

The Role of Dreams and Visions in Reaching Muslims



by a CMM affiliate

Throughout the Bible, God has revealed His heart and mission to draw all people to himself. “All people” includes Muslims. Yet some Christians see the conversion of Muslims as an impossibility or, at the least, a rarity. God continually sends people to minister among Muslims. God performs signs and wonders among them. In fact, Stuart Robinson surveyed 600 Muslim background believers and found six reasons Muslims chose to follow Jesus. The leading reason was supernatural encounters, including dreams and visions in which Jesus appeared and invited Muslims to follow Him.

Dreams in Islam

Islam contains extensive literature on dreams and dream interpretation. Medieval Arabic literature, both Muslim and non-Muslim, emphasizes the differences between receiving knowledge through physical senses and receiving ideas through inner senses activated through dreaming. The literature reveals connections to past dream

traditions of the ancient Near East. Islamic writers also incorporated ideas from the dream theories of Hellenistic philosophical schools.

The Qur’anic text often uses the word *ru’ya* to signify the metaphysical, whether in the context of attaining intellectual understanding, psychic visions or intuition. The word can also indicate a prophetic dream. It occurs five times in the Qur’an in reference to: Joseph’s vision in Genesis (*Surah* 12:5), twice for the Egyptian king’s dream (*Surah* 5:43), Abraham’s vision (*Surah* 37:105), and Muhammad’s vision (*Surah* 17:62). Thus, of the five occurrences of *ru’ya*, four refer to dreams found in the Bible. Both the Qur’an and the *Hadith* recognize significant dreams/visions of Muhammad, such as his “Night of Power” and his “Night Journey.”

Folk Islam also values dreams. Though folk Muslims embrace Muslim doctrine, they practice animism. They worship both Allah

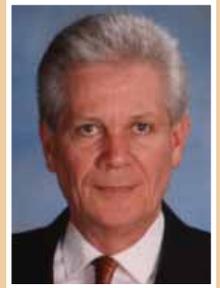
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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? –Romans 10:14

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



A prominent missiology journal reports: “Though dreams may play an insignificant role in the conversion of most Westerners, over one-fourth of those [Muslims] surveyed state quite emphatically that dreams and visions were key in drawing them to Christ and sustaining them through difficult times.”

Hardly a week passes that I do not receive a story of a Muslim receiving Christ as a result of a dream or vision. It isn't happening in a vacuum. Someone has interceded, asking God to reveal His salvation grace to Muslim people.

Most often it is Muslims who live in isolated or dangerous contexts who experience dreams and visions. In most cases the dream requires action or further seeking, often leading the dreamer to a Christian believer or revealing to the dreamer how he may access the Word of God. Rarely does the process end with the dream itself; the dream or vision is most often “a means to an end.”

The isaalmasih.net website states: “A great majority of dreams seem to fall into one of two broad categories. The first could be considered the preparatory dream. Like Christ appearing in a white robe, the vision confirms thoughts or conversations one has been having about Christ or the Christian faith. The second could be called the empowering dream. Here the

dream or vision commonly gives the believer strength in the face of persecution. Short of persecution, it may embolden believers, strengthening the nature of their witness.

The Preparatory Dream. A Sunni woman from the Arabian Peninsula had a figure appear to her in a dream, telling her to visit a Christian woman she knew. The figure, who she believed was Christ, told her this woman would teach her.

The Empowering Dream. A North African believer found the needed strength to face his imprisonment from a dream he had while imprisoned for his faith. In it, he saw thousands of believers pouring through the streets of his city, openly proclaiming their faith in his restricted country. While in prison, he was tortured, stripped, suspended upside-down for hours, beaten with electrified rods and repeatedly threatened with execution. His vision of a day when people of his country would openly proclaim their faith in the streets gave him great strength to persevere through this most difficult time.”

Whatever personal perspective one has on dreams and visions, it is difficult to consider engaging in ministry to Muslims without a recognition of and an openness for God to continue drawing people to Himself through what may be viewed as unconventional means.



Muslim World News



Bangladesh

Police are still seeking the killers of Tapan Kumar Roy and Liplal Mardi, two Christians brutally murdered in Bangladesh last July. Roy and Mardi (not Marandi, as missions groups previously reported) worked as health care workers for Christian Life Bangladesh and often showed the “Jesus” film at the invitation of local villagers. Edward Ayub, a respected area Christian leader, said the two men had received verbal threats from Hafez Abdullah al-Mamun, the supervisor of the *madrassa* (Islamic school) in Dhopapara village, where the two men were based. Police regard Abdullah as a suspect. They also detained a young man named Yunus Kazi in August on suspicion of murder but released him that night after questioning. With the growth of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh and the climate of impunity, further violence is expected.—*Compass*

Jordan

Three months after winning a final court victory for custody of her two children, Jordanian Christian widow Siham Qandah has enjoyed her first anxiety-free summer in seven years. By law her children's Muslim guardian had 30 days to submit a petition against the decision last June revoking his guardianship, but his lawyers took no legal action. Qandah had been enmeshed in a judicial wrangle with

her estranged brother, a convert to Islam who tried to gain physical custody of her children to raise them as Muslims. Abdullah al-Muhtadi had pocketed military death benefits for himself and embezzled nearly \$17,000 in U.N. trust funds meant for Qandah's children. Qandah still faces the challenge of how to provide for her family.—*Compass*

Pakistan

A mob of 200 Muslim protestors ransacked at least 16 homes of Christians in Lahore after a heroin-addict disrupted an Islamic service. Younis Masih, 35, was accused of insulting the Muslim prophet Mohammed. He faces several years in jail without bail while a lower Punjab court deliberates his case. If convicted, Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws require that he be executed. As Masih is a member of Pakistan's historical Christian community, angry demonstrators armed with sticks and bricks damaged Christian homes and stoned a church, where they threw Bibles onto the floor. Police did nothing to stop the attacks.—*Compass*

Eritrea

Eritrean police arrested a bridal couple along with their 18 wedding guests, dragging them to jail because they are Pentecostals, authorities said. The seven women and 13 men were attending a private wedding ceremony

last September in the home of the bride when Asmara police raided the house. Breaking into the traditional wedding tent of the groom, the police took him into custody along with his bride and their best men and bridesmaids. Jailed at Police Station No. 5 in Asmara, the 20 prisoners included two key leaders of the Hallelujah Church, as well as an evangelist in the Philadelphia Church. The church reportedly had taken careful precautions, as there was no singing or noticeable Christian activities, but somehow police learned about the wedding and arrived just as the ceremony was beginning.—*Compass*

Uzbekistan

Christians in a remote village of Uzbekistan are being beaten, publicly humiliated and hounded out of their homes and jobs for converting to Christianity. A local strongman is orchestrating harsh opposition to the small congregation in Janbaskala village, near Turtkul in southwestern Uzbekistan. Tokhtabay Sadikov has pressured local police and civic officials, the prosecutor's office, the secret police and Muslim clerics to impose punishing measures against every villager known to have “abandoned the Muslim faith of their parents.” The water supply to Christian homes in the village has been cut off, and the church of nearly 100 has dwindled to 20.—*Compass*

The Role of Dreams and Vis

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and spirits, turning to magic more than to Muhammad. Yet they remain emotionally attached to Islam. Folk Muslims seek power through herbs, amulets, charms, visits to shrines and divination. They also look to dreams and visions as “signs” that call people to become magic practitioners or that bring divine cures for illnesses. Through dreams, they seek guidance, comfort, communication with the dead and divine favor or blessing. Clearly, dreams are a strong motivational force in most Muslim cultures.

Implications for Reaching Muslims

The Bible contains no indications that dreams and visions ceased following the cross, ascension or day of Pentecost. While not all dreams and visions are of God, God still uses dreams and visions to reveal Himself, to further His mission and to enhance relationship with Him through Christ. Dreams and visions can function as signs pointing Muslims to Jesus. They are salvific because they reveal Jesus as God and as the One who offers them salvation.

Conversion, Connection, and Call to Service

In the missionary expansion of the Church, visions initiated crucial events such as the visions of Peter and Cornelius which resulted in the first Gentile converts, Cornelius’ household. The missions objective surrounded Paul’s Damascus road vision (Acts 9:1-9) and his vision of the Macedonian man (Acts 16:9-10). On the Damascus road, Paul encountered the living Christ whose followers he had persecuted and murdered. Ananias’ vision also carried a missions theme as he confirmed his call to reach the Gentiles. Thus, through these visions Paul received both revelation of Jesus that led to his conversion and direction that clarified his call. Similarly, Muslims have received visions of Jesus that both revealed Him as God and Savior and directed them to someone who could help them begin their walk with God.

In her biography, *The Torn Veil*, Gulshan Esther shared how Jesus appeared to her. One night she began crying in desperation to Jesus of whom she had read in the Qur’an. Suddenly 12 robed figures appeared, and a thirteenth who was larger and brighter. A voice said, “Get up. This is the path you have been seeking. I am

Jesus, Son of Mary, to whom you have been praying... Get up and come to me.” Gulshan felt strength flowing into her crippled legs and stood up, ran and fell at Jesus’ feet. He put His hand on her head and said, “I am Jesus. I am Emmanuel, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. See, from today you are my witness. What you have seen with your eyes you must take to my people.”

Later she prayed and Jesus appeared to her with comfort. Jesus told her to go north ten miles and a man would give her a Bible. She did as Jesus had told her; the man gave her a Bible in the Urdu language. So began her pilgrimage with Christ as He led her to read the Bible and meet other Christians who nurtured her in growth and ministry.

Contextualization

Given the place of dreams in both Hellenistic and Hebraic culture, God-given dreams and visions represent His contextualization with lost people using relevant cultural forms. He also connects these experiences to their own prophetic writings in the Qur’an. He thus combines a contextualization approach with both a Qur’anic approach and a felt-needs approach.

Community and Honor

God used dreams (Matthew 1 and 2) to ascribe honor to Jesus and to favor those who sought Him, whether Gentile, Magi or Jew. Islamic culture highly values honor and community. Any family member who converts to Christianity shames the entire family. A missionary related how one Muslim background believer received merciless punishment for “shaming” his family by coming to Christ. The father was especially cruel. The missionary prayed for God to give the father a vision. He prayed the vision would reveal that true honor comes through following Christ and that rejecting Christ was the most shaming act of all. One night the father saw a white shining figure that said, “You have beaten your son and he did not recant. You have bound him in chains and he did not recant. If you touch your son again, you are going to die. He is showing you the way of salvation. Listen to Him!” The father became a follower of Christ the next day.



Visions in Reaching Muslims

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Compassion and Assurance

Islam lacks the comfort and assurance of salvation. Yet the words Muslim and Islam depict Muslims as people who seek God. They seek Allah through practice of the five fundamental pillars of their faith. But spiritual hunger cannot be satisfied by zealous religious practices. One Muslim writes, “I longed to please God, but with all the effort I did not experience the presence of God in my life!” God reveals Christ as Savior to Muslims by allowing them to see and experience His compassionate presence through the lives of Christians, as well as through dreams and visions. How significant that the fulfillment quotations in Joseph’s first dream (Matthew 1:18-25) reveal Jesus both as a Savior who saves from sin and as Emmanuel, whose presence dwells among His people. This suggests God’s desire in giving dreams and visions is that all people may be assured of salvation in Christ and experience His presence in their lives.

The book *I Dared to Call Him Father* tells the story of Bilquis Sheikh, the daughter of an affluent Muslim family in Pakistan. Her husband, Pakistan’s minister of interior, had divorced her and both her parents had died, leaving Bilquis alone. As she heard the *muezzin’s* prayer call one evening, she cried, “Where? Oh Allah, where is the comfort You promise?” Reading the Qur’an, she found herself intrigued by its references to the Jewish and Christian writings in the Bible. She secretly obtained a Bible and began reading it. One night she lay in bed perplexed with the contrasting views of God portrayed by the Qur’an and the Bible. How could the vengeful God of the Qur’an be the same God as the merciful God of the Bible? That night she dreamed of having supper with Jesus. She felt joy and peace as He sat across from her. This dream began a series of dreams in which God gently opened her heart to His loving presence and salvation.

Her spiritual hunger led her to seek out a missionary couple she knew of. Knocking on their door, she asked the missionary’s wife, “Mrs. Mitchell, do you know anything about God?” The astonished wife answered, “I’m afraid I don’t know much about God, but I do know Him!” Bilquis asked questions until the wife shared

her testimony and the plan of salvation. Bilquis writes “my heart was strangely warmed” by His presence. Through dreams, God led her to discover His presence, love and assurance of salvation.

Conclusion

How then should Christians view the fact that God gives Muslims dreams and visions? First, as we encounter Muslims who have received dreams and visions, we must realize God’s visions to Muslims almost always include instructions to seek out a follower of Jesus. While God uses supernatural encounters to open their hearts, He uses believers to explain the gospel to them. Dreams and visions represent the beginning of their pilgrimage to Jesus. They also need to understand the gospel, respond to Jesus and be welcomed into a loving community of believers.

Second, as we pray for all Muslims, we must understand their deep hunger for assurance of salvation and a personal relationship with God. While devout Muslims bow with heads to the ground five times a day, only Jesus can bring them into true relationship with God. In Matthew, we see the Magi bowed before Jesus in the same Eastern posture of worship. May this remind us that the God who favored the Magi with a star and a dream also longs to honor and favor Muslims by drawing them to Jesus.

God extends the same offer of salvation to Muslims as He does to all people. As God’s supernatural guidance of the Magi led them to encounter scriptural prophecies about who Jesus is (Micah 5:2) and ultimately led them to Jesus, God gives Muslims supernatural encounters to open their hearts to the Word of God and to Jesus. The dreams and visions become signs pointing them to Jesus.

As we pray for Muslims to find Christ, may we remember the record in Matthew 28 of the image of the disciples bowing before Jesus in worship as he tells them to make disciples of all nations. May we fulfill the Great Commission by offering God our availability to reach Muslims. May we pray for them to see Jesus—through the Qur’an and the Bible; through our friendships with them; and through healings, miracles, dreams and visions.

This article is excerpted from a research paper written by Marcia Johnson for a class at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, MO.





JORDAN



Population: 7 million
 Religions: Muslim 95%, Christian 3%, Non-religious 1%
 Official Language: Arabic
 Peoples: Arab 97%

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was part of the Turkish empire until 1918. It became independent from Britain in 1946, and today Jordan is a constitutional monarchy. Political and military turmoil in the Middle East has profoundly affected life due to loss of land, influx of refugees and economic disruption. Jordan relinquished its claim to the West Bank area, but more than half of its present population are Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship.

Islam is the state religion, but the constitution prohibits discrimination and promotes the free exercise of religious belief and worship, while prohibiting religious change for Muslims.

The Gulf War led to deep questioning of the relevance and truth of Islam. There has been unprecedented openness among Jordanians which has led to conversions to Christ.

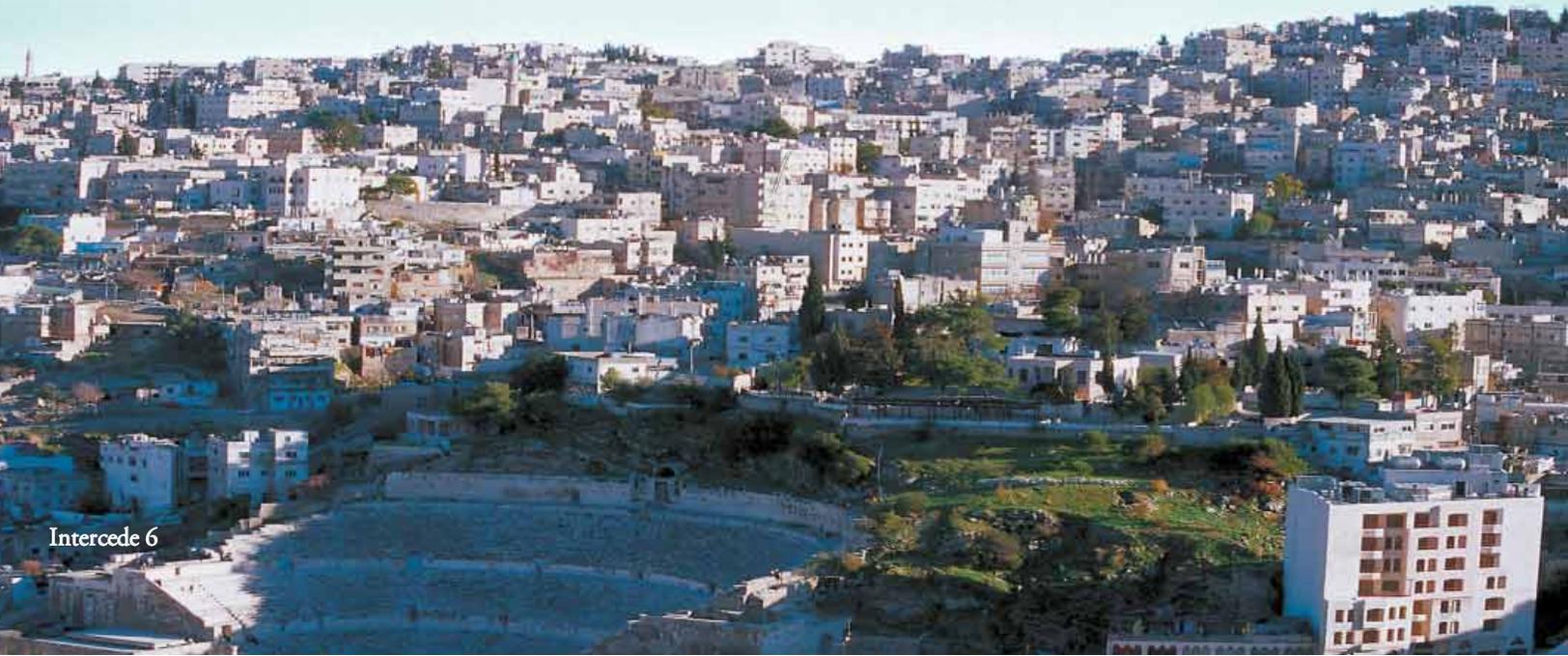
Unreached People Group Palestinian (Levant) Arabs

Location: grouped in 8 countries (largest in Jordan)
 Population: 3 million
 Religion: Muslim 95%
 Language: Mashriqi

Palestinian Arabs fall into a category classified as Levant Arabs, living in Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Libya, Yemen, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon. Most scholars consider Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula to be the original Arabs. The Arabian culture was developed by tribes of nomads and villagers who lived in the Arabian Desert. From there, Arab migrations began, eventually leading to the expansion of the Arab world.

The Palestinian Arabs have always had a close association with Islam. Islamic laws have greatly influenced their lives. For example, they generally marry those inside their own group.

Pray that... ...their traditional Muslim culture will soften, creating open doors for the gospel.
 ...a complete translation of the Bible will soon be made available in the Mashriqi language.
 ...God will reveal himself to these precious people through dreams and visions.





JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, January 6, 2006. Please pray

...for peace in Israel and Palestine. Since the withdrawal of Israelis from Gaza, there has been a lot of unrest. Pray that the Arab Muslims may be able to create jobs and bring order out of the chaos there.

...for the distribution of the Little Children's Bible. Pray that children in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt will soon have this wonderful Bible to read.

...for the students participating in an Islamic course being taught by a CMM team member at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio. Pray that the students will be motivated to reach out to Muslims in their area.

Friday, January 13, 2006. Please pray

...for the participants of the Institute of Islamic Studies being held in Amsterdam until the end of January. Pray that this will be a meaningful experience to prepare them for ministry among Muslims.

...for the safety of Gasir Mahmoud of Suez, Egypt who was released from prison after five months of brutal torture following his conversion from Islam.

...for followers of Jesus in Yemen. Pray that God will bless their ministry and that lives will be changed.

...for God to meet the financial needs of a church in southern Ethiopia that is reaching out to assist believers who have been cast away by Muslim relatives.

Friday, January 20, 2006. Please pray

...for the wives of the Eritrean believers who have been imprisoned for their faith in Christ as they struggle to provide for their families. Ask the Lord to comfort and strengthen them.

...for the safety of Christian families who are threatened daily in northern Nigeria. Pray for those who are returning to areas from which they fled to rebuild their lives.

...for the CMM team member who is teaching a course on Islamic in Ethiopia beginning next week. Pray for each of the students who will be taking this class.

Friday, January 27, 2006. Please pray

...for the bereaved families of two Christian men in Pakistan who were kidnapped and murdered. Pray that God will provide the emotional and financial support they need.

...for Christian children who must attend Islamic schools in Iran.

...for Christians in Indonesia as they face the challenge of Muslim leaders who are pushing for the adoption of *sharia* (Islamic law) in response to the Tentena bombings. Pray that God will give the Christians the courage and wisdom to know how to successfully oppose these leaders.

**I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. -1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV**



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, February 3, 2006. Please pray

...that God will use the schools, bookshops and other Christian centers in Iraq to bless all the people in their cities.

...for Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, often separated from family and living in desperate poverty and hopelessness.

...for outreach in prisons in Libya. Pray for plentiful resources to enable the outreach to continue and for the impact it is making on the staff.

Friday, February 10, 2006. Please pray

...that the Lord will give the Egyptian churches a greater vision for outreach to Muslims.

...for the work among the Wodaabe, Tuareg and other nomadic peoples in Niger. They are physically hard to reach but more open than many settled Muslims. Pray that their hearts will be open to the gospel during this famine.

...that the limited rights and freedoms for Christians in Iran will not be further eroded following the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president. He has taken a conservative Islamic stance.

...for participants of the Islamics course being taught by a CMM team member in the Ukraine. Pray they will be encouraged to be involved in Muslim evangelism.

Friday, February 17, 2006. Please pray

...for Christian workers in Syria. Ask God to multiply their number.

...for the last legal Protestant church in Uzbekistan as they have lost their appeal against closure and all activity has been banned. Pray for courage and wisdom for the leaders of many churches that have been forced underground.

...for the Church in Iraq that keeps growing in spite of persecution. Pray that the new constitution will provide equality to all faiths. Some Islamic leaders are pushing for Islamic law to be enforced.

Friday, February 24, 2006. Please pray

...that the Lord will intervene for Christians in Kazakhstan. The president recently signed a bill that puts new restrictions on religious activity.

...that permission will be granted for Christians in Tajikistan to continue the summer children's camp program. The government recently banned these summer camps.

...for a group of elderly Algerians who contacted a Christian TV station aimed at North Africa and begged them to continue their broadcasts. Pray these Algerians will quickly become mature in their Christian faith.