



## Can Women do Dream Amelioration?

### The Importance of Remembering Our Dreams

The long nights of the month of Kislev is the time to focus on our dreams. I love to linger in bed under my warm cover with the perfect excuse to take my time until I get up and out into the cold, dark winter morning. While relishing in the sweet embrace of my comforter, I try to decipher my dreams. When I remember my dreams, I attempt to interpret them myself. I also tell my dreams to my husband, whom I know will only interpret them positively. I'm contemplating leaving a notebook and a pen under my pillow as there are halachic sources that recommend writing down good dreams (*Kaf HaChaim, siman katan 6*). The *Zohar* furthermore emphasizes the importance of remembering good dreams as it states,

ספר בראשית פרק מב פסוק ט וַיִּזְכֹּר יוֹסֵף אֶת הַחֲלֻמוֹת אֲשֶׁר חָלַם לָהֶם...

“And Yosef remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them...” (*Bereishit 42:9*).

Why did Yosef remember the dreams he had about them? What would have happened if he forgot them? Yosef was wise and studied the verse, “A prudent man acts with knowledge: but a fool lays bare his folly” (*Mishlei 13:16*). A person should remember a good dream, so it is not forgotten, for then it is realized. But if it is forgotten by him, it is forgotten ABOVE AND DOES NOT COME TRUE (*Zohar 1:199b*).

### Positive Dream Symbols

From *Parashat Miketz* our sages learn out many fascinating principles about dream interpretation, many of which are concentrated in *Babylonian Talmud Berachot 55-57*. A dream of any of the seven fruits is always a good sign, as I wrote in my book, [The Seven Fruits of the Land-of Israel with Their Mystical & Medicinal Properties](#). From *Parashat Miketz* we learn that it's excellent to dream about a river “...Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river...” [This refers to Pharaoh's association with Yosef, for] every river alludes to Yosef, the Righteous. This is the hidden meaning of the concept that whoever sees a river in his dream sees peace, WHICH IS THE LEVEL OF YESOD, THAT IS, YOSEF, as it is written, “I will extend peace to her like a river” (*Yesha'yahu 66:12*); (*Zohar 1:194a*). Dreaming of any body of water is usually good, as is dreaming of a well, a bird, a kettle, a donkey, a white horse, Yishmael the son of Avraham, Pinchas, King David, King Solomon, an elephant with a saddle, goats, a myrtle branch attached to its tree, an etrog, a palm frond, a goose, chickens, or seeing oneself receiving a haircut, seeing one's jawbone fall out, having a boat ride, saying the Shema, responding to kaddish, or putting on tefillin. The Talmud includes interpretations of these visions, as well as of many others (See *BT, Brachot 55b-57b*). I often dream of chickens, fortunately, which means a blessing in the garden! However, I keep in mind that it may take 22 years before a good dream comes true as we learn from Yosef, whose dreams were only realized after 22 years (*BT, ibid.*).

### Our Subconscious Character is Revealed in Dreams

Sometimes, I have scary or challenging dreams. I have made a habit of never saying, “I had a bad dream,” because the fulfillment of a dream follows its interpretation, meaning the interpretation of the dream actually causes it to be fulfilled (*BT, Berachot 55a-b*). If we don't have our dreams interpreted, they will not be fulfilled. Or even better, if we explain a challenging dream in a positive way, we can transform the dream to become good! Therefore, by all means, I want to

avoid interpreting my own dreams negatively. Rabbeinu Bachaya notes that we should be careful how we tell over our dream, as the words we ourselves use can influence the dream-interpretation. For example, the butler started mentioning בַּחלוּמִי/*bachalomi* – ‘in my dream’ but it also means recovering from illness; whereas the baker started by saying אַף/*af* – ‘even’ which is the same word that the snake said and was punished. There are three kinds of dreams, 1. Prophetic Dreams 2. Psychological Dreams 3. Dreams of Nonsense – emanating from the gas and smoke that food digestion raises to the brain (Rabbeinu Bachaya, *Bereishit* 41:1). Most of our dreams today are not prophetic. They’re simply recycled thoughts from what occupied our minds during the day (category 2.). Negative dreams experienced after stressful incidents can certainly be attributed to those incidents. They don’t foretell anything bad (The Alter Rebbe, *Shulchan Aruch haRav, Orach Chaim* 288:7). Nowadays, the average person’s dreams are meaningless and are no reason for concern (Peleh Yo'etz entry *Chalom, Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim* 288). One of my reoccurring dreams is that I am sitting in a car going very fast and although I sit at the driver’s seat, I can’t stop the car from speeding and rolling down, down, down... The meaning of this dream is clear. It is an expression of my fear of losing control. It is not a prophetic dream but rather a dream exclusively psychological in nature, caused by my unconscious waking thoughts and fears. When a person is fixated on certain things during the day, he will dream about them at night. By expressing our repressed thoughts and feelings, such dreams help us to become more aware of our own subconscious. The *Zohar* explains that a person’s character is revealed in his dreams. As his soul ascends, he will perceive that which he deserves according to his level (*Zohar* 1:194a).

### What to Do About Disturbing Dreams?

Although the Talmud teaches, “A dream is one sixtieth of prophecy...” (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 57b), Rabbi Menachem Mendel Shneerson of Lubawitz stated that unless the individual is of exemplary piety, his dreams are not messages from G-d, and there’s no reason to be concerned about them. Rather, he should try to pay no heed to bad dreams and nightmares. Instead, a person must place his faith in Hashem and fear nothing else but Hashem (*Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim* 220:4; *Igrot Kodesh* vol. 7 pgs. 290-291). Whereas, it is recommended to tell a good dream to our friends and mention it in order that it should be fulfilled, we should ignore bad dreams, G-d forbid, and avoid telling or remembering them (*Siddur Sfarad, Dream Amelioration*). When we don’t give power to the dream, it will be nullified. Nevertheless, if we are anxious because of a dream, let’s keep in mind that the purpose of a disturbing dream is to spur us to teshuva. “G-d made it that they fear him” – This is a bad dream by means of which a person is aroused to *Teshuva* (*BT, Berachot* 55a). It is good to give tzedakka, check our tefillin and mezuzot, strengthen our emunah and mitzvah observance.

### Kohanim Blessings

We can transform a disturbing dream during *Birkat Kohanim* (The Kohanim blessing), because it has 60 letters, and a dream is one sixtieth of prophecy (*BT, Berachot* 55b). If a person sees in his dream as if a sword is cutting his hand, he shall go to the synagogue and listen to the blessing of the Kohanim. Then nothing evil can hurt him. Therefore, He tells the Kohanim “Thus shall you bless etc.” (*Bamidbar Rabbah, Parsha 11, Piska* 3). During *Birkat Kohanim*, we recite a special prayer to transform unknown dreams (*Tosafot, Sotah* 40a). This prayer is found in most siddurim. If you live in Israel, where we are privileged to have daily *Birkat Kohanim*, recite this prayer in the synagogue, the morning following the disturbing dream. Outside of Israel, recite this prayer when the *chazan* says the words of *Birkat Kohanim*. We should all recite this prayer on the holidays during *Birkat Kohanim*, because we can never be sure whether we might have forgotten that we had a dream that needs to be healed (*BT, Berachot* 55b; *Shulchan Aruch, HaRav* 288,130).

## Fasting

Raba son of Mechasia said in the name of Rav Chama son of Giora in Rav's name: Fasting is as good against a dream as fire against chaff. Rav Chisda said: Providing it is on that very day. Rabbi Yosef added: And even on the Shabbat (*Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 11a*). The Ben Ish Chai adds that if a person sees a bad dream, its healing is to specifically fast on the same day.

In addition to fasting, it's good to pray, recite *Tehillim* (Psalms) and give *tzedakah* (charity).

## Dream Amelioration by Three Friends

One who has a dream by which his soul is bothered, should go and have it interpreted in the presence of three... (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 55b*). Dream amelioration should even be done for a good dream, if a person is disturbed by it (*Siddur Sfard, Dream Amelioration*).

Likewise, the halacha teaches, "If a person's soul is bothered by a dream, he should have it ameliorated by three friends (meaning those who care about him). They should say, "You saw a good dream..." (*Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chaim 220, 1, Dream Amelioration and Fasting*). Only ask those who love you, since the dream follows its interpretation, and people who dislike a person may interpret the dream in a bad manner (*Drishah 220:1*). In addition, when they say the special dream amelioration text, they are praying for the dreamer, and davening by friends is more effective (*Avnei Yashpei 4:34:1*). Some suggest that the friends refer to relatives (*Teshuvot V'hanhagot 2:256*). The three friends don't have to be Torah scholars. If there are no adults available, it is possible to use children as long as they are mature enough to know and understand the amelioration text. However, it is best to get adult Benei Torah.

## May Dream Amelioration be Done by Three Women?

It seems to me, that if children can do dream amelioration, then surely women can. Most Torah observant women today, would be able to understand the recital much better than children. A woman may also be more comfortable with other women. I would certainly hope that close women friends would have more love for their worried friend than would other men, except for her husband., Of course the woman could get her husband and two sons to do the dream amelioration. However, this only applies to married women, who are not the only women that may experience a disturbing dream. The book *Piskei Teshuvot* quotes *Eishel Avraham*, who inquired about dream amelioration by means of three women. He wrote, "I have not yet found any Torah source for this. However, a woman can appoint her husband as a *shaliach* (emissary) to ameliorate her dream before three men..." (*Piskei Teshuvot, Seder Hatavat Chalom 3, footnote 22*). This solution wouldn't suit most women today, especially because a major effect of the dream amelioration is its psychological impact to calm the fears of the dreamer. This works best when the dreamer participates directly in the dream amelioration. I finally found a source for three women doing dream amelioration for their female friend: "Also women who are disturbed by a dream should do dream amelioration. They can appoint their husband to have it done before three men or they can do it by themselves before three women. We learn this from the fact that the *Shulchan Aruch* didn't write, 'he should have it ameliorated by three men,' but rather by three אֹהֲבִים/*ohavim* – 'friends who loves the person' (Rav Boaz Shalom, *Mishnat HaChalomot, Sha'ar Hahalacha* p. 267, FN 21 quoting *Siach Tefilah, Sha'arei Tefilah, Sha'ar 6:9*). I bless us all to have a restful sleep with beautiful dreams that will be fulfilled for good!

Ps. If you are interested in the ritual of dream amelioration instructions and text in Hebrew and English please email me at [director@berotbatayin.org](mailto:director@berotbatayin.org)