

Illustration for the Maggid Page

Contributed by [The Tasman Center for Jewish Creativity](#)

Source:



Allan Tasman. 2021. White Sands. [photography]

This photo was taken at White Sands National Monument in New Mexico. The gypsum sand is white as snow and occupies a space of 230 square miles. There are no landmarks in White Sands itself, only distant mountains to the west and north. Warning signs everywhere caution against walking after dark, or where there aren't a series of red poles placed in the sand marking the way. It's overwhelming and scary to venture out beyond the sight of the road, the only tether to safety, knowing people have been lost there and died as little as a mile from the road when they stray from the pole-marked "path". Contrast this with the 23,000 square miles of the Sinai desert through which the Israelites travelled for 40 years in the exodus from Egypt. Being at White Sands made me think about what it must have been like for a group who had never personally known freedom to set out with few landmarks to guide them on their 40-year crossing those thousands of years ago. It took a great deal of faith and courage to make that journey. I wonder how much faith we'd have today, living at a time of the greatest migration of refugees for thousands of years and as we relish our own lives of comfort and safety, to set out on that same harsh trek with no guarantee of safety, shelter, food, or water.

Artist Bio: Allan Tasman, M.D., '69 is Emeritus Professor, Chairman and Schwab Endowed Chair in Social and Community Psychiatry at the University of Louisville. A psychoanalyst, cognitive neuroscience researcher, and past president of the American Psychiatric Association, he has lectured and published extensively around the world. With his spouse Cathy, an artist, teacher, and mental health advocate, he has three adult children, including Rabbi Sarah Tasman and one grandchild, the brilliant and adorable Griffin Emmett Tasman Hathaway. He spends most of his free time gardening and making photographs. (allan.tasman@gmail.com)