

Peace (KS2, KS3)

Watching the news in January 2020 resulted in many of us praying for peace. This month I thought it would be appropriate to discuss the term peace in a general way.

Islam understands the relationship between God and the creation to be one of harmony and balance with everything in due order and in its rightful place. It is then in a state of security and safety; a state of deep and abiding peace. This comes about when the whole of creation functions according to the great designer's plan; when everything is obedient to God.

Arabic is a language in which most words are based on three-letter roots. Such a root carries within it a whole range of meanings. All the words that are based on that root form a family of words with a shared set of meanings.

One such Arabic root is made up of the three letters slm. This root carries that range of meanings that were mentioned above. By adding vowels to the root, we can make a series of words as follows:

s l m

i s l a m

m u s l i m

s a l a m

We can see the three-letter root slm running through all three words.

Now we can ask:

What is islam?

And answer: **islam** is that natural state of the whole of creation in harmony, balance, justice, peace etc. with God and within itself, which is the way that God created things and the state in which God wants them to live. This can only come about when everything lives according to the designer's plan, which for human beings means choosing to submit our wills to the revealed ethical divine will. Only then will we and all creation flourish in this world and the life hereafter. Our second word, **muslim**, is an adjective based on the same root; it describes something in the state of islam. We can say that God creates the universe in the state of islam.

You might also recognise the third of our words, **salam**, from the greeting that Muslims exchange: Salam 'alaykum. This is often translated as, "Peace be with you" but we can now see its deeper meaning: **"May you come ever more fully and completely into that state of perfect peace, which is islam, which will only come about when you submit to the divine will in every way" [Q. 33:44]**

Salam requires that state of abiding islam that is built on justice, etc. This is not something that just happens but it is built and maintained by human beings struggling to learn, rationally understand and live out the requirements of the revealed ethical divine will. Thus, salam means more than a meagre "peace" describing the absence of war and want, it is something much more far-reaching: the Islamic understanding of peace is that state of the whole of creation in justice, harmony and obedience within itself and with the creator.

The Qur'an tells us that this life is a test; an opportunity for human beings to put into practice the guidance of God, to do good and keep away from wrong [Q. 18:7]. Temptation is to be resisted with all one's strength. This struggle is first of all an inner one, against our own lower inclinations, our laziness, impatience and arrogance.

This resource was written by Aliya Azam, one of RE:ONLINE's Email a Believer team. If your class would like to ask a Pagan representative any questions about their beliefs, or to see answers to previously asked questions please visit <http://pof.reonline.org.uk/people-of-faith/islam/>