



All the World Praises You!

Debra Band



Review by Emily Schneider

In Debra Band's new aleph-bet picture book, each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is accompanied by a biblical quote about the natural world, along with an original work of art celebrating God's gifts of creation. In the author's note, Band explains the inspiration behind, and purpose of her work. The birth of her granddaughter, the desire to teach the aleph-bet to young readers, a sense of environmental awareness, and enthusiasm for the tradition of illuminated manuscripts all culminated in her production of this attractive volume. While the multiple elements of *All the World Praises You!* are all worthy of attention, they sometimes fail to cohere in a unified whole.

The majority of the book reads from right to left, but when flipped around and read from left to right, the book offers additional questions and observations. Unfortunately, this supplemental material is difficult to read—the text is much smaller than in the rest of the book. More seriously, Band could have benefited from professional editing. While Band conveys great enthusiasm for the spirituality of the universe, the range of her commentary is distracting and sometimes minimally relevant. She includes references to the Hubble Telescope; the barrier reefs of Israel, Australia, and Belize; and constellations seen in the sky on the night her granddaughter was born. Rather than clarifying or illuminating her point, this wealth of unrelated material obscures it.

Band is an accomplished artist, but her choice to include a little bit of everything would have been more appropriate in an anthology of her work. Nonetheless, her illustrations are graceful and dreamlike encounters with nature. Like her supplementary text, they represent a broad range of artistic influences. Some are clearly inspired by medieval manuscripts, such as the original Perek Shira. Several have a New Age flavor. Others refer to Japanese art. Each picture also includes a "hidden" honeybee and dahlia flower, in reference to the author's first name and the name of her granddaughter.

All the World Praises You! is recommended for readers ages 12 and up, as well as for adults interested in a point of entry to Jewish spirituality through environmental consciousness.



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