

ISAAC

True Treasures are Within

A Hasidic legend.

Intent of the Legend

- ✓ *To discover that all true treasures like fulfillment, peace, lasting happiness and wholeness are not found outside us but within us.*
- ✓ *To be keenly aware that in order to find those treasures first, we have to go out of ourselves in strange and uncertain directions, till finally returning to ourselves we discover them deep down within*
- ✓ *In a similar way in our God-wards journey, first we journey outside ourselves in search of Him, only on our return; we can find Him in the centre of our being.*
- ✓ *To understanding the profound truth in Jesus words" The kingdom of God is right within you".*

THE LEGEND

Narrator: Isaac was a very poor man, father of a large family. He spent his days in hunger, cold and destitution. One night he wailed:

Isaac: This is the third night we send the children to bed with just a few crumbs of bread... For how long shall we pull on like this?... Ummm!...

Narrator: And so, after another long day of worries and starvation Isaac went to bed. Before falling sleep he prayed to God.

Isaac: O God, Father of all men... look at our misery... do not forget me, do not forget my kids... do come to our help... I entrust myself and my family to you... -

Narrator: Isaac fell asleep... And in his deep sleep he had a dream and heard mysterious voice...

Voice: Isaac! Isaac!... Are you listening, Isaac?

Isaac: Yes, I am! Speak, speak... I am listening!

Voice: Isaac, go to the great city... There, under the bridge at the city gate... hidden somewhere... you will find a treasure... a bag of gold! Go! Search for it! When you find it, your troubles will be over!

Issac: What city? What bridge? Where?...

Narrator: Isaac woke up with a start... It was pitching dark. Everybody was asleep...He wailed:

Issac: O! What a wonderful dream! I wish it was true! How wonderful... to find a treasure... to get some money... to feed my children... to end our miseries... It's too good to be true!

Narrator: However much Isaac tried to fall asleep again, he couldn't....He was too excited. He could not.....Isaac started arguing within himself:

Issac: Suppose it was true! What a joy! No! No! It can't be true! I'll never be rich... I'll never get a treasure... I was born poor and poor I'll die!... Let me forget it all... I had better sleep...

Narrator: But he couldn't reconcile his asleep! The dream was too alluring. Isaac remained seated on his cot till dawn. Haggard and weary, Isaac still sitting on his cot, tried to convince himself.

Isaac: I am a poor man... Shall I lose anything if I go to that city?... You never know.. I may find the treasure... Never mind, I'll try my luck! I have little to lose... Yes, I'll go in search of that distant city! I'll go in search of that treasure!

Narrator: Isaac's wife seeing him getting ready to leave the house, asked:

Wife: Isaac, where are you going?... Why such hurry? What's come over to you?

Isaac: You know, I am going in search of a treasure! I had a dream!

Wife: In search of a treasure? Have you gone mad? Treasures don't come so easy, you know! Besides it's foolish to believe in dreams... Don't go! Think; in your absence who will bring in the few coins you earn to feed our children?

Isaac: Foolish or not, I'll go! The dream was so beautiful! It looked so real, you know! And that voice sounded so true and convincing! I can't but go!... I am going.

Narrator: And off he went... He walked and walked... Trudged along dusty and steep roads... weary travel worn and footsore he reached to an unknown city gate... There, before him was the bridge of his dream!... It was exactly as he had seen it in his sleep!... In his excitement he lingered longingly around the spot and then began searching inch by inch every corner under the arches of the bridge... He never cared to look around... He did not even notice the presence of anyone... Isaac's excitement and his strange behavior caught the eye of one of the guards at the city gate. The guard grew suspicious of Isaac. He shouted:

Guard: Old man, what are you doing here, loitering and searching under the bridge? Tell me the truth!

Issac: O.. O.. O.. No... Nothing, sir! Nothing special!

Guard: You liar! I have seen you moving stealthily all around, lifting stones... examining every inch of ground under the bridge... and you say you did nothing! Tell me the truth, or else I'll have you arrested!

Isaac: You know, sir, few days ago, I dreamt that if I journeyed to a city many miles away from my home, I would find a treasure, a bag of gold under the arches of the bridge at the city gate.

Guard: Ha, ha ha! stupid! Who believes in dreams, old man! Who would be foolish enough to take them for true? Forget it, man! You know, few days ago, I also had a dream,. Do you expect me to believe it?

Issac: Yes, sir? What was your dream?

Guard: Well, I dreamt that if I walked many miles away from here to a small village, I would find a bag of gold hidden behind and beneath the fire place in the hut of a poor man called Isaac. Do you expect me to go in search of that bag of gold in that poor man's hut? Ha, ha, ha... Be gone old fool! Get out of here!...

Narrator: Isaac returned home as fast as he could... He walked, he sped...He run.... When he reached home he dug behind the fire place... And sure enough., there, in the heart of his own home, behind the hearth, he found a bag of gold, the treasure he went in search of under the bridge of an unknown city gate far away from his home.

Ideas and Applications of the Parable

- We think ourselves spiritually poor and destitute when in fact we are rich, with riches no thief can get to, no moth can destroy.
- We think and feel ourselves to be away from God, when God is more present to us than we are to ourselves.
- We have to search for truth, meaning, beauty, and fulfillment and for God wherever we are. They are in plenty
- To discover them, our first impulse is to go outside ourselves to find them anywhere. At the end of our search, if we are persistent and perceptive enough, we shall discover them in the hearth of our heart.
- It is a hard fact that unless we go outside ourselves with generosity and detachment, we shall never find ultimate meaning in life.
- God is there in our inner most being, yet, invisible to those who do not search for Him

- Strange and paradoxical enough: We have to let God find us, and yet we have to search for Him.
- Our life is ultimately a journey homewards. Sooner or later our outward search will turn us inwards.
- Any true "spiritual odyssey" must end in finally finding God in the deepest layers of our being.
- Christ's "odyssey" followed the same pattern. He left heaven and came outwards to earth, only to finally reenter in a glorious comeback.
- This dialectical movement of going forward and coming back, of giving up and entering into possession of, is the very stuff of man's striving to transcend himself.
- Only by returning to himself, he becomes whole, he becomes one again with himself, with God and with the world.
- All the non material "treasures" of peace, joy, serenity, fulfillment, truth, love, beauty, meaning, bliss which man so frantically searches outside himself, in external things - *money, pleasures, success, fame, honor, status, power* - are already in his heart!
- He has only to discover that by renouncing those external things he will finally enter into the treasure-house of his heart.
- The great saints and mystics followed the same path. Renouncing the fleeting things of the world which once possessed them, they allowed God to possess them.
- But let us not forget that despite the transcendental nature of our human selves, our two-way journey would ultimately be a journey into the void but for the gracious fact that our human transcendence has been redeemed and transfigured by the divine transcendental immanence of the Word of God in Christ.
- Created things which make up the external world are good. They are signposts pointing inwards to where God, the Highest Good, meets man in the depths of his being.
- It is for us to read this sign-post correctly if our journey is to be truly rewarding.

N. T. Quotes in keeping with the Ideas of the Legend

Mt 5/1-11	The Beatitudes. Blessedness is in detachment, in going out of oneself.
Mt 5/ 13-16	We are salt and light. We have not yet discovered what we are and what we are supposed to do in the world.
Mt 6/5-6	When you wish to pray do not go out of self, close the door of your room that is, of your heart. God is there.
Mt 6/16-21	True riches are found in our hearts.
Mt 10/37-39	To be able to possess our lives, we have to lose them!
Mt 13/44-46	The hidden treasure and the pearl.
Mk 10/17-31	The rich young man searched for treasures outside his heart; he missed Jesus.
Lk 12/13-21	The rich fool.
Lk 17/20-22	The Kingdom of God is within you.
Lk 24/13-35	Emmaus. The Disciples went away from Jerusalem to find Jesus on their way and returned to Jerusalem
Jn 3/1	To enter the Kingdom of God we have to be born again.

