



The History of Last Night's Dream: Discovering the Hidden Path to the Soul

Rodger Kamenetz

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A third of our time on earth is spent sleeping, yet our dreams, if we remember them at all, have been relegated to nothing more than curious anecdotes. When Sigmund Freud awakened modern interest in the dream a century ago, his theory of interpretation undermined the potential insights dreams had to offer. For Freud, dreams were little more than fragmented puzzle parts made up of events from our waking lives. Most of us today still live under Freud's far-reaching influence. When we wake up after experiencing a powerful series of images, we too readily explain them away or simply ignore them all together. Whatever emotion or insight the dream evokes slowly fades. But what if Freud was wrong? Unless we challenge his deeply-ingrained assumptions, we will forever lose the gift of our dreams.

International bestselling author Rodger Kamenetz believes it is not too late to reclaim the lost power of our nightly visions. Kamenetz's exploration of the world of dreams reopens all the questions scientists and psychologists claimed to have settled long ago. The culmination of decades of research, *The History of Last Night's Dream* is a riveting intellectual and cultural investigation of dreams and what they have to teach us. We discover how the age-old struggle between what we dream and how we interpret our dreams has shaped Western culture from biblical times to today. Kamenetz introduces us to an eighty-seven-year-old female kabbalist in Jerusalem, a suave Tibetan Buddhist dream teacher in Copenhagen, and a crusty intuitive postman-turned-dream master in northern Vermont. He fearlessly delves into this mysterious inner realm and shows us that dreams are not only intensely meaningful but that they hold essential truths about who we are. In the end, each of us has the choice to embark on this illuminating path to the soul. But one thing is certain: our dreams will never be the same again.

The History of Last Night's Dream: Discovering the Hidden Path to the Soul Details

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Denise says

Pretty interesting book. He includes tons of research about dream interpretation throughout the Bible and focused quite a bit on the Jewish faith's view of dreams. He included Freud and Jung. I thought the historical part was overdone and frankly skimmed a lot of it. The part about the author's experiences and his dreams and about his mentor were very interesting.

Catherine says

I'm pretty torn about this book. There are numerous wonderful things in its favor, not least of which is Kamenetz's prose, especially in the earlier sections. I'm also persuaded of his central argument - that our dreams speak to us quite plainly about where we're 'stuck' in our lives, and whether you believe that information comes from the unconscious (which is not really unconscious so much as beyond our waking mind's reach) or a divine source, the effect of accepting that dreams have something worth saying is the same. I also enjoy his meditation (a strangely *inapt* word, actually) on the fact that interpretation of dreams is not worthwhile - that the narrative is not the story, and that events and people are not meant to evoke memories in us. Instead, the real nuts and bolts of the dream are feelings - how we feel (lost, isolated, alone, joyous, compassionate, curious) reflects how we feel, whether we're conscious of it or not, when we wake.

But the further I read into the book, the more conflicted I felt. At first I wondered if my reaction was pure resistance - I have read a lot of helpful books in my life, and listened to helpful lectures and conversations and interviews and songs, that have nevertheless put me on edge right in the moment. But i realized instead that - while I may still have some resistance going on - my reaction sprang from the fact that Kamenetz is proselytizing. He believes he has found the sure and certain path to enlightenment, even salvation of a kind, and is set on convincing the rest of the world of that fact.

It's an especially jarring thing to realize about the book considering Kamenetz's earlier book, *The Lotus and the Jew*, is focused on the fact that there are multiple paths to experiencing serenity (for want of a better word) whether that serenity is divine-focused or not. There's a tremendous generosity to the world of *Lotus* - if there is god, it seems, then that god knows full well that human creatures will need about a hundred different paths to experiencing something of divinity, because we are products of so many cultures, and times, and places. That no longer exists in *Last Night's Dream* - even Kamenetz's words toward the end of the book about many religions recognizing the divine as both male and female feels insubstantial when compared to his conviction that dreams are the only real way to unearth truth (big or little T).

Perhaps what I find most lacking about Kamenetz's new vision of the world is compassion. The author has tremendous compassion for the world and for others, a compassion he nurtures through his work with dreams, but what's lost is the idea of compassion for the self - of a lack of blame, and a lack of being intrinsically bad, or wrong. Where the Buddhism of *Lotus* cultivates the idea of loving kindness - that when we make a mistake we should simply acknowledge it, forgive ourselves, correct the behavior, and carry on without beating up on ourselves or marking ourselves as intrinsically evil - Kamenetz's dream approach carries old, old ideas about wrong and right with it. There is opposition to face down, and evil to vanquish, and if we're jerks, well, we're jerks, end of story, fundamentally flawed, even evil, and that makes us Less

Than. That's not a way of life I'm looking to embrace.

Tiffany says

This is a book that must be digested, reread, consumed, and internalized. It's full of dream history and religious references, which is why it only gets 4 stars instead of 5. I'm still trying to wrap my head around all there is in it. I need to go back through it and find each step to figure out the message of dreams, because each of these little gems of knowledge are buried within mounds of text and examples and references to Freud/Jung/Biblical characters. I suppose part of the healing-by-dreams process is to decipher and draw out meaning among the chaos, so I suppose it's fitting that I feel I have to go back now and pick out the stuff that is actual 'how-to' in the dream analysis process.

Brett says

After reading Rodger Kamenetz The History of Last Night's Dream, I have to admit that I had been approaching the topic of dreams and how to get the most out of my dreams from a mystical, not religious viewpoint. I had 'forgotten' the Biblical stories of Jacob's dream ladder, Joseph's admonition to Pharaoh that interpretation comes from God, and is 'not from me', Joseph's stars bowing down dreams. Kamenetz's book traces dreams through history, stopping along the way to observe three old testament varieties: warning, prophetic, revelatory, and giving the reader historical context that I found intriguing: "The Church Fathers who defended Christian doctrine against opponents and heretics were in a bind similar to that of the rabbis when it came to the question of dreams. They had to respect the authority of past revelation dreams and visions - but didn't want new dreamers to compete with the old."

Kamenetz devotes a significant number of pages to his experience in Jerusalem during the summer of 1995, exploring the imagery teaching of Colette Aboulker-Muscat. One of the book's theses: that for our spiritual growth and successful dream work, it is important to focus on IMAGE rather than WORD. Kamenetz says "For a dream to transform you, you must enter fully into its imaginal reality" and shows how in the Western world -> we are fed through the written word; our schooling puts a premium on written words; even the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths are based on acknowledging, repeating, adhering to the word. Even in our traditional attempts at dream interpretation "...the WORD strives to keep its place on top in the conscious mind, and awareness remains partly or wholly submerged." Kamenetz calls this force 'the opposition' "...which wants to keep the dream safely lodged in the darkness where it belongs, not out in the light of day."

Our blockage, focusing on the story rather than on the emotion, is exacerbated by the cult which tells us that we must focus on INTERPRETING our dreams. Kamenetz discusses the impact that Sigmund Freud and his disciple Carl Jung had on society's treatment of those of us who are active dreamers, and points out that "Freud is closer to the spirit of his rabbinic predecessors than he is to that pillar of faith Joseph."

After studying with Marc Bregman, Kamenetz tells us "Dreams may ultimately lead to a spiritual journey, but the path begins where you are. And where you are will remain the issue of your dreams until you allow the dreams to teach you certain facts about yourself that may, at first, be unpleasant to acknowledge." Bergman shows him that "Everything in a dream is a reflection of a feeling or an emotion. Every dream is full of clues as to which is which," but because of 'blind-spots' we ignore these figures, rejected by the "dream ego, the I-in-the-dream".

I enjoyed learning from Kamenetz' experience opening up what he calls 'the three gifts of the dream'. Part 3 of the book details his personal dream work; this is the best part of The History of Last Night's Dream.

Jonathan says

It's a complex book which holds many insights into the world of dreams and dreaming from a historical and religious perspectives.

Christine says

Took his Kaballah class at LSU in 2005. One day, about 2009, was visiting the library when my son pushed all of the books on a shelf at his level forward, causing those on the next aisle to fall on the floor. When I went to pick them up, I realized they were all about Jewish mysticism. I believe in synchronicity. I decided to go look up my professor to see if he had any new books out (I'd read some of his previous works) and saw that he had written a book about dreaming. I had been studying dreaming and found this book to be very helpful. The author is also a dream therapist with www.northofeden.com so I did a few sessions with him. Read this book and, if you can, do the dream therapy. You will learn things about yourself that you may not have known on a conscious level before, but will find out. It made me look at the spiritual world and my connection to it in a new light.

After reading "The History of Last Night's Dream", recording my dreams, doing the dream therapy, I then moved on to Robert Moss, a dream Shaman. I highly recommend his books if you want to know step-by-step on how to get the most out of your dreams. He recommends you start off with his book, "Unconscious Dreaming". His books are "tools". You don't just read them, you work through them.

Cathie says

Excellent! Highly recommended. This book led me to dream therapy with the author...amazing.

Jenny says

I don't think the subject of this book has a wide appeal, so I wouldn't exactly recommend it to my friends. But I personally found it fascinating.

Many years ago I was told I have a gift for receiving and understanding dreams. I believe dreams have a personal message for us. But the few books I've read on the subject haven't been very helpful to me in understanding my dreams better.

I appreciated the author's methods for exploring and understanding your dreams. Because of this book, I was able to understand a dream I had as a child, over 30 years ago. And I now understand a repeating "stress" dream that I've had for years--I even had a follow-up dream that helped me understand (and begin to change) a personality pattern of mine.

Katie Karnehm-Esh says

Lovely, fascinating book that's part memoir, part research on the history of making meaning out of dreams.

Diane says

Bummer! I was sooooo into this! Sadly, it is really more about the author than any real meaning behind dreams.

Megan says

In response to Catherine's review, I feel as if we read different books. I am not religious at all and felt that Kamenetz was not preaching, but rather exploring his dreams from his unique approach. The literary and historical approach were interesting to me, and I did not walk away with the sense of simple binary opposition or the lack of compassion. I felt the author was brutally honest and coming from a place that is very vulnerable. This is his journey and not the only journey; he seeks a very specific answer to a religious question and in the process is able to share his own transformation. I think the value is in comparing his journey with the history as he does throughout the book of others who seek to journey in their dreamworlds. The outcomes are shaped by the dreamer, and I think Kanenetz just scratches the surface for us, opening a bit the door in a world that we ultimately have to explore for ourselves.

Jon says

About dream interpretation, and challenging at times, it's about dream interpretation via Freud, Jung and Jewish mysticism.

Susan Ritz says

As someone who has been a traumatized client of the "crusty Vermont postman" so lauded in this book, I was surprised by how much I enjoyed it and how much I learned. I esp. liked the historical perspective and the chance to discover other ways dreams have been used or abused through out time, esp. in the Jewish tradition.

Priya Keefe says

From the moment I picked this book up with idle interest I was in its grip. Although some of the religious history went on a bit long for me, I found much of it more interesting than I would have guessed. Kamenetz

provides a background for how Western, Judeo-Christian culture has related to dreams, and in this he tells his own story of working with two teachers to learn what his dreams could teach him. This book gave me a new way to think about dreams.

Charlie says

I love a book that teaches me something new, I love it even more when it teaches me something that I did not know I was going to learn.

Rodger Kamenetz is a wonderful writer who explains his journey with his dreams in a beautiful clear climatic way. He explains the difference between the interpreter and the dreamer, pathology and the VIP, between word and image.

This book not only has me thinking about dreams differently, it has me doing something about it.

I already have two people in mind to share it with.
