

then inventing your own special brand of charity. It means facing adversary with the courage and integrity of martyrs and heroes of every era and continent — and then achieving your own personal victory.

When embarking on your adventure, you have a choice. You can ignore the signposts, and end up doing exactly what some other hapless wanderer did sometime, somewhere else, your "originality" intact only because you never heard about that other guy. Or you can follow the signposts to a true understanding and experience of your path, which will then become your foundation and platform upon which to play your own distinct role as G-d's partner in creation.

Live & Laugh

George W. Bush, while in an airport lobby, noticed a man in a long flowing white robe with a long flowing white beard and flowing white hair. The man had a staff in one hand and some stone tablets under the other arm.

George W. approached the man and inquired, "Aren't you Moses."

The man ignored George W. and stared at the ceiling. George W positioned himself more directly in the man's view and asked again, "Aren't you Moses".

The man continued to peruse the ceiling.

George W. tugged at the man's sleeve and asked once again, "Aren't you Moses".

The man finally responded in an irritated voice, "Yes I am".

George W. asked him why he was so uppity and the man replied, "The last time I spoke to a Bush I had to spend forty years in the desert".

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SUNDAY 9:00-10:00am (Zoom):
MISHNA & MYSTICISM with Rabbi Goldman

MONDAY 8:30-9:15am: (fortnightly)
SYDFAMS WOMEN'S CLASS (moms of children in school/university) with Rabbi Stern

TUESDAY 7:45-8:45pm (Zoom):
TALMUD FOR MEN with Rabbi Goldman

WEDNESDAY 8:00-9:00pm (Zoom):
TALMUD FOR MEN with Rabbi Goldman

WEDNESDAY: 10:00-10:30am (Zoom):
PRACTICAL PARSHA with Rabbi Stern

SHABBAT: 10:00-10:30am (Monthly):
LADIES MORNING SHMOOZ with Estee Stern

SHABBAT AFTERNOON:
PARSHA SHIUR BETWEEN MINCHA & MAARIV

contact us to join our classes
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Calendar

- Shacharis: 9am
- Children Services: 10:15am
- SYDTeens Mussaf: 10:30am
- Sponsored Communal Brocha
- Mincha: 5:45pm
- Shabbos ends: 6:47pm
- Weeknight Mincha: 6:00pm

SYDSHUL ON WHATSAPP

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Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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Rags to Riches

Dr. Tali Loewenthal

A common theme in Jewish life is the "rags to riches" story. A person is born and brought up in modest surroundings, with simple parents. The story then might continue in a number of ways. One is that he leaves school at sixteen, becomes a barrow boy in the market and some years later is the chairman of a large business corporation. Another is that from his local school he wins a scholarship to Oxbridge and eventually becomes a famous scientist.

This pattern of leaving one's background in order to conquer new frontiers has many variations. It is intriguing the way that although, of course, this is not restricted to Jews, nonetheless it is a typically Jewish story.

Perhaps this is all because the same pattern is seen in the life of first Jew, Abraham, the hero of this week's Torah reading (Genesis 12-17). G-d tells him "Go for yourself, from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you."

The Sages explain that this is really the basis of life for the Jewish people as a whole, the descendants of Abraham and Sarah. Of course, economic advance is only one example. In more general terms we move out of our past, step by step, into a new and unbounded future, defined only as "the Land which I - meaning G-d Himself - will show you."

What did Abraham leave behind? Three different aspects of his origin. The first was his

"land." The Sages explain this does not mean simply a geographical area. The term "land" suggests also the basic, earthly ground of one's character. In order to advance, this basic nature often has to be transcended, especially if one is seeking spiritual goals.

The second term, "your birthplace," suggests all the limitations of one's environment. We Jews are undeniably affected by the cultures in which we live. Sometimes the typical rags to riches story describes a person becoming thoroughly a part of that culture in a very successful way: from barrow boy to the House of Lords. Yet at this point there is the challenge to transcend the limitations of prevailing culture and to be able to be oneself, as a Jewish man or woman, maintaining Jewish values. As a number of people have achieved, one will be able to eat kosher food with Royalty.

The third phrase is "your father's house". This can be understood quite literally as home background and early education. While in most rags to riches stories there is an important debt to something that was gained at home and in school, even more so is there a leap beyond. This is yet more obvious when considered in spiritual terms. The path of Jewish discovery leads to exciting new territories of the spirit, quite different from anything one has experienced before: for example, the joy of Torah study.

Thus each one of us is Abraham or Sarah, leaving our natural limitations behind and advancing.

ing to the Land which G-d Himself will show us. This means the physical Land of Israel, and also every kind of new domain to which G-d leads us. There we can truly discover the untold wealth of what it means to be a Jew.

Parsha Pointers

Lech Lecha: Artscroll pg 55

Living Torah pg 53

G-d speaks to Abram, commanding him, "Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you." There, G-d says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife, Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of a one G-d.

A famine forces the first Jew to depart for Egypt, where beautiful Sarai is taken to Pharaoh's palace; Abram escapes death because they present themselves as brother and sister. A plague prevents the Egyptian king from touching her, and convinces him to return her to Abram and to compensate the brother-revealed-as-husband with gold, silver and cattle.

Back in the land of Canaan, Lot separates from Abram and settles in the evil city of Sodom, where he falls captive when the mighty armies of Chedorlaomer and his three allies conquer the five cities of the Sodom Valley. Abram sets out with a small band to rescue his nephew, defeats the four kings, and is blessed by Malki-Zedek the king of Salem (Jerusalem).

G-d seals the Covenant Between the Parts with Abram, in which the exile and persecution (galut) of the people of Israel is foretold, and the Holy Land is bequeathed to them as their eternal heritage.

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant Hagar. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly; an angel convinces her to return, and tells her that her son will father a

populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram's eighty-sixth year.

Thirteen years later, G-d changes Abram's name to Abraham ("father of multitudes"), and Sarai's to Sarah ("princess"), and promises that a son will be born to them; from this child, whom they should call Isaac ("will laugh"), will stem the great nation with which G-d will establish His special bond. Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and his descendants as a "sign of the covenant between Me and you." Abraham immediately complies, circumcising himself and all the males of his household.

The Burning Palace

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Jacobson

How did the Jewish faith come into existence?

The Midrash describes the birth of Judaism with the following cryptic parable:

"And G-d said to Abraham: 'Go from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house...'" (Genesis 12:2) — To what may this be compared? To a man who was traveling from place to place when he saw a palace in flames. He wondered: "Is it possible that the palace has no owner?" The owner of the palace looked out and said, "I am the owner of the palace." So Abraham our father said, "Is it possible that the world lacks a ruler?" G-d looked out and said to him, "I am the ruler, the Sovereign of the universe."

Abraham's bewilderment is clear. This sensitive human being gazes at a brilliantly structured universe, a splendid piece of art. He is overwhelmed by the grandeur of a sunset and by the miracle of childbirth; he marvels at the roaring ocean waves and at the silent, steady beat of the human heart. The world is indeed a palace.

But the palace is in flames. The world is full of bloodshed, injustice and strife. Thugs, abusers, rapists, kidnappers and killers are continuously demolishing the palace, turning our

world into an ugly tragic battlefield of untold pain and horror.

What happened to the owner of the palace? Abraham cries. Why does G-d allow man to destroy His world? Why does He permit such a beautiful palace to go up in flames? Could G-d have made a world only to abandon it? Would anyone build a palace and then desert it?

The Midrash records G-d's reply: "The owner of the palace looked out and said: 'I am the owner of the palace.' G-d looked out and said to Abraham: 'I am the ruler, the Sovereign of the universe.'"

What is the meaning of G-d's response?

Note that the owner of the palace does not make an attempt to get out of the burning building or to extinguish the flames. He is merely stating that He is the owner of the palace that is going up in smoke. It is as if, instead of racing out, the owner were calling for help. G-d made the palace, man set it on fire, and only man can put out the flames. Abraham asks G-d, "Where are you?" G-d replies, "I am here, where are you?" Man asks G-d, "Why did You abandon the world?" G-d asks man, "Why did you abandon Me?"

Thus began the revolution of Judaism --- humanity's courageous venture to extinguish the flames of immorality and bloodshed and restore the world to the harmonious and sacred palace it was intended to be. Abraham's encounter with G-d in the presence of a burning palace gave birth to the mission statement of Judaism - to be obsessed with good and horrified by evil.

It's Been Done Before

Rabbi Yanki Tauber

This One of the things about being a Jew is that no matter what you do, one of your grandfathers or grandmothers has done it already.

If you discover the truth of the one G-d and sell half the world on it — Abraham did that. Be thrown into a fiery furnace, have your wife

abducted, raise cattle, fight a war, rescue your nephew, pray for a child, have your son rebel, have him return to you, make a fortune and give it away, traverse the globe, stay home for 60 years, dig a well, farm the land, study half your life in a yeshivah, become an exile, fall in love, be cheated, work yourself to the bone, run away from your father-in-law, be the victim of sexual assault, take revenge, sell your brother into slavery, be thrown in jail, survive a famine, rule an empire — it's been done.

In the words of Nachmanides: "Everything that happened to the Patriarchs is a signpost for their children. This is why the Torah elaborates its account of their journeys, their well-digging and the other events [of their lives]... These all come as an instruction for the future: for when something happens to one of the three Patriarchs, one understands from it what is decreed to occur to his descendants..."

To some, this can be very frustrating. How can one ever do anything original with such ancestors?

(Which brings to mind an interesting difference between a Torah scholar and an academic scholar. Imagine an academic scholar laboring for years on a thesis only to discover that the very same arguments and proofs have been made years earlier by another scholar. It would be a catastrophe! For the Torah scholar, it would be the high point of his career and the ultimate validation of his legitimacy.)

It's good to be original. It's a blessing to be creative. (In fact, according to the Chassidic masters, the entire point of being created in your Creator's image is to be creative yourself.) But originality and creativity does not mean doing something that hasn't been done before. It means re-creating 4000 years of Jewish marriages in your marriage — and then adding to that your own special something. It means raising your child with all the wisdom of 100 generations of Jewish parents and educators — and enhancing that with your own unique insight. It means giving of yourself with the generosity of a million philanthropists — and