

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and **my Spirit moved upon the face of the water**; for I am God.

Barker admits the possibility of a subtle wordplay in examining the reversal of consonantal sounds between “brood/hover” and “atone”: “The verb for ‘hover’ is *rchp*, the middle letter is *cheth*, and the verb for ‘atone’ is *kpr*, the initial letter being a *kaph*, which had a similar sound. The same three consonantal sounds could have been word play, *rchp/kpr*. Such things did happen.”<sup>126</sup> “There is sound play like this in the temple style.”<sup>127</sup> The best known example is Isaiah 5:7, where justice and righteousness sound like bloodshed and cry.<sup>128</sup> In this admittedly speculative interpretation, one might see an image of God figuratively “hovering/atoning” over the singularity of the inchoate universe, prior to the dividing and separating process that was initiated by the first acts of Creation.<sup>129</sup>

**my Spirit.** The Hebrew term for Spirit (*ruach*) has the root meanings of ‘wind’ or ‘breath.’ This brings to mind the role of wind as the agent by which water is separated in two other places in the Bible—at the conclusion of the Flood and at the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>130</sup> In a poetic sense, the Spirit can be seen as the light-bearing, life-giving breath of God, blowing away the darkness of the deep. William W. Phelps equated this term to “the life organizing power of the Gods,”<sup>131</sup> seemingly referring to the priesthood.

**water.** The singular rather than the plural term for “water” appears in OT2.<sup>132</sup> However “waters,”<sup>133</sup> the original term in Genesis, is used in OT1 as well as in the later translation of the book of Abraham. This raises the possibility that the change in OT2 was made erroneously or on John Whitmer’s initiative rather than the Prophet’s.<sup>134</sup>

The most obvious implication of Abraham 4:2 is that the waters corresponded to the terrestrial seas that covered the earth following its initial creation. Some commentators, however, have associated the term “water” in its singular form with unorganized matter—the unexplained unity that existed prior to the creation process of demarcation, distinction, separation, and naming.<sup>135</sup> Summarizing the opinion of Jewish sages, Zlotowitz writes: “The ‘water’ mentioned in this verse is not the water that is in the ‘seas.’<sup>136</sup> It is clear that there was a certain common matter which was called ‘water.’ Afterwards, it was divided into three forms; a part of it became ‘seas,’ another part of it became ‘firmament’; a third part became that which is above the ‘firmament’—entirely beyond the earth.<sup>137</sup> Perhaps this is why... water is invariably in the plural form—suggestive of this pluralistic division.”<sup>138</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* suggests that a watery origin of all things is behind the etymology of the plural term “heavens”: “And God called the firmament heaven (*sha*).”<sup>139</sup> Rav said: *Shamayim* is a composite of *esh* (‘fire’) and *mayim* (‘water’). The Holy One took fire and water, and worked them into each other, and out of the two, heaven was made.<sup>140</sup>

Although no explicit blessing of the waters is mentioned in Moses’ account, D&C 61:14 records: “Behold, I, the Lord, in the beginning blessed the waters; but in the last days, by

126 M. Barker, *11 June 2007*.

127 See M. Barker, *Hidden*, pp. 15-17.

128 M. Barker, *11 June 2007*.

129 See H. J. Hodges, *Dove* for a cogent analysis of Milton’s sources and of general Hebrew-to-English translation issues. See also *Commentary* 1:1-b, p. 42 and 4:5-b, p. 246.

130 JST Genesis 8:47 and Exodus 14:21. See N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 6.

131 Cited in S. Brown, *Paracletes*, p. 81.

132 S. H. Faulring, et al., *Original Manuscripts*, p. 595.

133 Hebrew *mayim*.

134 K. P. Jackson, *Book of Moses*, p. 10; cf. *Commentary* 2:6-a, p. 104 and 2:21-a, p. 110.

135 C. Roy, *Liquide*.

136 Moses 2:10.

137 See M. Maimonides, *Guide*, 2:30, 2:352-353.

138 R. M. Zlotowitz, et al., *Bereishis*, p. 38. See D. Kimhi’s commentary on Genesis, excerpted in E. Monk, *Hachut*.

139 Moses 2:8.

140 H. N. Bialik, et al., *Legends*, 18, p. 9; J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah 1*, 4:7, p. 43; cf. J. Hirschman, *Baraita*, p. 6.