Talmud Brachot Top Ten Teachings, Daf 57:

1. **Favorable words to dream about.** Seeing the sage Huna in a dream signifies that a miracle will be done for you. Seeing the scholars Chanina, Chananya, and Yochanan in a dream means that you will have many miracles. If you see a eulogy - or more specifically, if you see the word *hesped*, which means eulogy, written down - it means Heaven has had mercy on you and redeemed you. Rashi says the need for the word to appear in writing also applies to the sages listed above, and that the reason these sages foretell good fortune has to do with the letters in their names. “Huna” has a *nun*, which is the first letter of the word *nes* (miracle). “Chanina,” “Chananya,” and “Yochanan” each contain two *nuns*, suggesting multiple miracles. The Maharsha questions this Rashi. First, where does he get the idea that the names must appear in the dream written out the same way “*hesped*” must be written out? And if these sages are special only because of the *nuns* in their names, what about other names that contain one or more *nuns*? The word *hesped* contains the letters of the word c*has.* (The letters *hay* and *chet* are similar enough that they can sometimes be switched.) *Chas* means compassion and forgiveness, which seems to be the reason the gemara assigns this meaning to “*hesped*” in a dream. It only makes sense that the same logic be applied to the sages. But it is not only the *nuns* that make these four names special. They all contain the word *chen*, which means grace. “Huna” is weaker - it again requires switching a *hay* for a *chet*. Perhaps that’s why Huna only signifies one miracle. But the other three names all contain the letters of *chen*. Grace means seeing only the good in someone and not being able to see anything bad in them. When we ask G-d to find grace in us, we are saying that we know we’re not perfect but we ask Him to find the good in us. The four sages listed were all exemplary people who were able to elicit G-d’s *chen* and bring about miracles. Perhaps it is the combination of the letters in their names – the word *chen* and the additional *nun* – and the miracles they often had in their lives that makes these four rabbis good dream omens.
2. ***Kaddish*, Shema, and tefillin.** If you see yourself in a dream responding to *kaddish* with “*amen, yehei shemai rabbah mevorach*…” - may G-d’s Name be great and blessed - you are assured a place in the World to Come. If you dream about reciting the Shema, you are fit to have the Divine presence rest on you, and if it doesn’t that’s only because your generation doesn’t merit it. We might think these two should be switched. The Shema contains the requirements to love G-d and do His will and learn Torah, so saying it sincerely and applying it in your life would earn you a place in the World to Come. The “*amen, yehei shemai rabbah*” response in *kaddish* is more related to the Divine presence. The gemara in Sotah 49a says that in the dark times of *galus*, what G-d has is the *amen yehei shemai rabbah* recited after *agadah* and the order of *kedusha*. This is probably referring to the *kedusha* in the *uva letzion* prayer. As long as we cannot be in the presence of the Shechinah in the Temple, we have these prayers as a substitute. So it would make sense to say that seeing this response in a dream would mean you merit the Divine presence that it is replacing. Why does the gemara switch the interpretations? Resh Lakish, in Shabbos 119b, says that whoever answers *amen* with all of his might merits the World to Come. Reb Tzadok Hakohen explains that by putting yourself into these words you are manifesting the governance of G-d. *Amen, yehei shemai rabbah* is an acknowledgment that right now the world isn’t quite like it should be, because not everyone recognizes the greatness of G-d’s name, but you know that one day it will be. When you say these words with all of your might, you are trying to bring about that future, and in that way you can earn a place in the World to Come. What is the connection between the Shema and the Divine presence? The Rambam says that there is a formula for achieving prophecy: you must exemplify self-control to the point where you’re not taken over by passion, and you must have a healthy sense of mind, not clouded by desires. If you follow the process correctly, you will almost automatically become linked to the Active Intellect, a conduit to the Divine emanation. (See Wikipedia article Active Intellect, citing Maimonides’s *Guide for the Perplexed*.) Greek philosophers believed the same thing, with one key difference: the Greeks thought that if you followed the proper steps, prophecy would come automatically. The Rambam believed that prophecy could be blocked even from someone who did everything correctly. Therefore, a person might deserve prophecy but not achieve it if his generation is undeserving and prophecy is blocked from the whole world, as it is now while we are in exile. The Shema represents the path to prophecy. You must believe in G-d and love Him, which means you must leave behind worldly pleasures that would take away from your love of G-d, and you must study Torah and keep the mitzvos. The Rambam, like Chabad, saw the ideal recitation of the Shema as being part of a more comprehensive study of G-d’s unity, knowledge, and understanding that increases one’s faith to the point of knowing G-d exists. He believed that the World to Come is already in existence now for those who use their minds to come closer to G-d in this world, because the World to Come is just a purer continuation of that G-d-centered consciousness. Thus, a proper recitation of the Shema should merit you the Divine presence, and the only reason it doesn’t is that our generation is unworthy.

If you see yourself wearing tefillin in a dream, anticipate greatness, because there is a verse that says, “The nations of the world will see that the Name of G-d is upon you and they will be in awe of you.” There may have been times in our history that tefillin actually protected us from attack, though that certainly wasn’t always the case. But people who stand for something are deserving of respect. Our tefillin show our enemies that they have nothing and they are just animals killing innocent people. Even if the tefillin don’t protect us physically, they grant some protection on a spiritual level. They are a reminder not to become a wild animal, and that is true greatness.

1. **Seemingly inappropriate dreams.** One who cohabits with his mother in a dream should anticipate understanding, because of the verse, “for if you call out to understanding.” The word *im*, which means if, has the same letters as the word *eim*, which means mother. Based on this wordplay, a mother is connected to the idea of understanding. Kabbalistically, mothers are the ones who give understanding. A mother can often understand her young child when no one else can. One who cohabits with a young betrothed woman in a dream should anticipate Torah, based on the verse, “*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe morasha kehilas Yaakov*” - the Torah that Moses gave us is the inheritance of the community of Jacob. The word *morasha* - inheritance - is similar to the word *me’orasa* - a betrothed woman. Specifically, a *me’orasa* has gone through the first step of marriage - the *erusin* - but not the final step - the *nissuin*. She is betrothed to one man and forbidden to everyone else, and this represents greatness in Torah. One who cohabits with his sister in a dream should anticipate wisdom, because the verse says, “*emor lechachma achoti at*” - tell wisdom you’re my sister. One who cohabits with a married woman in a dream is assured a place in the World to Come, but only if it’s a woman he didn’t know or think about before having the dream. This seems to be a strange way of understanding inappropriate dreams. Of course, often dreams are simply about wish fulfillment, and inappropriate wish fulfillment dreams are not holy. But sometimes creativity can manifest as an intimate dream. If you are dreaming about a woman for whom you’ve never had sexual feelings, the woman might be representing something deeper. The Talmud understood that dreams are often not literal and can have hidden meanings. They perhaps represent a longing to connect to a potential spiritual level that is currently out of reach.
2. **The seven species.** If you see a vine full of grapes in a dream, your wife won’t have a miscarriage, because the verse says, “your wife will be like a full vine.” If you see a branch of a vine, anticipate Mashiach, because the verse says, “he will tie his donkey to the vine.” If you see a fig, your Torah will be safeguarded and you won’t forget it, because the verse says, “the protector of a fig tree will eat the fruit.” If you see a small pomegranate, your business will become fruitful. If you see a big pomegranate, your business will increase like a pomegranate. A pomegranate that is split open can mean different things: if you are Torah scholar, it means you should anticipate Torah, and if you are not, it means you should anticipate mitzvos. It’s interesting that pomegranates can have so many different meanings, but it may simply be because there are multiple different verses about pomegranates. We know that to some degree, verses in the Torah are in tune with our inner life, so these differing verses suggest different meanings for different types of people. If you see an olive, your business will be fruitful and increase and endure like olives. If you see the olive tree, you’ll have a lot of children, because of the verse, “the children will be like olive shoots.” Some say that an olive in a dream means you will have a good name. If you see olive oil, anticipate the illumination of Torah, because the verse says, “take for yourself the oil of the olive that’s pure for lighting the menorah.” If you see dates, your sins will have ended. So far we have seen three categories of dreams and interpretations: first words and names, then people, and now the special fruit that Israel is blessed with.
3. **The esrog and the lulav.** If you see an esrog in a dream, you’re beautiful in the eyes of your Maker, because the esrog is called a “*pri etz hadar*” - the fruit of a beautiful tree. There are different opinions about what fruit this is actually referring to, but it is clear that beauty is an important aspect of this mitzvah. When it comes to picking an esrog, we always take into account *hiddur mitzvah* - fulfilling the mitzvah in an exemplary way. We don’t just pick any old esrog; we look specifically for a beautiful one. Of course, all mitzvos should be done in the most exemplary way we can manage, but for esrog there is a specific requirement of beautification. This goes back to our discussion of the nature of mitzvos. We do mitzvos because G-d tells us to, but there’s more to it than that. Each mitzvah has a particular emphasis and causes a particular affect within us. This particular emphasis of the mitzvah of esrog somehow has to do with beauty, and so we make an extra effort to make the esrog beautiful. And by beautifying the mitzvos, we are trying to become G-d’s esrog. Therefore, an esrog in a dream means that you are beautiful in G-d’s eyes. If you dream about a lulav, you only have one heart for your Father in Heaven. While the esrog is all about beauty, the lulav represents unity, because the lulav’s leaves don’t go away from the spine.
4. **Rosh Yeshiva dreams.** If you see a goose in a dream, anticipate wisdom, because the verse says, “wisdom cried out in the street.” If you dream of cohabiting with the goose, it means you will become a Rosh Yeshiva. Rav Ashi said he had a dream about cohabiting with a goose and then he became a Rosh Yeshiva. If you dream of going into a marsh, that also means you will become a Rosh Yeshiva. But if you dream of going into a forest, you will become the head of a smaller group that reviews sessions. Rav Papa dreamed of going into a marsh, and he became a Rosh Yeshiva. Rav Huna ben Rabbi Yehoshua dreamed of going into a forest, and he became the head of a smaller group. Some say that both rabbis had dreams about marshes, but in Rav Papa’s dream he had a bell. Like a goose, a bell makes a lot of noise, which signifies making more “noise” as a Rosh Yeshiva. Rav Ashi said he dreamed about entering a marsh with a bell and ringing it noisily. These rabbis wanted so much to be Roshei Yeshiva that they were even willing to admit to inappropriate dreams to “prove” that they were destined for the position. These days everybody wants to be a Rosh Yeshiva and a *gadol hador*, because yeshivas are teaching students that this is what everybody should strive for. But not everyone is meant to be a *gadol hador*. One of the main goals of chassidism at the beginning of the movement was to correct the overemphasis of ego in the world of Torah scholars. The reason the Rebbe did not want any more Rebbes after himself was that it’s dangerous for one person to have that much power. Striving for greatness is good, but it’s also important to have humility. Rav Moshe was a *gadol hador* not just because of his scholarship, but because of his humility and his dedication to the people.
5. **Ben Azai, Ben Zoma, and Elisha ben Avuya.** If you see Ben Azai in a dream, anticipate chassidus. If you see Ben Zoma in a dream, anticipate wisdom. If you see Elisha ben Avuya in a dream, anticipate Divine retribution. These are three of the four rabbis who entered into Pardes. The fourth, and the hero of the Pardes story, was Rabbi Akiva. In Maseches Chagiga there is a *machlokes* between Rashi and Tosfos. Rashi says Ben Azai died because he saw the Shechinah, and a person cannot see G-d and live. Tosfos is bothered by this assertion, because it would mean Ben Azai saw even more than Moses did on Mount Sinai. The idea is that Ben Azai went higher than he was supposed to, so high that his soul could no longer be contained in a physical vessel and he could not continue to survive in this world. Some say this is also what happened to Nadav and Avihu. But what does that have to do with chassidus? Ben Azai had piety, but he did not have enough concern for the physical world. In fact, the definition of “chassid” in the Talmud is one who acts piously even when it may be to their own detriment.
6. **Things that are one sixtieth of something else.** Fire is one sixtieth of *gehinnom*, honey is one sixtieth of manna, Shabbos is one sixtieth of the World to Come, sleep is one sixtieth of death, and a dream is one sixtieth of prophecy. One sixtieth is a concept that comes up in the laws of kashrus. If something that is not kosher gets mixed in with kosher food, but the non-kosher portion is less than one sixtieth of the food, in most instances it is nullified and the food is still kosher. Something that is one sixtieth is there but, at the same time, not really there. Shabbos is one sixtieth of the World to Come. The Rambam says that the World to Come is a state of consciousness that we can develop even in this world with a certain philosophy, worldview, and practice. In fact, the Slonimer Rebbe says that in order to gain access to the Garden of Eden after we die, we must have first had an experience of the Garden of Eden in this world. Shabbos is how we have that experience in this world. It gives us a taste of Paradise. Sleep is one sixtieth of death because you cannot do anything while you’re asleep, and some people worry about whether or not they will wake up. A dream is one sixtieth of prophecy. Almost all prophecy happens in a dream state. Prophecy requires an unlocking of the unconsciousness that typically can’t happen when a person is awake. The holier a person is, and the more detached from chasing physical pleasures, the more that person will be able to access holiness in their dreams.
7. **A dead person’s shoes.** If you dream about a dead body in a house, that is a sign of peace. If the dead person ate or drank, that is a good sign. But if the dead person took things out of the house, that is a bad sign. Rav Papa says it’s only a bad sign if the dead person took shoes or sandals out of the house; anything else is a good sign. What should be done with a person’s shoes after they die? Do dead people’s shoes carry some sort of bad luck? Some say the shoes shouldn’t be used, because the person might have left something detrimental in the shoes. But this only applies to shoes the person wore when they were ill. Some say this is just a misprint and it’s actually talking about a dead animal, and there is nothing wrong with the shoes of a dead person. But according to the Zohar, a person’s shoe is connected to who they are. Shoes represent a vessel of the soul. Thus the shoes shouldn’t be given to friends or relatives. Some say you can donate good pairs to the needy, but if they are nothing special they should just be thrown out.
8. **Converts in the time of Mashiach.** We have now finished the discussion of dreams, and we return to the topic of brachos. If you see a markulis, which is a type of idol, you should say, “Blessed is G-d Who is slow to anger for those who go against His will.” If you see a place where idolatry was uprooted, the wording of the blessing depends on where you are. In Israel the blessing includes the words, “*vehashev lev ovdeihem le’avdecha*” - You bring back the hearts of those who serve them to serve You. Outside of Israel we do not include those words in the blessing, because most people outside of Israel are still idolaters who are not ever going to worship the true G-d. But Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says we should say these words even outside of Israel, because eventually, when Mashiach comes, all of those idolaters will convert. There are three opinions about converts in the time of Mashiach. The first is that all non-Jews will convert, not by force but by choice. They will finally see the truth and they will want to serve G-d. This might mean that they will convert to Judaism or simply that they will observe the seven Noahide laws (including Shabbos, according to Rashi). The second opinion is that we will not accept any converts. The Rambam says we should not accept converts when times are very good, because we cannot trust their motivations. They might only be converting in order to gain money and power. The third is that conversion will work much like it does now: those who want to convert will, but most people won’t want to. We will find out when Mashiach comes which of the three opinions is correct.