

*"I left my land, my land did not leave me,"* by Qais Al-Sindy

art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [June 15, 2022](#) issue



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Baghdad-born artist Qais Al-Sindy, who now lives in California, knows what it means to carry a land, a people, and a tradition with him. His art creates connections between different cultures and traditions as he raises profound questions and seeks to promote spiritual healing.

The image we see here—part of a group exhibit titled Abraham—is sparse: Abraham, in layered garments and a long, flowing beard, faces a landscape viewers cannot see, eyes set toward an unknown land and future. But this father and shepherd of so many people carries a lamb as he leaves his home in Ur—now Nasiriyah, an Iraqi city—with the great ancient ziggurat in the background. He leaves the waters of the Euphrates which sustained him, and the artwork gathers together those things that formed and fed him, the known familiar that he carries within himself into the unknown, promised future.

“I wanted to bring the spirit and soul of this great prophet through the material of his native land,” writes Al-Sindy in his artist statement. The artwork is built of symbols of land and layers formed by the land itself. Al-Sindy takes portions of an “old Nasiriyah shepherd’s cloak” made of wool and attaches them to the canvas, the layers of canvas and wool not only forming the image but containing the land and the shepherd in profound ways.