

In honor of the special **Adventist World Radio Sabbath offering** this month, we are reprinting Wisam Ali's story—with an important update! His amazing life of miracles continues!



March 2020

Dear AWR Friend,

This past November, I was on the banks of the Jordan River in Nazareth. Many tourists visit this place where Jesus was baptized, and it's not unusual to see Christian church groups—especially from America—holding baptismal services in its waters.

But I was there for a very special and unprecedented event. I had the privilege of participating in the baptism of 16 precious souls, including a group of Arabs who gave testimony of their faith in Jesus and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church!

One of those baptized was Mohammed, a Bedouin—a nomadic Arab of the desert who lives with his people in tents made of animal skins. Bedouins are steeped in tradition and considered impossible to reach with the gospel message due to their nomadic lifestyle. And yet, there he was—because nothing is impossible with God!

But let me start at the beginning, because the events leading up to this moment were amazing. Just like God parted the water of this same Jordan River many years ago when Israel's spiritual leaders walked forward by faith, we can only watch in awe as God parts the waters and opens doors, inviting us to walk forward with the precious message—and He calls the most unexpected people!

RECAP: WISAM'S CALLING

I recently shared with you the story of Wisam. He was born into a powerful Muslim family in Nazareth, where his father was the chief and his uncle the imam, or Islamic religious leader.

As a young man, Wisam was taught to hate Christians and their pork-eating and alcohol-drinking ways. So, when he learned that his sister—who had gone to Europe to pursue her studies—had become a Christian, he was irate, and immediately told his family.

A tribal council was called, and his uncle told Wisam, "You must go to Europe and kill her!"

Soon, Wisam was on a flight to Europe. Hoping to change his sister's mind, he called her and said, "I have been sent by the family to kill you."

Much to his surprise, his sister remained calm and asked Wisam to give her a year. He agreed to wait (especially since she didn't disclose her address), and she then suggested that he stay at the Bogenhofen Christian school in Austria and study German. What he didn't know was that the school was Adventist and his sister was engaged to an Adventist pastor!



In the Jordan River, Duane McKey baptized Wisam's niece who recently gave her heart to Jesus.

Wisam liked this idea. He was sure that Allah was opening doors for him to convert Christians to Islam! But as time passed, the opposite happened. There grew in Wisam a desire to know the Jesus who raised the dead and forgave sins. The concept of a loving God who wanted a relationship with him was new to Wisam. By the time the year was up, Wisam had accepted Jesus and was baptized. Instead of killing his sister, he attended her wedding!

“STONE HIM!”

When Wisam returned to Nazareth, eager to share his newfound faith, he was received with suspicion and questioned about his loyalty to the Muslim faith. His uncle was angry when he learned Wisam had not killed his sister. And when Wisam boldly asked the council if they knew Jesus the Creator mentioned in the Quran, his uncle shouted, “Stone him!”

The men picked up rocks and hurled them at Wisam until he fell to the ground, unconscious. His father, moved to compassion, ordered one of Wisam’s brothers to rescue him and take him to the hospital, where he eventually recovered from his injuries. But when he returned home, the hostility continued and a few days later, he was stoned again! This time, his parents suggested he leave Israel.

Wisam returned to Bogenhofen, where he studied theology. Through an incredible set of circumstances, he found his way to America and attended Southern Adventist University in Tennessee. Eventually, he married Adri, a beautiful Adventist girl from South Africa, and together they pastored several churches throughout Europe.

Then an amazing thing happened: Wisam was asked to pastor in the Israel Field—right in his hometown of Nazareth! His mother was thrilled! She told him his uncle was dead and if Wisam returned, he would be safe. Wisam said, “Mother, if I return, no one can stop me from preaching the truth.” She not only agreed, but offered him a special place in the family business.

STABBED!

If you think Wisam’s conversion story couldn’t be more riveting and miraculous, it’s only because you haven’t heard the rest of the story. The real adventure of faith began when he started working for Jesus—and it’s been one miracle after another.

Last year, my wife Kathy and I visited Wisam and Adri in Nazareth. Adventist World Radio delivered a supply of Godpods for them to share with their community. We personally had the privilege of giving these special solar-powered audio devices to Wisam’s family—his mother, brothers and sisters (his father had since passed away). These Godpods contain the whole Bible in Arabic and Farsi, plus Bible studies and children’s stories.

While in Tel Aviv a few months ago, Wisam and Adri shared with us something that shook the Arab community and showed how God continues to protect Wisam and guide his ministry:

Not long before we arrived, two of Wisam’s cousins, angry at his Christian influence in the community, rallied a mob and went to Wisam’s house to attack him. One of his cousins carried a large butcher knife, and when Wisam came out of the house, they rushed him, screaming insults.

Adri heard the commotion and knew her husband was in serious trouble. She fell on her knees and began to pray. These cousins were the same ones who years before had actively participated in his stoning. Their father, the imam, was now dead, but his sons continued his legacy of hatred.



Duane and Kathy McKey (far left and far right) visit with Wisam, his wife, Adri, and their daughter (front center).



Wisam holds the butcher knife that was bent by an angel.

As Adri prayed, Wisam faced his aggressors. Unwilling to fight, and finding they would not be appeased, Wisam turned to go. In that moment, one of his cousins charged, stabbing him with enough force to plunge the sharp blade deep into his back.

Well, at least that was his plan, but what really happened is a different story. The blade of the thick knife bent at a 90-degree angle! The cousin dropped the knife in confusion, unable to understand what had happened. Wisam's brother picked up the now-useless knife and shook it in the air as he shouted, "Now try to kill the man of God!"

In the confusion and bewilderment, the crowd quickly dispersed, but as they were leaving, one of the cousins turned and shouted, "Wisam, you will not know how or when or where, but I will kill you!"

After the mob left, Wisam's family checked him for injuries. There were only two small tears on his shirt where the knife had entered and the bent blade had exited. The only mark on his skin was a small scratch—the knife had not penetrated his back!

Wisam's family vowed revenge on the cousins, but he said, "No, we will not attack them. God will fight for us."

As Wisam recounted the story to Kathy and me, he shared what had happened two weeks before we arrived. The two cousins who had threatened Wisam were riding their motorcycle, and as they rounded a corner, they hit a truck head-on. One cousin was killed instantly, and the other died a week later from his injuries.

THE REST OF THE STORY

This made a huge impact in the Muslim community. Wisam's family is prominent in the city, and it was a well-known fact that his uncle's family had vowed to kill him for being a Christian. People were amazed at his refusal to fight back and in awe of his deliverance.

Wisam's influence grew by leaps and bounds in both the Muslim and Jewish communities, and last year he was asked to be board chair of the largest school in Nazareth. When he told them, "But I'm a Christian!" they replied, "We know, and we don't care. We still want you to head our board."

Wisam has now opened a center of influence in the heart of Nazareth, where he teaches English straight from the Bible—and there is a waiting list to attend his classes!

But there's more!

WISAM, THE ARABS AND THE BEDOUIN

Recently, Wisam needed to translate our *Revelation of Hope* sermons into Arabic, so he approached a translator, Jamil, who agreed to do it. As he worked on the translations, Jamil was greatly moved by the Adventist message and was compelled to share what he was reading with a close friend from an Arab Baptist church in Nazareth. This friend, in turn, was so impressed that he shared the messages with his pastor.

It was now the pastor's turn to be impressed by the solid Bible-based presentations. He contacted Wisam and asked him to come to his church to share the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



They loved the presentations and Wisam became a regular guest at the Arab Baptist church. He went through the whole sermon series, and at their insistence, continued with more in-depth subjects—including our prophetic and health messages and Ellen White's writings.

To make a long and interesting story short, the Baptist pastor and most of his congregation decided to be baptized in the Jordan River and join the Adventist Church! That's why I was there, on the banks of the Jordan River, moved beyond words as Wisam and I baptized these precious souls.

And the Bedouin? Living the nomadic lifestyle, Bedouins don't normally attend school, but a group of Christians started a school adapted to their lifestyle. Mohammed attended that school, and one day he noticed a cross hanging in his teacher's car. He asked her what it meant, and she told him the story of Jesus.

Mohammed had never heard anything like it before. He found a Bible and began reading, but he wanted to understand more. One day, while visiting Wisam's center of influence, he learned he could receive sermons through his cell phone—the sermons Jamil had translated!

The rest is history. As I stood on the banks of the Jordan River, I watched as Jamil, Mohammed, and the first fruits of Wisam's labor with the Arab church group entered the baptismal waters. But there was one more person. One of Wisam's nieces made her decision for Jesus, and I had the privilege of baptizing her!

There is no greater joy than leading others to Jesus—even if we only play a small part in guiding their journey. We may not all be called to face peril like Wisam, but God is calling all who are willing to play a part in proclaiming His last-day message.

Adventist World Radio not only broadcasts into all the predominantly-Muslim countries in their own languages, but we are working with people like Wisam, helping to share the gospel message in countries that still need to hear the story of Jesus. We are promised that if we step forward in faith, the waters will part.

Thank you for supporting the work of Adventist World Radio. Jesus is coming soon, and He invites all of us to be a part of this great movement that will light the world with the knowledge of His truth.

Yours in the Blessed Hope,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duane McKey".

Duane McKey
President



Mohammed the Bedouin with Duane and Cami enjoying a cell phone evangelism moment.

P.S. If you would like to hear Wisam tell his story and learn additional details, visit awr.org/wisam. You can also view many of the amazing stories happening right now around the world! Your support is what makes these stories possible—and it's changing lives for eternity!