

Dreams and Realities

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"Laugh at all my dreams, my dearest;
laugh, and I repeat anew.
That I still believe in humankind
as I still believe in you"
(Shaul Tchernichovsky, 1894)

After October 7, I personally, and many others, lost our ability to dream. I am not speaking metaphorically. Many in Israel and around the Jewish world are too affected and traumatized to be able to dream, and even more so to dream good dreams about Israel. A professor with Tel Aviv University sleeping lab even invented a "dream changer" device to help overcome the inability to dream amongst traumatized young people.¹ And so, at this crucial time, Israel educators need to step in and help everyone retrieve their ability to dream, and encourage the widest variety of *good dreams* about Israel.

Regaining an ability to dream will mean resilience, purpose, and action. The power to חלום—*Chalom*—dream means starting the process of החלמה—*Hachlama*—healing, because they are one and the same: in Hebrew, dreams and healing are derived from the same linguistic root, חלם, and so Israel educators can proactively evoke dreams and kickstart the process of healing.

¹ <https://english.tau.ac.il/news/dream-changer-program>



Dreams are practical entities, Jewishly speaking. Beginning with Jacob, who is followed by a long chain of practical dreamers whose personal dreams reflect their national aspirations, dreams define our identity (Jacob becoming Israel), and pave a course of action (Herzl's *Altneuland*). All of them began with one or more "good dreams," because a good dream is sometimes all you need. "Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Three matters require a plea for mercy to bring them about: A good king, a good year, and a good dream" (Berachot 95:1). In the same way, at this moment in time, Israel education needs to leverage every channel toward purposeful processes of dreaming good dreams about Israel.

Dreaming in Israel education right now should be about meaning: "why" Israel is so central to the Jewish people. And dreaming should also be about "what" Israel can be for the Jewish people and the world. Inspired by Shaul Tschernihovsky's poem, Israel educational efforts should be open to catching and curating the widest variety of dreams possible: good dreams about life ("My soul aspires to sparrow"), humanity ("In my body, also in my spirit"), love ("Because I will find a heart again"), peace, Zionism, and more.

Israel education in this moment must release the pause in dreaming about Israel, and invite everyone to be an active, good dreamer.