**WHY DID ABRAHAM LEAVE HARAN AND HIS FARTEHRS HOUSE?**
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- I don't read the bible as history, I read it as wisdom literature
    - Stories born of experience that have been passed down through the ages to teach us timeless lessons.
    - I don't operate under the belief that Abraham existed as a human being but rather as a literary device to teach us these lessons
        - Does that make a difference in my Jewish practice or belief?
            - Not at all because my faith such that we use that word is not in a person/human beings but in the values and teaching of Torah
                - Often in the positive, but sometimes in the negative
- So many stories have been written about Abraham in particular, maybe next to Moses the most folktale'd biblical figure
    - These are midrashim
    - Midrashim = literature about literature
- We have been taught and Rabbi Brown repeated the well know midrash last night that Abraham left because he could not stomach his father's hypocrisy of being an idol worshipper.
    - Story of the smashed idols, woman with flour.
- But another parallel story exists that it wasn't idolatry that caused Abraham to leave but self-preservation and while I love the epiphany moment lesson of Lech Lecha that I grew up on and that we so often repeat, there is another lesson, perhaps more accessible to us and more emblematic of the Jewish experience.
    - Abraham left to save his life – self preservation. Which while not as celebrated as the epiphany reason, is more

emblematic of and more useful to the Jewish experience than an “Ahah Moment”

- It begins with this important but little mentioned character in the Torah Nimrod
- Nimrod was a king, an evil king who’s lineage goes back to Ham Noah’s cursed son from the end of last week’s parsha and Nimrod’s Grandfather.
    - Some readings are that Nimrod was not one person but that his name means rebellious ones.
- Time is fluid in the bible – another reason not to read it as history. If history needs to get one thing right it is the sequence of events. The bible plays pretty lose with the concept of time and lifetime.
    - Remember Nimrod is the grandson of Ham he lived post Noah and we are told their on 10 generations between Noah and Abraham.
- Nimrod is the prototype of a rebellious people, his name being interpreted as "he who made all the people rebellious against God" (Pes. 94b; comp. Targ. of pseudo-Jonathan and Targ. Yer. to Gen. x. 9). He is identified with Cush and with Amraphel, the name of the latter being interpreted as "he whose words are dark" (; Gen. R. xlii. 5; for other explanations see below). As he was the first hunter he was consequently the first who introduced the eating of meat by man. He was also the first to make war on other peoples (Midr. Agadah to Gen. x. 9).
- Nimrod was an earlier follower like Noah of God, but later when Nimrod was eighteen years old, war broke out between the Hamites, his kinsmen, and the Japhethites. The latter were at first victorious, but Nimrod, at the head of a small army of Cushites, attacked and defeated them, after which he was made king over all the people on earth, appointing Terah his minister.
    - Terach as we read in this morning Parasha is Abraham’s idol selling father.

- It was then, after this victory, elated by so much glory, that Nimrod changed his behavior toward Adonai and became the most flagrant idolater.
- Nimrod is generally considered to have been the one who suggested building the Tower of Babel and who directed its construction. God said: "I made Nimrod great; but he built a tower in order that he might rebel against Me" (Ḥul. 89b). The tower is called by the Rabbis "the house of Nimrod," and is considered as a house of idolatry.

ENTER ABRAHAM

In a story that will seem strikingly similar to the rise of Moses in the house of Pharaoh and the perceived threat his birth places upon the Egyptian King

- When Nimrod is informed of Abraham's birth he requested Terah to sell him the new-born child in order that he might kill it (see Jew. Encyc. i. 86a, s.v. Abraham in Rabbinical Literature). In a graphic midrash we are told a tale of how Terah hid Abraham and in his stead brought to Nimrod the child of a slave in his household, which Nimrod dashed to pieces ("Sefer ha-Yashar," l.c.).
- Midrash after Midrash then “documents” Nimrod’s persecution of Abraham; it has the shape of a Marvel Comics tale of superheroes fight or Greek Mythology of a fight between Gods.
- In one Midrash, by Nimrod’s command Abraham was thrown into a heated furnace; and it was on this account, according to one opinion, that Nimrod was called "Amraphel" ( = "he said, throw in"; Targ. pseudo-Jonathan to Gen. xiv. 1; Gen. R. xlii. 5; Cant. R. viii. 8).
- In a series of events similar to Pharoah’s hardened heart in the face of the 10 plagues on Egypt. When Nimrod was informed that Abraham had come forth from the furnace uninjured, he remitted

his persecution of the worshiper of Adonai; but on the following night he saw in a dream a man coming out of the furnace and advancing toward him with a drawn sword. Nimrod thereupon ran away.

- The dream is super weird, as dreams can often be.
- There is a scene it it with an egg being thrown at Nimrod. The egg turns in to a river, it swallows up Nimrod's army – again an foreshadowing of Egypt and Pharoah's chariots swallowed in the parted Sea of Reeds. It ends with Nimrod's eye being pecked out by a bird that was hatched from the thrown egg.
  - Dreams are weird, Midrashic dreams are borderline hallucinogenic
- The dream was interpreted as forecasting Nimrod's defeat by Abraham, wherefore Nimrod sent secretly to kill Abraham;

- It is because of this, Nimrod's fear of Abraham and his pursuit of him to kill him that according to some Midrashim that Abraham left his father's house and fled to Cannan.
- Nimrod then gets involved in the war with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, with whom he was defeated by Abraham ("Sefer ha-Yashar," l.c.; comp. Gen. xiv. 1-17).
- And wrap the whole thing up in a bow, reminiscent to the Twilight Zone Nimrod is killed by Esau, because of a jealousy that existed between them owing to the fact that they were both hunters (Targ. pseudo-Jonathan to Gen. xxv. 27; "Sefer ha-Yashar," section "Toledot," p. 40b; Pirḳe R. El. l.c.; comp. Gen. R. lxv. 12).
  - And Esau then goes on to become Rome and the cycle repeats.

But why is this story important?

- Because from the very beginning our role models in Judaism taught that the greater valour is to live to fight another day.

Preserve your life and with it its teachings. If they are coming to get you, get up early and leave.
    - Moses when he is discovered to be a Hebrew and to have killed an Egyptian task master
    - Yochanah Ben Zakkai when the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem is imminent.
    - The Jews who fled pogroms for the pre-state Israel or life across the ocean.
    - Those that could get out of Europe as the fires of the Shoah were beginning to catch fire.
- The lesson – Abraham discovered God by looking at idols and seeing the hypocrisy or by considering the sun and the moon and worshiping the power that makes them go up and down – another well known midrash – those lessons are lovely and they have their time and place.
- BUT ALSO the lesson from Abraham repeated from Jewish history – B'ahi Bhem – live by the words of Torah don't die by them.
    - Have your bags packed and be ready to leave
    - Preserve the tradition, your family, torah and run for your life.
- AND for the first time in Jewish history that lesson has an important caveat. The State of Israel.
    - For the first time in Jewish history we have a place to run to that will take us
    - And a place we will never have to run from.
- It changes everything and still we should heed the lesson because nothing has really changed.