

# The Kabbalah of Dreams

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## JEWISH QUOTES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DREAMING

**Midrash Bereshit Rabbah** (Genesis 17:7): "The buds of prophecy are dreams."

**Maimonides:** "As you are aware, our Rabbis state that a dream is 1/60<sup>th</sup> of prophecy; and you know, that it is inappropriate to make comparisons between two unrelated concepts or things...and yet they repeated this idea in Midrash Bereishit Rabbah (Genesis 17:7) and said, 'the buds of prophecy are dreams.' This is indeed a wonderful metaphor, for just as a bud is the actual fruit itself that has not yet developed fully, similarly, the power of the imagination at the time of sleep is exactly that which operates at the time of prophecy, in an incomplete and unperfected state." (Guide to the Perplexed 2:36)

**Baal HaTurim:** "A dream" spelled in full has gematria of 84, equal to that of Zehu Binvaah meaning 'This is through prophecy'.

**Reb Zusya:** "Even sleep has its purpose. One who wishes to progress...must first put aside his life-work in order to receive a new spirit, whereby a new revelation may come upon him. And therein lies the secret of sleep."

**Zohar,** "At night, all things return to their original root and source."

**Sefer Yetzira:** "A dream is more precise than a vision & may explain what's obscure in a vision."

**Rabbi Judah the Hasid:** "Whatever will happen to a person -- be it good or bad -- is shown to him beforehand in dream symbolism...The symbolic imagery of dreams may be compared to sign language. When a person is traveling to a foreign country, he will meet people whose language he does not understand. They will communicate to him through sign language, much like we communicate with the deaf. A sage can discern what he is being shown in his dream, and why it was shown to him in those symbols, and what the symbols stand for."

**Rabbi Elijah,** the Gaon of Vilna in 1800, told his disciples that sleep exists for the sole purpose of conveying the mysteries of the cosmos through the vehicle of dreams.

**Talmud** (Brachot 57b): "6 things are good for a sick person: sneezing, sweating, diarrhea, semen, sleep and dreaming"

Talmud, (Brachot 57b): “Sleep is 1/60th of death and dreams are 1/60<sup>th</sup> of prophecy”

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## CORE SOURCES



### The Sefer Habahir #40

שאלו תלמידיו מהו חולם א"ל נשמה ושמ חולם

שאם תשמע תחלים גופך לעתיד לבא ואם תמרוד בה ישובו הלאים בראשך  
וחלים בראשה

ועוד אמרו שכל חלום הוא בחלם וכל מרגלית לבנה היא בחלם כדכתיב ואחלמה

“His students asked, “What is the holem?” (the meaning of the vowel sound that looks like a dot above the vav). He answered, “It is the soul (the neshama) and its name is holem. If you listen to it your body will be vigorous (halam) in the ultimate future. If you rebel against it then sicknesses (halaim) will sit on your head and illness on her head”. He also said, “Every dream (halom) is in the holem, as it is written “achlama”. Every wise precious stone is in the holem (from the breast plate) – the amethyst (achlama).”

### Moving from Sickness to Recovery, Vitality and beyond

Moving from mahala מַחֲלָה - Illness

To hahlama החלמה - Recovery

To halam חלם – Vitality

To ahlama אחלמה – Amethyst stone/Psychic Abilities

**Using Tools of:**

הַמְלָה - Hemla Compassion

מְחוּל Machul/Mechila Forgiveness

מַחוּל - Machol - Circle of Connection & support – like the Samech

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**The Ramchal** (Derech Hashem): “God decreed that the bond between body and divine soul should be loosened while we sleep. The portions of the soul from ruach and above rise and sever from the body. Only the nefesh remain with the animal soul. The freed portions of the soul can move about in the spiritual realm and associate with spiritual beings as angels who oversee natural phenomena, some angels associated with prophecy and shedim, God forbid, depending on variety of factors.

When the higher levels perceive something they can transmit it step by step until it reaches the animal soul. The imagination is then stimulated and forms images in its normal manner. (a dream) – can be true or false or blurred...A person can receive info about his future – if god decrees is. This is revealed to the soul neshama by one of God’s servants. Then down to the nefesh – visualized by imagination. Dreams can arise either from the imagination or from the stimulation of soul neshama.”

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## JACOB'S LADDER: Genesis Chapter 28

10 And Jacob left Beer sheba, and he went to Haran.

וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּעַר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ  
חָרָנָה:

11 And he arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set, and he took some of the stones of the place and placed [them] at his head, and he lay down in that place.

וַיָּבֹאוּ יַעֲקֹב בְּמָקוֹם וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁם כִּי-  
בָּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מֵאֲבָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם  
וַיִּשָׁם מֵרֵאשִׁיתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בְּמָקוֹם  
הַהוּא:

12 And he dreamed, and behold! a ladder set up on the ground and its top reached to heaven; and behold, angels of God were ascending and descending upon it.

וַיִּבְנֶה חֲלֹמַי וְהִנֵּה סֹלֶם מֻצָּב אֶרֶץ  
וְרֵאשׁוֹ מִגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה  
מַלְאָכָי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ:

### Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed I.15):

"And, behold, the Lord stood erect on it," that is, was stably and constantly up on it--I mean upon the ladder, one end of which is in heaven, while the other end is upon the earth. Everyone who ascends does so climbing up this ladder, so that he necessarily apprehends Him who is upon it, as He is stably and permanently at the top of the ladder... "The angels of God" are the prophets with reference to whom it is clearly said: "And He sent an angel" (Nu.20:16)... How well put is the phrase "ascending and descending," in which "ascent" comes before "descent." For after the "ascent" and the attaining of certain rungs of the ladder that may be known comes the descent with whatever decree the prophet has been informed of--with a view to governing and teaching the people of the earth.

Moreover, he wrote (Guide, II.38), "Therefore one ought not to pay attention to one whose rational faculty has not become perfect and who has not attained the ultimate term of speculative perfection. For only one who achieves speculative perfection is able to apprehend other objects of knowledge when there is an overflow of the divine intellect toward him. It is he who is in true reality a prophet. This is explicitly stated: 'And the prophet [possesseth] a heart of wisdom (Ps.90:12).' It says here that one who is a prophet in true reality has 'a heart of wisdom.'"

Thus, the dream teaches Man to attain an understanding of the Deity and to reach the level of prophecy.

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In *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim* (I.19), R. Hayyim of Volozhin interpreted an idea of the **Zohar** as follows: Regarding the vision of the ladder "set on the ground," ... note that it does not say "set in the ground (*baaretz*), but towards the ground (*artzah*), to signify that its principal anchoring is in the heavens above, and from there it devolves downward, until it reaches the earth. **This signifies the *Neshamah* in man... From there it descends like a ladder and chain, joining with the spirit (*Ruah*), then with the soul (*Nefesh*), until it finally comes down to this world and into the body of man....**

Divine angels go up and down on it, as we said above, along its length which is the living soul of the worlds, the forces and the angels of the upper spheres, whose entire ascent and descent, indeed all their actions at every moment, depend solely on the inclination of the deeds, speech, and thoughts that are in the body of man at every moment. (As for what is written, 'ascending first, then descending', the entire thrust of human life is first to elevate the entire world from below to above, and after that, heavenly lights are drawn from above downwards.)

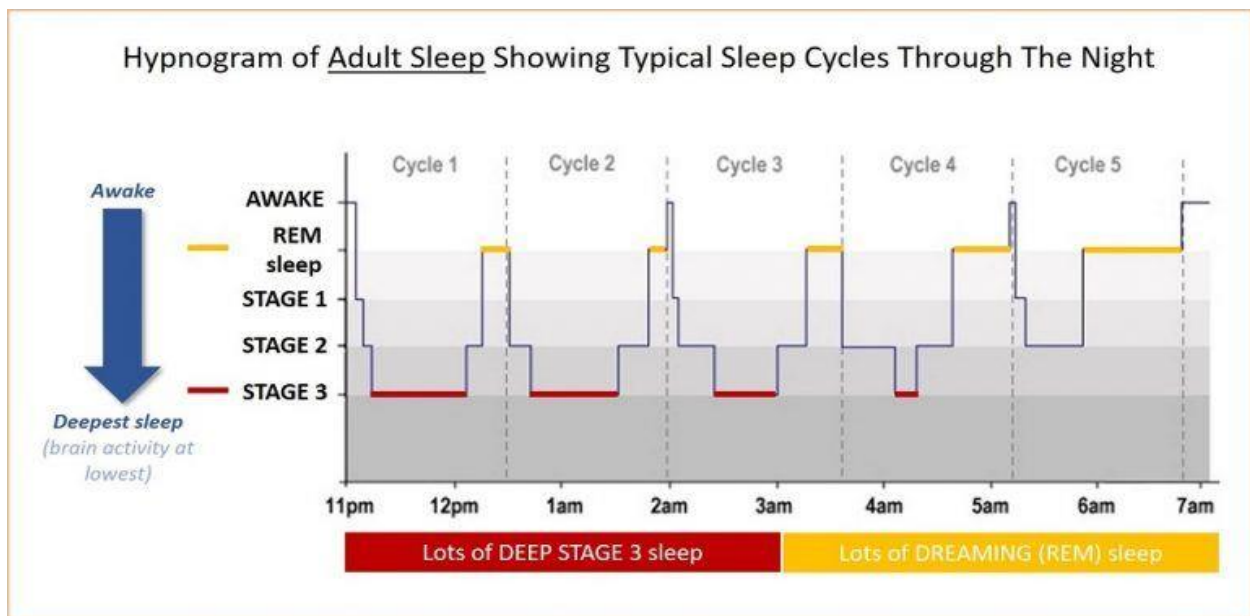
## THE LADDER OF ASCENDING/DESCENDING IN SLEEP CONSCIOUSNESS

**BRAIN WAVES:** In a nutshell, there are five major brain wave ranges: Beta (12-30Hz) is present in normal waking consciousness and is heightened during times of stress; the Alpha brain wave (7.5-14Hz) in deep relaxation; Theta (4-7.5Hz) in meditation and light sleep; and the slowest, Delta (0.5-4Hz) in deep dreamless sleep and transcendental meditation. The less recognised Gamma is fastest (above 40Hz) and associated with sudden insight. The optimal level for visualization is the Alpha-Theta Border at 7-8Hz. It is the gateway to your subconscious mind.

Mnemonic for Gamma/Beta/Alpha/Theta/Delta.... 'Get Brainy And Then Dream'....

Frequency range	Name	Usually associated with:
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> 40 Hz	Gamma waves	Higher mental activity, including perception, problem solving, and consciousness
13–39 Hz	Beta waves	Active, busy thinking, active processing, active concentration, arousal, and cognition
7–13 Hz	Alpha waves	Calm relaxed yet alert state
4–7 Hz	Theta waves	Deep meditation /relaxation, REM sleep
< 4 Hz	Delta waves	Deep dreamless sleep, loss of body awareness



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R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev (Poland/Ukraine, 1740 – 1809), aka the Kedushat Levi

Kedushat Levi on Parshat Vayetzei: When [Jacob] slept, his soul and his thoughts ascended on high, and his soul was attached to the blessed Holy One, the root of all roots. And this is the meaning of, “He took some of the stones of the place” (Gen.

28:11), referring to those letters which his thought is composed of. ... He put them “in the place” meaning in the blessed Holy One, who is called Place. And this is the meaning, that he placed them above his head. Because he was asleep, his thoughts ascended into the blessed Holy One, Who is above a person's head...

קדושת לוי על פרשת ויצא - כשהיה ישן עלה נשמתו ומחשבתו למעלה ומדבק נשמתו להקדוש ברוך הוא בשורש של כל השרשים וזהו פירוש ויקח מאבני המקום דהיינו אותן האותיות... שהיו במחשבתו שם אותן במקום דהיינו בהבורא ברוך הוא שנקרא מקום וזה הפירוש וישם למעלה מראשותיו רצה לומר מכח השינה היה עליות מחשבתו בהבורא ברוך הוא שהוא

### **Techniques to prepare for & remember dreams**

#### **HOLEM/SULAM MEDITATION – THE 4 RUNGS OF THE LADDER:**

Physical orientation: Lie down like the letter vav. Visualize self as the vav with the soul just above your head like the dot of the holem. Imagine that you are the ladder. Use breathing/tensing muscles and other relaxation techniques to achieve optimal relaxation of your body.

Emotional orientation: Do a heshbon hanefesh – a soul accounting – of your day (and life). Imagine anyone who has offended you. Give them forgiveness (mechila). And also give yourself forgiveness.

Psychological orientation: Hemla – Hold tight to the idea that you are the recipient of God's hemla – you are receiving your dreams as an act of compassion by god.

On the next level up, hold tight to the idea that you are in fact one with God.

Spiritual orientation: Say a prayer for what you would like to experience or see tonight in your dreams. Recite the shema & B'shem hashem prayer. If you'd like to continue on with the complete text of the Bedtime Shema you can.

## **Brief 5-Breath Holem Meditation:**

Close eyes and take 5 breaths.

First breath say to yourself, “I am orienting my body and nefesh to sacred dreaming.” Imagine your body as the vav with the holem dot.

Second breath say to yourself, “I am orienting my heart, emotions and ruach to sacred dreaming.” Feel forgiveness and compassion on self and others.

Third breath say to yourself, “I am orienting my mind, thoughts and neshama to sacred dreaming.” Set an intention for your dreams.

Fourth breath say to yourself, “I am orienting all levels of my soul to sacred dreaming. I welcome in Hashem.” Pray for your dreams.

## **Dream-Memory Techniques – YORDIM**

### Reverse Recall

The idea behind this technique is to practice remembering backwards. Like an investigator, you can retrace your mental steps in order to catch your dreams.

1. Before falling asleep, close your eyes and think about all the things you did during the day in reverse order.
2. The things you just did will be recalled first and the things you did at the beginning of the day will be last.
3. When you wake up in the morning after a night of dreaming, keep your eyes closed and practice backward recall. You will still be in a light trance or relaxed state. Ask yourself what you just did and what was before that, and so on and so on.
4. Keep practicing this technique for a few days and you will soon go back to a dream.

## Intention Setting

The idea behind this technique is to use self-suggestion to remember your dreams. By telling yourself what you want, you create an internal focus, which strengthens your connection to the inner world of dreams.

1. Repeat the following statement several times throughout the day. “When I wake up, I remember my dreams”.
2. Saying this statement when you are relaxed is especially beneficial. For examples, some relaxing moments may be when you take a shower, ride in a vehicle, sit down, or take a break from work.
3. You can also say this statement when you take a moment to reflect throughout the day. Try to say this statement ten times during the day.
4. When you go home and prepare for bed, you will be ready to use the power of intention setting. Before falling asleep at night, close your eyes and take several deep, full, and slow breaths. Repeat the statement in your mind several times.
5. For the next 30 seconds, silently scream the statement to yourself. When you wake up in the morning, you should remember your dreams.
6. If it doesn't work on the first try, be persistent. After a few days of practicing this intention setting exercise, you will be able to remember your dreams.

## Anchoring

The idea behind this technique is to program your mind and body to remember your dreams. Recall a time when you remembered something successfully and then create a physical anchor that will cue the body to have a similar result (remembering). Whenever you use this physical anchor, your dream recall will improve.

1. Before going to bed at night, take several deep, full, slow breaths. Most people breathe shallowly in the upper chest. Bring your breath all the way down to the stomach past the upper and lower chest.
2. As you inhale, your stomach should expand outwards and on exhalation, your stomach contracts inward. Imagine that your breath reaches your navel. Let in as much air as you can and exhale completely. Breathe slowly and deeply several times.
3. Breathe comfortably now at a natural pace and think about a time in your life when you remembered some information, event, or person. Some

- examples are birthdays, anniversaries, appointments, past acquaintances, and lost items. Think back to one time when you remembered something clearly.
4. Visualize, feel, and sense this event or time in your life. Replay this event in your mind and then focus on the exact moment you remembered this information, event, or person. You can zoom in on this exact moment, and slow it down.
  5. Replay that moment in your mind over and over. Feel how you felt when you remembered too. If you are not a visual person, feel, hear, smell, sense or imagine the moment instead.
  6. Next, press your index finger and thumb together and say, “every time I put these fingers together, I remember easily.” Take a deep breath and exhale. Release your fingers and go back to your remembered moment. Put your fingers together again, and take a deep breath and exhale. Notice how good it feels to remember easily.
  7. Repeat steps 3 and 4 several times.
  8. When you wake up in the morning after dreaming, put your fingers together and remember your dreams with ease.

### Upon Waking:

Keep eyes closed and don't move as you attempt to remember as much as you can.

All you remember is lost within 10 minutes.

Write down or record dreams immediately. Or say them aloud.

You can say aloud the main bullet points to remember and the details will come along too.

If you are having a hard time remembering, then go over people/places who are main players in your life and see if it hits on any images from the dream.

### Body Shifting

The idea behind this technique is that by re-positioning the body into different positions, you may remember a dream more easily. When you wake up, your body has a memory that your mind may not be able to access.

1. Before you wake up from sleeping, turn your body to one side without opening your eyes.

2. Hold the body in that position for thirty seconds and relax into that position. You may pick up a dream thread that will lead you to the rest of the dream. Try to keep your senses as still and inactive as possible.
3. Try rolling to the other side, hold the position, and see if a dream thread comes to you.
4. You can also try mobbing your body into other positions, such as lying on your right side, your left side, on your back, and on your stomach.
5. Try to imitate any body position that you may have held while in the dream.

### How to do a Dream Journal:

1. Keep a journal and pen beside your bed every night, so that you can awaken at any time and record your dream -- then fall back to sleep. Never rely on the belief that your dream was so fascinating, you'll surely remember it in the morning. If you recall it all, many important details will be forgotten even a few hours later. It may be wise to have your phone handy to make a voice recording if that is easier and your phone is not distracting.
2. Record your dream as fully as possible. Details that might seem trivial may prove important, even essential, later on. As you build up a "library" of your dreams, you'll find that certain images or themes repeat themselves. According to Jewish mystics, such repetition is especially significant, even vital, to the message your dreams convey for your current life.
3. Always use the present tense when you describe your dream and be sure to report how you felt in it. For example, "I am sitting in my living room and I hear a knock at the door. It is my college friend Alison, whom I haven't seen in real life for more than twenty years. I feel surprised and happy." Or, "I am driving my car very fast at night and suddenly see that the road ahead is completely blocked. I hardly have time to stop and feel scared."
- 4.(Optional) Once you have described your dream, make a list of all the symbols it contains. For example, you are climbing a mountain, flying through the air, or baking bread. Next to each symbol, using an "emotionality scale" of 1 to 5 (1 = minimal emotion, 2 = mild emotion, 3 = moderate emotion, 4 = a lot of emotion, 5 = intense emotion), write down how much emotional impact that symbol has for you. This will be useful for the stage of dream interpretation later.

## ORIENTATION OF HEMLA – COMPASSION

**Talmud Brachot 55a:** There are 3 things that require Rachamim - Compassion, a good King, a good year and a good dream. On a good dream it says, ‘Tachlimayni’- You cured me.

(See quote from Yeshayahu below)

### Yeshayahu 38:16

טוֹא-לְנִי עָלֵיהֶם יִחְגְּנוּ וְלְכָל-בְּהֵמָה  
:תִּנְיִי רוּחִי וְתַחְלִימַנִי וְהַתִּנְיִי

O Lord! Concerning them, [You said] they shall live, and before all of them the life of my spirit, and You cured me and gave me life.

The Modeh Ani Prayer: Said upon waking:

מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם,

vekaiyam    chai    melek    l'faneykha    'ani    modeh  
and eternal    living    king    before you    I    thank

שֶׁחֲזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.

'emunatekha    rabbah    bechemlah    nish-ma-ti    bi    she-he-che-zar-ta  
your faithfulness.    great (is)    in compassion    my soul    in me    for you returned

“You returned my neshama to me...b’hemla, with compassion.”

## FURTHER READING

### COMMENTARIES ON JACOB’S LADDER AND THE 5 LEVELS OF SOUL

**Ohr HaChayim:** "He dreamed that there was a ladder." Since many dreams contain matter without import, the Torah added the word "And behold!" [in Hebrew, "v'henai"] to indicate that in this dream every detail appeared to Jacob as especially vivid and important. He had total recall of everything he dreamed, and referred to each detail later on. This is why the word "Behold" is repeated before every segment of the dream. The Torah thereby characterizes the dream as a prophetic revelation.

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**R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady** wrote in *Likkutei Torah* (Numbers, *Naso* 2):

Therefore, one must begin from the bottom and work upwards in prayer, which is a ladder set on the ground, its top reaching towards heaven, until it reaches the One. Thereby the angels of god ascend and descend (*olim ve-yordim*) bo--in man. For man is the root of all; as it is written, "Each of the four had the face of a lion on the right; ... of an ox on the left," (Ez. 1:10) but "each of them had a human face," (*ibid.*) so in all they were like human beings comprised of all four creatures, all of them becoming spiritually elevated as the human soul is elevated through its adherence to the Living God...[2]