

Insights from the “Dream Book” of the Babylonian Talmud [200–500 ce]

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Abstract The “Dream Book” provides a subjectively extensive and humane approach to understanding dreams. The Talmudic dream is prophetic in nature so it is future oriented while the Freudian dream is past oriented toward childhood. In addition, there is the need to understand the dream experience. Dream meaning is not in the text but in the interpretation. The dream experience is over-determined. Word play is used by the Rabbis and modern interpreters. The Rabbis felt the dream experience reflected the psychology of the dreamer. Dreams of everyday men and women are presented, not just dreams of royalty. Good and bad dreams reflect the moral nature of the dreamer. And if it is a bad dream there is a method to prevent its fulfillment. Further, if one does not recall a dream, there is also a method for dealing with it in the daily prayers and asking the Lord to make it a good dream. Concern about false dream interpreters is expressed. Dreams with a sexual meaning are represented symbolically. Precursors of many of our modern views of dreaming are present in the “Dream Book”.

Keywords Dreaming · Hebrews · Babylonian Talmud · Freud

1 Introduction

The two earliest references to dream interpretation are in the Gilgamesh myth [Standard version 10th to 13th century bce] [12] and the Chester Beatty papyrus [1991–1786 bce] [11] which contains Egyptian dream interpretation directed at predicting the future. The work of Oppenheim [19] focuses on the Ancient Near-East primarily Sumerian and Akkadian [2700–2200 bce] which refer to three types of dreams: (1) revelations of the deity, (2) reflection of the state of mind of the dreamer, his spiritual and bodily health, and (3) mantic dreams in which forthcoming events are prognosticated. The second category is mentioned but never recorded. (The psychology of the dreamer is ignored). The Old Testament (Torah) contains only ten dreams and all are in Genesis (see Table 1). In antiquity it was assumed that dreams were divinely inspired and contained messages about the future. People needed to understand them so professional dream interpreters developed. The vast library of the Assyrian King Assurbanipal [668–627 bce] at Nineveh had clay tablets with signs and phenomena according to which symbols and allusions could be deciphered [4].

The Talmud, a central text of Rabbinic Judaism, normally refers to the Babylonian Talmud, as there is an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud [2]. The Talmud has two components, the first is the, Mishnah [200 ce], a written compendium of the oral torah; and the second part the Gemara [500 ce] elucidates the Mishnah and other writings and expounds on the bible. It contains the opinions of thousands of rabbis on law, ethics, philosophy, customs, history, etc. With the destruction of the first temple in the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 bce, prophecy transferred from the prophets to the sages. The Babylonian exile had started in 597 bce and ended in 532

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Table 1 Dreams in the Torah

1. Abimelech and Sarah [Genesis 20:3ff]
2. Jacob's ladder [Genesis 28:12ff]
3. Jacob's speckled sheep [Genesis 31:10ff]
4. Laban told to leave Jacob alone [Genesis 31:24ff]
5. Joseph and the sheaves [Genesis 37.5ff]
6. Joseph and the sun, moon and stars [Genesis 37.9ff]
7. Joseph and the cupbearer [Genesis 40.9ff]
8. Joseph and the baker [Genesis 40.15ff]
9. Pharaoh and the cows [Genesis 41.1ff]
10. Pharaoh and the sheaves [Genesis 41.5]

bce when Cyrus—a Persian king—conquered the Babylonians and the Jews were permitted to return to Israel.

2 Methods

The richest source of descriptions of the Hebraic view of dreaming is to be found in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Berakhot [Blessing], chapter 9, “One Who Sees”, folio 55a–57b [200–500 ce], often called the “Jewish Dream book”. I have extracted from the folios the concepts relevant to understanding the process and interpretation of dreams by the Hebrews and made comparisons to modern dream interpretation, particularly Sigmund Freud's [9] “The Interpretation of Dreams”.

“For Jewish tradition, dreams occurring during sleep would not be of central importance” [14]. The Torah has many regulations about many things, but there are no rules, regulations or laws about dreams. There is “...no reference to an office of Israelite oneirocritic” [14].

The Rabbis were hostile to magical practices including dream incubation and dream interpretation, but had to give interpretation a grudging recognition [3]. Some have even said, “Dreams are of no account” [14]. Nevertheless, dreams are discussed extensively in the Talmud with Lorand [16] having found 217 references to dreams in the Talmud and related literature.

3 Results

3.1 Future vs Past Orientation

The dreams of the Ancients including the Hebrews were future oriented and involved with prophecy [3], while those of modern dream theorists such as Freud, which were the fulfillment of childhood desires (wishes), were past oriented and reductive; “Freud, turned away from the future

and focused on the past” [10]. Dreams give us no knowledge of the future, but by picturing our wishes as fulfilled are leading to the future [9]. It has been suggested that all therapy is future oriented as the goal in dream interpretation is to achieve change in the dreamer/patient across time. The dream was a mode of communication between God and the Prophets (B.T., 55b, 10) ‘I (God) do speak to him in a dream’. It could take as long as 22 years for a prophecy to be realized “Whence do we know this? From Joseph. For it is written: These are the generations of Jacob; Joseph being 17-year-old, etc., and it is further written, And Joseph was 30-year-old when he stood before Pharaoh. How many years is it from seventeen to thirty? Thirteen. Add 7 years of plenty and two of famine, and you have twenty-two”. (B.T., 55b, 7) [How wonderfully arbitrary!].

Prophecy was lost to the prophets when the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple during the siege of Jerusalem in 658 bce. However, the sages continued the prophetic tradition [16] for Tanninim, scholars of the Mishnah, teachers and Amarim, scholars of the Gemorah, interpreters. The focus on the current meaning of dreams as revealing an effort to solve current problems is reflected in the work of the ego psychologists such as Thomas French [8]. Both the Rabbis and Freud [9] cite dreams which focus on current issues or problems.

3.2 Dreams Require Interpretation

R. Hisda says, “A dream which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read” (B.T., 56a, 5). R. Hisda precedes his observation on interpretation with the comment, ‘Any dream rather than one of a fast’. Interestingly if you have a bad dream, fast to ward off consequences even on the Sabbath. ‘To dream oneself fasting’, Rashi (B.T., 56a, reference 30) explains ‘There is reality in every dream save one that comes in a fast’ therefore no reality, [So what? Non predictive so no help]. The implication of the comparison to a letter is that there is a message with meaning in the dream and that there is an outside source for dreaming as one usually does not send a letter to oneself. What harm can it do? not knowing (B.T., 55b, reference 5) Dreams do exist and have the possibility of meaning [15].

Freud took as his task ‘...to show that dreams are capable of being interpreted...’ ‘The scientific theories of dreams in Freud's time had no room for any problem of interpreting them...as they are seen as a somatic process...’ and therefore had no meaning [9].

In Chapter 1 of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud [9], p. 75) divides theories of dreaming into three groups: (1) ‘...(The) whole of psychical activity continues in dreams’ ‘...(The) mind does not sleep (but) ‘produces different results during sleep’ ‘Either dreamless sleep

or...awakening. (2)...theories (of)...dreams imply(ing) a lowering of psychological function...dreams as a result of...a gradual, partial...awakening. An example is Robert' (who says)...dream so frequently of the most trivial daily impressions. (Also Freud's view), but we found that it is the most intense of daytime thinking that appears in dreams [20]. Robert in Freud [9]...describes dreams as a somatic process of excretion and 'Dreams serve as a safety valve for the overburdened brain. They possess the power to heal and relieve'; and (3) capacities of the mind undiminished in dream-life. 'The most original ... attempt to explain dreaming as a special activity of the mind was that undertaken by Scherner in 1861 and made more intelligible by Volkelt, although some level of mental capacity diminishment occurs for them—imagination uses recent memory, pictorial not verbal representation, and symbolizing; Perkinje-(focuses) the reviving and healing function of dreams [9].

The dreams in the Talmud are seen as functioning like those in the third group, undiminished and with healing properties. The Talmud states 'If they are good dreams confirm them and reinforce them; like the dreams of Joseph, and if they require a remedy, heal them, as the waters of Marah were healed by Moses, our teacher, and as Miriam was healed of her leprosy and Hezekiah of his sickness, and the waters of Jericho by Elisha. As thou didst turn the curse of the wicked Balaam into a blessing, so turn all my dreams into something good for me' (B.T., 55b, 10).

3.3 Dreams Follow the Mouth [Interpretation]

Dreams follow the mouth (B.T., 56a, 5 and B.T., 55b, 12),—scripture, as he interpreted to us, so it was'. [Meaning is in the interpretation not in the dream]. However, interpretation must be related to the dream's content (B.T., 55b, 12).

Caillois [6] provides an example of the power of the interpretation below, in the Sect. 3.4. He describes an interpretation that follows the mouth that is confirmed repeatedly by the prophecy in the interpretation coming true. The meaning of the dream is in the interpretation not in the dream report which is the same each time.

3.4 The Dream of the 'Cracked Granary'

'A certain woman came to Rabbi Eliezer and said to him: "I saw in a dream that the granary of my house came open in a crack". He answered: "You will conceive a son". She went away and that is what happened.

She dreamed again the same dream and told it to Rabbi Eliezer who gave the same interpretation and that is what happened.

She dreamed the same dream a third time and looked for Rabbi Eliezer. Not finding him, she said to his disciples: "I saw in a dream that the granary of my house came open in a crack".

They answered her: "You will bury your husband". And that is what happened.

Rabbi Eliezer surprised by the lamentations, inquired what had gone wrong? His disciples told him what had happened. He cried out, "Wretched fools! You have killed that man. Is it not written: 'As he interpreted to us, so it was? [GEN:41:13].

And Rabbi Yohanan concludes: "Every dream becomes valid only by its interpretation".

3.5 Over Determination of Meaning—24 Interpreters

There were 24 interpreters of dreams in Jerusalem [may suggest plenitude [14]; B.T., 55a, 2). I dreamt a dream and I went round to all of them and they all gave different interpretations and all were fulfilled, confirming that all dreams follow the mouth (B.T., 55b, 12).

Freud [9], p. 148) is of the view 'that dreams, like all other psychopathologic structures, regularly have more than one meaning.'...each of the elements of the dream's content turns out to have been 'over-determined'-to have been represented in the dream-thoughts many times over [9].

Three kinds of dreams are fulfilled: (1) those of the early morning, (2) those a friend has about you, (3) those interpreted in the midst of a dream [Lucid] and some say (4) which are repeated (B.T. 55b, 12).

[Daniel [O.T. 3:31] tells Nebuchnezzar the dream he has forgotten.]

The Emperor (of Rome) (B.T., 56a, 1) said to R. Hananyah, You [Jews] profess to be very clever. Tell me what I shall see in my dream. He said to him: You will see the Persians making you do forced labor, and despoiling you and making you feed unclean animals with a golden crook. He thought about it all day, and in the night, he saw it in his dream. King Shapur (B.T., 56a, 1) once said to Samuel: You [Jews] profess to be very clever. Tell me what I shall see in my dream. He said to him: You will see the Romans coming and taking you captive and make you grind date-stones in a golden mill. He thought about it the whole day and in the night saw it in a dream.

How might we understand the outcome in these two situations. By focusing on the suggestion all day long, the incubation experience is employed. In incubation focusing on an idea before sleep increases the likelihood of it occurring much like as it was done in the Aesculapian temples [17] where one went to sleep to gain a cure from

illness. Some Rabbis forbade incubation because of its magical implications [5]. Further, Piccione et al. [20] found that it was the more emotional experiences of the day that appear in dreams in contradistinction to the Freudian view of it being the insignificant daytime thought that appears in dreams [9].

3.6 Only Dream About What is on Your Mind [3]

R. Samuel b Nahamani said in the name of R. Jonathan: ‘A man is shown in a dream only what is suggested by his own thoughts (B.T., 55b, 12). ‘Raba said, This is proved by the fact that a man is never shown in a dream a date palm of gold or an elephant going through the eye of a needle, ‘because he never thinks of such things’ (B.T., 55b, reference 39).

Freud [9] ‘...the content of a dream... is derived from experience... and the... choice of material reproduced [is]...indifferent and insignificant (p. 18)—in every dream it is possible to find a point of contact with the experiences of the previous day (p. 165). They make their selection...[i.e., recall]...what is subsidiary and unnoticed (p. 163) and ‘may have impressions dating back to earliest childhood (p. 189). We tested whether the day residue was indifferent and found, to the contrary, that it was the more intense thoughts of the previous day that appear in the dreams of the night [20]. Never the less, dreams show a clear preference for the impressions of the immediately preceding days [9], p. 163). Almoli said every interpretation should follow the dreamer’s work and interests [7] and that dream interpretation must be based on a prior detailed knowledge of the dreamer’s private life. In a study making predictions of the meaning of the dream solely from the dream report, I agreed with the patient’s therapist 93% of the time (Glucksman and Kramer [13]. Not what Freud [9] or Artemidorus [1] would have predicted.

The interpretive methodologies employed by Freud and the Rabbis had much in common. However, the use of en detail associations is unique to Freud and the use of quotations from the Torah/Talmud to interpret or confirm an interpretation is unique to the Rabbis (B.T., 55–57) who also like Freud isolated parts of a text for association and exploration. Bakan [3] sees the two approaches as very similar and has further enumerated techniques that both have employed. Both have used word-play techniques. For example, Freud [9] is told of ‘flowers in a dream report’ what kind he asks, they were ‘violets’. Freud associates to the French *viol* (rape), the dreamer associates to violate [flowers and defloration]. [See also Freud [9], italien to genitalia]. If one sees an elephant [pil] in a dream, wonders [pela’oth] will be wrought for you (B.T., 56b, 13). Bakan [3] gives examples of ‘word play’ and of other techniques from Jewish mysticism: numerological play (B.T., 55a, reference 23) letter play: zeruf [combination]-Gematria-

establishes meaning based on the numerical value of words (Bakan [3] cites Freud’s own number dream, Notarikon-making words from the first or last letters of other words and Temurah-changes words by changing the order of their letters [oneg = pleasure, nega = pain]. The techniques used are identical in many situations. Underscoring the similarities in the two approaches.

Almoli [7], who, was published originally in 1515 says ‘...every interpretation should follow the dreamer’s work and interests’ and ‘dream interpretation must be based on a prior detailed knowledge of the dreamer’s private life. It was the most widely distributed dream book in the Jewish world. Freud clearly preferred the views on knowing the dreamer expressed in the 5th century by Artemidorus (1990) as he mentions Almoli only in a footnote in “The Interpretation of Dreams” [9]. The recognition that information about the dreamer would influence the interpretation occurs in Berakoth (B.T., 57a, 3 and 6) when commenting on the difference in interpretation if the dreamer is a scholar or is unlearned.

3.7 Dreams of Common Men and Women

Oppenheim [19] reports only dreams of royalty, (kings and noblemen have dreams which concern the world in general). Almoli [7] describes dreams of common people, non-royalty as does the Talmud; but the dreamer could be head of an academy, and includes both men and women dreamers, but overwhelmingly men.

There is the recognition of geographic/linguistic differences by the Rabbis that alter interpretation and prophecy. For example, if one sees a cat in a dream in a place where they call the cat shunara, a beautiful song will be composed for him; if in a place where they call the cat shinra, he will undergo a change for the worse (B.T., 55b, 12).

Much of the ‘dream book’ is a traditional dream dictionary (B.T., 56b, 11), i.e., birds can be a good or a bad omen, if one sees a goat he will have a blessed year and a specific meaning for example, is given to seeing in a dream a lion, a dog, or a horn, etc.

The Rabbis say one should recite a line of scripture after waking from sleep related to the dream and they give 25 examples (B.T., 56b, 11–17). ‘If one sees a river in his dreams, he should rise early and say: ‘Behold I will extend peace to her like a river’, before another verse occurs to him, viz., for distress will come in like a river’.

3.8 Good vs Bad Dreams

3.8.1 Introduction

The ancient Hebrew dreamer is particularly concerned with whether he has had a good or bad dream as dreams are

prophetic of what will happen to him. Freud [9] rejects the prophetic notion of dreaming and ‘observes that conscience seems absent in dreams. In dreams we learn to know ourselves as we really are ‘what we have experienced and suppressed’. Dream censorship is directed against ‘ucs wishes that are reprehensible and repulsive from an ethical or social point of view’. These wishes are controlled by the distorting action of the dream work. The goal is to decrease the anxiety associated with the instinctual wish that stimulates the dream formation in order that sleep be maintained. Failure in this function leads to arousal with an anxiety dream. If the dream does occur, i.e., slips by the censor, the remark ‘it is only a dream’ may be said in the dream and sleep may be sustained. Punishment dreams, create from an ucs wish a dream where the dreamer may be punished for the reprehensible ucs wish [18].

Frieden [10] observes that ‘To dream is to deceive oneself...no interpretation is intrinsically true, because a present truth depends on the future reality that confirms, alters or gives meaning to the interpretive act. Meaning does not stand waiting to be uncovered behind a dream or text, but evolves in front of it, actualized by readers or interpreters who produce new possibilities. Meaning is made not discovered’. Interestingly, Glucksman and I [13] agreed in a study on a dreams meaning 92% of the time. A contradiction to the implicit creative description given by Frieden above.

The Talmud comments extensively about good and bad dreams and what to do about them. R. Johanan (B.T., 55a, 5) points out there is ‘no dream that is without non-sense. R. Hisda (B.T., 55a, 5) indicates that the whole of a dream, good or bad, is never fulfilled R. Berikiah (B.T., 55a, 5) notes that the lack of total fulfillment of a dream also has been found. These observations of course weaken the stringency of the predictive nature of dreams.

One of the three things one should supplicate for ‘is a good dream, as it is written; wherefore cause thou me to dream and make me to live’ (B.T., 55a, 5; 57b, 11). [the same quote is in Isaiah 38:16]. A list of good dreams is provided (B.T., 57a, 1–6). An illustration of a good dream is: ‘If one dreams he is putting on Tefillin, he may look forward to greatness, for it says: And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon thee; and it has been taught. R. Eliezer the Great says: This refers to the tefillin of the head’. R. Hisda said (B.T., 55b, 8) “A good man will not be disturbed by bad dreams or evil thoughts nor any plague come nigh thy tent [wife menstruating when you are back from a trip]”.

3.8.2 Comparison of Good with Bad Dreams

The Talmud underscores bad dreams by comparing them to good dreams. R. Hisda (B.T., 55a, 5) says ‘A bad dream is

better than a good dream, because it incites one to repentance’. He also notes the sadness caused by a bad dream is sufficient for it and the joy which a good dream gives is sufficient for it. Then there is no need for them to be fulfilled (B.T., 55a, reference 33). [Sounds like discouraging a predictive explanation. He didn’t approve of it anyway]. R. Hisda (B.T. 55b, 7) said a bad dream is worse than a scourging, since it says: God hath so made it that man should fear before him, and Bar Hannah (B.T., 55a, 5) said...This refers to a bad dream’.

3.8.3 Moral Character of the Dreamer

The nature of the dream experience for the Talmud Rabbi’s is related to the moral character of the dreamer. ‘R. Huna (B.T., 55 b, 8) said: A good man is not shown a good dream and a bad man is not shown a bad dream, and a good man is shown a bad dream so he will repent and a bad man a good dream so gets his reward in this world (B.T., 55b, reference 4) [and not in the next]. This separation of dream type by moral character is reflected in a quote from Samuel (B.T., 55b, 11). When Samuel had a bad dream, he used to say. The dreams speaks falsely (Reference Zechariah X:2). When he had a good dream, he used to say, Do the dreams speak falsely. Seeing it is written, I [God] do speak with him in a dream? Raba pointed out a contradiction. It is written, ‘I do speak with him in a dream’ and it is written ‘the dreams speak falsely—There is no contradiction; in the one case it is through an angel, in the other through a demon. [How convenient, invent a mechanism].

Freud’s [9] moral view is that the good man will have to deal with his ucs reprehensible wishes coming to the fore in sleep with the relaxation of the censorship and the dream work distortion protecting their expression. This could and does happen to both ‘good and bad’ people.

3.8.4 Treatment of Bad and Unremembered Dream

If one has a dream that makes him sad (B.T., 56b, 8–9) one should have it interpreted in the presence of three...he should have a good turn given to it...He should say to them, ‘I have seen a good dream [?lie]; and they should say to him, Good it is and good may it be. May the All-Merciful turn it to good; seven times may it be decreed from heaven that it should be good and may it be good. They should say three verses with the word turn, and three with the word redeem and three with the word peace, [nine verses in all].

There is a concern about not remembering dreams. ‘If a man goes 7 days without a dream he is called evil, since it says, He sees but does not remember what he sees (B.T., 55b, 8)’. What can one do (B.T., 55b, 10)? ‘If one has seen

a dream and does not remember what he saw, let him stand before the priests at the time when they spread out their hands and say as follows...I have dreamt a dream and I do not know what It is...If they are good dreams, confirm and reinforce them...and if they require a remedy, heal them, as the waters of Marah were healed by Moses, our teacher, and as Miriam was healed of her leprosy and Hezekiah of his sickness, and the waters of Jericho by Elisha. As thou didst turn the curse of Balaam into a blessing, so turn all my dreams into something good for me. Try to end with the priests so congregation can answer Amen! If not, finish prayer with hope for peace. [This is now said in the Amidah at daily prayer by Sephardim].

3.8.5 *Payment of Interpreter*

The psychoanalytic tradition of charging for services including of course dream interpretation is described in the Torah. 'Bar Heyda was an interpreter of dreams (B.T., 55a, 1–5). To one who paid him he used to give a favorable interpretation and to one who did not pay him he gave an unfavorable interpretation. Abaye and Raba each had a dream. Abaye gave him a zuz and Raba did not give him anything. They said to him: in our dream we had to read the verse, Thine ox shall be slain before your eyes, etc. To Raba he said: Your business will be a failure and you will be so grieved that you will have no appetite to eat. To Abaye he said: Your business will prosper and you will not eat be able to eat for sheer joy'. This pattern continued for 18 dreams. Then Raba gave Bar Heyda a zuz and in the next four dreams Bar Heyda gave Raba positive interpretations.

Bar Heyda and Raba went on a boat trip together (B.T., 56b, 5, 6.8). When Bar Heyda got out of the boat a book fell from his pocket. Raba found the book and read in it 'All dreams follow the mouth'. He exclaimed Wretch! ... You gave me all this pain. Raba cursed him to be shown no mercy and Bar Heyda fearing the curse coming true fled to Rome. In Rome the keeper of the King's wardrobe wanted his dreams interpreted without payment. One dream was of worms spoiling all the King's silk garments. Finally the king's silk clothes were all destroyed by worms. The King had the keeper of his clothes arrested and planned to kill him. The keeper pointed out it was Bar Heyda's fault for not interpreting his dreams. Bar Heyda was arrested and killed by being torn apart. [Why so much attention to payment and interpretation. Perhaps, need for truth, and beware of the interpreter. Talmud Rabbis do warn against false prophets who use dreams to lead one away from the Lord to worship false Gods].

3.8.6 *Sex-Erotic Symbolic (B.T., 56b, 8–9) and Overtly Erotic (B.T., 57a, 2)*

Freud presents the view that the source of dream formation is an ucs infantile wish; the majority of which are sexual in nature [18]. The dream is a disguised fulfillment of the repressed wish [18]. The impulse connects with the day residue which is then subject to the distortions of the dream work to produce the dream experience.

The Talmud presents sexual dreams in a symbolic form (B.T., 56b, 8–9) and overtly sexual dreams (B.T., 57a, 2) as reflecting non-sexual valuable qualities. Examples of symbolic sexual dreams are the following: (1) He said to him (R. Ishmael): I dreamt that there was a shade above me and yet it was beneath me. He replied: It means unnatural intercourse. And (2) A certain Min said to R. Ishmael: I saw myself [in a dream] pouring oil on olives. He replied: This man has outraged his mother. (3) He said to him: I dreamt I plucked a star. He replied: You have stolen an Israelite. (4) I dreamt that I swallowed the star. He replied: You have sold an Israelite and consumed the proceeds. (5) He said to him: I dreamt that my eyes were kissing one another. He replied: This man has outraged his sister. (6) He said to him: I dreamt that I kissed the moon. He replied he has outraged the wife of an Israelite. (7) He said to him: I dreamt that I was walking in the shade of a myrtle. He replied: He has outraged a betrothed damsel. (8) He said to him: I saw ravens keep on coming to my bed. He replied: Your wife has misconducted herself with many men. (9) He said to him: I saw pigeons keep on coming to my bed. He replied: You have defied many women. (10) He said to him: I dreamt that I took two doves but they flew away. He replied: You have married two wives and dismissed them without a bill of divorce.

The overtly sexual dreams in the Talmud (B.T., 57a, 2) are given a non-sexual interpretation by the Rabbis. [Rabbis can give very sexual interpretations of symbolic sexual dreams so it is not just delicacy] (1) If one dreams that he has intercourse with his mother, he may, he may expect to obtain understanding since it says, Yea, thou wilt call understanding mother. (2) If one dreams he has intercourse with a betrothed maiden, he may expect to obtain knowledge of Torah, since it says Moses commanded us a law [Torah], an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. Read not morashah [inheritance] but me'orash [betrothed]. (3) If one dreams he had intercourse with his sister, he may expect to obtain wisdom, since it says, say to wisdom, thou art my sister. (4) If one dreams as he has intercourse with a married woman, he can be confident that he is destined for the future world, provided that is that he does not know her and did not think of her in the

evening. (5) If one dreams that he is standing naked, if in Babylon he will remain sinless, if in the land of Israel he will be bare of pious deeds (B.T., 57a, 5).

4 Conclusions

It provides a psychologically rich and humanistic approach to understanding dreams. The Talmudic dream is prophetic in nature so it is future oriented while the Freudian dream is childhood wish fulfillment so it is past oriented. In addition to the need to understand the dream experience, e.g., “A dream that is not interpreted, is like a letter that is not read”. “And, that the dream follows the mouth”, so that meaning is not in the text but in the interpretation. Word play is similarly used by the Rabbis and modern interpreters. The dream experience is over-determined, e.g., “...There were 24 interpreters of dreams in Jerusalem...I dreamt a dream and I went round to all of them and they all gave different interpretations, and all were fulfilled”. Therefore, the meaning of the dream is over-determined. The dream experience the Rabbi’s felt reflected the psychology of the dreamer, e.g., “A man is shown in dreams only what is in his own thoughts”. “The dreams of everyday men and women are presented, i.e.,... “The dream of the cracked granary”, or “If one sees a goat in a dream, he will have a blessed year”. Good and bad dreams reflect the moral nature of the dreamer and if it is a bad dream there is a method to prevent its fulfillment by telling it to three people and if one does not recall a dream there is also a method for dealing with it in the daily prayers asking the Lord to make it a good dream. Concern about false dream interpreters is expressed by having one who demanded payment being killed. Dreams with a sexual meaning are presented symbolically”, Two eyes kissing means you want sex with your sister; while an overtly sexual dream such as having sex with your sister is interpreted as a search for a higher value such as wisdom. The dream of everyday men and women are examined as happened in the case of the “cracked granary”.

The precursors of many of our modern views of dreaming are captured in the “Jewish Dream Book”.

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