

Shem very carefully finished drawing the circle around us, and then continued to chant and dance around the edge. Several of the adult Canaans in the circle began to chant with Shem, setting a cascading rhythm that seemed to bounce off the massive rocks and echo over the cool desert floor. If I didn't know better, I would swear someone was playing drums.

"B'raysheet." Shem began, drawing out the sound of the word as long as he could.

"In the beginning," he continued, using that same hypnotic tone and cadence he had used to calm me down before. Except this time all of the dogs seemed to be eagerly caught in his web.

"In the beginning *Elohim* Source of Powers, created heaven and earth."

And in unison, all the Canaans responded. "And the earth was without form and empty, with darkness on the face of the depths..."

“And *ruach Elohim*,” Shem continued, “*ruach Elohim* moved on the water’s surface. *Ruach*. What a strange word, *ruach*.”

What does it mean?”

“Spirit!” called out one of the young Canaans excitedly, in probably just the way Josh would have had Shem not had control of the voice box.

בראשית

B’raysheet

B’raysheet is the first word in the Torah, and names the first section of the Torah. It means “in the beginning,” and is probably one of the best-known phrases in the Torah.

“Yes, wonderful.” Shem encouraged him.
“And the Spirit of *Elohim* Source of Powers,
moved over the water. But what else? **Ruach** is
not just spirit. What else does it mean?”

רוח

Ruach

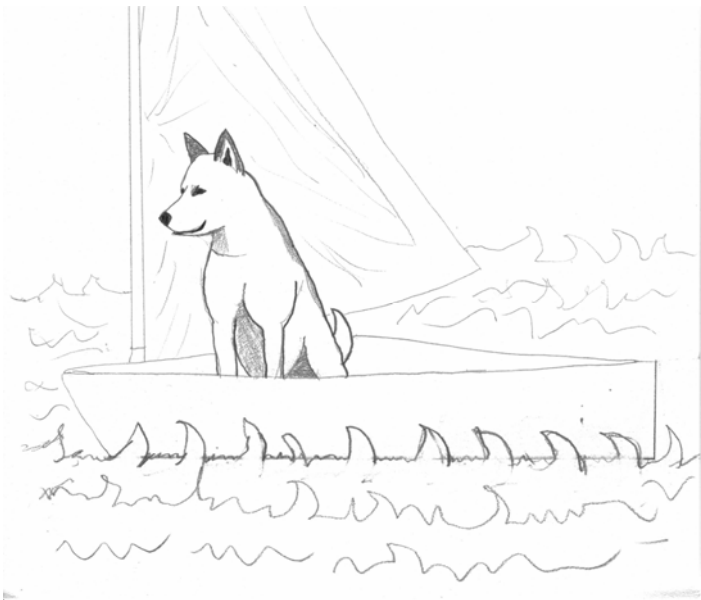
Ruach translates to “moving air,”
and is usually used for wind or
breath, but also means the “spirit.”
This is because when G-d created
Adahm, G-d brought Adahm to life
by blowing G-d’s breath into
Adahm’s nostrils. This has been
interpreted to mean that G-d gave
Adahm a “spirit,” or Ruach, which
created the life. In traditional usage,
ruach is also used to mean angels or
spirits.

"Wind!" Called out another young Canaan.

"Wind, yes; it also means wind. And the wind of Source of Powers moved over the water.

"Must have been a good time to sail a boat, with so much *ruach* on the water."

Several of the younger Canaans giggled, or made whatever sound it was that dogs made when they were laughing.



Shem kept weaving and dancing, shifting his body back and forth in rhythm to the chanting.

“It would have been hard to sail though, even with all of that *ruach* around. Let me see, we have water, and wind, but...” Shem started moving around and bumping into dogs like he couldn’t see anything. “What was missing? What did we forget?”

“A boat!” Called one.

“A sail!” Called another.

Shem kept stumbling around the circle.

“Light!” I called out.

“Ah yes, light.” Shem stopped bumping into things and fixed his eyes back on the group, now totally under his spell. “And *Elohim*, Source of Powers said, “Let there be light!” and *bam*, just like that, there was light.

“And light was good. We are very thankful for light, seeing as we wouldn’t be seeing without it.

“And *Elohim* Source of Powers, divided between the light and the dark, giving us day and night, so we know when we’re supposed to be sleeping, and when we’re supposed to be up and actually doing something useful.

“Very important, that night thing. Without it we would just keep working and working until...” He flopped on his back and stayed there with his paws in the air for a few dramatic seconds, “...until we fell over and died from lack of rest. Whew, that’s a lot of stuff to create; maybe we should bring it to a close.”

And all the Canaans called in unison, “And it was *erev* and it was *boker*, one day.”