sup> *Salām* in particular means peace, soundness, safety, and security.<sup>7</sup> *Salāmah* means to be free from impairment and harm.<sup>8</sup> What do faultlessness and safety have to do with peace as we understand it?

In *Mu'jam al-Ghanī*, it is stated that Allah *al-Salām* is free of any deficiency and defect and, therefore, the one who is with Him experiences tranquility and reassurance.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, when we feel safe and secure with the Only One who can grant complete safety and security, we feel a sense of internal peace. And Allah is *al-Salām* since He is truly free of all the impairments and defects that affect His creation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, we can say that *al-Salām* gives rise to the following meanings and implications:

- 1- Perfection, free from fault: His essence, His attributes, and His actions are all free of any deficiency.<sup>11</sup>
- 2- Remembering *al-Salām* and living in His way brings peace, and He gives safety and reassurance from worry and anxiety to everyone who turns to Him.<sup>12</sup>
- 3- *Al-Salām* has made His Paradise the true Abode of Peace for His servants, where He greets them with the greeting of peace.<sup>13</sup>
- 4- *Al-Salām* wants peace for His servants and in the relationships between them.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), 442.

<sup>7</sup> Wehr, 443.

<sup>8</sup> Aḥmad ibn Fāris al-Rāzī, *Maqāyīs al-lughah* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 3:90.

<sup>9</sup> Abdel-Ghanī Abu al-‘Azm, *Mu'jam al-Ghanī al-zāhir*, entry no. 14932.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, 3:90.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Umar Sulaymān al-Ashqar, *Sharḥ Ibn al-Qayyim li-asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (Amman: Dār al-Nafā’is, 2008), 54–58.

<sup>12</sup> Ṣafwān Maḥmūd Ḥanūf, *al-Isim al-Rabbānī wa atharuhū fī al-sulūk al-insānī*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2004), 89; Salmān al-‘Awdah, *In the Company of God: Closeness to Allah through the Beauty of His Names and Attributes*, 2nd ed. (n.p: Islam Today, 2011), 40.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Badr, *Fiqh al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā*, 3rd ed. (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1441 AH), 233.

<sup>14</sup> Ḥanūf, *al-Isim al-Rabbānī*, 90.

## The manifestations of *salām*

### Allah, the Source of Perfection and Peace

Understanding the flawless nature of Allah should strengthen the conviction we feel in our hearts as well as imbue us with a sense of peace. This is because Allah is free from any defect in His essence, His attributes, and His actions.<sup>15</sup>

When we think of Allah's essence and attributes, we understand that His mercy, His justice, His punishment, His love and all His other names and attributes are perfect, without defect. There are no extremes. This is reassuring when it comes to His names of majesty, such as *al-Qahhār* (the Dominator), for example, because we understand them holistically. Allah is the Dominator, but He dominates based on His justice, wisdom, as well as mercy. But what does it mean that His attributes of beauty are also free of fault? Is that not self-evident, or can beauty also have failings? We can examine a human being's seemingly positive characteristics that sometimes result in unfairness, to understand Allah's flawlessness in His names and attributes.

For example, in a well-known and horrifying case, a man who sexually assaulted an unconscious woman was let off lightly—six months in prison, of which he only served three months. For that man and his family, this leniency from the judge was an act of mercy. Indeed, the judge mentioned one of the reasons for the light sentence was that a harsher sentence would have had a detrimental impact on the perpetrator's life. But this 'mercy' was wholly unjust—and indeed, cruel—to the victim, to other victims of sexual violence, and to the general well-being of society.

Allah *as-Salām*'s attributes are far from being tarnished by injustice, extremity, or defect. Regarding justice, Allah tells us in the Qur'an, "Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, [even] as much as an atom's weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward."<sup>16</sup> This verse illustrates to us the balance between His justice and His generosity—there is never injustice under

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<sup>15</sup> al-Ashqar, *Sharḥ Ibn al-Qayyim li-asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 56.

<sup>16</sup> Qur'an 4:40.



Him, while for those who do good, their rewards are multiplied. Moreover, His mercy is the most perfect form of mercy that encompasses those who make mistakes, those who slip up, and those who try and falter; it is not, however, mercy that perpetuates transgressions against others. Human love may be tarnished by the ego or the selfish needs of a person, but His love is free from need or want or personal gain; thus, it is the purest form of love for His people. Indeed, this name shows us how all His names are interrelated; we understand His names *al-Wadūd* (the Most Affectionate), *al-Raḥmān* (the Entirely Merciful), *al-Raḥīm* (the Especially Merciful), *al-Hakam* (the Judge), and so on, through this lens of perfection and lack of deficiency.

His creation is also flawless and exactly as it should be, and reflecting on the creation of God can only lead us to *al-Salām*, the Flawless. This includes, for example, the way that we as human beings were created—Allah says, “We have certainly created man in the best of stature”<sup>17</sup>—the natural world around us, the beauty of the skies, and so much more. Just reflecting on a single cell in our body, or the composition of one eye, is enough to demonstrate God’s perfection in His creation. Additionally, there is an abundance of research as well as personal anecdotes on the effects of just being in nature without distractions. People go on nature retreats for that tranquility. The Creator of the natural world that is designed to inherently have this effect on people—and even more so when we reflect upon it—endows this sense of peace through the natural beauty of the world He has created. Indeed, He is *al-Salām*, Whose creation leads to peace and Who is ultimately the source of that peace.

His actions are also free from fault. This is a crucial point to understand. When things happen in this world that we do not understand or regard as unfair, we need to remember that Allah is *al-Salām*, and His actions are flawless. We are told in a *ḥadīth qudsī* that Allah says, “O my servants, I have forbidden oppression for myself.”<sup>18</sup> What might appear to be bad or evil or unjust on the outside has a wisdom that He knows. In Sūrat al-Kahf, we are told of two incidents where ‘bad things happen to good people.’ The people who helped the Prophet Moses عليه السلام

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<sup>17</sup> Qur’an 95:4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2577.

and al-Khaḍir had their boat damaged. For people who were poor and relied on their boat for their sustenance, this was no minor incident. Then, an even more devastating thing occurs. Two righteous parents lose their child. One who does not know Allah might ask, “Why? They did not deserve this. They were good people!” But Allah explains through al-Khaḍir that the minor damage to the boat—which can be fixed, even though it causes harm in the short-term—helped to avert the greater calamity of having their boat completely and permanently confiscated by a tyrant king. Similarly, with the parents, the child was going to grow to be a transgressor, which would have caused more pain for the parents, as the impact of their child’s actions would extend to the next life. While the parents went through the most difficult thing any parent can go through, ultimately it saved them from future pain and gave them ultimate bliss and peace in Paradise, where they will be reunited with their child. Allah’s actions are free of any malice, haste, or injustice; on the contrary, all His actions are from His mercy, His wisdom, His justice, and His knowledge of the seen and the unseen.

Acceptance does not mean complacency. Indeed, as Muslims, we are commanded to stand for justice as an act of devotion to God. We are told,

You who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to God and bear witness impartially: do not let hatred of others lead you away from justice, but adhere to justice, for that is closer to awareness of God. Be mindful of God: God is well aware of all that you do.<sup>19</sup>

However, knowing Allah’s perfection and freedom from fault in His actions should help us internally to accept the things that have happened and not get stuck in questions of ‘why’ and ‘if only.’ We can look forward and not backward, focusing on the things that we *can* do, rather than the things that have already happened and cannot be changed.

Moreover, knowing that Allah is *al-Salām* also enables us to think well of Allah. Thinking well of Allah is an act of worship of the heart. The Prophet ﷺ told us,

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<sup>19</sup> Qur’an 5:8.



“Verily, thinking well about Allah is a part of the excellent worship of Allah.”<sup>20</sup>  
Indeed, he ﷺ also said,

How wonderful is the case of a believer! There is good for him in every situation and this applies only to a believer. If something good happens to him, he thanks [Allah] and this is good for him. When he faces adversity, he endures it patiently and this too is good for him.<sup>21</sup>

When a calamity befalls us or when we face a difficulty, understanding that God is the Flawless Source of Peace should be enough to know that there are wisdom and benefit decreed in the situation, even if it is not immediately apparent. It also means that we should derive lessons from the matter at hand. Some things may be outside of our control, and this should cause us to turn to Allah sincerely in supplication. Other things may have been caused by our own actions, whether materially or spiritually, and our hearts, while pained initially, should eventually be filled with tranquility knowing that we are meant to learn from the situation, seek forgiveness and help from Allah, and be able to move on. When we understand that everything is purposeful—because it is coming from a source free of defect—this should help us to search for the wisdom in everything and take the lessons that we can. And Allah's peace—peace for our hearts and minds—is granted in this way.

Indeed, when one lives one's life thinking well of Allah, viewing hardships and difficulties as purposeful, and using them to return to Allah, one can only hope for good from Him after death. The Prophet ﷺ said, “None of you should court death but only hoping good from Allah.”<sup>22</sup>

## The Giver of Safety and Peace

Since Allah is Flawless, the Source and Giver of Peace, we should turn to Him whenever we feel overburdened with the stresses of this world. We will not find true safety or peace outside of Him, and whatever gives discomfort to our hearts is a reason for us to go back to Him. Much of our heartache lies in the disappointment that comes with expecting more from the things of this world than

<sup>20</sup> *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 3970.

<sup>21</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2999.

<sup>22</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2877, <https://sunnah.com/muslim/53/98>.

they can realistically give and the uncertainty that accompanies placing our hopes on what is essentially the unstable and temporary nature of this world.

If we believe that having a lot of money, for example, will give us ultimate security, we set ourselves up for constant anxiety when we do not have ‘a lot.’ Even if we get what we regard as much, the worry may not disappear because there is always fear of losing what we have, since our hopes of security are placed on that money.

If we believe that one person can fulfill all our happiness, we end up burdening that person and potentially failing to take responsibility to change our own shortcomings. No relationship can be truly satisfying because no one person can give the perfection we expect of them—they, too, are human with their own flaws.

Recognizing that He is *al-Salām*, the Source and Giver of Peace, reminds us where to seek ultimate peace and safety: in He who will always remain. This enables us to be at peace with people and with things because our expectations are measured. When we understand that security lies with God, wealth becomes a means to us, and not an end. Knowing that money can come and go pushes us to work hard, be grateful for what we have, and at the same time understand that there are things far beyond material wealth. As the Prophet ﷺ taught us: “Whoever among you wakes up secure in his property, healthy in his body, and he has his provisions for the day, it is as if he were given the entire world.”<sup>23</sup>

Our relationship with people can be more at ease as well because we do not burden others with the unrealistic expectation of tending to our every need. We can recognize the good in others and take comfort in that, and also realize that it is natural for people to have shortcomings. Instead of relying on others to make up for our deficiencies or to fill whatever emptiness we feel inside, we can take responsibility and work on ourselves.

**The peace we receive is proportionate to that in which we seek peace. When we seek peace in its source—in *al-Salām*—we will find it infinite.**

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<sup>23</sup> *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 2346.

This point is crucial. It means that we *can* utilize the methods of peace that work for us, such as being with friends and family, exercise, a vacation, and so on. God has placed in His creation means of peace and this should lead us to gratitude that He has provided us with them. But it also means that we recognize that these are not *replacements* for the actual source of peace: God Almighty Himself. Nor can they be considered true means of peace if they go against the commandments of God. We cannot substitute prayer with a different form of meditative practice, even if it makes us feel good, for instance, nor can we engage in an illicit relationship outside of marriage because it fills a void in our heart. While we all know that taking a pain reliever does not address the root cause of an illness, and simply suppresses its symptoms, imagine taking cocaine for heart disease. It might make us ecstatic in the moment, such that we forget about our illness, but it will only worsen the disease we already have and indeed will create other problems. Similarly, the Source of Peace would never put the solution in what He has deemed reprehensible. There is no peace in what has been prohibited; simply an illusion and temporary pleasure that, over time, deepens the hollowness in our hearts.

We have to realize that the modern world influences us to incline towards quick fixes to fill the void in our hearts that can only be filled by *al-Salām*. We might post something on social media that Allah does *not* like, in order to get likes from people and obtain momentary joy. But the void remains. Ibn al-Qayyim famously stated,

In the heart are disorders that cannot be remedied except by responding to Allah. In it is a desolate feeling that cannot be removed except by intimacy with Him. In it is sadness which will not leave except by happiness with knowing Him and truthfulness in its dealings. In it is anxiety that is not made tranquil except by gathering for His sake and fleeing to Him from His punishment. In it is a fire of regret which cannot be extinguished except by satisfaction with His commands, prohibitions, and decrees, and embracing patience with that until the time he meets Him. In it is a strong desire that will not cease until He is the only One who is sought. In it is a void that cannot be filled except by His love, turning to Him, always remembering

Him, and being sincere to Him. Were a person to be given the entire world and everything in it, that would never fill the void.<sup>24</sup>

The treatment and the cure for these disturbances of the soul are all with Allah; but this does not mean we will never feel stressed or even overwhelmed by the trials and tribulations of this life. It does not mean we will not or cannot be sad when faced with loss, anxious when faced with uncertainty, heartbroken when dealing with betrayal, or afraid when confronted with danger. The Prophet ﷺ went through the Year of Sorrow due to the loss of both his beloved wife Khadījah (ra), and his uncle Abū Ṭālib. He wept and was deeply pained when his infant son, Ibrahim, died. Similarly, when Mūsá عليه السلام, to whom Allah spoke directly, was initially told to face Pharaoh, he and his brother Hārūn عليه السلام said, “Our Lord, indeed *we are afraid* that he will hasten [punishment] against us or that he will transgress.”<sup>25</sup> When Mūsá عليه السلام was first confronted with the tricks of the magicians, the Qur'an tells us, “And he *sensed within himself apprehension*, did Mūsá.”<sup>26</sup>

This medley of emotions is part of being human and of being in this world. Having faith in Allah helps, no doubt. The same Mūsá, when he was cornered by Pharaoh and his army, said with full conviction to his followers, who thought there was no escape, “No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.”<sup>27</sup>

Just like Mūsá عليه السلام, our hearts can become strengthened through our reliance upon and closeness to Allah, and this usually happens over time. However, tests in this life are guaranteed. Part of the reason is so that we do not become too attached to this worldly life, and instead find peace in God and His promise. Allah tells us, “Peace be upon the servants He has chosen,”<sup>28</sup> “Peace be upon Noah in all the

<sup>24</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-sālikīn bayn manāzil iyyāka na 'budu wa iyyāka nasta 'īn*, trans. Justin Parrott (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1996), 3:156,

<https://abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2014/08/28/ibn-qayyim-void-heart/>.

<sup>25</sup> Qur'an 20:45.

<sup>26</sup> Qur'an 20:67.

<sup>27</sup> Qur'an 26:62.

<sup>28</sup> Qur'an 27:59.

worlds,”<sup>29</sup> “Peace be upon Abraham,”<sup>30</sup> “Peace be upon Moses and Aaron,”<sup>31</sup> “Peace be upon Elias,”<sup>32</sup> and “Peace be upon the Messengers.”<sup>33</sup>

Allah shows us through the above verses that despite all of the prophets facing hardship and tribulation, His bestowing of peace upon them meant that their hearts were filled with contentment and certainty and that they were safeguarded in the next life. Allah bestowed His peace upon them and granted them the strength to face the tribulations of this world.<sup>34</sup> And this is not just for the prophets; it is also for those who emulate them. God tells us, “Peace be upon those who follow guidance.”<sup>35</sup>

Another way that *al-Salām* gives peace to His servants is through those very acts of worship that He has prescribed upon us.

## Prayer, the Qur'an, and Peace

The prayer—*al-ṣalāh*—as we know it today was decreed during the Prophet's ﷺ miraculous journey from Makkah to Jerusalem, and then from Jerusalem to the Heavens. This event took place during one of the most difficult periods of the Prophet's ﷺ life, after he had just lost his wife and his uncle. It is almost as if to say when we are facing trials and tribulations the best thing that we can do is turn to God in prayer. Indeed, when it was time for the call to prayer to be given, the Prophet ﷺ used to say, “O Bilal, give the call to establish the prayer and comfort us with it.”<sup>36</sup> It was something that the Prophet ﷺ looked forward to, and something he took comfort and rest in. He ﷺ also said, “The delight of my eyes is in prayer.”<sup>37</sup> The ritual prayer is our direct communication with God, without barrier. Essentially, in prayer, we leave this world behind and enter into an intimate

<sup>29</sup> Qur'an 37:79.

<sup>30</sup> Qur'an 37:109.

<sup>31</sup> Qur'an 37:120.

<sup>32</sup> Qur'an 37:130.

<sup>33</sup> Qur'an 37:181.

<sup>34</sup> al-ʿAwdah, *In the Company of God*, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Qur'an 21:47.

<sup>36</sup> *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, no. 4986 and graded authentic by al-Albānī.

<sup>37</sup> *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*, no. 3939 and graded authentic by Ibn al-Qayyim in *Zād al-Maʿād* (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risālah, 1994), 1:45.

conversation with Allah. And it behooves us to understand our prayer in order that we can be in a true state of remembrance. During the prayer, in the *tashahhud*, we say, “*Salām* upon you, O Prophet,” “*Salām* upon us,” and “*Salām* upon God’s righteous servants,” invoking God’s peace upon our beloved Prophet ﷺ, ourselves, and all the righteous. This is a moment for pause. We are praying for *salām*—protection, well-being, safety, and care—for our beloved ﷺ, for ourselves, and for every single righteous servant of God—humans, Jinn, and Angels—past and present. This is a supplication, a sincere request we make, which should truly come from the heart.

There is something else that we seldom pay attention to when it comes to *salām* upon the Prophet ﷺ. He said, “No one sends me *salām* except that Allah has returned my soul to me so that I can return his *salām*.”<sup>38</sup> Imagine that when you are supplicating for *salām* upon the beloved ﷺ, he returns that supplication for peace and well-being for you. That in itself is a source of tranquility for everyone who loves Allah and His Messenger. Many people wait to go to Madina to pray in the *Rawḍah*, or ask someone who is going there, to give their *salām* to the Prophet ﷺ in his grave, but we do not realize that we already give *salām* to him—and he returns this *salām*—every day in prayer.

We end the prayer by giving *salām* to our right and our left. The intention is to exit the prayer, and give *salām* to the persons sitting on our right and left (when we are praying in congregation) as well as the angels to our right and left.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, after we conclude the prayer, we say, “O Allah, You are Peace and from You is peace. Blessed are You, the Majestic and the Noble.”<sup>40</sup> The end of prayer is all peace, for ourselves and others, and this should be the effect of prayer upon our hearts.

<sup>38</sup> *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, no. 2041 and graded fair by al-Albānī.

<sup>39</sup> The companions would make hand gestures when saying the *salām* at the end of prayer, so the Prophet ﷺ corrected them and said, “One should place one’s hand on one’s thigh and then pronounce salutation upon one’s brother on the right side and then on the left.” *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 431.

<sup>40</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 592.



Furthermore, Allah tells Mūsá عليه السلام in the Qur'an, "...establish prayer for My remembrance."<sup>41</sup> And what does the remembrance of Allah do? "Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."<sup>42</sup> The whole of prayer is a remembrance that brings assurance to the hearts. If we find it difficult to connect during our prayer, the solution is to never give up on it and find something else to replace it that appears to give us rest. We may not realize it but if we do this, we are essentially replacing the worship of Allah with worship of the self, because we have deemed a 'feel-good' activity better than what Allah Himself has prescribed as a healing for our souls. The things of true value in life may require effort, but the end result is truly immeasurable: worldly and otherworldly peace with and through the Source of Peace.

Additionally, part of the secret of the remembrances of the morning and the evening are that they remind us of Allah, of His power, of His being with us and His protection over us, which ultimately gives rest to our hearts. Another form of remembrance that *al-Salām* has given is the Qur'an for us to ponder over for guidance. He tells us,

...There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book through which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace (*subul al-salām*), brings them out from darkneses into the light by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.<sup>43</sup>

Allah guides through His Book those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace. And this should cause us to ask ourselves how much of the Qur'an we have contemplated and followed, and what the effect of the Qur'an is upon our hearts.

These are some of the ways in which God guides us to His peace. Whenever we face any difficulty or stress in this world, our immediate reaction should be to go to the Source who can truly soothe the agitation in our hearts. And even if some difficulties of this world may try us, He has given us something to look forward to.

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<sup>41</sup> Qur'an 20:14.

<sup>42</sup> Qur'an 13:28.

<sup>43</sup> Qur'an 5:15–16.

## Peace and Paradise

Through both its beauty and its harshness, this world is designed to turn us to Allah. When the world seems a bit too much for us to bear, Allah reminds us where true eternal peace is to be found. He says,

...We have detailed the verses for a people who remember. For them will be the Home of Peace (*dār al-salām*) with their Lord. And He will be their Protecting Friend because of [the good] they used to do.<sup>44</sup>

For those who remember God, and try their best for Him, He has prepared for them the ultimate Home of Peace—Paradise, where there is no sadness nor pain nor grief. Indeed, it is called *Dār al-Salām*, first, because Allah is *al-Salām*, and Paradise is His home.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it is the home of peace because whoever enters it is safe—completely and eternally—from misfortunes and calamities.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, all of its different parts and stages are coupled with *salām*: it is said in the beginning, “Enter it in peace, safe [and secure],”<sup>47</sup> the angels enter from every door saying “*salām*,”<sup>48</sup> the people in it only hear words of peace,<sup>49</sup> and their greeting there is peace.<sup>50</sup> True and all-encompassing peace can only be found there.

In this world, Allah appreciates our struggles. He appreciates our turning to Him, the Source and Giver of Peace, because we are demonstrating our desire to find the solution with Him. And though the hardships of this world might test us, there is something beyond. We are told:

Those will be awarded the Chamber<sup>51</sup> for what they patiently endured, and they will be received therein with greetings and [words of] peace.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Qur'an 6:126–27.

<sup>45</sup> al-Husayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tafsīr (Tafsīr al-Baghawī)*, accessed July 17, 2020, <http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/baghawy/sura6-aya127.html>.

<sup>46</sup> al-Baghawī.

<sup>47</sup> Qur'an 15:46.

<sup>48</sup> Qur'an 13:23–24.

<sup>49</sup> Qur'an 56:26.

<sup>50</sup> Qur'an 10:10.

<sup>51</sup> An elevated station from the stations of Paradise, or the highest chamber in Paradise.

<sup>52</sup> Qur'an 25:75.

Allah tells us in numerous verses that the people of Paradise will be greeted with words of peace.<sup>53</sup> And we should pause to ask ‘Why peace?’ out of all the things we could be greeted with.

We can be granted a measure of internal peace in this world with Allah. But externally, there will be tribulations. In the Abode of Peace, there is true, undisturbed internal and external peace—perfection and flawlessness. Finally, a place where those who dwell in it “will not hear therein ill speech or commission of sin—Only a saying: ‘Peace, peace.’”<sup>54</sup>

Whenever we feel trepidation in our hearts due to the stresses of this world, we should turn to Allah *al-Salām* and ask to be of the people who are with Him in the Abode of *Salām*.

## Devotion to *al-Salām*

### Remember *al-Salām*

Remembrance of Him is one of those things that can give us rest and tranquility. With Him, we can be in a state of stillness and serenity. And remembrance is not just about remembering with the tongue, though that is important. The definition of internal peace is possessing that internal calm despite the stressors around us. Therefore, we need to cultivate a relationship with the Flawless, the Source and Giver of Peace. We do so by understanding His names and the manifestations of His names in our lives, by connecting to Him in our ritual prayers and supplications, by pondering over the Qur'an, and by turning to Him during times of both ease and difficulty.

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<sup>53</sup> Qur'an 10:10, 14:23, 33:44, 39:73, 56:90–91.

<sup>54</sup> Qur'an 56:25–26.

Some of the companions and *tābi ʿīn* would, upon seeing the Kaʿbah, say, “O Allah, you are Peace and from You is peace, so grant us life, our Lord, with peace.”<sup>55</sup>

This supplication was not recorded from the Prophet ﷺ, but it was reportedly what some of the companions and *tābi ʿīn* themselves said when they saw the Kaʿbah—they remembered Allah by His name *al-Salām*. One can imagine that when they saw the purity and magnificence of the House of God, they could only be in awe of His Flawlessness, their hearts overcome by His Peace and His Security. Indeed, it is *al-Bayt al-Ḥarām*—the Sacred House—and whoever enters it is given safety and security.<sup>56</sup> Being in that sacred space reminds us truly that peace is from Him, and hence the supplication to allow us to live in a state of peace and security.

After understanding this name, what reminds you of *al-Salām*? Is it being in solitude, reflecting upon the beauty that He has created? Is it in the middle of hardship, unexpectedly feeling reassurance from Him? Is it after completing the prayer, being reminded that true tranquility is only with Him?

One way to remind ourselves of *al-Salām* daily is by memorizing and truly understanding the aforementioned supplication that the Prophet ﷺ would make after prayer:

O Allah, You are Peace and from You is peace. Blessed are you, the Majestic and the Noble.<sup>57</sup>

The question to ask ourselves here is: When I say these words, am I actually connecting to them? Do I feel a sense of peace with the conclusion of prayer, this direct conversation between me and Allah? And if the answer is no, this does not mean that we should give up and despair. The One who has named Himself *al-Salām* is inviting us to turn to Him for peace, and not to turn away in distress.

<sup>55</sup> It was reported in different narrations that ʿUmar bin al-Khaṭṭāb would say this, as well as the *tābi ʿī* Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib. See: Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī al-aḥādīth wa-al-āthār* (*Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*), nos. 18787, 18789.

<sup>56</sup> Allah says in the Qurʾan, “And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security.” Qurʾan 2:125.

<sup>57</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 592.

Our shortcomings in prayer are an opportunity to connect to Allah's name *al-Salām* by learning how to be truly devoted in our prayers and gain peace and strength through them. And every effort that we put into finding peace through prayer is rewarded in a multitude of ways through *al-Salām* Himself.

## Cultivate peace in your heart

Another way to live with this name is to try and cultivate a sound heart. Much of our internal disconcertment and how we behave subsequently is directly correlated with the diseases we allow to seep into and spread in our hearts. Have we ever met a person who is greedy and peaceful? Or hateful and peaceful? These are natural opposites. No one whose heart is overwhelmed by spiritual diseases can be at peace. We have to remember that from the flawlessness of *al-Salām*, and the fact that He is the Giver of peace, all of His commands are also perfect and by their very nature lead to both internal and external peace.<sup>58</sup> So, when Allah and His Messenger ﷺ tell us to free our hearts of arrogance and envy, for example, it is because that is the path to *salām* and *al-Salām*. He grants peace to those who work on the state of their hearts and those who strive to cleanse their hearts of these flaws. We are told in the Qur'an:

The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart (*qalbin salīm*).<sup>59</sup>

And what is a sound heart?

Many of the Qur'anic exegetes specified that, among other things, it is a heart free of associating anything with Allah. al-Qurṭubī, reviewing the different statements and interpretations of this phrase, stated that it is the heart that is free from blameworthy traits and that is characterized by praiseworthy traits.<sup>60</sup> Imam al-Ghazālī similarly stated, "Every servant whose heart is free from deceit, hatred, envy and evil intent, and whose limbs are unblemished by sins and forbidden

<sup>58</sup> On the concepts of war and peace in Islam, see: Justin Parrott, "Jihad in Islam: Just-War Theory in the Qur'an and Sunnah," *Yaqeen*, May 15, 2020, particularly p. 17 for the relationship with Allah's name *al-Salām*.

<sup>59</sup> Qur'an 26:88–89.

<sup>60</sup> al-Qurtubi, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī: al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qurān* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 16:44.

actions, and whose attributes are not affected by inversion and reversal,<sup>61</sup> will be one who comes to God the Most High with a flawless heart.”<sup>62</sup> The Prophet ﷺ also emphasized the importance of the state of our hearts. He ﷺ was asked, “O Messenger of Allah, who is the best of people?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “One with a heart swept clean and truthful in speech.”

The companion inquired further about “a heart swept clean.” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “One that is mindful of Allah and pure, in which there is no sin, nor aggression, nor envy.”<sup>63</sup>

There are numerous sayings of the Prophet ﷺ instructing us to cleanse our hearts of various diseases, such as ostentation,<sup>64</sup> arrogance,<sup>65</sup> rancor,<sup>66</sup> envy,<sup>67</sup> greed,<sup>68</sup> miserliness, bad character,<sup>69</sup> and heedlessness.<sup>70</sup> Part of attaining internal peace is to reflect upon the state of our hearts to know to what degree we have these diseases and work on freeing our hearts from them.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, the Qur'an describes to us someone who had such a heart: “...Ibrāhīm, when he came to his Lord with a sound heart.”<sup>72</sup> It is almost like Allah is telling us that if we want to achieve this sound heart, we need to look to the story and character of the Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. What we find is that his heart was

<sup>61</sup> In this context, al-Ghazālī explains that “inversion of attributes” means that one’s reason is subjugated to his passion and anger, instead of the other way around.

<sup>62</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God: Al-Maṣṣad al-Asnā Fī Sharḥ Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, trans. David Burrell and Nazih Daher, The Ghazali Series (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992), 61.

<sup>63</sup> *Sunan Ibn Majah*, no. 4216, <https://sunnah.com/urn/1343550>, graded authentic by al-‘Irāqī in *Takhrīj al-iḥyā’* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2006), 1575, and al-Albānī.

<sup>64</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said that what he feared most for his *ummah* was “hidden idolatry, that a man stands for prayer and beautifies his prayer when he sees another man looking at him.” *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, no. 4204.

<sup>65</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, “No one who has the weight of a seed of arrogance in his heart will enter Paradise.” *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 91.

<sup>66</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, “If you are able every morning and evening to remove any rancor from your heart towards anyone, do so.” *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 2678.

<sup>67</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, “Faith and envy are never combined in the heart of a servant.” *Sunan al-Nasa’ī*, no. 3109.

<sup>68</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, “Greed and faith are never combined in the heart of a servant.” *Sunan al-Nasa’ī*, no. 3110.

<sup>69</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, “Two qualities are never combined in a believer: miserliness and bad character.” *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 1962.

<sup>70</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not speak too much without remembering Allah. Verily, too much talking without remembering Allah hardens the heart.” *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 2411.

<sup>71</sup> A good book in this regard is: Hamza Yusuf, *Purification of the Heart: Signs, Symptoms and Cures of the Spiritual Diseases of the Heart*, 5th ed. (Chicago: Starlatch, 2004).

<sup>72</sup> Qur’an 37:83–84.

completely free of anything other than Allah. When his father threatened to stone him for calling to God's way, he said, "Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me."<sup>73</sup> When he was catapulted into a raging fire, he was in a state of complete calm and trust. As Ibn 'Abbās narrates, his last words were, "Sufficient is Allah for me, and He is the Best Disposer of Affairs."<sup>74</sup>

Another equally important way to purify our hearts is through seeking forgiveness. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

Verily, when the servant commits a sin, a black mark appears upon his heart. If he abandons the sin, seeks forgiveness, and repents, then his heart will be polished. If he returns to the sin, the blackness will be increased until it overcomes his heart. It is the covering that Allah has mentioned [in the *ayah*]:<sup>75</sup> No, rather a covering is over their hearts from what they have earned.<sup>76</sup>

The steps described in this hadith are important for anyone who is serious about becoming close to God and attaining peace. Sin and disobedience to Allah naturally affect the state of our hearts. The effect need not be permanent because when we stop the sin, ask forgiveness from Allah, and pledge to never return to it, the negative effect will vanish; not only will it vanish, we can become even better than we ever were before. The link with seeking forgiveness is important. The Prophet ﷺ taught us,

Whoever increases his prayers for forgiveness, Allah will grant him relief from every worry, a way out from every hardship, and provide for him in ways he does not expect.<sup>77</sup>

Why would seeking forgiveness have this effect? We need to remember that seeking forgiveness does not simply mean uttering the words "*astaghfirullāh*" (I seek forgiveness from Allah) or "*Rabbī ighfir lī*" (My Lord, forgive me). Truly

<sup>73</sup> Qur'an 19:47.

<sup>74</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 4564.

<sup>75</sup> Qur'an 83:14.

<sup>76</sup> *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 3334, graded fair by al-Albānī.

<sup>77</sup> *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, no. 1518; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, no. 3819; al-Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (Cairo: Dār al-Ta'ṣīl, 2014), 7:479, who graded it authentic, though there is some dispute among the scholars of hadith about its authenticity.



seeking forgiveness means we are reflecting upon our actions and our hearts, identifying our mistakes and sins, and then seeking forgiveness. At a spiritual level, Allah is guaranteeing that a person who does this will be granted relief. At the material level, because it is easy to get stuck on a problem or a difficulty, the reflection that leads to seeking forgiveness enables us to get 'unstuck' because we are focusing on what we have control over—our actions. We take responsibility for our mistake, seek forgiveness from Allah, try to do better and move on.

## Spread peace and keep people safe from harm

The Prophet ﷺ instructed us to spread peace. Famously, the first thing the Prophet ﷺ said to the people of Madīnah was, “O people, spread peace, feed the hungry, and pray at night when people are sleeping and you will enter Paradise in peace.”<sup>78</sup> He ﷺ also said, “Spread peace and you will receive peace.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, one of the ways to be guaranteed forgiveness is to spread peace, as the Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, among the deeds that must result in forgiveness are offering peace and good words.”<sup>80</sup>

As Muslims, our greeting to each other is one of peace. When one says “*al-salām* ‘alaykum” or “Peace be upon you,” part of the meaning is that you are praying for the person to be protected from every harm, such as physical and mental illness, the evil acts of people, from sin and spiritual diseases, and the hellfire.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, it is also a declaration to the person you are greeting that you will not harm them; i.e., you are guaranteeing them safety from you and peace.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, because *al-Salām* is one of the names of Allah, this greeting has another meaning: we are saying, “I place you in the security of God’s name *al-Salām*.”<sup>83</sup> Since we are with *al-Salām* and we are the servants of *al-Salām*, then we are at peace with others, and this peace comes from God Himself. Indeed, this is directly related to the Prophet’s

<sup>78</sup> *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 2485.

<sup>79</sup> *Musnad Aḥmad*, no. 18509; al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, no. 787, <https://sunnah.com/adab/33/34>, and graded fair by al-Albānī.

<sup>80</sup> *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, no. 17950, and graded fair by al-Iraqī, *Takhrīj al-iḥyā’* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2006), 656.

<sup>81</sup> Maḥmūd al-Maṣrī, *Laylah fī bayt al-nabī* (n.p: KTAB, 2011), 514.

<sup>82</sup> Ṣafwān ibn Aḥmad al-Azdī, *al-Imām al-Nawawī wa-manhajuhu fī asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā min khilāl sharḥihi li-Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Alexandria: Dar al-Eman, 2005), 224.

<sup>83</sup> Joe Bradford, “Praise, Glory, and Peace, Prayer as the Path to Knowing Allah: Finding Greater Meaning,” accessed June 28, 2020, <https://www.subscribepage.com/prayerpath>.

صلى الله عليه وسلم statement that, “The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe (*man salima al-nās min yadihi wa lisānihi*).”<sup>84</sup> When you truly submit to *al-Salām*, you become a conduit for peace and safety.

This point is related to the previous one regarding purifying our hearts of various diseases. We cannot truly keep people safe from our harm and be in a relationship of peace with them if we are prisoners of our lower selves.<sup>85</sup> In this sense, well-being and peace in society are dependent upon our individual efforts to purify our hearts.<sup>86</sup>

## Strive for excellence

As servants of *al-Salām*, the Flawless, we should strive for excellence in all our deeds and ‘flawlessness’ to the degree that is humanly possible. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “When one of you does something, Allah loves that you do it with proficiency.”<sup>87</sup> We should strive for excellence and for good because we are servants of the Perfect One, and realize that all and any good comes from Him.

## Conclusion

We are all affected by internal and external stressors and it can feel overwhelming at times. While there are things of this world that we can do in order to mitigate these stressors, Allah teaches us that He is *al-Salām*—the Flawless, the Source and Giver of Safety and Peace. *Salām* means to be free from any fault or deficiency, to be safe, and peaceful. These are all interconnected, as true peace and safety can only be found in the One who is free of all flaws.

When we feel overwhelmed by the tribulations and stresses of this world, *al-Salām* leads us to Him and to true peace by giving us the tools we need: understanding the nature of His names and attributes, how to deal with hardships through knowing Him, finding peace through prayer, remembrance of Him, and the Qur’an. He

<sup>84</sup> *Sunan al-Nasa’i*, no. 4998.

<sup>85</sup> al-Ghazālī, *Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, 62.

<sup>86</sup> Ḥanūf, *al-Ism al-Rabbānī*, 90.

<sup>87</sup> al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu’jam al-kabīr*, 24:306; graded fair by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-jāmi’*, no. 1880.

reminds us that the true Home of Peace is Paradise, which He has prepared for His righteous servants, who will be greeted there with words of peace. One of the ways of being true servants of *al-Salām* and true Muslims is to cleanse our hearts of defects and diseases—thus, achieving a heart that is sound or *salīm*—and spreading peace to others. The Muslim is the one who is in a state of *salām*, and greets others with *salām*, hoping to meet *al-Salām*, in the Home of *Salām*.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, this is what awaits the righteous:

Indeed the companions of Paradise, that Day, will be amused in [joyful] occupation—they and their spouses—in shade, reclining on adorned couches. For them therein is fruit, and for them is whatever they request [or wish]. [And] “*Salām*,” a word from a Merciful Lord.<sup>89</sup>

Eternal, unadulterated, pure peace, from The Flawless, The Source of Peace Himself.

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<sup>88</sup> Bradford, *Praise, Glory, and Peace*.

<sup>89</sup> Qur'an 36:55–58.