



How Do Dreams Help Heal Our Lives?

The Spiritual Healing of Dream-Work

Dreams are our souls' way of broadcasting wisdom to us every night. Yet, few people realize how powerful their dreams are for providing guidance and healing information. Dreams come from the unconscious mind, and most of our behavior is determined by our unconscious. Therefore, dreaming plays an important role in our well-being and health. Although I've been interested in dreams since adolescence, I don't always remember my dreams. However, sometimes I wake up shaken by a vivid dream. When I remain in bed mulling over my dream, I am usually able to make sense of my dream and understand how it applies to my life. I also have several Torah books about dream imagery. Taking extra minutes of just lying in bed, trying to remember and embrace our dreams is invaluable for self-awareness and healing. Dreams can serve as deep psychotherapy. Therefore, I regret that I don't always put enough effort into remembering my dreams. As I write this, I'm inspired to try and place a journal and pen by my night table, in order to write down my dreams as soon as I wake up, so I won't forget them. This month of Kislev – the month of sleep – is a perfect time to start writing down our dreams in order to deepen our spiritual awareness and engender profound healing. Dream interpretation is part of the spiritual healing which results from looking inside and breaking through the exterior layers that separate us from our Divine essence, enabling us to connect and reveal the inner point within ourselves. Through dreams, we can become more in touch with our inner spark of Hashem – our neshama – that knows exactly what we need, in order to be 100% healthy and fulfill our mission in the world. However, we are so entrenched in our body and the physical world, that we are often unable to tap into the buried treasure of our soul. Dream interpretation can help us open a window into our inner essence and become more in tune with our neshama. The more we work on purifying our channel of intuition this way, the more we receive answers from Hashem to help heal our lives. We live in particularly important times with incredible changes in the world, and Mashiach around the corner. At the time of our final redemption, prophecy will return to Israel through dreams and visions, as our prophets teach: "It shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your elders shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Yoel 3:1). Since "A dream is one sixtieth of prophecy" (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 57b*), and "an uninterpreted dream is like an unread letter" (*Babylonian Talmud Berachot 55a*), dream-work, becomes especially vital in this pre-messianic era, as preparation for prophecy.

Letting Go of Knowing

To become a pure channel for Hashem's messages, we need to detach ourselves from the analytic faculties of knowing, what is learnt from the Tree of knowledge. Similar to falling asleep, we need to turn down the volume of our external consciousness and tune into Hashem's light within. In order to know something we don't know; we must let go through the process of not knowing. Ya'acov's most prophetic dream brought him to this place of not knowing:

ספר בראשית פרק כח פסוק טז וַיִּקַּץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ הָשֵׁם בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:
 "Ya'acov awoke from his sleep, and he said, 'indeed Hashem is this place, but I knew it not'" (*Bereishit 28:16*).

What was it that Ya'acov didn't know? He exclaimed: "I didn't know it was a holy place. If I would have known, I wouldn't have slept there!" (Rashi *ibid.*). Ironically, it was through dreams he had when sleeping, that he came to know something he didn't know. When we recognize "I didn't know," that is

the moment when we begin to know. When we feel ignorant, we finally begin to be learned. So, we must learn to overcome our fear of letting go of “knowing” in order to really know. It’s like allowing ourselves to experience the lifting of our foot from the lower rung of a ladder, before we place it firmly on the next rung.

Healing through Dream-Work

“I am asleep, but my heart is awake” (*Song of Songs* 5:2). During sleep, dreams can awaken us to accomplish things that are impossible to achieve while awake. We can process emotional difficulties and conflicts, while subconsciously finding solutions to work them out. Dream-work entails becoming aware of our dreams, depicting their messages, and connecting them to the things we are going through in life. Through dream messages, we can gain deeper insights and learn how to better deal with the deeper issues in life. The language of dreams follows a language of pictures, rather than one of words. Picture language is the most primordial form of human communication. Infants, before ever learning to speak a word, have already learned a lot by simply watching the adults around them. Because we have been programmed to use our left-brain to develop our sense of logic, we have forgotten our innate understanding of pictures and feelings, which were much clearer when we were children. When we remember a dream, we have a gnawing feeling that we know what it means, yet we fall short of grasping its meaning. It’s like an itch you can’t reach to scratch (Based on Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzaddok). Dream-work can help us decipher the pictures and scratch more than the surface of the itch.

Alive in G-d’s Dream

ספר בראשית פרק כח פסוק יא

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן נֶשֶׁם כִּי בָּא הַשֹּׁמֵשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּשָּׂם מִרְאשֵׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא: (יב) וַיַּחלֶם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אֶרְצָה וְרִאשׁוֹ מִגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וִירְדִים בּוֹ: (יג) וְהִנֵּה הַנֶּשֶׁם נֹצֵב עָלָיו:

“He arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set, and he took some of the rocks of the place and placed [them] at his head, and he lay down in that place. And he dreamed and behold! a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to heaven; and behold, angels of G-d were ascending and descending upon it. And behold, Hashem was standing over him...” (*Bereishit* 28:11-13).

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה סח פסקה יב

ר' חייא ורבי ינאי חד אמר עולים וירודים בסולם וחד אמר עולים וירודים ביעקב...

Rabbi Chia and Rabbi Yanai, the former said they ascend and descend on the ladder, the latter said that they ascend and descend in Ya'acov (*Midrash Rabah, Bereishit Parasha 68, Piska 12*).

According to Rabbi Yanai, Ya'acov was looking into himself. This is learned from the word “bo” “...angels of G-d were ascending and descending בּוֹ/bo – ‘in him.’ As Sfat Emet explains, “In truth, the person himself is the ladder, and within him is the inner neshama, a part of G-d from Above. This hints to the aspect “G-d was standing upon him” (*Sefat Emet, Bereishit, Vayetze* 5647). A relationship with G-d means a relationship with our own inner core. Alienation from G-d means alienation from the depths of the self. Rav Kook says, “How can I speak words of Torah, if I do not find it within myself first?” Although intellectual analysis is a necessary part of the thinking process, finding Torah within ourselves is about tapping into the essence of what we are, from where we are, and how it connects. It is only when we can connect to the essence of ourselves that we are capable of bringing Torah into this world. The internal reality of dream is expressed well in the following anecdote: An eight-year-old boy asked his father, “Dad, are we alive and real, or are we only part of G-d’s dream?” The father replied that he’d have to ask a rabbi. They went to ask Rav Shlomo Carlebach. Rav Shlomo answered, “Wow, what a gevaldic question! Let me think about it awhile and I’ll get back to you soon.” A few days later Rav Shlomo phoned and said, “In reply to your son’s question – please tell him that we’re alive... in G-d’s dream!” This is what Ya'acov discovered. When you look inside, you see G-d’s dream (Daniel Nakonechny, quoting *Holy Brother* p. 91).