EPHESUS · 2ND CENTURY · FROM THE GREEK

The Dream Book of Artemidorus

II · Gods, Wealth and Journeys



What your dream foretells — love, wealth or your future

ARTEMIDORUS OF DALDIS · BOOK II

BOOKS OF WISDOM · DREAMS AND OMENS · NO. 105



The Dream Book of Artemidorus

II. Gods, Wealth and Journeys

The oldest dream book to survive complete — what a dream promises the rich and the poor, the lover, the traveller and the ruler. Book II of three: Artemidorus' Book Two, 75 chapters. Complete translation from the Greek after the Paris edition of 1603, with notes, a foreword and commentary

BlusaBooks · MMXXVI

© 2026 BlusaBooks (SIA "Blusa Entertainment"). Modern English text, notes, foreword and commentary.

Source: Artemidorus of Daldis, «Oneirocritica» (The Interpretation of Dreams, 2nd century), after N. Rigault's edition «Artemidori Daldiani et Achmetis Sereimi f. Oneirocritica», Paris, 1603 (Duke University copy, archive.org); Greek text with J. Cornarius's Latin translation; text in the public domain. Translated from the Greek; no images of the printed edition are reproduced. A few dreams of forbidden sexual relations are omitted in this edition; each omission is marked in the text. A historical source: statements on health or other matters reflect the beliefs of the ancient world, not medical or any other advice.

BLUSABOOKS · MMXXVI

CONTENTS

Foreword 6

Book Two 8

Preface 8
1. On Waking 8
2. On Going Out and Greeting 9
3. On Clothing and Adornment of Every Kind, Men's and Women's 9
4. On Dreaming That One Washes One's Clothes 11
5. On Outward Ornaments 12
6. On Combing and Plaiting the Hair 13
7. On Looking into a Mirror 13
8. On the Air and What Happens in the Air 14
9. On Fire in Daily Use 18
10. On Parts of a House on Fire 18
11. On Hunting and Dogs 20
12. On All Kinds of Animals 21
13. On Reptiles 27
14. On Fishing 28
15. On Frogs 30
16. On Sea Beasts 30
17. On Gulls and Divers 31
18. On Dead Fish 31
19. On Fowling with Birdlime 31
20. On Creatures That Travel Through the Air 32
21. On Marsh Birds 34
22. On Bees 34
23. On Sailing 35
24. On Farming 36
25. On Trees of Every Kind 38
26. On Dung of Every Kind 39
27. On Rivers, a Lake, a Spring and a Well 40
28. On Marshes, Mountains, Roads, Glens and Ravines 42
29. On Law Courts and Lawsuits 42
30. On Physicians 43
31. On Every Kind of Office 43
32. On War, Military Service and Enlistment 45
33. On Single Combat 46
34. On the Worship of the Gods 47

35. On the Heavenly and Earthly Gods 48
36. On the Sun 51
37. On the Moon 53
38. On the Stars 53
39. On the Rainbow 55
40. On Clouds 55
41. On Winds 55
42. On the Earthly Gods 56
43. On the Gods of the Sea 61
44. On the Gods of the Underworld and Those About Them 62
45. On Heroes and Spirits 64
46. On Earthquakes and Chasms 65
47. On the Ladder, the Frying Pan, the Mill, the Mortar and the Cock 65
48. On Eggs 65
49. On the Hippocentaur, Scylla and Gods in Human Form 66
50. On the Writing Tablet and Books 67
51. On Partridges 67
52. On Fetters 67
53. On Blows 67
54. On Death 68
55. On Hanging 69
56. On Slaughter 69
57. On Being Burned Alive 70
58. On the Cross 70
59. On Fighting Wild Beasts 70
60. On the Descent into Hades 71
61. On Carrying and Being Carried 71
62. On the Dead 72
63. On Coins 72
64. On Treasure 73
65. On Tears 73
66. On a Tomb 74
67. On the Dead Coming Back to Life 74
68. On the Dead Dying Again 74
69. On a Deadly Poison 74
70. On Marriage 74
71. On the Swallow and the Nightingale 75
72. On Teeth 76
73. On Flying 77
74. On Trustworthy Figures 79
75. On the Length of Life 80

Commentary 85

How to read it. As everywhere in Artemidorus, a dream is good or bad depending on who sees it. Death in a dream means freedom for a slave, for "the dead have no master", while a crucified poor man becomes "lifted high". Purple promises freedom to a slave, honour to the rich and chains to the poor. The keys are likeness, custom and wordplay, and sometimes the numerical value of letters. Each dream has its own paragraph.

Why it still fascinates. This is a book about the wishes people still seek in their dreams today: freedom, money, love, power and a safe return home. In his closing words Artemidorus swears that he has tested everything by experience, and says that the god of his native Daldis, Apollo Mystes[1], bade him write the work.

About the translation. It is made from the Greek text in the Paris edition of 1603, prepared by N. Rigault, with the Latin translation of Janus Cornarius as an aid. This book is translated in full, without abridgement, as in the original. The ideas of the age about slaves, women, punishments and gods are not softened. Our explanations appear only in notes at the foot of the page.

Beliefs of the ancient world; not medical or any other advice.

Book Two of three.

1 Apollo "the Initiate" — the god of the city of Daldis; Artemidorus honoured it as his home town on his mother's side.

for the rest it signifies sickness or inactivity. The Roman garment, which they now call the tebennos,[1] signifies the same. It is named after Temenus the Arcadian, who was the first to throw his chlamys[2] about himself in this way, when he had sailed into the Ionian Gulf and been received by the people who lived there; learning from him, the natives too dressed in the same fashion and called the garment "temenios", after Temenus who invented it. Later, in the course of time, the name was corrupted and it was called "tebennos". To wear soft and costly clothing is good for the rich and for the poor as well: for the former, their present luxury will remain; for the latter, their affairs will become brighter. For slaves and the needy it foretells sickness. Curtailed and unseemly garments signify losses and inactivity. The chlamys, which some call "mandye", others "ephestris", and others "birrus" foretells affliction and straits, and for those in a lawsuit, condemnation, because it encloses the body. The so-called "phainoles"[3] signifies the same, and anything else similar to these; hence it is better to take off these garments than to keep them. Of other garments, the loss of none is beneficial, except perhaps for the poor and slaves, for those in bonds or in debt, and for all who are in constraint: for these garments, when lost, signify the loss of the evils that enclose the body. For the others it is good neither to be stripped nor to lose garments, for it signifies the loss of everything that serves as someone's adornment. For a woman, many-coloured and flowery clothing is beneficial, especially for a courtesan and a rich woman: the one wears flowery clothes because of her trade, the other because of her luxury. Garments of a single colour signify good for all, especially for those who are being cautious, for such a colour does not allow one to be exposed. It is always better to wear clean, bright and well-washed garments than dirty and unwashed ones, except for those who do dirty work.

4. On Dreaming That One Washes One's Clothes

To dream that one is washing one's own clothes, or another's, signifies that one will put away something of the hardships of one's life, because clothes too cast off

1 The Greek name for the Roman toga.
2 Chlamys: a short Greek cloak pinned at the shoulder.
3 Phainoles (Latin paenula): a heavy hooded travelling cloak that wrapped the whole body.

men's rooms[1] signify the people of the household, kinsmen and servants alike; the women's quarters, the maidservants; the porch of the house, the masters. Storerooms and granaries signify the possessions, or the stewards or the managers of the household. So much for whole rooms. Of the walls, the one with the door signifies the master, the one with the window the mistress. Where there is no window, the middle wall signifies the master, the right-hand wall the children, the left-hand wall the wife. When a room has many windows, it foretells death to brothers and partners as well: to the elder, the eastern side of the room, to the younger, the western side. Let the northern side be judged like the eastern, and the southern like the western.

Walls that look brighter as a great fire grows on them carry life over to something better and more splendid. Doors on fire signify the ruin of the wife, and that the dreamer's life does not stand in safety. Of the door-leaves, the one that has the bolt signifies a free wife, the one that receives it, the wife. Columns burning with a clean fire and not destroyed signify that the dreamer's children will pass to a better and more brilliant condition. But those that are shattered signify the ruin of sons —

"For male children are the pillars of a house", as Euripides[2] says somewhere. Roof-beams, lintels and railings, if burned down, foretell the ruin of children and the loss of property. The foundations signify the masters, the copings of the walls kinsmen and friends.

Trees growing in front of the house signify the masters. Of those inside the house, the large ones, if burning, likewise signify the masters — the male[3] ones the men, the female ones the women; the small ones signify friends and kinsmen; and those quite low to the ground, such as box and myrtle, the household slaves.

1 The "andrōn" was the men's room of a Greek house, where the master received guests and held drinking parties; the women's quarters ("gynaikōnitis") usually lay further inside or upstairs.
2 Euripides (c. 480–406 BC), Iphigenia in Tauris, line 57: Iphigenia dreams that her father's house collapses, leaving only one column standing — her brother Orestes.
3 The ancients divided trees into "male" and "female" by their growth and fruit (for example the male and female fig, or palm).

red mullet. The red mullet is good for childless women, for it spawns three times[1], and that, they say, is why it rightly bears its name; so say Aristotle in his works on animals and Aristophanes[2] in his commentaries on Aristotle.

Fish that shed their shells are good for the sick, for those in prison, for the poor, and for all who are in some distress; for they will put off the troubles surrounding them. For the soft-shelled creatures shed their old age: shrimps, spiny lobsters, crabs, lobsters, edible crabs, the so-called "old woman", and all others like them. They have often foretold blows as well, because they strike themselves, and they signify journeys, because they live both in water and on land.

Fish that upset our bellies and expel the excrement signify the same as vegetables and render people the same service; I have spoken of them in the account of food. All the shell-skinned creatures loosen the belly: the purple-shell, the trumpet-shell, the oyster, the rhombus, the sea-urchin, the mussel, the pelōris, cockles, scallops, hermit crabs and anything else of that kind. Purple-shells and hermit crabs often benefit fishermen and purple-dyers. The pinna and its so-called pinna-guard[3], and the crab, are good both for marriage and for partnership, because of their partnership and goodwill towards one another.

Soft fish benefit only those who undertake some knavery, for they themselves change their colours and, taking on the look of the places where they are, escape notice. To everyone else they signify hindrances and detentions, because they hold fast and are sticky; and in business they foretell great feebleness, because they have no bones — and the strength of the body is bone. They are these: the octopus, the squid, the sea-nettle, the nautilus, the porphyrion and the cuttlefish. The cuttlefish alone helps those who wish to run away, because of the trick it uses to escape so often[4]. Antiphon of Athens also mentions this dream.

---

1 A play on words: "triglē" (red mullet) is linked with "tris", three times; the ancients believed it spawned three times a year.

2 Aristophanes of Byzantium (c. 257–180 BC), the Alexandrian grammarian who compiled an epitome of Aristotle's zoological works.

3 The pinna is a large sea mussel; a tiny crab, the "pinnophylax" ("pinna-guard"), lives inside it, and the ancients believed the two guarded and warned each other.

4 Fleeing a pursuer, the cuttlefish squirts dark ink and hides in its cloud.

everyone else, since they bear no fruit, they are a sign of poverty and want. Only the white poplar benefits athletes, because of Heracles.[1]

Box trees, myrtles and oleanders signify courtesan-like women who are not at all decent. They are good, too, for those setting out to act; for the sick they signify recovery and health; but for everyone else they become symbols of fruitless labour. Concerning the remaining trees, one must make one's judgments according to the principles already laid down, always taking what is similar to the outcomes. For dream interpretation is nothing other than the setting of like beside like. One must also remember this: trees that signify something good would be good if they flourish and bear fruit; but if they wither, or are torn up by the roots, or struck by lightning, or otherwise consumed by fire, they signify the opposite. Those, on the other hand, that signify something bad and untoward in their outcomes become more profitable when they wither and perish. Next after farming it would be fitting to speak about dung as well.

26. On Dung of Every Kind

Cow dung benefits only farmers, as does horse dung and every other kind except human. For everyone else it signifies distress and losses, and if it soils one, sickness as well. It benefits only those who do dirty work, and it has been observed to be profitable to them. Human dung, if seen in quantity, signifies many and various evils. It works as follows. Seen in a street, in the marketplace or in any public place, it prevents one from using the places where it lies. Often it also hinders one from going forward. Thus it has at times made those who would not listen to their womenfolk pay dearly for great evils. It would be unpleasant, too, to be soiled with human dung flowing down from somewhere. Yet I know a man who dreamed that a rich companion and intimate of his, who was his friend, heaped dung upon his head; this man succeeded to the other's property and became his companion's heir. And again, another man dreamed that he was befouled by a poor acquaintance; he suffered great harm at his hands and fell into great disgrace.

1 The white poplar was sacred to Heracles, patron of athletes; myth tells that he brought it up from the underworld and wore a wreath of it.