

Exodus: the book of Exodus, the 2nd in the Bible, tells the story of the deliverance (or Exodus) of the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt through their wandering in the desert wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. Through their wanderings they discover what freedom really is, and are made into a common people under the leadership of Moses. Today's selection comes from the last chapter, containing the last words of the book which focus on the living presence of God in the middle of the people.

The Cloud: ענן pronounced [aw-nawn'] meaning: a cloud mass, cloud. Here the word is the form of the divine presence in a pillar of cloud and fire. The Shekhinah (Biblical Hebrew: שכינה [šekīnah]): the English transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning "dwelling" or "settling" and denotes the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of God. This term does not occur in the Bible, and is from rabbinic literature. The Semitic root from which shekhinah is derived, sh.kh.n, means "to settle, inhabit, or dwell". In the verb form, it is often used to refer to the dwelling of a person or animal in a place, or to the dwelling of God. Nouns derived from the root included shachen ("neighbor") and mishkan (a dwelling-place, whether a secular home or a holy site such as the Tabernacle).

In classic Jewish thought, the shekhinah refers to a dwelling or settling in a special sense, a dwelling or settling of divine presence, to the effect that, while in proximity to the shekhinah, the connection to God is more readily perceivable.

The shekhinah represents the feminine attributes of the presence of God, shekhinah being a feminine word in Hebrew, based especially on readings of the Talmud.

The prophets made numerous references to visions of the presence of God, particularly in the context of the Tabernacle or Temple, with figures such as thrones or robes filling the Sanctuary. These visions have traditionally been attributed to the presence of the shekhinah.

The shekhinah is referred to as manifest in the Tabernacle and the Temple in Jerusalem throughout rabbinic literature. (*definition from Wikipedia*)

Tent of Meeting: אהל pronounced [ohel]: meaning "a tent" and מועד pronounced [mo-ade']: meaning of an appointed time, place, or meeting

Glory of God : pronounced [kaw-bode']

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Exodus 40:34-38

The Message (MSG)

³⁴⁻³⁵ *The Cloud* covered the **Tent of Meeting**, and the *Glory of God* filled **The Dwelling**. Moses couldn't enter the Tent of Meeting because the Cloud was upon it, and the Glory of God filled **The Dwelling**.

³⁶⁻³⁸ Whenever the Cloud lifted from The Dwelling, the People of Israel set out on their travels, but if the Cloud did not lift, they wouldn't set out until it did lift. The Cloud of God was over The Dwelling during the day and the fire was in it at night, visible to all the Israelites in all their travels.

John 1:6-18

The Message (MSG)

⁶⁻⁸ There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

⁹⁻¹³ The Life-Light was the real thing:
Every person entering Life
he brings into Light. He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.
He came to his own people,
but they didn't want him.
But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves,
their child-of-God selves.
These are the God-begotten,
not blood-begotten,
not flesh-begotten,
not sex-begotten.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and blood,
and **moved into the neighborhood**.

We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the *one-of-a-kind* glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.

¹⁵ John pointed him out and called,
“This is the One! The One I told you was coming after me
but in fact was ahead of me. He has always been ahead of
me, has always had the first word.”

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ We all live off his generous bounty,
gift after gift after gift.
We got the **basics** from Moses,
and then this exuberant giving and receiving,
This endless knowing and understanding—
all this came through Jesus, the Messiah.
No one has ever seen God,
not so much as a glimpse.
This one-of-a-kind God-Expression,
who exists at the very heart of the Father,
has made him plain as day.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?
- What do you know, or remember, about the story of the Exodus? How was God present with the Israelites in the slavery in Egypt? How was God present in their deliverance and their emerging freedom?
- How do these texts intersect or touch your life?
- When have you most felt God's presence? Least felt it?
- How has that experience of God's presence – the Shekhinah – the Spirit of God in our world – impacted and shaped you?
- How do you understand God as present in today's world?

and the glory, wealth, splendor, honor.

The Dwelling מִשְׁכָּן pronounced [mish-kawn']: meaning, habitation, dwelling place, tabernacle. It comes from the the Hebrew verb for to settle down, abide, or dwell (שָׁכַן shakan)

moved into the neighborhood Peterson's translation for “lived among us” which comes from the verb form of the word “tabernacle” - coming from the the Hebrew verb for to settle down, abide, or dwell (שָׁכַן shakan). The phrase thus reads in the original lanague “The word became flesh and *tabernacled among us.*” Remember that the tabernacle was the place of worship, located at the cetner of the camp and city (neighborhood) where the Spirit of God (Shekhinah) resided. (see Exodus 40).

John: The gospel of John is one of the four gospels or life-stories of Jesus contained in the Bible. Most likely the last one written of the four, in contains a deeper theological reflection which is evident in the expansive use of metaphor and poetry used in the telling of the life, person and teachings of Jesus. Our selection comes from the first chapter (the prologue) which lyrically connects Jewish-Christian theology with the Greek view centered around the philosophical notion of the LOGOS (or word) at the center of all creation. We see in our selection an evocation of the Pillar of fire/cloud from Exodus 40.

one-of-a-kind glory: This is Peterson's interpretation of the literal phrase “the glory as of a father's only son” to represent the mystery of the incarnation of divinity into humanity, Godself into flesh and blood.

Generous inside and out, true from start to finish. in the original text “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

basics: the word in the original text is the Law (or Torah). Peterson interprets the Law as the basic teaching of faith that Jesus (the Messiah) comes to elucidate and expand..