

## *Maggid*

By Marge Piercy, Siddur Lev Shalem, pg.412

The courage to let go of the door, the handle.  
The courage to shed the familiar walls whose very  
stains and leaks are comfortable as the little moles  
of the upper arm; stains that recall a feast,  
a child's naughtiness, a loud blattering storm  
that slapped the roof hard, pouring through.

The courage to abandon the graves dug into the hill,  
the small bones of children and the brittle bones  
of the old whose marrow hunger had stolen;  
the courage to desert the tree planted and only  
begun to bear; the riverside where promises were  
shaped; the street where their empty pots were broken.

The courage to leave the place whose language you learned  
as early as your own, whose customers however dan-  
gerous or demeaning, bind you like a halter  
you have learned to pull inside, to move your load;  
the land fertile with the blood spilled on it;  
the roads mapped and annotated for survival.

The courage to walk out of the pain that is known  
into the pain that cannot be imagined,  
mapless, walking into the wilderness, going  
barefoot with a canteen into the desert;  
stuffed in the stinking hold of a rotting ship  
sailing off the map into dragons' mouths,

Cathay, India, Siberia, goldenh medina,  
leaving bodies by the way like abandoned treasure.  
So they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way

out of Russia under loads of straw; so they steamed  
out of the bloody smoking charnelhouse of Europe  
on overloaded freighters forbidden all ports --

out of pain into death or freedom or a different  
painful dignity, into squalor and politics.

We Jews are all born of wanderers, with shoes  
under our pillows and a memory of blood that is ours  
raining down. We honor only those Jews who changed  
tonight, those who chose the desert over bondage

who walked into the strange and became strangers  
and gave birth to children who could look down  
on them standing on their shoulders before having  
been slaves. We honor those who let go of every-  
thing but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought,  
who became other by saving themselves.