



The Night World

written by

Mordicai Gerstein

illustrated by

Mordicai Gerstein

{ **How can we see our world with fresh eyes?** }

Good Morning

This book echoes the story of creation in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible): “There was evening and there was morning, a first day.” Jewish tradition builds its calendar around this phrase. “Days” begin in the evening, with sundown. All holidays, such as Shabbat and Hanukkah, start at sunset, often with candle lighting, and end the following evening when three stars appear in the sky. Each dawn is a reminder of this moment in our shared existence. With light, we see the color of what is, as well as the shadow of what’s been and the flicker of what might be. That’s why traditional Jewish morning prayers express thanks to God for “kindly renewing the world each day.” To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/nightworld.

HANDS ON!

Have an Upside-Down Day

In Jewish tradition, days begin in the evening, which is upside-down from how we usually think of starting a day. Why not take that literally and have an upside-down day? (Don’t try this on a school night!)

The new day begins as night falls, so go ahead and have 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 you get ready for bed, pretend you’re just going to take a nap. Bonus: Wear comfortable daytime clothing, not pajamas.

In the morning, change into pajamas...
...and then have dinner for breakfast!

Compare your upside-down day to a regular day. What did you enjoy? What things were different and what things were the same? What features of a regular day will you be happy to return to?

Twilight Zone

Around the time that the sun goes down, parents around the globe tuck their children into bed and say good night. For kids, the world may seem to shut down -- but we adults know that the world is bigger and broader than each person experiences. When Sylvie the cat wakes up the boy in this book, he doesn’t know if it’s “too late to go out – or too early.” The same question was posed 2000 years ago by rabbinic scholars: As light creeps in, when is it light enough to say morning blessings? The answer: When there’s just enough light to recognize your friend coming toward you. In this case, that friend turns out to be a cat!

A New Perspective

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.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHEN you look at the illustrations, who is still asleep in the house? Who is wide awake in the yard?

WHY do you think the boy seems happy at the end of this book? What do you think he’ll do when he goes back inside his house?

THE opening page of this book refers to the creation of the world, including nighttime and daytime. Why do you think it’s important to have nighttime? Why is it important to have daytime?