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Dreams and Visions Among Muslims

“I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,
’ To a nation that was not called by My name”
(Isaiah 65:1 NKJV).

Introduction

How does God seek those who do not ask for him? He does it in many and varied ways that are culturally relevant to the recipient community. Among Muslims, dreams and visions have been one such venue. This was already announced by Joel when he wrote, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also, on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29 NKJV).

Researchers have demonstrated that among the reasons named by Muslims for why they have converted to Christianity, dreams are either the first or the second prevalent reason (Greeson 2010:40; Trousdale 2012:13).

In a survey of Muslims academics, undertaken at the International Islamic University of Malaysia early in the twenty-first century, all the participants reported their belief in the possibility of receiving true guidance from God in their dreams. Many said that they perform rituals before going to sleep with the hope of having true guidance from God in their dreams. (Sirriyeh2015:5)

Jerry Trousdale comments on the phenomena saying:

Many of these Muslim people come to God's Word by dramatic means, through dreams and visions, or as a result of seeing miracles, for men and women are being healed of physical disabilities and addictions, bands of hardened rebels are voluntarily laying down their arms, and thousands are seeing the power of God's Spirit in their lives. (2012:13)

Dudley Woodberry argues that dreams are instrumental in the decision of approximately 40% of Muslim converts to Christianity, with empirical feedback suggesting that the actual rate of key dreams was really more like 70% (Types of Isa Dreams n.d.). Bill Musk also argues that "the channels for such sharing might be many. Dreams, for example, offer a viable entrance to the center of the worldview of popular Islam, for dreams already function in a significant way within Muslims' lives" (2003:246).

This is not a new phenomenon, since there are many manuals regarding dream interpretations among Muslims in the Middle Ages. What is new is the large number of Muslims reporting on the presence of "the Man in white" in their dreams.

The purpose of this article is to survey the contours of this phenomena, its impact among Muslims in the Middle East, and what role Christians play as they encounter Muslims who have had such dreams. Yet, for many—especially people from the West who are generally skeptical of dreams—it is important to remember the following.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55: 8-11)

Thus, I expect in the years to come to discern deeper ways of understanding how God ministers to Muslims, to better understand the imagery, language, and timing of such dreams and discern the role of the Church for building, clarifying, and discipling those who receive dreams and visions.

Definitions of Dreams and Visions

A dream is “a sequence of sensations, images, thoughts, etc. passing through a sleeping person’s mind (*Webster’s New World College Dictionary* 2005:434). According to Myers a dream is “a series of perceptions or images experienced during sleep” (1987:293). A vision is “something supposedly seen by other than normal sight; something perceived in a dream, trance, etc. or supernaturally revealed, as to a prophet” (*Webster’s New World College Dictionary* 2005:1598). Allen Myers defines vision as “a supernatural visual manifestation, which may also involve the aural, that serves as a divine revelation of something otherwise secret. Visions are closely related to such other revelatory phenomena as dreams and journeys through heaven and hell. Nearly every religious tradition, ancient or modern, contains of visions experienced by holy men and women.” (1987:1041).

The Purpose of Dreams and Visions in the Bible

There are 108 references to dreams in the Bible (e.g., Gen 20:3, 28:11-22, 31:10-13, 37:1-10, 40:9-19, 41; Judg 7:13-15; 1 Kgs 3:5-15; Dan 2, 4, 7; Matt 1:18-2:23, 27:19), with Daniel being the recipient of the most dreams and visions in the Old Testament (26) and the Apostle Paul with 6 in the New Testament. A notable example of a dreamer is Joseph, who was nicknamed as such by his brothers. Not only did he receive dreams, but his life was dramatically changed by his ability to interpret dreams (Gen 37, 40, 41).

Through dreams, “God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride. He protects them from the grave, from crossing over the river of death” (Job 33:14-18).

Central to the biblical motif of dreams is the fact that God communicates with the covenant community and those outside the family of Abraham like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2), Abimelech (Gen 20:1-7) and Belshazzar (Dan 5) and even Pharaoh (Gen 41:1-8), but often the interpretation required the wisdom of one of God’s people to decipher them.

Thus, the functions of dreams include: (1) to invite sinners to turn from wrongdoing, such as King Abimelech’s dream (Gen 20:1-7), Saul’s vision (Acts 9:1-9), and Laban being warned not to harm Jacob (Gen 31:29); (2) to warn those who are falling into pride—Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 4:10-18); (3) to guide to the truth—two dreams given to Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10:1-8); and (4) to warn people regarding impending death

and give directions to protect them—Pharaoh’s dream about the coming famine (Gen 41:14-24), the Magi’s and Joseph’s dream that saved Jesus’ life (Matt 2:1-18) (Bauer 2010:116).

Also, God speaks through dreams to (1) restrain from evil (Gen 20:3), reveal his will (Gen 28:11-22; 37:5-10), warn government officials and world leaders of future events (Gen 41:1-8), provide revelation to his prophets (Num 12:6), encourage his people (Judg 7:13-15), answer believers’ petitions and prayers (1 Kgs 3:5-15), give instruction (Matt 1:20), and warn people against certain decisions (Matt 27:17-19).

Sources of Dreams

James White suggests that one of the signs of the near approach of the great and the terrible day of the Lord is God-given dreams (Joel 2:28-31; Acts 2:17-20). However, dreams have three possible sources: first, “too much activity gives you restless dreams” (Eccl 5:3 NLT), second, those who are under a foul spirit and deception of Satan, may have dreams through his influence (Deut 13:1-5; Jer 23:25-28; 27:9; 29:8; Zech 10:2; Jude 8), and third, God has always taught, and still teaches his people more or less by dreams, which come through the agency of angels and the Holy Spirit. Those who stand in the clear light of truth will know when God gives them a dream; and such will not be deceived and led astray by false dreams (1850:1).

The most basic indicator that a dream is of divine origin is that it does not contradict biblical revelation. Muslims recognize a similar principle in relation to the Qur’an.

For a dream to be from God, it must be consistent with previous revelations: for instance, the Bible forbids many kinds of spiritistic practices, including sorcery and consulting psychics (Lev 19:31). The message and focus of a dream must be coherent with the character of God: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 7:1). Dreams must also bear good fruit: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22, 23). God-given dreams must point to God. In Deuteronomy 13 and 18, God gives keys to recognizing true and false revelations. Dreams should also be full of color and light. Dreams from God may be bright, full of color, bring hope, be accompanied by a sense of peace and wonder, and highlight an aspect of God’s character.

Dreams from the enemy are often dark, hopeless, and full of temptation, leaving the recipient in a state of fear. Such dreams herald death, destruction, and fate. Nightmares are obvious examples. Even when God warns his children of upcoming negative situations, of things to come that

may be calamitous, these are presented in a frame of hope, so that the dreamer may be able to stay strong and resist the natural tendency to fear or be dismayed in times of darkness. God sends an answer when people are faced with trying situations (1 Cor 10:13). It is a customary belief among Muslims that negative dreams if shared, will bring a bad omen to the dreamer. So, they feel it is better to avoid sharing terrifying dreams.

Dreams from natural causes can result from intense experiences such as trauma, or reactions to current events, and often highlight one's own desires and fears.

Dreams and Visions in Islam

The Islamic culture is fascinated with dreams. Dream interpretation is an established science in Islamic literature. Dreams are discussed in twenty-four verses of five *surahs* (chapters) in the Qur'an, namely: Al-Anfal (sura 8), Yunus (sura 10), Yusuf (sura 12), Al-Safat (sura 37), and Al-Fath (sura 48). There are several terms used in the Quran to refer to dreams such as *ru'ya* (vision—sura 17:60, 37:105, 48:27 and 12:43), *hulm* (dream—sura 21:5, 12:44), *manam* (sleep—sura 37:102, 8:43), and *bushra* (tidings—sura 10:64).

Much of the Qur'an assumes the importance of dreams and visions, which is not surprising because of the prevalent dream culture in the Middle East that is shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The motif of seeing God and angels and receiving guidance is one that predates Islam. Elizabeth Sirriyeh says that "many of the Muslim's ideas about dreaming and visionary experience [are] derived from the people's and cultures of pre-Islamic Near Eastern and Mediterranean regions" (2015:9).

Some dreams are direct and do not require interpretations, some are enigmatic, full of unclear symbols and require the assistance of a person with previous knowledge to decipher them. "The interpretation of a dream acts in a way similar to exorcism so as to release the dreamer from the powerful and evil hold of the uninterpreted dream" (12).

True dreams also come in the form of seeing good things, such as seeing oneself in prayer, in paradise, or dreaming of good. These dreams are from God and should be shared only with those one trusts.

The Qur'an says, "When God showed them to you in your dream as few; and if He had shown them to you as many, you [believers] would have lost courage and would have disputed in the matter [of whether to fight], but God saved [you from that]. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts" (Al-Anfal 8:43).

It was related that Abi Saeid Al Khudari said that the prophet (pbuh) said: "If any one of you sees a dream that he likes, it is from God, and he

should thank God for it and narrate it to others, but if he sees something that he dislikes then it is from Satan, and he should seek refuge in God from its evil, and he should not relate it to anyone, for it will not harm him" (Zidan N.d.:1165).

The Qur'an says, "For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. No change is there in the words of God. That is what is the great attainment" (Yunus 10:64). Many Qur'anic commentators like Al-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, Al-Baghawi and Al-Saady said that the good tidings in the worldly life are dreams and visions. For example, Ibn Kathir in his commentary wrote, "For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. He said: 'The good vision is seen by the believer in a dream or given to him'" (Ibn Kathir 2005:2:409).

Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* reported that Anas bin Malik narrated God's Messenger said, "A good dream (that comes true) of a righteous man is one of forty-six parts of prophethood" (Al-Bukhari 2002:1730).

Ibn Qutaybah Al-Dinawari says in his book "*Kitab Taabir Al-Ruaya*" on dream interpretation, "There is nothing in which people deal with from the different sciences that is more obscure, delicate, exalted, noble, difficult and problematic than dreams because they are a type of revelation and type of Prophethood" (2001:24-25).

Dreams and visions played and are still playing a larger role in shaping the Muslim worldview and continue to have a great deal of influence on religious life. "To judge from the number of dream manuals alone, one would have to conclude that the interpretation of dreams was as important to these Muslims as the interpretation of the Koran. Some sixty dream manuals were composed during the first four and a half centuries of the Muslim era. During that same period, very nearly the same number of Koranic commentaries were composed" (Lamoreaux 2002:4).

Islamic Typology of Dreams

Muslim Al-Naisaburi in his *Sahih* confirms that there are three types of dreams:

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger as saying: When the time draws near (when the Resurrection is near) a believer's dream can hardly be false. And the truest vision will be of one who is himself the most truthful in speech, for the vision of a Muslim is the forty-fifth part of Prophecy, and dreams are of three types: one good dream which is a sort of good tidings from Allah; the evil dream which causes pain is from the Satan; and the third one is a suggestion of one's own mind; so if any one of you sees a dream which he does not like he should stand up and offer prayer and he should not relate it to people. (1991:1773)

Within dreams that come from God, there are two categories. Ibn Battal said:

Dreams are of two types: a clear evident dream like somebody would dream about himself giving dates to someone and during the daytime he would give somebody dates. This type of dream does not need any interpretation. Secondly, a dream that comes in symbols and this type you would understand its meaning unless you get it interpreted by a person who has knowledge and experience dream interpretation because sometimes the symbols are very delicate and sophisticated. (Al-Bakhari 2015:538)

The Hadith offers advice regarding sharing dreams. A good dream can be retold to others, but bad dreams should not be shared, Al-Bukhari in His *Sahih* says that Abu Saeid Al-Khudri reported: The Prophet said, "If anyone of you sees a dream that he likes, then it is from God, and he should thank God for it and narrate it to others; but if he sees something else, i.e., a dream that he dislikes, then it is from Satan, and he should seek refuge with God from its evil, and he should not mention it to anybody, for it will not harm him" (2002:1730).

True dreams increase towards the end of times. Al-Naisaburi reports in his *Sahih* that, "Abu Hurairah reported, 'Prophet said, "When Time approaches, the dream of the believer rarely would lie"' (1991:1773).

Missiological Typology

The studies on dreams among Muslims who see Jesus has mostly focused on describing them, but not much analysis has looked at potential patterns, the language that Jesus uses to describe himself, the name that is most common, and the timing when such dreams appear. So, what I present here is mostly based on personal observation and dialogue with other practitioners who are encountering these phenomena.

There are at least four types of dreams in terms of content that play various roles for those who receive them.

First, Muslims see a "man in white" who gives them an indescribable sense of peace and forgiveness of sin. He often uses biblical language, especially "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, based on John 14:6. This is a language that is unknown to Muslims and takes them to the Bible, which is considered to be unreliable for being a corrupted book. Why would *Al-Masih* use the *Injil* to create a bridge to the Bible which is critical for discipling?

Second, dreams are given in which people are in danger—danger of fire, of flood, or being lost in a place of deep darkness and unable to find their way out. Jesus comes to them and extends his hand to take them out of that situation as a rescuer. They understand that he saves those who are in danger. Since the images of the Day of Judgment are so strong in the Muslim mind in terms of physical danger, Jesus' saving comes in ways that are needed.

Third, dreams reveal theological truth. This perhaps is a rare category, based on empirical evidence. Muslims see Jesus battling against a dragon, or like a clock marking the "sign of the hour" emphasizing the need to be prepared.

Fourth, dreams of Jesus come at two critical stages, (a) either to motivate a person to begin a faith journey towards Christ, or (b) to comfort and help when a person is confused and/or wondering if their Islamic view on Jesus or what they have been studying from the Bible is right. This is a point of decision and intense spiritual struggle. Jesus comes to confirm the believer's newfound truth about him. I am not aware of dreams of Jesus when people are asking God direction before a major decision such as marriage, career, or buying a house. I hope in the future more people will undertake the study of dreams in the context of faith development and not just research the recollection of dreams.

Is Dreaming of God Almighty True in Dreams?

A common question in the mind of the dreamer is, Can any believer see God? Islamic scholars have consistently agreed that it is not possible to receive a vision of God in this world while awake, based on the story of prophet Moses: "And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, 'My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You.' [God] said, 'You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.' But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, 'Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers'" (Al-Aaraf 7:143).

Ibn Kathir in his commentary argues, "He said: I wanted to ask him whether he had seen his Lord. Abu Dharr said: I, in fact, inquired of him, and he replied: I saw Light" (2005:4:234). In another *Hadith* it says, "It is narrated on the authority of Abu Dharr: I asked the Messenger of God: Did you see thy Lord? He said: (He is) Light; how could I see Him?" (Al-Naisaburi 1991:161). The *Hadith* in *Sahih Muslim* explained the meaning by saying,

God does not sleep, and it is not befitting that He should sleep. He lowers the Scales and raises them. The deed done during the day is taken up to Him before the deed done during the night, and the deed done during the night before the deed done during the day. His Veil is Light, and if He were to remove it, the glory of his Face would burn everything of His creation, as far as His gaze reaches. (*Al-Naisaburi* 1991:161-162)

Muslims believe that if the glory of God Almighty had been revealed, and that light which he had between him and us had not been veiled, creation would be burned with his great light. For this reason, it was said that God cannot be seen while a person is awake. That is why God withheld himself from the Prophet Moses and also to us; however, God can appear to human beings from behind a veil.

Also, the Qur'an refers to seeing God on the Day of Resurrection: "And leave the Hereafter. [Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, looking at their Lord" (*Al-Qiyama* 75:21-23), in the sense of looking with your own eye. Also, Al-Nawawi in his Hadith collection says, "*Jarir bin 'Abdullah* (May God be pleased with him) reported: We were sitting with the Messenger of God when he looked at the full moon and observed, 'You shall see your *Rabb* (Lord) in the Hereafter as you are seeing this moon; and you will not feel the slightest inconvenience in seeing Him'" (*Al-Nawawi* 2007:532).

Tafsir Ibn Kathir says, "Narrated by Ibn Abbas from the Prophet that he said: 'Tonight, my Lord, may God be blessed and exalted appeared to me in the best image'" (*Ibn Kathir* 2005:4:41-42).

Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani said that the people of the scholars said that it is possible to see the Almighty in a dream, and his vision needed interpretation always (*Al-Asqalani* 2005:16:335). Al-Ghazali said, "such as those who see God in a dream, His Deity cannot take any form and image, but His Deity ends with a specific definition to the slave by a tangible example of light or other, and that example is true in being a mode of definition. The dreamer will say: 'I saw God in a dream, but this does not mean that he saw the Being of God, as he can say in the case of other objects'" (*Al-Asqalani* 2005:16:335).

Al-Nawawi said explaining *Sahih Muslim*, "Ayad said, the scholars agreed that it is permissible to see God in a dream, and this is true" (*Al-Nawawi* 1987:15:25). Al-Baghawi said in his book *Sharh Al-Sunnah*, seeing God in a dream is permissible, if one sees God, and he promises paradise, forgiveness or escaping fire, his words and promises are true. If he sees him looking at him, it is his mercy, and if he sees him looking somewhere else, it is a warning of sins. (1971:12:227-228).

Notice a summary of what I have found concerning the interpretation of dreaming of God Almighty.

1. A vision of God Almighty in a dream is a sign of good tidings and evidence of true religion.
2. If the dreamer finds God in a body of light, then this is good news for great good will be obtained by God's permission.
3. A vision of God in a dream talking and looking at the dreamer is proof that God Almighty will grant the person mercy and increase his grace upon him.
4. If a person finds that he is speaking to God and is close to Him, then this is a good thing for this shows God's satisfaction.
5. Hearing a voice in a dream as the voice of God shows the significance of the great position and the great thing that the dreamer will receive.
6. If the dreamer finds in a dream that God Almighty mentions him in heaven or calls him by his name, then that is a sign of God's satisfaction.
7. When the dreamer sees God Almighty in the condition of acceptance, good tidings, pleasure, and joy in a dream, this may indicate that the dreamer will meet God on the Day of Resurrection.
8. When the dreamer sees God Almighty and is able to look at him in the dream, this may indicate that the dreamer will be a good servant in the world and enter paradise in the hereafter.
9. When the dreamer sees God warning him of things in a dream, this may indicate that he lives in disobedience and must turn and repent.
10. When the dreamer sees himself in the hands of God in a region he knows, this may indicate that this region will be covered with blessings and goodness. The oppressed will prevail and defeat the oppressors.
11. Talking with God in the dream behind a cover or veil is a sign of the goodness of the dreamer and righteousness of the heart.
12. A vision of God Almighty, if it was behind a veil, is evidence of the healing of the patient, security from fear, and good tidings to human beings in general to grant the desires of their hearts. (Dreams of *Isa Al-Masih* 2018)

According to the Qur'an, *hadith*, and Islamic writings, seeing God in a dream is permissible. It is good news of God's acceptance, an expression of his grace and mercy, the forgiveness of sins, and acceptance of piety. Furthermore, seeing God is an evidence of healing from disease and safety from fear.

Dreams of Jesus: Real Stories of Salvific Dreams and Visions

A vision of Jesus in a dream is a vision of truth. Ibn Sirin—one of the most known interpreters of dreams in the Islamic world, lived in the first Islamic century—stresses that the one who *sees* Jesus is a good man, is blessed, and travels and moves a lot to do good and benefit others. For a single girl, a vision of Jesus means that she will do good and benefit others and follow the good way. As for a woman who is pregnant, she will give birth to a male child who is wise and has power and authority to do good. As for married women and other women, it may indicate pregnancy for those of the age of gestation, and reproduction, and indicates the happiness and satisfaction of other women (2008:808-809).

Malik in Muwatta reports a *Hadith* that Muhammad the prophet of Islam had seen Jesus in his dream, which leads to the fact that seeing Jesus (*Isa*) in a dream is a God-given dream.

Yahya related to me from Malik from Nafi from Abdullah ibn Umar that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “I dreamt at night that I was at the *Kaba*, and I saw a dark man like the most handsome of dark men you have ever seen. He had hair reaching to between his ears and his shoulders like the most excellent of such hair that you have seen. He had combed his hair, and water was dripping from it. He was leaning on two men or on the shoulders of two men doing tawaf around *Kaba*. I asked, ‘Who is this?’ It was said, ‘*al-Masih ibn Maryam*’ [Christ, the son of Mary]. ‘Then we were with a man with wiry hair and blind in his right eye, as if it was a floating grape. I asked, ‘Who is this?’ It was said to me, ‘This is *al-Masih ad-Dajjal*’ [the Anti-Christ].” (Ibn Annas 1985, Book 49, Hadith 1675; see also Sahih Muslim 169 a, Book 1: Hadith 332, and Sahih al-Bukhari 5902, Book 77: Hadith 119.

There is another important *Hadith* of a dream that Muhammad saw referring to Jesus and even describing what happened to him by his people. “*Ibn Mas’ud* (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: I can see the Messenger of Allah look like one of the Prophets of Allah whose people beat and made him bleed while he was wiping the blood from his face and supplicating: ‘O Allah, forgive my people because they know not.’ [*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*]” (Al-Nawawi 2007:29). This *Hadith* even mentions a direct quotation of Jesus from Luke 23:34 NKJV: “Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

Dreams: True Stories

In the following section I will describe four dreams and seek to extrapolate some of the insights presented in the previous sections. These stories are only an example of what is happening on a regular basis.

Fatima's Story

"My name is Fatima, and I am 21 years old. I grew up in Jerusalem in an educated Sunni family that values Islam and perform its obligatory duties, such as praying and fasting. I practiced my religion fanatically, refusing even to speak with non-Muslims.

After graduating from high school at age 18 I was excited as I began attending university. One day when I was at work, someone told me about his dream of *Isa Al-Masih* and that he had converted from Islam to Christianity. I scoffed at him. He was carrying Bible verses printed on paper, so I grabbed them and tore them into pieces. I hated Christians because I believed they had distorted the Bible and that they believed in three gods.

I was keen to perform the five duties of Islam and also to do the *Qiyam al Layl* prayer, which begins after midnight until the time for *Fajr* (morning) prayers. During this special prayer time, Muslims believe that God comes down and listens to their prayers.

One night in *Qiyam al Layl* prayer, I asked God, 'Who are You? Who is *Isa Al-Masih*?' That night, I dreamed that God told me to go and ask a Christian pastor about *Isa*. Later that morning I found a minister and asked him, 'Who is *Isa Al-Masih*?'

'He is the Son of God,' he replied. 'He is the incarnated God, the bearer of the sins of the world, and He died for us.'

I returned home with my mind in turmoil. I told myself that it had just been a dream, and it was impossible to change my faith and beliefs for just a dream.

That night in *Qiyam al Layl* prayer, I asked God to tell me who *Isa* is. Again, that night He sent me a dream. In the dream, I saw myself praying in a Christian church in the name of *Isa*. When I woke up, I told myself that it was just a dream.

The third night, I asked God the same request: 'Who are you, Lord?' And He sent me a third dream. I saw *Isa Al-Masih* standing in the sky, extending his hands to me. He shone with light so bright that his face illuminated the entire sky. I woke up and cried, my body trembling with awe and wonder. My family asked what had disturbed me. I just told them I'd had a dream, but I didn't tell them any details about it.

After my experience, I heard news from my brother that his friend had become a Christian and that *Al-Masih* appeared to him in a dream and asked him to follow Him. *Al-Masih* also appeared to my close friend in a dream, and I am still praying that she will give her heart to Him. I also pray for my family, that God will touch them with His unlimited ability and miracles. He still speaks today through visions and dreams.”

Kazim’s Story

Kasim belonged to an Iraqi Shiite family. Tired of the war he feared that one day he would fall victim of the sectarian war ravaging Shia and Sunni Muslims. Often, he pondered why Muslims would show such contempt for those who shared the same scriptures and love for the “Straight path.”

He recounted, “I have been following the path of my father, grandfather, and all my ancestors. I read the Qur’an, fast during Ramadan, keep Ashura,’ and visit the shrines of the Imams. I am a good Shiite Muslim. But in fact, some things were really bothering me and filling me with questions. Why the hate verses in the Qur’an that are used to justify killing each other, such as *Surat Al-Tawba* (chapter 9)? I used to cry as I called to God (though men should not cry according to our traditions): Why don’t You stop this war? But things got worse, and our family decided we needed to leave the country, so we went to Jordan. It was peaceful there—no suicide bombers or cars exploding shredding people to pieces.

I started going to a gym in Amman. I met various people there, but there was one person who was different. I watched him for weeks. He was calm and always smiling and encouraging people. I felt that I needed to win him as a friend. I spoke with him, and he invited me to eat with him in a nearby Iraqi restaurant. He seemed to want me to feel at home. I wanted to know what made him so different from others. Where did his joy and peace come from? I asked him these questions, but I nearly choked on his answer: He told me it was Jesus, or as we call him in Islam, the Prophet *Isa Al-Masih*. For hours he shared with me about *Isa* from the Qur’an and the Bible. He knew the Qur’an more than I knew it. He said something that captured my attention: *Isa* is the One who gives peace in the Qur’an and the *Injil* (the gospels). I argued with him on some things, but he was calm and friendly. He never argued with me, instead showed me verses from the Qur’an and the *Injil*.

I started reading the Qur’an, *hadith*, and other Islamic books, searching on the Internet, and watching television programs and YouTube videos to answer him. That led me to start reading the Qur’an in a different way. There was a battle going on in my mind. I began falling in love with the *Isa* he told me about. *Isa* was different—loving, close, and peaceful—but I could not believe that He was God. That is *shirk*, the only sin that God will not forgive.

One day he surprised me by giving me a special copy of the *Injil*. He told me to read it, and we could talk about it. I had never seen a Bible in my life. I was afraid. I accepted it out of respect for my friend, but I was not planning to read it. That night before I went to bed, I hid the book in my closet.

That night I had an amazing dream. In it I saw a Man in white, shining like the sun. He told me to read the book my friend had given me. I asked him, 'Who are you?'

He answered me, 'Read the book, and you will know.'

I woke up and immediately started reading the book. I fell in love with it. I could not stop reading it. I knew who had come to me in the dream. I knew that my friend was right. I knew I needed to start worshiping *Isa* (Jesus). I had found what I was missing.

My new love for *Isa* caused me many problems with my family and friends. During that time, my friend was so helpful. He encouraged me to stay with my family and witness to them through my life so that they could find the truth I had found.

I have found Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior. I love Him and praise Him every day. I cannot live without His presence in my life. I am still living with my family, using the method of peace, kindness, and love that my friend uses to show them who Jesus is. I am praying that *Isa* will appear to them in dreams so they can worship Him and be saved. Please keep me and my family in your prayers."

Ali's Story

"My name is Ali, and I am 20 years old. I grew up in Pakistan in a family that values Islam and performs its obligatory duties, such as praying five times a day, working in *da'wa*, fasting, taking care of the poor, paying *Zakat*, etc. I practiced my religion fanatically, refusing even to speak with non-Muslims, for they were infidels, and I didn't want to lose my eternal life for associating with them.

I had two dreams in which I saw a Man in white. The first dream came to me when I was eight years old. I saw God in my dream. God appeared to me in white, shining with bright light. I couldn't see His face clearly, but I could see his long white beard. Then God spoke to me. I don't remember the conversation, but I remember how happy and filled with peace I was in His presence. At the same time, I felt His greatness.

When I was 18 years old, I had another dream of the same Man in white. I was with Him on a battlefield with 10 or 12 men fighting against a dragon with an army. The warfare was terrible, but at the end the Man in white defeated the dragon and the enemies, and they were cast out. I had

the privilege of sitting with Him and spent time talking and learning from Him. I was so incredibly happy to be at His side that I cannot describe my feelings. I was filled with peace and joy like I had never experienced before.

When I woke up, I wanted to understand my dream. I asked various people what it meant, but no one gave me a satisfying answer. I started searching the Internet, and I found an article on a website explaining that we can see God in our dreams. I wrote to them for information: who was that Man in white? Who was that dragon? Why were they at war? Why had I been shown this dream? What did it mean?

The answers that was sent back were marvelous. They sent me some verses from the *Injil* describing exactly what I had seen in my dream. I was stunned! 'And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time'" (Rev 12:7-12).

After reading the verses, I was shocked. This was from the *Injil*? I thought it had been corrupted. But it described what I had seen in my dream! I could not resist. I wanted to know everything about the Man in white.

I am just beginning my journey to learn about the Man in white. Who is He? Why did I have such a dream? I am thankful for such [a] website that opened my eyes and pushed me to study and know more.

Ahmad's Story

"My name is Ahmad, and I am a Shiite from Iraq. I left my country because of the war and embargo during Saddam Hussein's regime. I could not go back because I would be killed by the regime. I lost all of my family members to war. My brothers were killed in the Iraq-Iran war, and my parents during the second Iraq war in 2003. I have lived in Jordan for the past 25 years.

One day I was walking down the street, and in my heart I was struggling. Why had all this happened to me? Why did I have to suffer and lose my family? Why were my immigration papers delayed? I was muttering to myself. As I was walking past a church, something stopped me and urged me to go inside. I had never been in that church before, and I was uncomfortable. Would they throw me out? But I could not resist that urging, so I walked into the church that afternoon.

There were no statues or pictures in the church, just people sitting and listening to a preacher. He was preaching in English, and my English is not good, so I sat quietly and tried to understand. The preacher seemed to see that I was not understanding, so he started saying the main points in Arabic. I really liked what he said. After prayer, to my surprise, he came directly to me and welcomed me. He was so friendly. He then invited me to eat lunch with him and his family. He insisted that I go with him, so I did. That opened the door for a long-lasting friendship.

I started asking the pastor questions. He was so understanding and answered my questions with love. I challenged him, but he was so calm and sure of what he believed. We started studying the Qur'an and the Bible. He had knowledge of both of them. We discussed everything—whether the Bible was corrupted, who *Isa* is, the Trinity, *Isa's* death on the cross, family issues, the inspiration of the Qur'an and the Bible, the validity of the *Hadith*, and so on. I started seeing things in a different way. After four years of friendship and studies with the pastor, I accepted that the Bible is the Word of God and not corrupted. I saw Jesus differently even as the Qur'an says, "among those brought near [to God]" (Al-Imran 3:45), but I could not accept that He is God in [the] flesh.

I remember one night after a long discussion about who Jesus is, my friend prayed for me and asked God to show me the full truth of who He is. Then he told me that God will always reveal His truth to those who are seeking.

Early the next morning, I had a dream. In it, a Man in white was talking to me and asking me, 'Why do you doubt who I am?'

I said, 'Master who are You?'

He answered me, 'I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life. Listen to your friend. He is telling you the truth.'

I woke up at 5 a.m. with an overwhelming urge to call my pastor friend. 'I believe!' I blurted out when he answered the phone.'

'What do you believe?' he asked, sleepily and confused.

'I am telling you, I believe!' I nearly shouted. He could not understand what I meant. I repeated the same answer four times before I realized I hadn't told him about my dream. 'I saw Jesus in my dream!' I finally said. 'I believe He is my God and Savior!' My friend was so happy for me, then

he prayed with me on the phone, thanking Jesus for leading me to the full truth and encouraging me to submit my life fully to Jesus. During that prayer together, for the first time I prayed in the name of Jesus.

I do not know what would have happened if I had not listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit that day and entered that church, or if I had declined the pastor's invitation to eat with his family. Now I can see how God led me through those four years of study to learn so much, and then to seal the truth in my heart with the dream. My life is not easy at all, but I can shout with the Apostle Paul, 'For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day' (2 Tim 1:12).

Why Does God Use Dreams to Speak to Muslims?

Through dreams, God bypasses the many intellectual, theological, and social barriers Muslims have to help them receive the Messiah as more than a prophet and to accept the Bible. Due to the significance dreams already have in the Islamic faith and tradition, it is befitting that Jesus would speak to people in ways that facilitate them hearing.

Dreams allows for direct access, and once a Muslim chooses to follow the One that came to him in the night, it brings a level of conviction that causes the heart to respond. Musk argues that Muslims expect supernatural encounters, so for Muslims "dreams are central to the cosmological outlook of ordinary Muslims from founder to followers. Dreams form part of the total paradigm within which Muslims live and move, touch and are touched, meet and are met. They are not optional; they are a meaningful component of life" (1988:164).

We can conclude by emphasizing the role of dreams and the importance of their interpretation by agreeing with Lamoreaux, "to reject dream interpretation, is to reject the Prophet and his commands . . . it is incumbent on good Muslims to attend to their dreams and their prophetic significance" (2002:59).

As we ask why God uses dreams to reach the Muslims, it is important to think about one of the biggest unanswered questions for those who receive dreams: Why did God give this dream or vision to me? The answer is that God is reaching out to that person, that individual, to say, You are important to my happiness, and I want to help you be with me where I am, and I want you to have peace along your journey. I love you!

How to Disciple Muslims after They See Jesus in a Dream?

Any effective communication consists of understanding the three components of communication: (1) the source (who is communicating), (2) the coded message (what has been communicated), and (3) the respondent (the one received the message). This is also true in understanding a God-given dream. The dreamer needs to understand who communicated with him/her through the dream, understand the message in the dream, and then decide how to respond to the dream.

First, you need to help the dreamer understand the dream. So, you need to create a map to identify the elements in the dream (Man in white, robe/garment, light, angels, Bible/*Injil*—book, clouds, cross, people, tree, worship place, prayer) and to understand images, symbols, and meanings in the dream that could be implicit or explicit.

Common features of dreams include (1) Jesus identifying who he is, (2) Jesus shows the cross, (3) he calls for repentance, (4) he calls the Muslim to believe in him, (5) the Muslim is overwhelmed with a sense of love, peace, and blessing when in his presence, and (6) Scripture is often quoted.

Disciplining a Muslim after seeing Jesus in a dream will depend on at what stage of their spiritual journey the dream was received. Was it sent at the beginning to launch the person to seek more information? Was it to confirm the person who was already struggling to know which path to follow?

Randal Scott argues that there is a three-phase process to understand dreams: (1) the mystery phase, (2) the meaning phase, and (3) the response phase (2008:178).

In the mystery phase, the message of the dream remains a mystery until the meaning of the dream is revealed. In most cases, the dreamer will stay in this phase unless he/she seeks to understand the meaning of the dream. In the meaning phase, the dreamer reaches a good or complete understanding of what the dream means. In some way, the message that God cares for me is revealed. In this phase, God reveals his love in a very personal way, "God is personalizing a message to the dreamer that will speak" (181). Finally, in the response phase the dreamer is called to respond to the Man in white who was seen in the dream or vision. This step requires a conscious act or a proactive response of faith.

One of the most important worldview concepts in the Muslim mind is *baraka* (blessing). God-given dreams bring *baraka* to the dreamer, so it is important to focus on this concept while helping to interpret the dream. Musk argues,

The concept of *baraka* is fundamental to the worldview of most Muslims. It appears in the context of formal faith. It is validated and exegeted quite considerably in the Qur'an. The *hadith* described its potential for movement through contact and touching. *Baraka* explains much of the activity of holy occasions, on both an official and popular level, and finds expression and magical practices, including those of protection and healing. It is seen as a power inherited by certain people and objects, and transferable to others. It operates as a cohesive force in social interrelationships. In its earliest derivation, the word *baraka* conveyed the idea of the kneeling position of the camel. It described the position of rest. In that sense, *baraka* expresses the need and goal of Muslims as human beings. In a world of activity and stress, disturbed by many 'beings' and 'powers', they need the blessing that will bring peace. (Musk 2003:240)

According to the Qur'an, Jesus is *baraka* (blessing) wherever he is. "He made me blessed wherever I am" (Mariam 19:31). So, seeing Jesus in a dream is a *baraka* by itself that brings blessing, peace, joy, comfort, protection, and a sense of love and care.

The role of a Christian friend is important. He/she not only can help the Muslim to take the right steps and gain more knowledge of what the dream means, but as Jesus said "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matt 28:19, 20). They can clarify the dream's meaning from the teachings of Scripture, leading the person further in their journey of discipleship and comforting and encouraging them on their new spiritual journey.

It is important to stress that the best help that can be offered to a Muslim is to lead him to the Living Word of God (incarnated and written)—Jesus and the Bible. It is not time for Bible studies or theological debates and lectures, but it is time to allow God's Word to speak to the heart and mind of Muslims, for Jesus in the dream has led them to explore more about the written and incarnated Word.

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