

Maggid by Marge Piercy

Contributed by [Rachel Goldberg](#)

Source:

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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 blistering 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 the empty pots were broken.

The courage to leave the place whose language you learned
as early as your own, whose customs however
dangerous 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, Serbia, *goldeneh medina*,
leaving bodies by the way like abandoned treasure.

So they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way
out of Russia under loaves 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 for having
been slaves. We honor those who let go of everything
but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought,
who became other by saving themselves.