

**Our Biblical Heritage**

While the source-critical debate over *Goodnight Moon* never reached the heightened pitch of the argument over the Torah's multiple authors (one thinks of the famous duel

between Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber on the banks of the Main River over whether Rabinowitz stood for Redactor, Rabeinu or Rosenzweig [the latter being the view silently held by Fralein Rosenzweig]), the question of whether *Goodnight Moon* has one, three or more authors continues to keep scholars up past their bedtime. Can a work that clearly

owes so much to the Ugaritic psalm, "I see the moon and the moon sees me; really have been written by a Manhattan socialite? Most scholars take "Margaret Wise Brown" as stand-in for a postulated committee of at least three authors. Clearly most of the book consists of a "doublet" that is, two versions of the same tale repeated. For convenience, we designate the first section, which announced the existence of the objects in the room, as E; the second, in which the objects are greeted "Goodnight room...." is designated G. Yet the repeating motifs of the Cow Jumping over the Moon and the Three Little Bears speak to a separate awareness of European folktales....

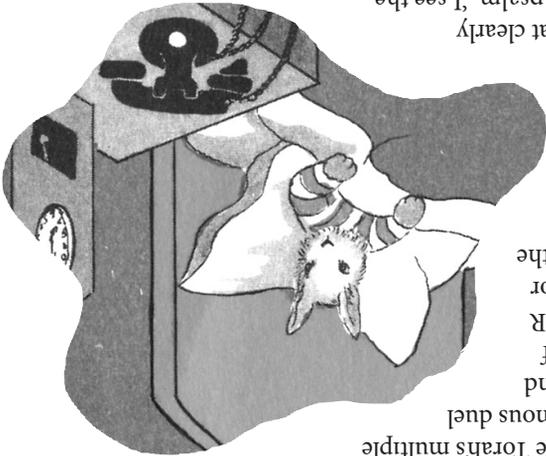
**Kabbalistic Perspectives**

Few books were as beloved by the circle of mystics of Safed as *Goodnight Moon*, for the simple yet thorough recounting of kabbalistic mystical lore. As Gershon Scholem has observed, the expulsion from Spain had separated sleepless historical reality from messianic dreams, and *Goodnight Moon* quickly found a place in that yawning gap. The idea that the moon — symbolizing shechina and the Jewish people — would reach a state of "good," despite the long "night" of exile was immediately appealing, and the therapeutic bedtime ritual of its midnight recitation became immensely popular. With the "great green room" clearly symbolizing the sephira of tiferet, the book lays out a messianic vision of flying cows, working telephones, and the end of the alienated situation of naughtily little kittens who have lost their mittens.

(continued on p. 345)

Larry Yudelson lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, where he tries to educate Jewish children about the meaning of bedtime. He vents the resulting frustrations at <http://www.shmoozenet.com/yudel>.

March 2005  
Adar 2 5765  
To subscribe: 877-568-SHMA  
www.shma.com  
10



the book — might bring bread into the house during Passover. When it was suggested that those concerned simply sell the book to Gentiles over the Passover holiday, the editor did just that — and it became a smash publishing hit for Harpers and Row.

In the 1990s, an attempt to re-introduce the book into the Reconstructionist liturgy fell apart when the publishing committee was dominated by radical opponents of speciesism, whose draft with species-neutral references to "the living being who jumped over the moon," a "living being whispering hush," and "two differently-sized beings who lost their mittens," was rejected by even more radical "inanimists" who objected to drafts "privileging of living beings over non-living beings by other living beings — the rankest form of prejudice — as manifest in the the failure of the balloon to receive a speaking role;"

*Goodnight Moon* has held a paradoxical resonance for generations of Jewish women. As one reads, re-reads, over-reads and, fine, reads it one last time but-only-if-you-close-your-eyes, one is led to believe that Margaret Wise Brown seeks to reject the traditional woman's role. The titular "Moon" is, in Jewish tradition, a symbol of the feminine. The reader simultaneously has us bid "goodnight" to that symbol, while encountering "the great green room" — where celebrity guests wait before appearing on television for their moment of fame. The telephone too brings to mind the media of positive and negative, they have produced. And the "red balloon" reflects the desire, so often suppressed in Jewish (and non-Jewish) societies to rise flamboyantly above ordinary communal existence. Yet our expectations are upended when, on turning the page, we encounter the argument "re-framed" as ....

**A Woman's Whispered Voice**

(continued on p. 300)

the book — might bring bread into the house during Passover. When it was suggested that those concerned simply sell the book to Gentiles over the Passover holiday, the editor did just that — and it became a smash publishing hit for Harpers and Row.

*Goodnight Moon* has held a paradoxical resonance for generations of Jewish women. As one reads, re-reads, over-reads and, fine, reads it one last time but-only-if-you-close-your-eyes, one is led to believe that Margaret Wise Brown seeks to reject the traditional woman's role. The titular "Moon" is, in Jewish tradition, a symbol of the feminine. The reader simultaneously has us bid "goodnight" to that symbol, while encountering "the great green room" — where celebrity guests wait before appearing on television for their moment of fame. The telephone too brings to mind the media of positive and negative, they have produced. And the "red balloon" reflects the desire, so often suppressed in Jewish (and non-Jewish) societies to rise flamboyantly above ordinary communal existence. Yet our expectations are upended when, on turning the page, we encounter the argument "re-framed" as ....

green room  
picture of —  
ing over the moon



(continued on p.315)

