

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

Vol 6, # 1

The Hovering Spirit

The Torah begins with the well-known, cheery sentence: "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth."

Less famous, and more ominous-sounding, is the Torah's second verse: "And the earth was chaotic and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of G-d hovered upon the face of the waters."

Let's take a closer look at these words. Once we understand them, perhaps they won't sound so spooky any more. They will also tell us much about why things are the way they are, where we're headed, and how we know that we'll get there.

The Talmud looks at the Torah's second verse and says: "Such is the way of creation: first comes darkness, then light."

This statement is the source of the law that night precedes day. That's why Shabbat begins on Friday evening, and all the festivals and special dates of the Jewish calendar are observed for a night and the following day. "First comes darkness, then light."

It also expresses a profound truth about every area of our lives: that in everything we do and experience, we begin in the dark. We emerge from the womb to a sun-blessed world; we proceed from ignorance to learning, from barbarism to civilization, from selfishness to altruism, from turmoil to serenity, from challenge to achievement.

It is also a source of encouragement and empowerment to us. It tells us that in G-d's world, things get better. "First comes darkness, then light." Not, G-d forbid, the other way around.

In fact, philosophers and mystics agree that the only way to have light, is to begin with darkness. Either because (as the philosophers explain) without darkness, there's nothing to define the reality and experience of light. Or (as the mystics reveal) because darkness is the stuff out of which light is made.

The Midrash looks at the second part of the our verse (the part about "the spirit of G-d hovering above the face of the waters") and explains: "This is the spirit of Moshiach."

Who and what is Moshiach? Maimonides describes him as the one who "will restore the kingdom of David to its glory of old... He will build the Holy Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel. In his times, all laws of the Torah will be reinstated."

And: "In those times, there will be no hunger or war, no jealousy or rivalry. For the good will be plentiful, and all delicacies available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be only to know G-d."

In other words, the world that you, I and every decent human being dreams of every day.

And that was hovering above, waiting to happen, even as time, space, energy and matter were emerging out of the "water" of formlessness and void on the first day of creation.

In the eyes of the Jew, the world is not an evil to be defeated and transcended. Nor is it a neutral mass upon which goodness needs to be created and imposed. The goodness and perfection is here, hovering about us, waiting to be anchored and revealed. The spirit of Moshiach is programmed into every molecule of creation; we need only to push the right buttons to unleash it.

And the earth was chaotic and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of G-d hovered upon the face of the waters. Thence derives the Jew's eternal optimism -- our ceaseless effort to improve our world, and our unshakeable faith that this effort will succeed.

Because we know: Darkness is the stuff out of which light is made. And it's all already here, hovering about us, waiting to happen.

(By Yanki Tauber; based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.) - chabad.org

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This Shabbat is "Shabbat Bereishit," when we read the very first portion of the Torah. As explained by the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the way we conduct ourselves on Shabbat Bereishit has an influence on our conduct of the entire year to come.

This week is also the Shabbat on which we bless the coming month of Marcheshvan. The name is derived from the Hebrew word meaning "drop," as it is in Marcheshvan that the rainy season begins in the Holy Land.

Winter is the season for rain; summer, for dew to fall. But what is the difference between rain and dew?

Rain is dependent on man's Divine service. In the merit of our prayers, G-d causes the rain to fall. If, G-d forbid, our behavior is lacking, He withholds His life-giving waters. Dew, by contrast, occurs independent of our actions. G-d causes the dew to regularly replenish the earth, without any effort on our part.

The physical phenomena of rain and dew expresses the essential difference between summer and winter. In the summer, when dew falls, the world receives G-d's blessings from Above without our exertion. Winter, when rain falls, is a time when it is more difficult to obtain His blessings, as we must labor to be worthy of receiving them.

The Previous Rebbe once stated: "The service of G-d is easier in summer than in winter."

This Shabbat, when we bless the month of Marcheshvan, we imbue the "month of rain" with the power which will sustain it. It is the last Shabbat of Tishrei, the "chodesh hashevi'i" (the "seventh month" when counting from Nisan), that is "musba" ("satiated," from the same root word as "sheva," meaning "seven") with all that is good. For only a month that is so full of mitzvot as Tishrei can impart the necessary strengths to the difficult month that will follow. Indeed, it is from Tishrei that we draw the ability to perform our G-dly service throughout the entire winter.

So rain or shine, it's always time to do a mitzva. (Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, L'Chaim 5761, #641)

And G-d called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

When Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi was imprisoned in 1798 under capital sentence by the dreaded Secret Service of St. Petersburg, the Chief of the Gendarmes came to his cell to interrogate him. As soon as he opened the door he realized that the saintly visage before him, deep in thought, was the face of no ordinary prisoner. The officer, who was a thinking man, and familiar with Scripture, addressed the Alter Rebbe as follows: "I have a question on Scripture to ask you. Are you willing to answer it?"

"Ask your question," replied the Alter Rebbe.

"Please explain me the meaning of the verse, 'And God called to Adam, and said to him: Where are you?' Didn't the Almighty know where he was?"

"Do you believe," countered the Alter Rebbe, "that the Torah is eternal, and remains true for every generation -and for every man?"

"Indeed, I so believe," replied the officer.

"This, then, is the meaning of the verse. At all times the voice of God calls out to every man, and asks him, 'Where are you? Where are you up to in your world? For every man has been apportioned a certain number of days and years, so that every day and every year he should live righteously with God and with man. Think, therefore: where are you up to in your world? How many years have gone by, and what have you done with those years?' You, for example, have lived so and so many years (and here he gave the officer's age exactly): what have you done with those years? Have you been of any good to anyone?"

The officer was overwhelmed. He clapped his prisoner on the shoulder, and cried, "Bravo!"

After several more such episodes, the Chief of the Gendarmes reported to the Czar on this wise man of God, and added his opinion that the charges brought against him by his slanderers were no doubt unfounded. (From: A Treasury of Chassidic Tales by Rabbi S. Y. Zevin)

We do recite the b'racha upon seeing the rainbow (p. 87); we do not follow those (authorities) who are hesitant in this matter. A resident of Mezibuz had a quarrel with another. Once, while in the Baal Shem Tov's shul, he shouted that he would tear the other fellow to pieces like a fish. The Baal Shem Tov told his pupils to hold one another's hand, and to stand near him with their eyes closed. Then he placed his holy hands on the shoulders of the two disciples next to him. Suddenly the disciples began shouting in great terror: They had seen that fellow actually dismembering his disputant. This incident shows clearly that every potential has an effect - either in physical form or on a spiritual plane that can be perceived only with higher and more refined senses. (From Rebbe's Hayom yom Tishrei 29).

As we learn to walk by falling down, so we learn to be awake by groping in the dark. When there is no support, no brightness to keep us on our toes, when we are on our own -- that is when we learn to be awake, not because it is day, but because we are awake.

From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Tzvi Freeman.

<u>Sunday</u>	8:00 AM	Gemara-Tractate Rosh Hashana (men)
<u>Monday</u>	8:00 PM	Chumash (men and women)
<u>Tuesday</u>	8:00 PM	Gemara-Tractate Sukka (men)
<u>Wednesday</u>	8:30 PM	Halacha and Tanya (women)
<u>Thursday</u>	10:00 AM	Chassidus (women)
	8:00 PM	Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students
<u>Daily</u>	6:45 to 7:15 AM	Chasidus
	Between Mincha and Maariv	Halacha

DAILY MINYONIM:

Shacharit: Mon-Fri 6:00 AM and 7:30 AM

Sunday 9:00 AM

Mincha/Maariv: 6:30 PM

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Chabad of Beverly Hills has hundreds of hours of online audio Torah classes by Rabbi Y. Shusterman. Subjects include Gemara, Tanya, Chassidut, Jewish Law and Customs, Chumash, and Stories. The audio classes are accompanied by online text. There are online lessons on how to read Hebrew and how to read the Torah. You can view our Weekly and Halacha Newsletters from the past years. We also have an Ask the Rabbi Section and the Mezuzah and Tefillin Information Center.

SHABBOS PARSHAS BEREISHIS

Shabbos Mevorchim

October 4, 2002

Candlelighting:(Los Angeles) 6:16 PM

Friday Mincha: 6:30 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA 9:45

SHABBAT MORNING

- **Tehillim 8:00 AM**
- **Shacharit 9:30 AM followed by Kiddush, Cholent & Farbrengen**
- **Chumash 5:20 PM**
- **Mincha 6:05 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit**
- **Shabbat ends 7:16 PM**

Kiddush this week is being sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Jerry Friedman in honor of the Bar Mitzva of their great nephew, Deuce Janisch.

Seuda Shlishit is being sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Sol Brok in memory of Sol's father's yartzheit.

Yartzeits: Rivka Mareyan - Tishrei 30, Yitzchok Aria Brok – Cheshvan 4.

Happy Birthday to Estee Kesselman, Elena Bazes, Jimmy Mohaber and Michael Lipsker.

Mazel Tov to Dr. and Mrs. Daren Hirt on the birth of their new baby boy and to the Grandfather, Raffi Sulami.

GOOD SHABBOS!