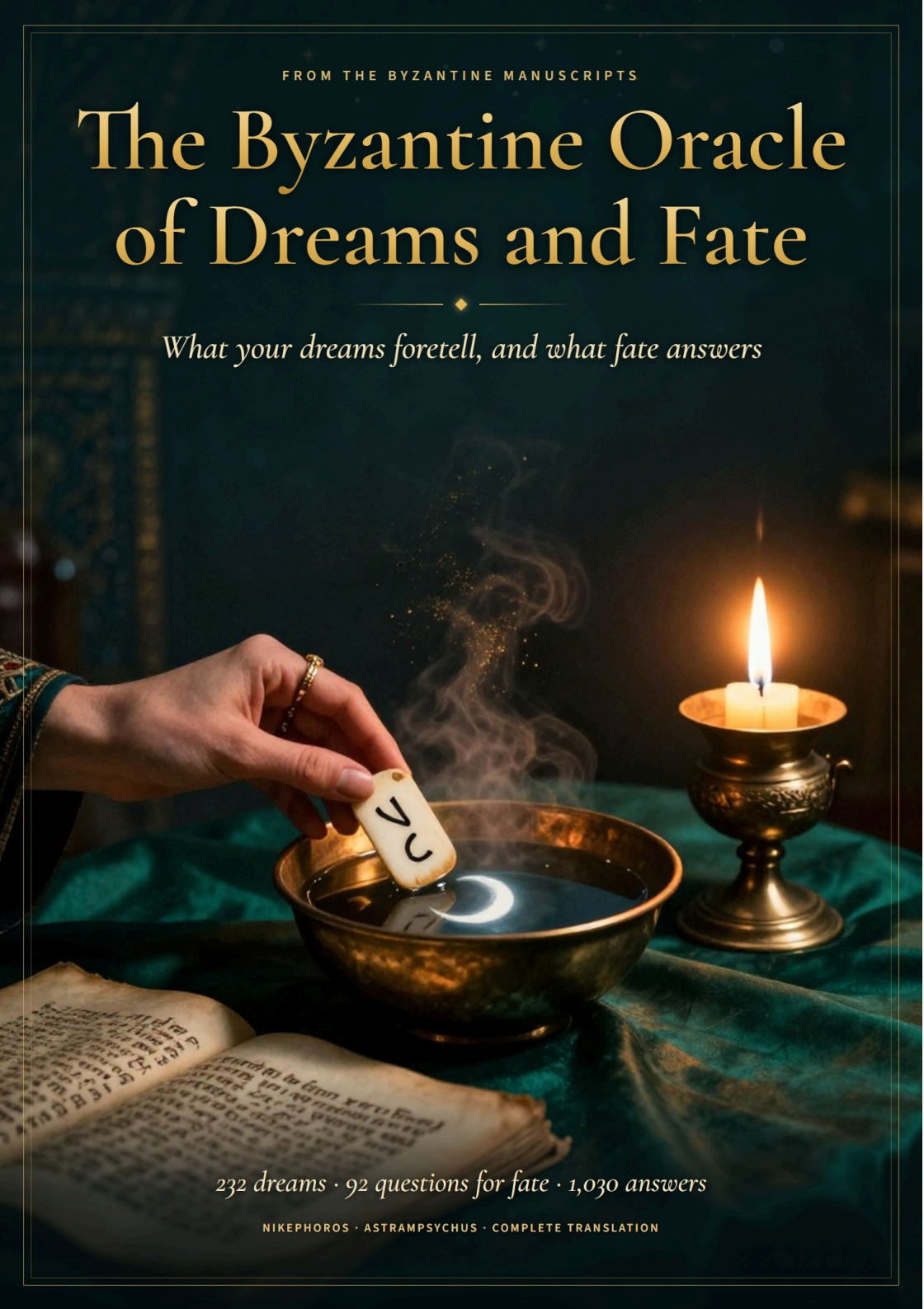
FROM THE BYZANTINE MANUSCRIPTS

# The Byzantine Oracle of Dreams and Fate

*What your dreams foretell, and what fate answers*



*232 dreams · 92 questions for fate · 1,030 answers*

NIKEPHOROS · ASTRAMPSYCHUS · COMPLETE TRANSLATION

BOOKS OF WISDOM

# The Byzantine Oracle of Dreams and Fate

*What your dreams foretell, and what fate answers to your question*

The dream books of Nikephoros and Astrampsychus — 232 dreams and their meanings in the order of the Greek alphabet — and the «Oracle of Astrampsychus»: 92 questions on wealth, love, power and the future, with 1,030 answers. Complete translation from the Greek with notes, a preface, commentary and a guide to asking the oracle

BlusaBooks · MMXXVI

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

Sources: «The Dream Book of Nikephoros» and «The Dream Book of Astrampsychus» after the edition of N. Rigault (Paris, 1603), the text of Nikephoros compared with the manuscript BnF Grec 2494 (15th century); «The Oracle of Astrampsychus» (Sortes Astrampsychi) after the edition of R. Hercher (Berlin, 1863); texts in the public domain. No manuscript or print images are reproduced. A historical source: divination, dream interpretations and statements on health reflect Byzantine belief, not advice or a promise.

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# PREFACE

In Byzantium a dream was not a chance picture of the night. It was a message — a sign to be read in order to know what tomorrow held: gain or loss, honour or shame, love or parting, victory over an enemy or his attack. Whoever could read dreams knew more than others. This book holds three old Byzantine keys to the future: two dream books and one oracle of fate.

**The Dream Book of Nikephoros.** The first part is a short dream book in verse which the manuscripts ascribe to Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople. Tradition usually takes this to mean Nikephoros I (patriarch 806–815), defender of the holy icons and historian, though his authorship is not proven. The book opens with brief advice on how to prepare for a true dream; then come more than a hundred and thirty dreams, each in one iambic line: the image and its meaning. The verses follow the order of the Greek alphabet, so the book can be used like a pocket dictionary: find the image of your dream and learn its sign.

**The Dream Book of Astrampsychus.** The second part is a similar, still shorter dream book of 101 verses, also in alphabetical order, under the name of Astrampsychus. The ancient Greeks gave this name to a Persian magus; the Byzantine encyclopedia known as the Suda credits him with an «Interpretation of Dreams». The two books are related, and several verses are almost word for word the same. In both, the meaning is often the opposite of the image (whoever weeps in a dream will rejoice), or it springs from the sound of a Greek word. Such wordplay cannot be reproduced in English, so it is explained in the notes.

**The Oracle of Astrampsychus.** The third part is the oldest text and perhaps the most fascinating: a book of oracles that answers particular questions. It opens with a letter to King Ptolemy in which Astrampsychus promises that by this method of Pythagoras Alexander the Great himself ruled the world. There are

# THE DREAM BOOK OF NIKEPHOROS

*The Interpretation of Dreams of Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople*[1]*, in alphabetical order, in iambic verse.*

Before all else, master your passions and your belly; let tears fall from your eyes, send up prayers from your whole heart, and lift your hands to God and Lord, when as a mortal you would bow your head to sleep.

For thus you will see, clearly and swiftly, the shadowy semblances of dreams.

A laden belly shows false dreams.

So too do heavy drinking and a surfeit of unmixed wine[2], the gloom of cares and the fog of the mind.

## A — alpha

If you see an eagle, know it for a messenger[3] of God.

A dream of a cock is a true dream.

To eat bread still steaming hot betokens sickness[4].

He who holds a pear misses the mark of his hopes.

To move sluggishly makes one's roads ill-starred.

He who converses with a king comes away empty-handed.

1 Tradition ascribes the book to Nicephorus I, Patriarch of Constantinople (806–815); the authorship is not securely proven.
2 Greeks and Byzantines normally drank their wine mixed with water; neat wine was a mark of intemperance.
3 The Greek ἄγγελος means both "messenger" and "angel".
4 A medieval belief; not medical advice.

To hold lighted wax candles is a good thing.

A head running with oil — know it for good.

To eat flesh is not good for everyone.

He who wears an iron collar[1] is not far from danger.

Felled trees signify the fall of men.

To hold a broadsword proves good for all.

## Λ — lambda

A gaping pit shows the idle talk of babblers.

Seeing white flesh, know it for favourable.

To see a lion shows the ranks of your foes.

White hairs show prosperous dealings.

## M — mu

A mouse that appears lays a character bare.

Entwined in an embrace with your mother, know it for the best of dreams[2].

A blade held in the hand portrays battle[3].

Pearls show a stream of tears.

A black face brings long sorrows.

If a black man appears, he is a messenger of sickness.

Holding apples[4], know that you will be united with love.

1 κλοιός — a ring of iron or wood fastened round the neck of captives and criminals.
2 Artemidorus (2nd century), in his own dream book, also reads such a dream as a good sign in many cases.
3 A pun: μάχαιρα, "sword, dagger", and μάχη, "battle".
4 Since antiquity the apple was, for the Greeks, a gift and an invitation of love.

A broken staff brings no good end.

But to hold keys shows a well-ordered temper.

Having held a vine-branch, expect to be accused.[1]

Seated in dung, you shall have ruinous ways.

To fall from a cliff betokens an unlucky fate.

The barking of dogs betokens harm from enemies.

## Λ — lambda

To let yourself down into a pit — that is not good.

To talk in your sleep: this dream is true.

To see lions betokens battle with enemies.

To see white flesh is very favourable.

To wear a white robe in sleep is the finest of all.

A gaping wolf shows idle talk.

## M — mu

A sword gripped in the hand paints a battle.[2]

To be entwined with one's mother — in a dream this is good.

A mouse, if it appears, makes plain a man's ways.

## N — nu

Dead oxen betoken times of famine.

Seeing the dead, you shall see your affairs die.[3]

But holding spun yarn, expect sorrows.

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1 A pun: klema, "vine-branch" — enkaleisthai, "to be accused".
2 A pun: mache, "battle" — machaira, "sword".
3 A pun: nekros, "corpse" — nekrosis, "deadening".

**49.** Shall I receive the dowry[1]?

**50.** Will my possessions remain with me?

**51.** Shall I win the lawsuit I have?

**52.** Shall I inherit from my wife?

**53.** Being slandered, shall I be saved?

**54.** Will the sick person recover?

**55.** Shall I take the woman I want?

**56.** Being held in prison, shall I be released?

**57.** Shall I sell my cargo?

**58.** Having lent money, shall I not lose it?

**59.** Will my wife miscarry?

**60.** Shall I become a steward[2]?

**61.** Shall I take a lease, and is it to my advantage?

**62.** Shall I inherit from this person?

**63.** Shall I defeat my adversary?

**64.** Shall I see the death of my child?

**65.** Shall I become strategos[3]?

**66.** Shall I become a cleric[4]?

**67.** Shall I succeed in my appeal?

**68.** Have I hope of being trusted?

**69.** Having laid down the court deposit[5], shall I win?

**70.** Shall I marry my mistress?

---

1 The property a bride brought into marriage; under Greek and Roman law the husband managed it, but it usually had to be returned when the marriage ended.
2 Steward (Greek oikonomos) — the manager of an estate, a household or church property.
3 Strategos — originally a general; in Roman Egypt, the civil governor of a district (nome).
4 Bishop, presbyter and clergy entered the oracle with Christian-era copyists; the oldest papyrus texts do not have these questions.
5 Greek parabolion — money paid into court on bringing a suit or lodging an appeal; the loser forfeited it.

**4.** You will not suffer loss. Do not be anxious.

**5.** You will marry, and dissolve the marriage out of jealousy.

**6.** You will buy what is offered quickly.

**7.** You will be fortunate through your own labours.

**8.** You will strike no bargain with anyone now.

**9.** You will not go abroad now. Wait.

**10.** You will rise to your good and be honoured.

## Decade 19

**1.** You will not rise now.

**2.** You will enter a partnership well and profit.

**3.** You will serve as a soldier with toil, and regret it.

**4.** Do not ask. The day is against you.

**5.** You will sail once the hindrances are past.

**6.** The prisoner will be released from custody.

**7.** You will be rid of your mistress by force.

**8.** You will become a bishop and profit by it.

**9.** You will be caught in adultery. Beware.

**10.** You will not buy the estate now.

## Decade 20

**1.** You will not sail well.

**2.** The prisoner will be released.

**3.** You will be rid of your mistress when you do not expect it.

**4.** You will become a bishop when you do not expect it.

**5.** You will be caught in adultery now.

**6.** You will not buy land now.

**7.** You will remain a presbyter into old age.

**8.** Your wife will not stay with you. She will be married to another.