



THE NIGHT WORLD

Written and Illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein

While the rest of the world is asleep, the night world is awake and alert with curiosity and gratitude – and so are we.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Around the time that the sun goes down, many parents tuck their children into bed and say goodnight. The world, to those children, seems to shut down -- but as adults we know that the world is bigger and broader than each person experiences.

The Night World introduces readers to a variety of creatures for whom sundown marks the beginning of their day. This echoes the story of creation, about which the Torah describes: “There was evening and there was morning, a first day.” Jewish tradition has based its calendar on this phrase. “Days” begin in the evening, with sundown. All holidays, such as Shabbat and Hanukkah, start at night, often with candle lighting, and end the following evening when three stars appear in the sky.

This story inspires the reader to see the world from a different perspective. Over the course of many centuries, a Jewish concept has emerged that the Torah has 70 faces, or different interpretations. The sages of the past encourage people to “turn the Torah and turn it again, for everything is in it.” When we look at stories and traditions from many angles, we find a wide variety of meaning and insights. So, too, we can learn and grow by letting our and our children’s curiosity guide us in turning our experiences and view of the world around us again and again.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Twentieth-century scholar Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught the importance of seeing the world with a sense of wonder. “Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement ... get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal.” Inspiring and encouraging this spirit isn’t as hard to do as it might seem. Try having a “backwards” day inspired by *The Night World*:

- Start by having breakfast for dinner.
- Stay up a little bit later than usual. Play a few family-friendly games, read a few extra books, or work on a puzzle together.
- As it starts to get late, help your child pretend that going to sleep at night is just for a longer “nap time.”
- In the morning, have dinner for breakfast.
- To end the day, try your normal bath and bedtime routine before sundown.

As a family, you can talk about what things were different and what things were the same, compared to a regular day. This might be a great time to explore with your children the lives of nocturnal creatures, for whom waking up in the morning would be a “backwards day.”