

# A Desert Theology of Liberation



The Journey of God's People as  
Refugee, Outsider, Slave, and Exile  
in the Urban Wilderness

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# Confronting Chaos



# CCAM

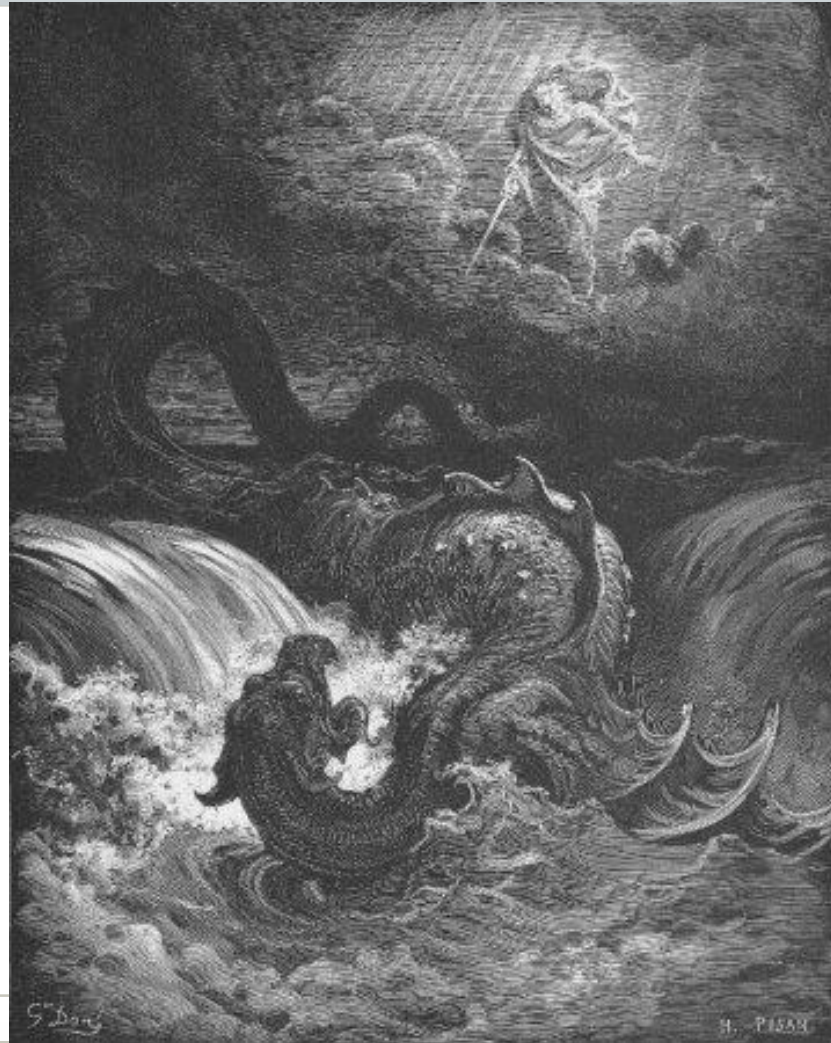


# Dislocation

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- Stressed
- Isolated
- Powerless
- Scared
- Alone
- Desperate

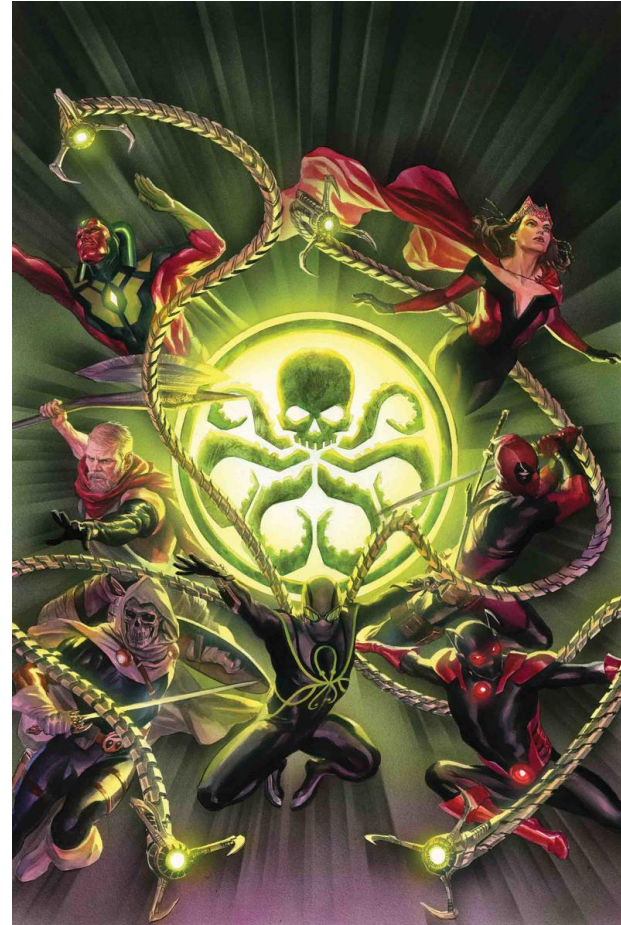
# Chaoskampf: The Chaos Struggle



# A Universal Story



# Hydra and The Avengers



# Ancient Symbols of Chaos, Death and Destruction

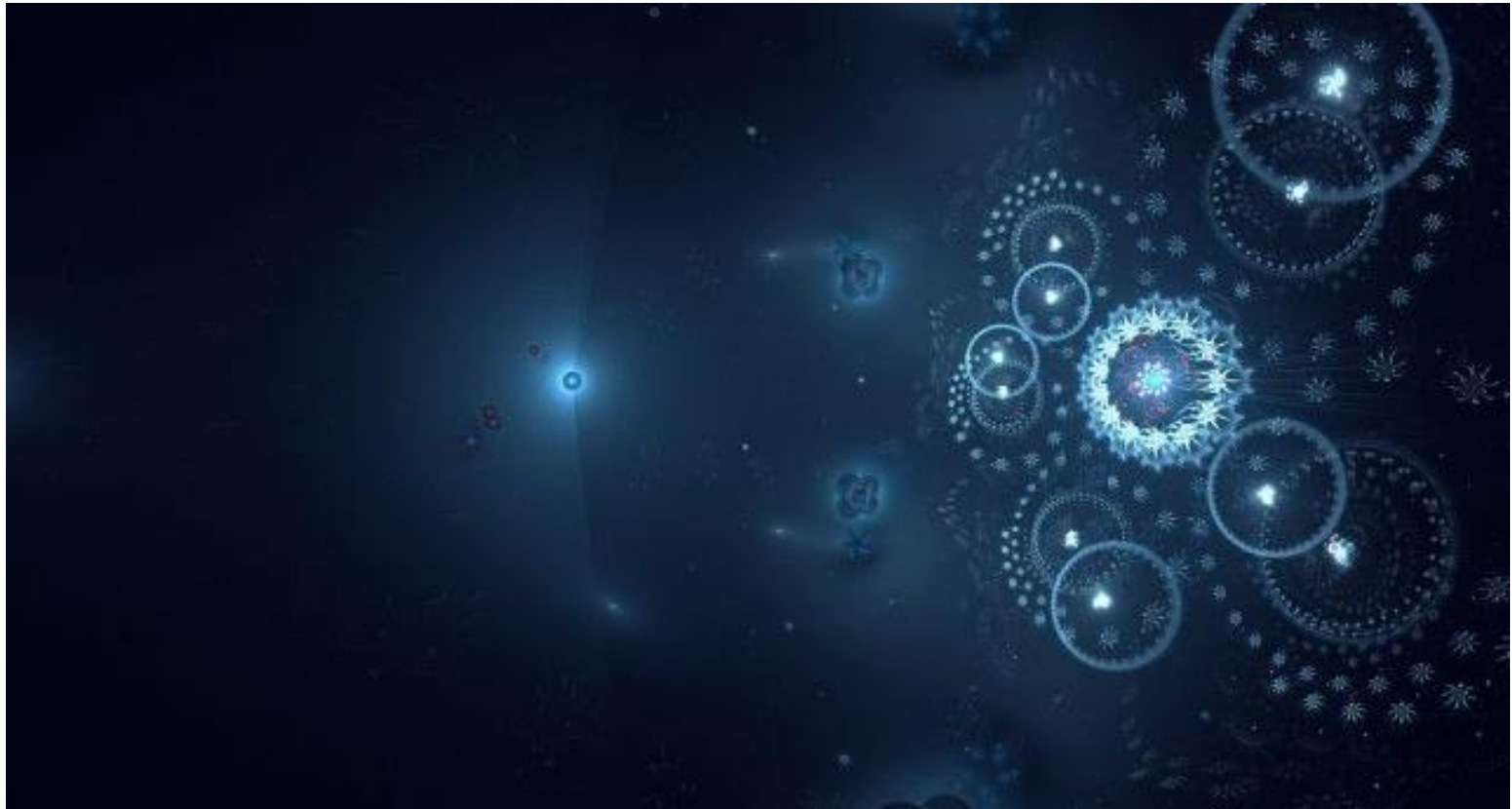
- Dragon
- Sea Serpent
- Giant Squid or Octopus
- Violent Waters
- Demon
- Skulls
- An Extreme and Harsh Environment and/or a Violent and Hostile Beast or Creature



# Client Tattoos



# *Creatio Ex Nihilo*



# Chaos and Life



# Chaoskampf in Scripture

- God Divides the Waters at Creation
- God Divides the Waters at the Red Sea
- God Divides the Waters at the River Jordan
- God Guides His People Through the Desert
- God Overcomes and the Dragons Rahab and Leviathan in the Book of Job.
- God Overcomes the Violent Waters and Slays Rahab and Leviathan in the Psalms
- God Slays Leviathan in the Book of Isaiah
- Christ Conquers the Devil in the Wilderness
- Christ Calms the Storm and Casts Out Demons in the Gospels
- Christ Conquers the Dragon and the Beast in the Book of Revelation

# Chaos

Darkness over the face of the *deep, formless and void, the waters.*

- Lack of Balance
- Lack of Order
- Lack of Rhythm
- Lack of Harmony

# Elements in Their Extreme

- Extreme Water – Flood
- Extreme Fire – Hell, Brimstone
- Extreme Wind – Whirlwind, Storm
- Extreme Earth – Desert, Wilderness,  
Drought

Hostile to Life

# The Triumphant Earth



# The Building Blocks of Life



- **Water** – Fluids
- **Fire** – Body Temperature
- **Earth** – Solids, Bones
- **Wind** – Breathing, Inhaling and Exhaling



# Cosmos and Anthropolos

You are supported by a rigid skeleton made of minerals. *You are earth.*

Your body is over 70% fluid. *You are water.*

Your lungs take in and expel breath. *You are air.*

Your blood is warm and your brain runs on electrical impulses. *You are fire.*

# Creation Story

- **Balance** – Brings Light to the Darkness
- **Order** – Separates the Heavens and Earth, Water and Land, Humans and Animals, and Male and Female.
- **Rhythm** – God creates in a rhythmic recurring 7-day cycle of evening and morning.
- **Harmony** – The Spiritual, Mineral, Plant, Animal, and Human, and Celestial Worlds are Interconnected.

# The Combat Myth?



# Conflict Without Opposition

- Jiu Jitsu – The Gentle Art
- A method of martial arts that uses the opponents force against themselves rather than meeting it with force.
- The goal of Jiu Jitsu is to neutralize a fight without causing the enemy harm.
- The Jiu Jitsu practitioner uses holds, pins, and submissions to neutralize the chaos and violence of a fight, thus creating order, balance, rhythm, and harmony with the opposing force.

# Fedor vs Fabricio

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-1tdurWvoU>

# Creation as Kata

- **Kata** – In Japanese means *order*. A set of pre-arranged patterns of rhythmic movements to prepare the warrior for the chaos of the battlefield.
- God gives His people the Creation Story to prepare them to face the forces of chaos and to remind them that He has the power to conquer them.
- The Exodus Story is then used in the same way: to remind God's people during times of chaos and dislocation that if He slayed the dragon before, He can do it again.

# The Sacred Metronomes of Remembrance

- **The Sabbath** – Remember to rest and to not make money and consumption your gods
- **The Passover** – Remember that you were once slaves, that slavery was horrible, and that God delivered you.
- **The Feast of Firstfruits** – Remember to be grateful and beware of entitlement.
- **The Feast of Weeks** – Remember to be generous and beware of greed.

# The Sacred Metronomes of Remembrance

- **The Feast of Trumpets** – Remember to give praise to God and beware of cynicism.
- **The Day of Atonement** – Remember that your and other's sins have been forgiven and beware of holding resentments.
- **The Feast of Booths** – Remember to give thanks for your basic needs being met and beware of taking things for granted.



# A Kata of Festivals

- **Zeitgeber** – Shaped their cultural and sacred understanding and keeping of time.
- **Psychosocial Integration** – Established a sense of social belonging, communal identity, and psychological well-being.
- **Boundaries** – Created necessary boundaries with opposing systems of greed and idolatry.
- **Harmony** – Preserved an economy of all being working together in harmony.
- **Resilience** – Helped the people survive spiritually and culturally in times of dislocation and chaos.

# Dislocation

- A breakdown of psychosocial integration through cultural, social, psychological and spiritual devastation and impoverishment.
- **Refugee** – Longs for Survival
- **Outsider** – Longs for Belonging and Acceptance
- **Slave** – Longs for Liberation
- **Exile** – Longs for a Home

# Stephen's Sermon Acts 7

- **Refugees:** “there was great famine the land...and our fathers could not find any food...so Jacob went down to Egypt.”
- **Outsiders:** “until another king arose in Egypt and dealt shrewdly with our race.
- **Slaves:** “his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave and afflict them for four hundred years.”
- **Exiles:** “and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.”

# Dislocation and the Chaos Struggle

- In times of prolonged dislocation, the ancient Israelites would invoke the Chaoskampf, the story of God's triumph over the dragon, the forces of chaos, as an instrument of psychological and theological resilience.
- Also, in times of dislocation, the ancient Israelites significantly preserved their religious and cultural identity and way of life through Sabbath-keeping and Passover observance when facing new forces of chaos.

# Psalm 74

- A lament of the people in the context of Babylonian Captivity
- “You divided the sea by your might;
- You broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.
- <sup>14</sup> You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
- you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.”

# Isaiah 27

- A proclamation of God's triumph and the redemption of His people in a context of Babylonian Captivity.
- “In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.”

# Jeremiah 17

- “But keep the Sabbath day holy and do not work on it...”
- ”But if you do not listen to me to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.”

# Ezekiel 20

- “Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them. But the house of **Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness.** They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live, and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned.”



# The Wilderness

- Why was it so difficult for Israel to walk in God's statutes and follow His rules in the wilderness?
- The wilderness was a significant time of dislocation.
- Israel was transitioning from 400 years of slavery into a harsh environment.
- They had become *addicted* to Egypt, their oppressor and slave master.

# Egypt: Two Names

- **Rahav** – like Leviathan, refers to an ancient dragon that God conquered at the beginning of creation as well as a new imperial and draconian force that oppresses God’s people.
- **Mitzrayim** – literally “narrow straits.” In later Jewish tradition, Mitzrayim was understood not so much as a geographical place but as a diseased state of mind when thinking, feeling, and believing is constricted.

# Mitzrayim

- “The exile of the Israelites in Mitzrayim represents a condition of self-alienation, of not being in one’s true place. In exile we become disconnected from our own true nature and inner being; our outer lives slide out of sync with our inner essence.”
  - - Estelle Frankel

# Rahav and Mitzrayim

- The forces of *Rahav* and *Mitzrayim* work together to both destroy social, psychological, and cultural ways of life and isolate the individual in a state of self-alienation.
- In this state of dislocation, an individual and a society will turn to the most expedient way to adapt and cope. This is how idolatry functions for God's people in times of stress, isolation, and powerlessness.

# Bruce Alexander

## The Dislocation Theory of Addiction

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- The Rat Park Experiment
- <http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/comic/rat-park/>

# The Roots of Addiction in Free Market Society

- “Although any person in any society can become dislocated, modern western societies dislocate all their members to a greater or lesser degree because all members must participate in “free markets” that control labour, land, money and consumer goods. Free markets require that participants take the role of individual economic actors, **unencumbered by family and friendship obligations, clan loyalties, community responsibilities, charitable feelings, the values or their religion, ethnic group, or nation.**”

# King of Tyre

- The Phoenicians posed a major threat to the ancient Israelites in exile because of the seductive power of their goods and a trading system that did not acknowledge the sacred parameters of the Sabbath.
- “Tyrians, also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath...what is this evil think that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day.” - Nehemiah 13:16

# King of Tyre

## Ezekiel 28

- Corrupted by their trading system.
- In the abundance of your **trade**  
you were filled with violence in your midst, and  
you sinned;
- By the multitude of your iniquities,  
in the **unrighteousness of your trade**  
you profaned your sanctuaries;
- Because your heart is proud,  
and you have said, '**I am a god,**



# The Nature of Chaos

- **Rahav** – a draconian and oppressive system that works against the cosmic, biological, and sacred parameters established by God.
- **Mitzrayim** – a state of alienation and desperation; a narrowing of the mind.
- **Addiction** – an attempt to adapt to a prolonged state of dislocation through expedient means of relief.

# 3 Examples

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- Thomas Jefferson and the Indian Removal Act
- Green Eggs and Ham
- The Karate Kid

# Thomas Jefferson and the Indian Removal Act

- **The Rahavic Force** – The U.S. Government forcibly removes native people from their land and then establishes trading posts to drive native people into debt in order to take legal ownership of their land.
- **The Mitzrayim Force** - For all intents and purposes, the way of life of native people is destroyed and they are forced into a trade system and money economy that destroys their psychosocial integration.
- “To promote this disposition to exchange lands, which they have to spare, and we want... we shall push our trading uses and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run in debt,” he wrote in February 1803. “We observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands.”
  - Thomas Jefferson

# Green Eggs and Ham

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KRkR8HaR9c>

# Green Eggs and Ham

- Sam I Am comes to an isolated individual riding on a beast.
- He doesn't take no for an answer and pushes and pushes until he gets what he wants.
- He dislocates the man from his home and speeds up the pace of his life.
- When the man is completely submerged in the waters; chaos, he gives in and eats the green eggs and ham.
- The man now wants to eat green eggs and ham everywhere.

# The Karate Kid

- **Refugees:** Like Jacob traveling to Egypt, Daniel Larusso and his mother travel from New Jersey to California in hopes of making a better life for themselves.
- **Outsiders:** Daniel doesn't fit in and experiences his differences as social and psychological alienation.
- **Slave:** Daniel is trapped in a cycle of destructive behavior expressed through acting out in temper tantrums, violent outbursts, and emotional breakdowns.
- **Exile:** He feels dislocated and longs to return home especially in times of crisis.

# The Karate Kid

- **The Rahavic Force** – A gang of bullies that target Daniel.
- **The Mitzrayim Force** – Daniel's state of mind becomes narrowly focused on relieving his alienation through the affections of a girl.
- **Addictive Behavior** – Daniel gets quickly trapped in a vicious cycle of instigating fights with the bullies and running to the girl for validation in a way that actually undermines his desire for integration.

# Mr. Miyagi and Kata

- Mr. Miyagi initiates Daniel into a rhythm of life through manual labor, social connection, and martial arts training.
- Mr. Miyagi senses that Daniel is fragmented and struggling, and in a significant time of transition, so he uses the kata as a way to help Daniel achieve balance, rhythm, order, and harmony.
- Daniel then experiences psychosocial integration through his relationship with Mr. Miyagi.



# The Kata

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXjrHFW3hfg>

# Summary

- In short, the children of Israel experience dislocation in four distinct ways that represent four distinct psychological experiences that occur in the context of empire: the Refugee, the Outsider, the Slave, and the Exile. God uses and redeems these distinct psychological experiences as an initiation ritual to humble and mature His people and as a way to fight against opposing imperial forces.

# Summary

- Through cultural and theological story telling, God is remembered as a primordial warrior that slays the dragon and orders the cosmos as a trope of psychological resilience during times of dislocation. In reality, God uses the integration of cosmic, biological, and sacred rhythms to protect His people from imperial (draconian) forces and to maintain psychosocial integration.

# Summary

- In our current context, we can understand free market capitalism as the ultimate imperial force that disregards cosmic, biological, and sacred rhythms and that breaks down psychosocial integration resulting in both the masses experiencing dislocation and turning to expedient means to resolve their suffering. The psychological experience of the refugee, outsider, slave, and exile is no longer socioeconomically or geopolitically bound but is now the norm, and therefore, addictive behavior as an expedient way to adapt to these experiences of dislocation is also the norm.

# Summary

- The story of God as creator/warrior is best understood as a *kata*, a pre-arranged set of rhythmic movements that prepare people for the chaos of the battlefield and that transmits martial knowledge to future generations. The rhythm of God's creative work is remembered by ancient Israel in times of dislocation as martial dance against a draconian force. In the desert experience of ancient Israel, God entrains His people to an integration of cosmic, biological, and sacred rhythms as a way of to defeat both political and psychosocial chaos and to liberate them from idolatry and addictive behavior.

# The Opioid Epidemic

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- We can then understand the rising opioid epidemic as the logical conclusion of a draconian system of chaos that both destroys traditional ways of life and alienates people from themselves, others, and their environment through hyper-individualism and hyper-consumerism.

# The Message

## Grandmaster Flash

- “It’s like jungle sometimes, it makes me wonder how I keep from going under.”
- Broken glass everywhere  
People pissin' on the stairs, you know they just don't care  
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise  
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice  
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back  
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat  
I tried to get away but I couldn't get far  
'Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car..

# The Message

- A child is born with no state of mind  
Blind to the ways of mankind  
God is smilin' on you but he's frownin' too  
Because only God knows what you'll go through  
You'll grow in the ghetto livin' second-rate  
And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate  
The places you play and where you stay  
Looks like one great big alleyway  
You'll admire all the number-book takers  
Thugs, pimps and pushers and the big money-makers  
Drivin' big cars, spendin' twenties and tens  
And you'll wanna grow up to be just like them, huh  
Smugglers, scramblers, burglars, gamblers  
Pickpocket peddlers, even panhandlers  
You say I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool  
But then you wind up droppin' outta high school  
Now you're unemployed, all non-void



# Camphill Lifesharing Communities

- Camphill Village Kimberton Hills is a dynamic farming, gardening, and handcrafting intentional community that includes adults with developmental disabilities.
- *“The Healthy Social Life is found when, in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community the strength of each one is living.”*



# The Negev



# The Negev



# The Negev

