

DREAM INTERPRETATION

Rating: 4.9

Description: A brief explanation of dreams; their importance in Islam and the three different types of dreams. This is followed by some details about dream interpretation and the dreams of the prophets.

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Objective

- To understand how Islam views dreams and dream interpretation.

Arabic Terms

- Istikarah* – the prayer for Guidance.
- Shaytan*- sometimes spelled *Shaitan* or *Shaytaan*. It is the word used in Islam and the Arabic language to denote the devil or Satan, the personification of evil.
- Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.

The significance of dreams

A dream is a series of thoughts, images and sensations that occur in the mind whilst a person is asleep. Dreams are a universal human experience and the dreamer has very little control over the content. Our experiences in dreams have very lifelike qualities and can be extremely vivid and often bizarre. Some people report very emotional experiences during dreams and frightening or upsetting dreams are often referred to as nightmares. Throughout the history of humankind people have tried to interpret their dreams and many people believe they contain important messages or symbols. There are many superstitions and beliefs associated with dreams and Islam has cleared up many misconceptions involving dreams and their interpretation.



The scholars of Islam say that while dreams can be meaningful, not all dreams should be considered important. Ibn Sireen is considered the Islamic world's foremost expert on

dream interpretation and he calls it a difficult science that should be treated with the utmost care. The importance of a dream is usually determined by the impression it makes on the dreamer, however most dreams have no real value and thus no need for interpretation.

The three types of dreams

Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, told us that there are three types of dreams^[1]. A true dream (sometimes called a good dream) that comes to us from Allah, a bad or frightening dream that comes from the *Shaytan* and the third is a dream that comes from a person's experiences and thoughts. Each one should be managed differently.

Prophet Muhammad said that if anyone has a dream that he likes then it is from Allah. He should therefore thank Allah for it and narrate it to others^[2]. The Prophet went further and said that if a person has a good dream, he should expect good things to happen and only narrate the dream to people that he likes^[3]. An example of this in the Quran is when Prophet Yusuf narrated to his father the dream he had about the sun, the moon and the stars prostrating themselves to him. His father, Prophet Yaqub told Yusuf not to relate the dream to his brothers.

“Remember when Yusuf said to his father: ‘O my father! Verily, I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon - I saw them prostrating themselves to me.’ He (the father) said, ‘O my son! Relate not your vision to your brothers, lest they should arrange a plot against you.’...” (Quran 12: 4 & 5)

Frightening or disturbing dreams are from *Shaytan* and are nothing more than his attempts to scare and terrify us. Prophet Muhammad tells us that these dreams will not harm a person in anyway. Thus if a person has a bad dream or nightmare he should spit dryly (no saliva should be ejected) to his left three times and seek refuge from *Shaytan* with Allah^[4]. He also recommended turning over^[5].

The third type of dream is one that does not fit into either the good or bad category.

These dreams come from what a person has been thinking or worrying about or from the experiences, events and fears stored in the memory and the subconscious. These dreams are of no consequence and there is no interpretation for them.

Rules of dream interpretation

It is the opinion of most Islamic scholars that dreams should be interpreted only by someone that is qualified to do so. The reason for this is that the interpretation of dreams can be problematic. Take for instance a simple thing such as knowing whether the dream you had was about you or someone else or even someone connected to someone else. A companion of Prophet Muhammad's saw in a dream the great enemy of Islam Abu Jahl becoming Muslim and pledging allegiance to the Prophet. This did not happen; it was Abu Jahl's son who sometime later converted to Islam and vowed

allegiance. Symbol's in dreams are also problematic because they mean different things to different people.

We must be careful not to rely too much on dreams or believe that they are filled with hidden meanings and symbols. However there are some dreams that are easy to interpret. If Prophet Muhammad appears in a dream and looks as he is described in the *Sunnah* then we can be sure that this is a true dream, one from Allah and full of good tidings. The Prophet said that whoever sees him in a dream has indeed seen the truth [6].

In regards to interpreting dreams as an answer to an *Istikarah* prayer [7], then this is an incorrect practice. Allah does not answer this prayer through dreams. Dreams that are interpreted must be done so according to the Quran and the *Sunnah*. An example of this would be if a person dreamt of holding tightly to a rope. We could understand that this meant a covenant with Allah because we find in the Quran the following verse.

“And hold fast all of you to the rope of Allah...” (Quran 3:103)

The dreams of the prophets

True or good dreams are a part of prophethood; Prophet Muhammad told us that true dreams are one of 46 parts of prophethood [8]. His beloved wife Aisha tells us that the first revelation granted to the Prophet was a true dream in a state of deep sleep and that he never dreamed a dream that was not prophetic after that [9]. The scholars of Islam agree that the dreams of the prophets are a form of revelation. An example of this is when Prophet Ibrahim intended to slay his son because he had seen it in a dream.

The trueness of a dream is related to the truthfulness and sincerity of the dreamer. Prophet Muhammad said that those who have the truest dreams are those who are the most truthful in speech [10]. He also told us that towards the end of days there will be very few untrue dreams. He explained that since the prophets and their influence would be so far away in time, the believers would be given a form of compensation, true dreams [11].

Footnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[3] *Saheeh Muslim*

[4] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari & Saheeh Muslim.*

[5] *Saheeh Muslim*

[6] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[7] Explained here: <http://www.newmuslims.com/lessons/163/>

[8] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[9] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[10] *Saheeh Muslim*

[11] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari & Saheeh Muslim*

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