

inform what I do and how I think.

To the places on the earth that I have walked and swum, especially Santa Barbara, Montana, Australia, Hawaii, Greece, and Africa. In these landscapes the voices of native teachers, the creatures, land, and seas have spoken their stories through the living images of dream.

To all of the dreamers and their dream figures who touched my soul and helped shape the craft of Dream Tending.

To my Mother and Father and their parents and grandparents, without whom the stories of the dreamtime would have never revealed themselves.

And most importantly, to Maren Tonder Hansen, my wife, whose continued love supports me to follow the calling of my heart. Her deep regard, technical expertise, and empathy for the work companions the journey of tending dreams.

INTRODUCTION

My great-grandfather was a shoe cobbler from the old country, a place called Belarus or "White Russia." His shoe repair shop in 1950s Pasadena, California was a small room on the ground floor of the old rickety house he shared with my great-grandmother. It opened to the street just a few yards from the railroad tracks, and the windows rattled when the huge locomotives thundered past. The shop had an unforgettable smell of fresh-cut leather, shoe polish, and kerosene. Shoes of every size, shape, and style were piled up in rows to the ceiling, leaving hardly any space to stand. I remember the walls were covered with little scraps of paper with parables written on them in my great-grandfather's funny handwriting.

Great-grandfather (who I called "Zadie") was so different from us. Zadie was large, had a thick Yiddish accent, and always seemed so happy. His cobbler's shop was usually crowded with people who came to sit and talk with him. He'd work on their shoes some, but mostly he asked them questions, offered advice, and told stories. He had a joke or allegory for everyone—even me. He'd ask me questions, tell me stories, and give me a penny every time I laughed. Great-grandfather was ninety-three years old the first time I looked into his eyes behind their old-time spectacles. His eyes were blue and crinkled all around the edges, and the skin around them scrunched up even more as he laughed and

laughed. His hands smelled like shoe leather and the borscht he had for lunch. He made me feel completely grown up and ready for adventure. I had never felt such belonging.

I was just six years old when he died and I don't remember the funeral. There wasn't much talk about him after that. It was easy to see that my father, his grandson, had loved him, but at the same time my dad seemed uncomfortable and even ashamed whenever he was mentioned. My family, like every family I knew, was from a world far different from the long-ago village. We grew up with the Cold War, the H-bomb, and Sputnik. It was our duty to do well in school, go to college, and study science and math in order to beat the Russians at everything. There was little room for remembering the quaint oddities of an old man from a completely different time, and so eventually I stopped thinking about him.

Twenty years later, I had become a psychologist interested in dreams. The 1960s had radically opened up the field of psychology, and I had eagerly joined in the revolution. I went to workshops and lectures of every kind, and gradually learned that dreams were something more than just a chaotic rehashing of our daytime life. During that time, I was at a dream workshop and remembered a dream I had about my great-grandfather.

In the dream I heard his voice. He told me to go to a house where there was a wooden chest, and inside this chest was a book that contained my whole future. This dream was different from any I had had before. It was not so much a dream as it was a commandment from the other side. I was shook up, but also aware of the warmth I felt for my nearly forgotten great-grandfather.

Excited, I called home that afternoon and asked my mom and dad if they knew anything about a wooden chest and a book. Neither had a clue what I was talking about. Not wanting to let

this go, it occurred to me to contact my great aunt, Zadie's sister. She was always a bit odd, but she was one of my favorite relatives. I called her and told her about my dream. Incredibly, she said she knew just what I was talking about and told me to come right over.

When we were sitting together in her living room, she asked me what I remembered about her older brother. I told her my memories and all that had been shared with me, which wasn't much. She then pointed to a wooden chest covered with an embroidered cloth and flower-filled vases. "Stephen, in that chest is a book that will give you the answers to everything you are searching for. I have saved it all these years, waiting for the person who would come to find it. Now it's yours."

Crossing the room, she opened the chest and handed me the book. Strange hieroglyphs covered its worn red cloth cover. My aunt explained that the book was written in Yiddish and that it ran from right to left and back to front. Turning the book over, I opened it and saw something I never expected. On the first page there was a photograph of my great-grandfather with his wife at his side. He was dressed in a grey flannel suit, and those amazing eyes I remembered from childhood were staring at me.

"Your father's grandfather was a revered tzaddik," my great aunt told me. "The people you remember seeing in his shop were there to ask him questions about life, to hear his stories, and to listen to his teachings." She described him as a man who was learned, but not in the ways of the university. My great-grandfather, it turns out, was steeped in the oral tradition from the elders of his country and others. "This book is called *Der Shooster*, which means 'The Shoe Cobbler,'" she said. "It's a book about him."

I looked at the photo again, and I was filled with pride and a sense of belonging to a lineage I had never imagined existed.

What had been a source of embarrassment for my family was now flooding me with something essential, something wise. I felt my great-grandfather's presence in my blood, his heart beating in my chest. The force of his character strengthened my own. It was my turn to open the book and read the story that would forever change my life.

In the following months I had the book translated into English. I located a woman in New York City, who lived in a Jewish neighborhood not far from where Zadie had lived when he first arrived in this country. Every thirty days or so, I received about a dozen pages of typed text. For over a year, as the translation continued to arrive, I experienced the revelation of my inheritance, yet it took me much longer before I began to truly realize the depth and meaning of my great-grandfather's teachings. It came as a shock to me that this man, whom my family had always seen as a fossil from the past, was the storehouse of the very knowledge I needed to encounter the future.

THE DREAM TENDING VISION

When I began my work as a therapist, psychology was enjoying a tremendous boom in popularity, boldly striding into new areas of research. Living in California, I was exposed to every possible form of therapy, from the rational and straight-laced, to the far out and unusual. I tried them all, seeing for myself what seemed to work and what did not. I had the great pleasure of learning personally from some of the greatest teachers and thinkers of the 20th Century, such as Frederick Perls, Robert Johnson, James Hillman, Marion Woodman, Carl Rogers, Virginia Satir, Gregory Bateson, and Joseph Campbell, as well as many gifted analysts, native teachers, and others.

But there was always something missing for me, until I had the dream about my great-grandfather. Even then it took me a long

time to appreciate his teachings, because many of them were deceptively simple, such as, "There is life in the shoe leather." At first I didn't know what to do with an aphorism like that, but slowly, as I began to understand, these teachings transformed me from the inside out. I realized that my interest in psychotherapy was the continuation of my family lineage in a new, more modern, form. Using his seemingly simple idea that everything in the world is alive, I began treating dreams as having a life of their own. That's when something began happening in my professional psychotherapy practice that I hadn't seen happen with the other forms of therapy I was utilizing. People's lives began to turn around.

At first, I was a little skeptical. Was what I was doing simply the next "therapy of the month"? The culture was flooded with dubious cures for every possible affliction, the bookstores buried under an avalanche of self-help books, and it seemed like most of them disappeared as fast as they caught on. I didn't want to be the source of another well-intentioned but ineffective therapy. I have to admit that sometimes the idea that dream figures are alive sounded more like a hallucination than a contribution to the practice of serious psychotherapy.

Yet the more deeply I listened to dream figures, the more my clients experienced a positive change in their lives. Sometimes in just a single session, making contact with a particularly potent living dream image transformed someone's addiction or opened new heights of intimacy in a couple's relationship. As their dreams came alive, so did each person's own sense of self worth. Not only were serious problems worked through, but an authentic life emerged, one informed by the truth of what existed at the inner core of each individual.

Personally and professionally, my life has been shaped by my relationship to the living figures of the dreamtime. I now

experience life in the world as if it were a dream. This does not imply that things seem more distant, surreal, or disconnected. Just the opposite, in fact. Dreams keep my imagination active and vital. Living with this quality of mind brings me closer to everything and everyone around me. I feel more present, more aware, more engaged. I experience the world as burgeoning with color and texture.

Remember as children when we had access to the miracle of our imaginations? How wonderful it was to explore the world as a place of magic and mystery? For most of us, school and society very quickly trained us away from our imaginations and into the business of making a living.

We travel many paths, looking for the ones that will take us back to the place of imagination and dreams. We all know that there are many wrong turns, many detours. The demands of family and work leave us no time or energy to touch the living dreamtime. Sometimes a new love will break us out of our stale patterns for a few weeks, yet this is usually only a faint echo of the magic we once knew. Other times we get caught in the seduction of drugs, with their false promise of giving us back our long lost creative lives. And so we continue relentlessly searching for the originality with which we were born, longing to remember the living images of our dreams.

“Keep the dream alive” is more than a romantic ideal. I am convinced that tending dreams holds great promise for the future. I believe that the DNA of our individual and planetary evolution is coded in the images of dreams. Combine this conviction with the idea that dream images not only live within us, but they exist all around us, in every animal, plant, and object of this world. My great-grandfather’s teaching echoes an old yet new idea: that, in a certain way, everything is dreaming. If we

allow ourselves even a few minutes a day free from distraction, we will certainly begin to encounter this lush and expansive dream life. We need only learn how to listen to the living images of dreams.

The system that I have developed to work with living dream images is called “Dream Tending.” Dream Tending uses techniques that I have tested on myself, my family, my peers, my clients, and thousands of university and workshop students from around the world for over thirty years. I have carefully weeded out anything that didn’t seem to bear fruit and have poured further energy into developing the concepts and exercises that I’ve seen repeatedly helping people.

I look forward to sharing Dream Tending with you.