

Does God still speak in dreams and visions?

Sometimes God speaks directly to us in dreams.¹ This was at one time a highly sought out form of divine communication and those who lost this gift were greatly troubled.² However, in a day when beautiful coffee table books on angels and dreams are a dime a dozen we need to remember that these divine dreams were not always very pleasant. Often they were actually positively nightmarish.³

The prophetic dreamers were not always able to interpret their dreams. Sometimes they needed interpretive help: Gideon required the help of a friend to interpret his dream.⁴ Nebuchadnezzar demanded the aid of magicians, astrologers, but it ultimately required Daniel (a renowned and much honored interpreter of dreams and visions⁵) to interpret his dream and tell him what to do with it.⁶

Joseph interpreted the dreams of the chief baker, the chief cupbearer and the pharaoh.⁷ Interestingly however, Joseph did not interpret his own dreams in his youth. His brothers and father jumped to the right conclusion but he did not. Either his abilities to interpret were not yet fully developed or he had an innate sense of modesty and did not want to publicly claim the obvious conclusion that he would rule.⁸

The servants of God were given visions and dreams for specific reasons and/or to convey special messages. For example, Jesus gave a vision of His future Kingdom on earth to Peter, James, and John, no doubt as a witness and encouragement both to them and to us.⁹

These dreams were never lightly given. Apparently Hashem only uses this form of communication when the circumstances warrant. Even then, such revelations were ordinarily (but not always according to Acts 2:17-18 and Joel 2:28) directed to His ministers and specially chosen servants such as Jacob, Joseph, Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel.¹⁰

We must keep in mind that false prophets also claim to dream in the name of the Lord in order to lead us astray.¹¹ Religious leaders often are tempted to give their message divine authority by claiming to see visions, have prophetic dreams or to speak to angels. Those who do so falsely can be sure that the Lord God will visit their iniquity upon them.¹²

This leaves us with the responsibility to “test the spirits” and make sure that the person who is sharing what they claim to be a prophetic dream is a valid prophet of God. Their lives must not be characterized by sin or rebellion. Their message must not contradict the Word of God. It must not lead people away from the God of the Bible to worship some other lesser god or their own vain imaginings and feelings.¹³

God has used prophetic dreams and visions in the past and will do so again in a particularly startling fashion toward the End of Days.¹⁴

Today, God principally speaks to us through His Son¹⁵ Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.¹⁶ The Bible is the Word of God in written form. God the Father gave it to Christ. Christ, in turn,

¹ Genesis 28:10-13; 37:5-11; 41:15-16; Judges 7:13-15

² 1 Samuel 28:6, 15

³ Job 4:12-21

⁴ Judges 7:13-15

⁵ Daniel 1:17; 5:12-17

⁶ Daniel 2:24-28

⁷ Genesis 40:5-8; 41:15-16

⁸ Genesis 37:5-11

⁹ Matthew 17:1-9

¹⁰ Amos 3:7

¹¹ Jeremiah 23:25-32; 27:9-10; 28:9-10

¹² Zechariah 10:2-3

¹³ Deuteronomy 13:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

¹⁴ Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2:28

¹⁵ Hebrews 1:1-2

¹⁶ John 1:1, 14

inspired both the prophets and the apostles, and they preserved it for us. The Father's will, commandments, and specific promises are revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. So God is actually speaking to us through His Word, the Bible.¹⁷

It is not always easy to determine the origin of a vision, dream, or premonition which one might experience. Therefore, we must be very careful about ascribing to God any such communication—even if it is supernatural!¹⁸ John tells us that any visionary must “confess” Christ. This is more than simple verbal assent, however. Adolph Hitler at one point claimed to be a Christian! The term “confess” in this sense means to live that truth. Anyone can SAY “Jesus is God in flesh”. Many who do, fail to live their lives accordingly. “By their fruit you shall know them” says our Master.¹⁹

Jude warns that sometimes false ministers use dreams and visions to deceive God's people and create a following for themselves.²⁰ We must be careful to separate such paranormal activity from the revealed truth of God. God, through the prophet Isaiah, instructs us how to test the spirits.²¹

Unless a dream or vision agrees completely with the Bible in its message and content, we can know it is not of God. Some visions and dreams may simply be caused by mental or physical stress or the pressures of daily life. The Bible reveals that dreams may result from an upset or overly stimulated mind. If one has had a very troubled or busy day, he might be more likely to have vivid dreams that night. Ill health or memories of unpleasant experiences may also cause such dreams.²²

In situations where an unpleasant dream or vision causes distress, fear, physical sickness, or any such thing, seek God's intervention and healing. If Satan bothers us with bad dreams, we should ask God to rebuke him.²³

We should also stay close to God in prayer and Bible study so that Satan cannot bother us.²⁴

God will grant us peace of mind if we walk with Him each day²⁵ but again, it is not the one who “claims” peace (as the “health and wealth theologians” will urge) but the one who has seen, heard, received, learned and DONE the will of God.

¹⁷ 2 Peter 1:20-21; Luke 1:70

¹⁸ 1 John 4:1-3;

¹⁹ Matthew 7:16

²⁰ Jude 1:8; Deuteronomy 13:1-5

²¹ Isaiah 8:19-20

²² Ecclesiastes 5:3

²³ Jude 1:9

²⁴ James 4:7-10

²⁵ Philippians 4:4-9; Isaiah 26:3