



## From Exile to Exodus

What comes to mind when you hear the word *freedom*? In Jewish history, the idea of freedom is often linked to the Exodus from Egypt, which we celebrate on Passover each year. Freedom meant the end of slavery in Egypt, the opportunity to receive the Torah, and the return of the Israelites to their homeland. The themes of exile and return have since repeated themselves over and over in Jewish history. What does freedom mean to you?

## Staying True to Your Name

The Tanakh recounts how Jacob, on his way home to Israel after many years, found himself locked in a struggle with a stranger one night. When daybreak came, Jacob discovered that he had wrestled with an angel. In recognition, his name was changed to Israel, or *Yisrael*, meaning "one who wrestled with God." Since then, the Jewish people have been called *Am Yisrael* or *B'nei Yisrael*, the Children of Israel.

*Jacob Wrestling with the Angel,*  
Gustave Doré, 1855



## Mapping the Path of the Jewish Nation

The history of the Jewish nation begins in ancient Mesopotamia and Canaan. Canaan, as the Land of Israel was known then, was the Promised Land of the Israelites, and all paths led back to it. But the course of the Jewish nation has not been straight. Plot the travels below by locating each place on the map and drawing an arrow from one place to another. Label each arrow with the number that matches the statement. One example has been filled in for you.



1. Abraham is born in **Mesopotamia**. He and Sarah move to **Canaan**.
2. Joseph is sold and taken from **Canaan** to **Egypt**. Jacob, his children, and their families eventually join him there.
3. The Israelites leave **Egypt** and spend forty years in the **Sinai desert**.
4. Led by Joshua, the Israelites settle in **Canaan**, which is later called Israel.
5. Israel is divided into two kingdoms, **Israel** in the north and **Judah** in the south. The ten tribes of the northern kingdom of **Israel** are exiled to **Assyria**.
6. Jerusalem falls, and the people are exiled from the kingdom of **Judah** to **Babylonia**.
7. Under Persian rule, the Jews return from **Babylonia** to **Israel**, with leaders Ezra and Nehemiah.

In which places did members of the Jewish nation spend time in exile?

Which part of the Jewish nation did *not* return to Israel? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the patterns of exile and return have affected the identity of Am Yisrael?

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