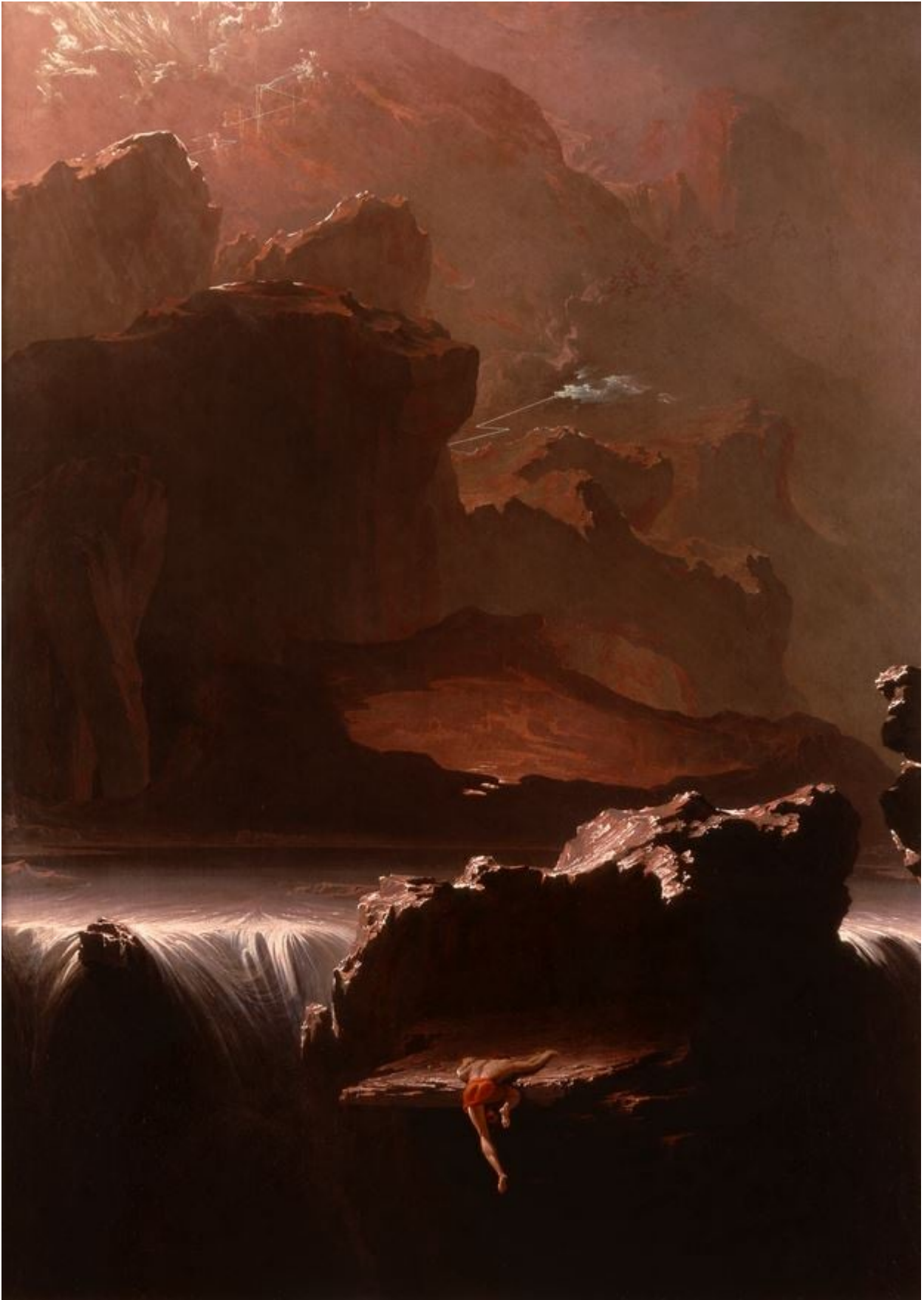


The Journey

by [Paul H. Yarbrough](#) (June 2023)



Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion, John Martin, 1812

He had slept well. He wasn't sure why, but he was rested. And—he was awake now. A dream had awakened him. Not a nightmare. Not even a bad dream. Just a dream, like a streaming reverie, though like most dreams, it collected more fantasy than sense. And before the dream ended, the sleep broke and his deep relaxation faded with the newly-passed night.

He awakened to begin a new journey. He stared, briefly at the ceiling before rolling over and sitting up on the edge of the bed. Time to get up.

He dressed appropriately; he had had proper instructions before he had gone to bed last night; after he had eaten the evening meal. It was tomorrow now, but early. The sun would be coming up, though he could not see its light from his location. But he knew the time from the chiming of the clock. He did not wear his own watch today.

He stepped into another room, a place of waiting; of thoughts, not dreams, until his new journey would begin.

He had discussed the upcoming trip with the man; a Christian man who had spoken of life, though the man seemed to care more for the book he had brought. "Where," he had asked "will this trip take me?" It would be a new journey, the answer had come. A new journey. But as he recalled, now, and the man had called it, "an additional journey." Oh, well. It could not matter—the difference. But, if it did not matter, he thought, why did he care? In *addition* to what?

Last night he had eaten of the *plants of the field*. He had stipulated *no blood* be shed for him to eat. He remembered this from "Genesis." So, he had made the same request. The Christian man saw to it for him, so the meal needn't have been a concern. He had eaten corn and beans and fruit, and a small piece of bread. Now, with overnight sustenance, he was prepared. He stood in an area where his departure would begin.

He wondered about this new journey. For some reason he felt both curiosity and trepidation. Were those the proper words? He thought, with what rational skills he could draw on, that maybe these word-mates bred another word—fear. Perhaps?

But the Christian man had told him that fear was the wrong consideration to have. All journeys were but new adventures. Perhaps, the Christian man, had told him, the word to be sought was *anticipation*.

He waited now, staring at the ramparts around him: gray, concrete, lined with fractures, the cracks zig-zagging like patterns of lightning; chaotic routes. He spotted a spider crawling up to the top. The fissures indicated time, not weakness. He had that same feeling when peering at clouds, imagining forms and things, shapes within the mind, maybe within the soul. In time they might crumble; but in a *long* time. Not this time. No way of penetration through them but for special quantum movement of complicated electrons orbits and wave forms, etc., things few understood. A single iron door stood like a sentry, momentarily blocking the way. It was as if it were an iron knight guarding *against*, and allowing *for*, passage.

To begin the escort for him, a small cordon of three men had moved forward, blocking view of the fractures and clouds and shapes and *the* quantum motion from view. One of the three looked at his watch then spoke; then stepped back allowing a path of trod. The words had been kind, though pointless. The *one* pointed, without speaking, at the *iron knight*. The dark reddish-brown door creaked with age, as old as the ramparts, as it was opened. Except for the *one* who had spoken there had been a *loud* silence. Pursued lips and gazes were the only communication. Cold stares; though not frigid ones.

Through it he walked, directly through the exit in step with the three acquaintances who had become his appellants, his plaintiffs; those to whom he had entreated, though briefly.

One held his arm. He glanced down at the tattoo on his own hairy forearm. An inked drawing of a Tiger. He could not remember why he had added that to his life. But it was there forever now. The tattoo of the tiger held open its mouth as the artist had formed and drawn it long ago—as if to roar.

Outside, now, he looked up at the sky, his eyes blinking at the shining sun, smiling as if seeing a friend who he had not seen for some time. He turned at the direction of his ushers, disparate shepherds pointing a way for him: toward the stairs which would take him up. He glanced to his rear, then looked up, then began the climb to the top. He saw the sky now, and he viewed small white clouds pasted against a light blue heavenly covering that seemed cool and pleasant to his mind—or maybe again, his soul. He smiled for a moment and realized he was enjoying his smile. He did not know why. But he felt peaceful smiling.

Then someone covered his head, which unavoidably covered the smile; then the one who had covered, gently turned his shoulders.

Lastly, into the dark veil which had hidden his smile he spoke in a whisper: small, soft, muffled words that no one could comprehend.

The floor opened and he plunged. His neck snapped. The sun ceased shining and the white clouds melted into a special darkness. The excitement of a new dream arose, and his journey began.

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Paul H. Yarbrough has written for The Blue State Conservative, NOQ, The Daily Caller, American Thinker, The Abbeville

Institute, Lew Rockwell, and more. He is the author of 4 [novels](#): *Mississippi Cotton*, *A Mississippi Whisper*, *Thy Brother's Blood*, and *The Yeller Rose of Texas*, in addition to many short stories and poems.

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