

Dreams in Islam – Part 1 – Seeking Protection from Bad Dreams.



Abu Qatada reported Allah's Messenger (saw) as saying: A good vision (mubashshira – مباحشرا) is from Allah and a bad dream (hulm - حلم) is from the satan; so if one of you sees anything in a dream which he dislikes, one should spit on one's left side three times and seek refuge with Allah from its evil and then it will never harm him. Abu Salama said: I used to see dreams weighing more heavily upon me than a mountain; but since I heard this hadith I do not let it burden me. (Sahih Muslim - 5616)

This hadith (also reported in Sahih Bukhari) and others like it with minor variations in both isnad and matn, illustrates that dreams and the interpretation of their content was important to the prophet Muhammad (saw) and the group of righteous companions, may Allah (swt) be pleased with them. Indeed, in other hadith that we will explore there are accounts of interpretations and traditions that were followed in making those interpretations. The science of Islamic dream interpretation dates back to those times and borrows from traditions that pre-date Islam. There are also examples of dream interpretation in the Qur'an (notably the story of Yusuf) and other passages which support the desirability and permissibility of interpretation by qualified individuals.

In this case we see that seeking protection from the bad dreams influenced upon us by Shaytan is allowed and encouraged. The influence of bad dreams in our life is one that, as Abu Salama reports, burdens us as if the weight of a mountain is upon us. Probably all of us can relate to this, after having awakened from a nightmarish vision. It is true that its impact on us seems very real.

At these times we remember that there is only one true refuge for us. That refuge is in Allah (swt). So with a clear conscience and with faith we can turn to Him and ask for that protection. Rasul Allah (saw) goes so far as to tell us in this hadith that doing so, in the manner prescribed, will prevent any harm from coming from the dream. A revelation that eases Abu Salama's mind and should relieve ours as well when faced with the bad dream.

The hadith tells us that when we awake from such a dream in fear of what we have seen we should spit three times on our left side (if you are married make sure your spouse is out of the way when you do this) and seek refuge in Allah (swt) from its evil. The words to repeat to ask for this protection are:

أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم

a'udhu billahi min ashaytanir rajim (I seek protection in Allah from Shaytan, the rejected)

And Allah (swt) knows best.