

SKY

A heavenly experience in the desert

by HEPHZIBAH MARITZ



I always wondered why the Israelites had to travel through a desert on their journey from Egypt to their land of promise. Was that perhaps the only route or was there a specific reason why they had to go through all that suffering?

Likewise, on our way to our Promised land, we do experience Wilderness times as well. That is when we get thoroughly prepared and purified from defilement of the past. There we learn to become fully dependant on Abba Father for survival, just like the Israelites above who trusted Him unconditionally for their daily needs.

Waiting

Despite my understanding of isolation in the spirit, it still came as a shock when Abba revealed to me one quiet evening that He was going to take me to the wilderness, or desert as He described it. I interpreted His statement as an early warning that I will have to go through a time of severe testing and preparation. Well, I trusted Him and knew that He would see me through, regardless of my own weaknesses.

In a way the idea still scared me as I never had a clue what all this would really lead to. Uncertainty crept in and petty questions started to flood my mind: Does He honestly love me as He always say? Or ... have I not perhaps misunderstood something in His message?

In any case, I slowly started clearing my diary and cancelled or rescheduled appointments for the next few months. Days passed but nothing specific happened. It was as if my Father suddenly went quiet and that concerned me. Now was the time when I needed His closeness more than ever ... but the soft whispering in my spirit stayed away.

I became short tempered and found it difficult to sleep. Night after night I made myself a cup of tea, sitting on my own praying and seeking the face and presence of my Father. Mixed emotions were raging inside me. I repented for not having spent enough time with

Him lately, because wrong daily priorities kept me occupied. An unfathomable longing to be in His presence washed through me. Day and night my heart cried out for Him.

From where I was sitting in my prayer room, I watched the stars through the narrow opening between the curtains. A sickle-moon was shyly peeping back at me and I remembered how as a child I was sitting at my bedroom window at midnight, searching for the heavenly Father among the thousands upon thousands of glittering stars. It was during times like those that my heart could speak to Him for hours on end, without uttering a word.

Then! one night the soft whispering was there:

“Do you still love Me, Hephzibah? I missed you so much.”

Tears flowed abundantly and I tried to tell Him everything in one sentence while He was there.

“Abba, yes I do love You very much. I missed You too and I desperately need you. Please forgive me for neglecting You and for not giving my everything to You. I beg You, do not hold it against me.”

“Little one, I need you as well. I have to teach you many new things and want you to become an open living gateway, through which I can reach other people.”

Initially I was under the impression that my busy schedule was the reason why I had to go to the desert; therefore, His promise to teach me new things, immediately comforted me.

“Abba, I want to turn back to You as my First love. Teach me the true meaning of love. I would like to understand love the way You want me to.”

“Little one, there is nothing wrong with your perception of love. Unfortunately, what you experienced of love in your past was often defiled. I am going to teach you and will be doing it My way this time.”

Days went by and my night-watch never stopped. I was in expectation of what He was going to surprise me with. Until one night ... the longsuffering wait paid off.

The desert

I found myself alone in a wilderness surrounding, sheltered underneath the branches of a peculiar thorn bush, waiting on the Father. All around me were high dunes of desert sand. I waited for quite some time, but when nobody turned up, I started to drag my weary

body towards the nearest dune. I could sense that even my spirit was searching for Abba, like a deer seeking for water.

This must have been how Hagar felt when she was chased away by Sarah; deserted, scared, hungry and thirsty, I thought by myself.

Crawling across the never-ending sand-landscape, searching in vain for the One Who promised never to forsake me, I paused for a moment. With my hand I levelled a section and wrote with my finger in the dry sand. I could not read the words I wrote, because my eyes became blurry with tears running down my face and dripping onto my sand-letter in front of me. However, deep inside my spirit I knew that it was a love letter to my Bridegroom, regretting and asking for forgiveness for the little time I spent in His presence over the last months.

With the back of my hand I tried to wipe my eyes to regain some focus. It worked and a spark of hope emerged when I noticed a slight movement; still extremely far ahead of me. It seemed as if something was moving in my direction and it became impossible to hold back the joy and renewed energy that bubbled up inside me. Perhaps somebody who really cares has arrived at last and was bringing hope and clarity.

A beautiful deep-brown horse with its black mane swaying in the bright desert light, steadily walked up to me. He was all saddled, but without any sign of a rider. Within metres from me the muscular animal paused and looked me directly in the eye. The sky-blue colour of its eyes confused me for a moment, but I carefully watched every movement.

Could this perhaps be a heavenly animal or why do I have this feeling as if we belong together? I asked myself.

New hope flared up but was quickly spoiled by waves of uncertainty. Wishful thinking, why would anyone bother?

The feeling of closeness grew heavier. There he was standing, looking at me with eyes wrapped in a silky glow of tenderness and empathy. Excitement resurfaced. Could it perhaps be that Abba Father ordered an angel to guide me out of this dry place?

“What is the reason for you coming to me?” I tried to start some sort of conversation but with no success.

It was as if the eyes of the beautiful stallion were piercing my heart as he slowly went down on his front knees. I immediately knew that I had to mount. It was quite easy to get on because I was sitting with both my legs hanging down the one side. He waited until I was comfortable, whinnied softly, and started off like the wind.

I was completely caught by surprise but safely gripped the saddle and started to enjoy the unfamiliar ride, not scared at all. The wind was running its fingers through my hair. To my excitement and surprise a white scarf appeared from nowhere and wrapped around my neck. My heart was singing and indescribable joy filled my innermost being. I could think of nothing else but to enjoy this most peculiar journey. It felt as if my long time of isolation and searching was over and a feeling arose that this amazing stallion was on a mission and that I was part of it. Only time would tell the reason for this very unexpected assignment.

Sadly, my own reasoning started to sow disbelief. Is this whole event not just a coincidence? A war was going on inside me; a battle between my mind and what my heart so deeply longed for.

The river

Not at all detracted by the pangs of my conscience, the horse continued and halted on the bank of a strong-flowing river. Bordered by reeds the rumbling stream formed an unbridgeable obstacle. Through dense vegetation the strong animal made its way down to the water. As its hooves touched the water, a crossable passageway immediately formed in the gushing stream. To my astonishment I noticed that the hooves of my riding-animal did not even get wet when he first walked into the stream. I was fascinated by the wall of water that formed on either side as we smoothly passed through.

On the opposite bank a long woven cloak in blue, red and white colours was draped around my shoulders.

In silence I allowed the comforting gesture and enjoyed the divine action; not at all questioning where the cloak came from or why it was necessary. The moment when the hems of the beautiful mantle touched the water, the high walls gushed back into place and the river was flowing like before.

At this stage I decided to put words to some of the many questions that piled up inside me and I tried again:

“Why are we here and where are we going?”

The comforting words came as a shock and a surprise when the brown stallion responded and started to speak:

“You are safe now, little maiden. You are safe. Trust Me and I will take care of you. On My back I will carry you and when you need hinds’ feet to stand on high places in time to come, I will be there to assist you. Trust Me.”

I was so overwhelmed that I kept myself from asking more questions and just waited, safely positioned in the saddle. It was a matter of becoming at ease with the strange way things were developing. I stared at my secret carrier and wished I knew a bit more about this journey.

A resting place

On an easy gallop we progressed but did not move for too long before a high, spectacular mountain arose in front of us like an insurmountable obstacle. It did not seem to bother my companion at all as he slowly continued uphill towards the entrance of a huge cave that could not be overlooked in the mountainside.

Curiosity took over and nothing could stop me from sliding from his back. I attentively surveyed the area around us. On top of a flat stone near the entrance was a brick-coloured clay jar filled with camel milk. Nobody told me but I just knew that it was camel milk. On the side was also a stone plate. My heart was overflowing with questions, but I again refrained from asking. When I moved closer cautiously I noticed the small pieces of bread on the plate for the first time. Against the rock next to the stone table fresh golden honey was dripping from a honeycomb.

“Eat the bread, it was made from fine flour. Also let the fresh honey nourish you.”

I looked around and realised that again it was my celestial carrier giving the command. He was patiently waiting and watching me from a short distance away. At that very second a love unspeakable and above comprehension flooded my innermost being. Spontaneously I turned to him and flung my arms around the neck of the gorgeous animal. I even dared to gently kiss the glossy nose.

I looked deep into the heavenly blue eyes and whispered in unbelief:

“Could you perhaps be ...?”

The adorable creature pressed its velvet nose against my cheek and sniffled tenderly in my neck.

“But ... who are you?” I tried again.

“You have to eat before we resume our journey.”

I knelt at the stone table and helped myself.

“Where are we going?”

Without waiting for an answer, I continued:

“Have you ever tasted these freshly baked barley bread and honey? It is delicious.

“But tell me, where are you taking me?” I tried once more.

“Little rider, to a place where you have never been before. A place called Love.”

I looked up to him in surprise as he was moving a few steps closer.

“I am going to take you on a journey to unfailing Love, a place you've been craving for so long.”

“I am so happy! Will I definitely be able to recognise a place like that?”

“For sure. It might take some time to get there, but eventually you will succeed.

“Come, follow me,” he invited and walked past me into the cave.

It was not too dark inside and I followed him comfortably.

“Lay down and rest while I keep watch. You look a bit drained,” my friendly companion ordered as we reached a bed of soft sand. A sheepskin cover on the sand-bed looked tempting and I obeyed.

As the unknown still made me feel uneasy at times I jumped up and asked:

“But ... what shall I call you? Who are you?”

“I must remain unrecognisable and camouflaged at all times and must cover all clues. It's for your sake,” he cleverly steered away from my question.

I did not understand and before I could rest my head, I jumped up again:

“First please tell me ... what is your name?”

His deep blue eyes penetrated mine and the strong sense of being in the right place that I experienced before, was back.

“Just call me Sky.”

“Sky? ... the name suits you, Sky.”

Then, humble like a lamb, I laid down on my sand-bed and pulled the cover over me. For one last time before I closed my eyes I softly sighed: *“... Sky.”*

Overtiredness took over and I immediately fell asleep.

For how long I slept I do not know but a dainty little kiss on my forehead eventually woke me up. What a way to wake up I thought when I was looking into two pools of liquid heaven in front of me.

“It is time to move on.”

As I came to my feet, I was spoiled with water in a stone bucket and next to it a clean, neatly folded, sand-coloured linen garment. A tender smile enlightened my face and lit the glow in my eyes, while a message echoed in my heart: Sky ... what a gentleman.

It was only then when I realised that I was all by myself. Sky was not there but I accepted the unfamiliar situation as natural and was not too puzzled. I felt refreshed after my field-bath and the new dress fitted me perfectly. The old white linen dress I wore before, mysteriously vanished and was nowhere to be seen.

Outside on the flat stone table was a bowl filled with fresh ripe figs, dates and a handful of almonds. I could not resist the delicious meal and felt spoiled to be served with all my favourite fruits and even almonds. While enjoying a mouth-watering ripe fig, my beloved companion returned. With childlike delight I spontaneously put my arms around his neck and only by habit asked the obvious question:

“Why do we have to do things this way?”

The answer came somehow as a surprise and was short but sweet:

“Just enjoy the ride.”

With this short answer the question was taken care of.

It did not take me long to get back into the saddle. Everything outside was clear, with no sign of any daybreak or approaching sunset. No stars or any sign of a blazing desert-sun were visible; only a soft glow enlightened our pathway.

“Cover your hair,” Sky instructed.

I was confused for a moment and looked around to see if I perhaps missed something.

“But there is nobody else around but us,” I debated.

“You have to hide yourself.”

I immediately obeyed and wrapped my scarf around my hair.

Meribah

We followed a meandering path that was taking us higher up the majestic mountain. Higher and higher we circled around the slopes until we reached an incredible height and eventually disappeared into a huge silvery white cloud. Visibility was poor inside the cloud, but we still managed to go higher. I admired Sky for being able to follow the pathway despite the foginess. My curiosity snowballed as we steadily made our way.

Through the veil of murkiness, the distant flickering of a fire became visible. It made me even more excited when I discovered that we were advancing in that direction. At the top of the mountain the heavy cloud opened, and the fire was clearly exposed. The flames were coming from an altar built from stones on a solid rock foundation.

Again, I quickly slipped from my high seat on Sky's back and cautiously walked closer to the fire. The presence of an altar and the mountainous surrounding reminded me of the story where Abraham had to sacrifice his son, Isaac. An uneasiness made me look back to where Sky was standing.

"Little one, the summit of this mountain is where you have to lay down your past. Sacrifice it on the altar so that you could enjoy total freedom."

This unexpected command left me speechless and step by step I moved closer to the altar. In respect I went down on my knees. The moment was extremely holy. I remained in my kneeling position for some time. The bleating of an animal that sounded like a goat eventually brought me back to reality. I looked at Sky that was still watching. Somehow, I understood that he became a witness of my sacrifice and I bowed my head and tried to determine what exactly I should lay down.

In a hoarse voice I stumbled over the words:

"Abba Father, where shall I start?"

It was Sky that answered:

"At the beginning, start right there."

Sobs shuddered through my body. While screaming out I started to confess my sin. Many of them were so deeply hidden that I had to tear them from my inner most being like pages from a book. This painful process continued until I emptied myself and a mere heap of ashes was left behind.

I could feel the relief. A soft light replaced the darkness of those memories that shackled me for years. I closed my eyes and embraced the moment, knowing that I was not alone in this hour of distress when the woolly head of Sky was brushing my shoulder. I lifted my hand and lovingly stroke the neck of my dearly, beloved companion

Safely back in my saddle the reality of those sacred moments at the altar still lingered. I was simply happy to be with Sky and tried not to interfere as we continued our journey.

"We are on our way to the Pool of Meribah," the message came from the front.

Curiosity re-emerged.

"But ... why?"

"To be cleansed in the healing water."

"But Moses was unfaithful to Yahuwah at Meribah. Why do I have to go to that rock?" I argued.

"Quite right, but Meribah symbolises the crucified and resurrected Messiah. The water that flowed from the rock represents the living water that flowed from His bruised body. Hephzibah, you crucified your past on the altar today and it is now time to embrace the future. It will be as if fresh living water flows from your renewed spirit. Does this make sense to you?"

I nodded.

Snaking down the slopes I had adequate time to wonder about the things that seemed vague. As if he could read my thoughts Sky responded:

"There is no easy way to explain how to live kingdom of Heaven on earth, or to understand it either. Only Holy Spirit can enlighten our understanding of how to live an earthly life and at the same time enjoy a Kingdom lifestyle ... to be in this world but to live with a renewed spirit, the presence of The Father."

I was listening attentively to all the explanations as we slowly descended. Halfway down Sky suddenly stopped, looked around and without explanation took a byway. I was a bit upset and tried to warn him because we were now heading for a deep valley ahead of us, but no reaction came from his side. A deep silence wrapped around us. Only the rhythmic sound from the hoofs of Sky on the gravel road was cutting through the quietness.

At last we reached a dry riverbed down in the valley. Beautiful snow-white lilies all around were a pleasure to the eye.

"Look at the splendour! All of them so perfectly created by our Father," I expressed my feelings. When Sky was not reacting, I took the gap and continued:

"But tell me: why do we have to move in secrecy? We are all alone and on our own down here?"

"It is for your protection, little maiden," was the only answer I could obtain.

"We are safe down here," he added.

I slipped off and went down on my knees, embraced the indescribable lovely lilies that were growing wild in the riverbed and buried my face in the white petals. I remembered how I as a child on our farm, used to pick fresh evening lilies and how my flowers mostly ended up in the refuse bin, because Mom was ignoring my intentions. My eyes became watery as sadness tried to surface but Sky immediately reminded me:

"Remember, you laid down the past on the altar, little lady."

I looked up into the royal blue eyes that sparkled like stars. For a moment I had nothing to say but then it struck me:

"But Sky, how can these flowers manage to flourish in a dry riverbed?"

The reply was short:

"Scratch."

Without delay I dug into the soft sand with bare hands and before long water started to filter to the surface. I looked up at him and whispered:

"Water! In some mysterious way this water was stored under the dry sand."

"It is in the valleys that you grow," he replied.

I was not sure what he meant but he continued:

"You could have missed all this if we followed the original route. Summits always offer a better view but down in the valleys is where you find peace of mind."

I looked at the lilies again; their sweet fragrance almost taking my breath away.

"May I please stay for a bit longer?" I begged and it seemed as if my friend had no problem with my request.

"You know Sky, it seems strange and surely clashes with my nature, but as much as I desire them, I have no intention of picking any of these beautiful flowers. Because they are just going to die and fade away. I prefer to leave them as undamaged as they are."

I could see how passionately he was listening to my explanation. The blue eyes were shining brighter than before and mirrored the purest blue of heaven itself.

Have I missed a sparkle of a tear or was it my imagination? I wondered.

"Daughter, you have already picked your lilies. What you see here is a portrayal of all the negative things of the past that you were carrying. All of it had been changed into blessings."

These were precious words from my dear friend, and I regretted the fact that I did not know more about his status. I mean: why did he bring me around in the first place and who is he?

“You were drifting along in the spirit and was crying for help. I brought you here to teach you Kingdom priorities and demands. Here you can embrace intimate time with Me and allow Me to wipe tears from your eyes. Even though you did not pick lilies now, were the lessons you learned during your bad times the lilies you gathered in the past.”

This was a mouthful from Sky, I thought. But as he was standing motionless aside, staring at me, I immediately realised that it was not from him. It was our caring Abba Father Who intervened and comforted us. He was the One Who explained the purpose of me being in the desert.

As things started to get clearer, I ran to my adorable friend and hurled my arms around his neck, pressing the big head against my cheek. The nostrils opened wider and the heat of his breath dried the tears on my cheeks, shaping them into pearls.

“You are so special Sky, so very, very unique.”

Behind me where I scratched in the sand earlier, the puddle of water has changed into a comfortable pool, surrounded by white lilies.

“This is the Pool of Meribah where you will be enjoying your cleansing bath.”

I turned back and slowly stepped into the clear water until I was completely immersed. I had an awesome time among the lilies and when I later left the pool, I discovered that my sand-colour linen dress was as white as snow.

“I am cleansed,” I whispered, but Sky did not react and was obvious in a hurry.

From the back of my mate I waved goodbye to the lilies for the last time. The pool was gone, and we were on our way again.

Curtain of prayers

Sky followed the flow of the ravine for quite a distance. Our winding path later led downwards in the direction of a huge lake. Like a fresh destination the mirror-smooth water stretched out ahead of us. I prepared myself to get down as usual, but Sky was adamant:

“Not now, little maiden.”

“Do we have to cross this lake?” I tried, but Sky hesitated as if He was waiting on instructions.

"How are we going to reach the other side?"

Again, no result. I waited in silence, knowing that now was not the right time to ask any more questions.

As if he responded to a silent command, Sky moved forward. He stepped onto the surface of the lake that has now formed a hard, transparent layer. He comfortably walked along and from below where his hoofs touched, a glow of soft colours emanated. Schools of various species of fish below the surface were supporting the immaculate water-path and kept the mirror-layer intact. The eyes of the different kinds of fish glowed like sparkling crystal beads. Right in the middle of the lake we stopped for a while that I could cuddle the glorious moment.

We gently moved ahead, and when we paused in front of a partition that looked like a curtain of tiny raindrops, my trustworthy guide once more had to explain:

"This is the curtain of prayers, woven of tears of travail from parents who pray for their children, sincere intercessions and tears of praying generations. Sometimes, when least expected by them, blessings are raining down."

"I am sure that the tears of my own parents also form part of the curtain," I whispered.

The curtain was gently shifted aside and slowly, as if walking on holy ground, we moved past.

"Where are we going from here, Sky?"

"We will be journeying through the land of knowledge and wisdom. You are a stranger and I would love to show you these paths, ways of total surrender and radical obedience before you can enter Everlasting love."

I just shook my head and did not respond. I trusted my honest friend and knew that he would safely lead me.

As we were leaving the splendid lake behind, I sensed that Sky was behaving more restless. I could feel the stress in his strong muscles as he was moving faster than his normal stride.

When a bright light unexpectedly beamed its brilliance from above, events rapidly changed. Light beams were criss-crossing like arrows through the skies. Without explanation both of us ended up on a light beam and were transported into space at lightning speed.

Our landing site was a purple transparent flat terrain. Overwhelmed and speechless I instantly noticed that my linen dress also had a divine radiance of soft purple. I immediately looked where my mate was and exploded with joy.

“Sky, look at my gorgeous dress!”

“You are now dressed in royal colours; the colours of divine wisdom and insight,” he joyfully pointed out.

I looked at him. Was he smiling or was it just my imagination?

“My little maiden, the heavenly realm became your domain.”

“Am I allowed to stay here, please,” I pleaded and tenderly stroke his nose, lightly massaging the velvet skin with my fingertips. It looked as if he was enjoying it as his bright blue eyes twinkled appreciatively. Deep inside me something moved, a sensing above words or description. I patted his cheek:

“Sky, you are so special, so very precious. Do you know how deeply I trust and adore you?”

He cuddled his chilly nose in my neck and breathed softly in my ear until I started giggling. We became wrapped in a softness like a cosy woollen blanket, a timeless closeness beyond words or description. I could not stop the trickling of tears. With eyes closed I surrendered and emotional pain and hurt I carried for so many years, were rolling away. My truthful companion faithfully allowed me to sob my heart out while resting his head against mine.

When I lifted my head again there were flowers all around me. Carpets of exquisite flowers painted the surrounding in the most joyous colours.

“The winter has passed, look your springtime is here,” Sky humorously added.

In pure delight I knelt among the wealth of beautiful flower-faces, tenderly touching and talking to the closest ones and inhaling their divine fragrance. I noticed how five angels in purple wear, carrying golden quivers loaded with sharp arrows, walked up to Sky. Only when they reached the beautiful stallion it became clear that the arrows were in fact scrolls, neatly rolled up in the distinctive shapes of arrows. Fearlessly I watched how the angels launched their arrow-shaped scrolls in my direction, not missing my body once. One by one the shots mysteriously disappeared into me and the angels left.

I was still touching the area with my hand where the last arrow penetrated when Sky explained:

“Wisdom and insight are the sweetest fragrances from the heart of our Creator. In wisdom and out of wisdom creation originated. What you see around you was the resting place for the feet of Wisdom when He proclaimed: ‘And it was good.’”

Thousands upon thousands of different kinds of birds flocked together in large groups, diving and tumbling at incredible speeds as they flew past us. It was an impressive

demonstration of beauty and breath-taking, synchronized manoeuvres while their fluffy bodies released unbelievable melodies as they moved along.

Stunned by the scene I could just whisper:

"How great is our Creator Elohim. How marvellous the works of His hands. Not even one tiny feather will fall from a single bird without His knowledge or consent. He feeds the millions of them, care for them and even count them. And each little bird responds according to its own nature. I have never seen something like this."

"And it was good," Sky declared.

As unexpectedly as they appeared, the millions of birds vanished into the nothingness. Wave upon wave their beautiful sounds still echoed. It sounded like the clapping of hands, long after they have disappeared. This exhibition was a beauty beyond description, a song without words; it was as if a paintbrush was producing a live painting. My cup was overflowing and my spirit flooded with the beauty of creation, a professional piece of master art, designed by our praiseworthy Master Creator.

"Sky, I do not deserve to be blessed like this!"

"Little one, this is to restore your spirit. Your senses need to come in harmony with the will of Father Elohim. You have given so much of yourself and withheld nothing. Now is the time to be spoiled and restored. You need to be refilled with new vitality and enthusiasm."

The ambiance was fragile and I sighed:

"Is this love?"

"There is more, little maiden. Rather call this tender love and care. Come, it is time to rest for a while."

Caringly like a mother he showed me to a patch of lush green moss. I enjoyed laying down and inhaled the fresh air. Unspeakable peace and the fading bird-songs in the distance, lulled me to sleep.

I cannot tell how long I slept because time did not matter. When a soft breath gently caressed my eyelids, I slowly opened them. It was indeed my dear friend, Sky, standing next to me like a watchdog.

"You must eat something quickly. Then we will have to go."

I watched him as he was walking in the direction of a nearby weeping-willow tree. In an open space, close to some long overhanging branches, a table laden with fresh fruit was again waiting on me. Sky paused close to the table and looked back at me. Something in

my spirit unfolded, something wonderful, like a book consisting of a thousand invisible words.

“You are so special. I honestly adore your patience and deeply appreciate you, Sky.”

His eyes brightened up and I could not resist moving closer and for a while rest my head close to his shoulder. The moment was so valuable. I wish it could last for ever.

“Have some fruit. I want to take you on a ride deeper into the Word.”

As before, the fruit was delicious and energising and we left. Comfortable and secure, I shut my eyes. A deep tranquillity filled me, a shalom unspeakable. A feeling of belonging, a homecoming, nestled deep inside me.

The Eagle

Unlike the first part of our journey, our new route was clearly marked and visible. We were winding upwards again towards the summit of another mountain, but this time not as steep as the previous one.

“Sky, how will I get deeper into the Word?” I asked as we hit a foggy patch along the way, signifying that we were moving quite high up the mountain.

“You will understand soon,” was the only response.

I was totally at peace although our destination was still concealed.

At the summit we had an impressive view of a panoramic landscape on the other side.

“This is beautiful Sky; where are we going from here?” I wanted to know, looking at the gorgeous scene ahead of us.

“To Insight.”

I looked at him, confusion written all over my face:

“Who is Insight and why must I go there to get deeper into the Word?”

“You will understand when we get there. We will be taking a short cut from here.”

I did not insist on more detail and felt wrapped by the heat of the unfamiliar situation as if I was covered by an invisible rug. A sense of urgency was present as we made our way towards this beautiful landscape.

The white shore of an awesome silvery ocean greeted us. I wanted to jump off straight away, but Sky kept going. As before at the beautiful lake, he continued across the

transparent surface of the water as if nothing happened. I immediately looked down to see whether any type of sea-life was again supporting our water-path, but what I discovered, left me speechless.

A whole new world, a city deep down, was visible. I stared motionless. A hidden wonderworld was down there.

“Where is Insight?” I asked when it became obvious that the water-city was not going to be our destination.

“Insight is a way of understanding,” the puzzling reply came.

I tasted the words on my tongue:

“Insight ... you mean ... to understand the still concealed Word.”

“Something like that,” he replied bluntly.

I kept on recalling the beauty of the underwater city in my mind. Occasionally I had to shake my head because I was unsure if I was not missing something anyway.

I leaned forward and put my arms around the neck of my desert-carrier.

“Honestly, Sky my friend, I love and trust you.”

On the other side of the ocean the landscape changed completely. Green pastures all around were a blessing to the eye. We did not travel along this lush-green area for too long when Sky stopped at a well. Flourishing Aaron lilies camouflaged the water source and I nearly missed it. Happy to be able to stretch my legs for a change, I went closer and was quite puzzled when I discovered that the top layer of the water surface was all tiny, sparkling crystals. To confuse me even more, angels, dressed in purple-tinted gowns, unexpectedly appeared. Without explanation they collected some of the glittering stones and quietly left again.

This mystery needed clarity and I turned to my dearest stallion:

“Sky, what are they doing with the crystals?”

“You are witnessing how the tears of people, weeping over those who lack the way to salvation, get carried to the Father. Our Father is turning it into blessings and not a single drop will get lost. All of it will become part of the flow of the river of living water.”

He slowly turned aside and patiently waited on me to get into my seat again. I however lingered at the extraordinary well, not eager to leave this remarkable spot that soon. From nowhere an impressive eagle appeared and landed next to the well.

“We must leave. From here the eagle will guide us,” my carrier ordered, and I could hear in the tone of his voice that he was eager to leave.

The magnificent bird also stretched its wings and took to the sky. Soaring at an incredible height our eagle-guide was reduced to a mere speckle. Sky however managed to follow the tiny spot comfortably and kept me informed all along.

“We are heading for the city of everlasting Light. More shekinah glory needs to enter your body.”

I did not respond because I did not know what to say. All I could do was to ponder on his message.

We carried on for quite some distance with Sky carefully following the flight of the eagle. When a shimmer like the lights of a big city became visible in the distance, expectancy escalated. Funnily, I also found words to comment on what Sky said earlier.

“You mean... more of the presence of our Father needs to enlighten me?”

“Yes, more of Him in you, little maiden.”

“But how, Sky?”

“You will see shortly.”

As we moved closer to the lit-up area, I noticed how my body gradually started to glow.

“This is what you have been like before the foundation of the earth. You were pure light and part of the Father. Light is life and life derives from Light. There is no darkness in Light because shekinah light is the purest form of light.”

“Why do I need to be filled with more light, Sky?”

“Adam and Eve were created as spiritual beings but permitted darkness to enter their domain of pure Light and became defiled. Afterwards sickness could enter and touch their mortal bodies. Only Light can purify man from the pollution of sickness caused by darkness.”

“I definitely want more pure Light in me, Sky.”

“This will happen inside the city of everlasting Light.”

Inside the well-lit city we halted and I immediately realised that the eagle has left us. I slid down but remained close to Sky. I looked at the face of my special friend and a gladness and peace took hold of me, an inner joy that I could not give expression to when he said:

“I am releasing the spirit of a conqueror in you that will replace the old victim-spirit you housed for many years. Never let people rule your life again and pollute you with stress and unhappiness.”

“Thank you, but how is it possible that you know everything about me. All my secrets and inner vows are known to you. Where did you get the facts?”

I shook my head in disbelief as this was above my human perception. Without answering my question, he continued:

“I would like to see you dressed in joy and freedom because you have surely missed out on them. Be healed little warrior, be restored and purified seven times over. This is our reward and blessing unto you.”

Beams of wholesome light from the heart of my dearest friend pierced into my body and morally lifted me to a new level. Bathed in light of love, I watched Sky as he lifted his right front leg and with the hoof gently touched my body close to my heart ... on the exact spot where I always thought my spirit was sheltered.

“You will give birth to a new illuminated spirit. Do not allow darkness to pollute your mind and dim the light in your life. Even bloodlines were now purified.”

“But how will this affect my life in the natural, dearest Sky?”

I looked at him with confidence.

“You will soon understand.”

I stepped forward, raised myself on my toes and kissed the tip of his nose. I was so focused that I did not realise a deeper concentration of light has entered our bodies.

“You are now a citizen of this beautiful illuminated City.”

His presence felt so real and that encouraged me. It was as if the two of us became one in spirit.

“We must go further, little one, but this time you are not allowed to ask questions about our destination.”

I smiled because I realised that he was referring to my typical questions. The moment I took my seat, the eagle was back.

After a quick journey, that seemed like the blink of an eye, we reached another high mountain peak. The scene around us was incredible and from this high point it was possible to observe the terrain around us quite far and wide.

“What will that bright golden glow in the distance be?” I asked and pointed in the direction of what looked like corn fields.

“Those are all the fields, ripe and ready to be harvested,” Sky confirmed.

I turned around in my saddle and as far as my eyes could see, waving crops were greeting me. As I was watching, a deep tranquillity wrapped around us like a skirt.

“Hephzibah, I am releasing your mandate and authority to take up your sickle. Do not hesitate, and remember: ‘I am close and will always assist.’”

My heart was flooded with appreciation. My divine mate has so much faith in me. We left the high mountain under the safe guidance of the eagle that was now circling at a lower altitude.

Once more the surrounding changed rapidly. For the first time we were entering real desert area again. Removed from glittering lakes and lush green meadows, we steadily made our way across lonely sand dunes. The wearisome stretched out sandy landscape eventually led to a range of sandstone mountains. Our end point happened to be a part of the mountain range where various stone pillars loomed like old, dry cedars.

How I managed to get off my horse so quickly when we stopped, I do not know. The next moment Sky was gone. The eagle was still soaring high above but manoeuvred in a strange way. Its presence however, comforted me. I was a bit confused with the new course of events and called Sky’s name. There was still no sign of him, and I was completely bowled over when Abba Father answered instead.

“You are not alone, little one. I am always with you because My dwelling place is inside you.”

“Why did Sky bring me here, Abba?” I asked and saw an opportunity to get answers to my many questions. I mean: who would know the reason why I am in this desert, better than my Abba Father?

“You are on an incredibly special and secret mission. That is why you had to move under cover. You first had to be thoroughly prepared and are now ready to proceed.”

“To accomplish what, Father?”

“To enter a still hidden and unknown Qumran-cave.”

“But why me? I do not even know how many caves there are,” I barely whispered.

I was moved to a place not far from where Abba was talking to me and instinctively knew that I was facing the mountain range close to the Dead Sea in Israel. The stone pillars were still there and I glanced around, trying to identify the cave Father referred to.

“You must enter the cave and unroll the sealed scroll that is hidden inside. Will you do that for Me?”

“Yes Abba, but please stay with me?”

I immediately sensed the presence of Sky and was desperately looking around. It did not take me long to locate him. Partially hidden behind a rock, he appeared to be restless as he was anxiously patting with his front foot on the ground.

My saddle was still in place and with my trustworthy companion gently bending his knees, I again easily mounted. At least this time I knew where we were going, although I had no idea what to expect.

The Qumran Cave

I sensed that we were moving in an unusual manner. My clothing also changed, and I was now dressed in a worker’s overall with a helmet protecting my head. Safety glasses and gloves were also part of my new outfit. The small flashlight in my hand finally convinced me that we should be close to the Qumran cave.

The landscape was pretty rough, but Sky managed extremely well in getting me to where I should be.

I approached the entrance cautiously and wriggled myself through the narrow gap. Inside a passage led deeper into the sandstone mountain. Uncertainty surfaced and I looked behind me for Sky. To my detriment I discovered that I was alone, but before the shaky situation could get worse, Abba Father Himself comforted me:

“I am here.”

Inner joy flooded me. His presence was enough, and all uneasiness vanished.

The passage was narrow and blurry. Here and there engraved pillars of stone that have deteriorated badly over millions of years, supported the sides. I could vaguely distinguish a soft melody that sounded like music from a harp.

“Follow the music, little one.”

As I moved deeper the music became clearer. A soft breeze was also clearing most of the dust.

“My daughter, you are blessed to be able to hear the ancient sounds. Keep following the echoes and it will become music in your heart.”

I stopped for a moment.

“Abba, what is so precious and justifies being concealed inside this cave?”

“The mystery of the Sabbath-rest was sealed inside. To the ancient scribes this was a safe place”

It felt weird to be in this strange situation, but obedience and curiosity inspired me to continue with my underground journey. I surveyed the inside of the unimpressive cave as I slowly progressed. At a certain area it appeared as if the sandstone wall formed a slight hollow space. A thick layer of dust almost made it impossible to notice the old skin-pouch on the dirty edge. I carefully lifted it from its dusty position and shook off most of the dirt. Convinced that I was at the right place, I opened the age-old leather bag with unsteady fingers. I could not believe my eyes, looked up and with dry lips puzzlingly stumbled:

“It is empty!”...

“Yes, you will find no visible scroll. The reason is to expose a mystery. The bag is empty to make a statement and explain the deeper and hidden meaning of the Sabbath-rest.”

I did not comment right away, and my body-language exposed my bewilderment.

“What do You mean, Father? The Sabbath is on the seventh day and that is no secret at all.”

“There is a deeper meaning to it that needs to be exposed in this hour,” He calmed me down.

“I really do not understand, Abba.”

“Little one, your part in all this is that I need you to release a prophetic declaration. This ancient pouch represents the rest of the house of Judah, those who are symbolic of the Sabbath-rest with their spirit still asleep. Their eyes have been veiled and they have been at rest for many decades. Who I really am, remain locked in their human understanding. The fact that the pouch is empty represents their insight of Who the Messiah really is. The seed of insight in their spirit and mind could not yet be conceived by a deeper knowledge and understanding. I will allow it to happen at My time.

“The time is now.

“I will allow clear awareness into their spirit and mind about who they really are.

“You must also understand that there is more about this scroll that symbolises an even deeper meaning. You will find nothing visible inside the pouch because I, All in all, filled it completely. In Me everyone will find fulfilment of the Sabbath-rest. I established it when I rested on the seventh day after creation was accomplished.”

“Father, does it thus mean that You represent both the cave and the scroll?”

“Yes, and because the bag is without a scroll does not indicate that the cave is empty. I represent the invisible scroll and fills the cave.”

I looked at the empty leather pouch in my hand and held it closely, deeply aware of the valuable treasure in front of me. I did not want to miss anything.

“What must we do now, Abba Father?”

“I have asked your willingness to enter the cave and capture the locked-up revelations. By means of a declaration you must release the truth and prophesy over the house of Judah. Their spirit has to become alive and stand up in them and a deeper understanding will develop suddenly. Like lightning the truth will hit them, but the key of time remains in My hand.”

I was eagerly waiting on Him to reveal more.

“The Sabbath-rest of Judah is over and her time to sleep has run out. For far too long she was hiding in the darkness of the empty grave of the Messiah. The Judah-bride should take her place and follow the example of the Ephraim-bride and appreciate the truth about their Messiah. The two of them need to be united in the spirit and become one bride.”

“Thank You, Abba. I now understand that the cave is like the empty tomb, the place where the Messiah was for three days and three nights. He slept in You and was resurrected into You, the One in all. He did not just rest for three days but became our Sabbath as well. When we enter into Him, we can have eternal rest in You.”

Suddenly it went quiet inside the cave.

“What would you like me to do with the pouch?” I asked at the end.

“Leave it behind and follow Me. Write down what you experienced. The truth needs to be unveiled and released through a declaration in the heavenly sphere.”

I respectfully put the leather pouch back on its sandy shelf and bowed my head before I turned around and left the cave. It was not difficult to find my way back to the entrance because the route was now brilliantly illuminated. The presence of the Father filled the cave in a visible way.

My heart bounced wildly when I found Sky outside the entrance, waiting patiently as always. The glimmer in his eyes was like the rays of the sun at sunset. He did not say anything, but I knew that he was fully aware of the significance of the commission and that it was not necessary for me to explain anything.

From the back of my companion that I missed so much, I immediately tried to get clarity about my new task.

“Dear Sky, when and where am I supposed to do the proclamation. I left the only proof, the leather pouch, inside the cave.”

It was again the Father Who instantly replied:

“When the time is right, I will tell you how.”

I looked around me in silence, surveying the sandstone environment around the outside of the cave. In the divine stillness I could read many unwritten words.

To my delight it was the voice of my beloved Messiah that broke the quietness:

“I am still not fully acknowledged by My Judah-bride. They must understand that I am the Living Torah and should appreciate Me that way. They know about Me, but they do not know Me, and I want to open their eyes of understanding so that they can see Me and discover My unfailing love.”

Not knowing what to say, I waited.

“Little one, be the scribe and journal what you witness. Become like the donkey that carried Me into Jerusalem and release My message in the spiritual sphere. Do the proclamation and let your lips voice the words.”

My heart could just as well have missed a beat ... that was how I experienced the tender whispering that entered my spirit-heart:

“Little one, it is time.”

My Messiah immediately supported the vital order:

“Keep trusting Me with the heart of a little girl. The inner child in you will be fully restored and I will wrap My love around you and shelter you under the inner feathers of My wings.”

I did not see Him, but the presence of my Messiah was so real that I got down from Sky's back and went down on my knees.

“Dearest Yahushua, sorry that I fail so often. I do trust You but feel incapable because of my own weaknesses.”

I could feel how His hand touched my head and I waited in silence. When I looked up again, I noticed that Sky witnessed everything. With blue piercing eyes he gazed at me.

“My daughter, here in the desert you will start to love Me all over again, like you adored Me when you were still a little girl. Once you leave this place, people will ask: ‘Who is that coming from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved.’”

The deep peace that followed Abba Father's words stretched out like the first trace of sunlight at daybreak. I walked to the front of Sky and cupped the face of my true friend in the palms of my hands. What I experienced the moment we made eye contact, left me wordless. The blue eyes were sparkling with warmth, brighter than the sun and purer than the tenderness of a new-born. Like shimmering light penetrating the waters of the oceans, the reflection from his eyes carried deep into the skies and I knew: ... what I witnessed, was divine, unfailing love.

"Little maiden, I will always love you ..."

He stroked my forehead with his nose and tenderly licked a lonely tear from my cheek.

"Thank you Sky for teaching me more about love."

He moved a few steps back and whispered:

"It is time to go back."

"Can't we stay a little longer? I would love to go back into the cave and once again experience the presence of our Father in that special way. We were so close."

Deep inside me I could hear my Abba Father respond:

"Yes, this cave represents My very heart. My abiding love for My children is safely documented in the scroll it shelters."

I noticed that Sky was becoming restless again.

"My dearest little maiden, it is time for our Creator Elohim to breathe the words into your spirit-heart to enable you to give expression to the declaration."

A deeper peace settled in me. I was aware that it was Abba Father Who needed to release the words over my lips. I was sad to leave but respected the will of Those Who were turning my desert experience into an unforgettable mission.

The Declaration

When Sky was ready to follow our route downhill I glanced in the direction of the cave for the last time. To my dismay the entrance has vanished. The cave was no more. Only the lonely eagle was circling high above. It was during this moment of uncertainty that I noticed a leather-covered book on a sling, hanging around my shoulder.

"Where did this come from?"

Sky looked back at me, but it was Father Who was giving directives:

“Hold onto this precious book. In it you will find directions from the Messiah. Stay close to Him while dwelling through the wilderness. Do not give up now. The testimony and declaration are ready to be delivered. I am about to use your story like a sickle, to reap those who need to participate in the harvesting. This story is timely. Proceed and I will richly bless you.”

Uncertainty was still hovering. What if Sky was going to leave me on my own? I leaned forward and put my arms around the strong neck.

“Please do not go. I want you to stay with me until I have fulfilled my commission. There are so many lessons you still have to teach me on my way.”

“Hephzibah, little one, it is time,” Abba Father reminded.

I started to weep openly.

“Thank You Abba that you sent Sky to be my partner. I don’t want him to leave now.”

My mind and spirit were overflowing.

“But it is time to move on, daughter. You must accomplish your commission and We will command ministering angels to arise and assist you,” Father, the One Who fills an empty cave in a visible way, answered.

I sadly realised that the time has arrived for Sky to return to his celestial domain. Perhaps a new assignment was waiting on my dearest friend since he fulfilled his task in delivering me to the hidden Qumran cave.

For the last time I glided off the back of my dearest Sky I learned to love so much over time, and with a tear-stained face I walked to his front. His piercing eyes were dimmer and he lowered his head and tenderly breathed in my neck as he so often loved to do during our journey. I stroke along the contours of his neck. For a while we just soaked in the awe of the moment. His face became blurry, but I managed to whisper:

“I will miss you, Sky.”

“True, little maiden, I will also miss our special time together. Stop crying now. I will always be close.”

With his woolly cheek he tried to brush away my tears. Before I could respond we were back at the top of the mountain where we had been before, overlooking the yellow-ripe cornfields. I was trying to understand why he was showing me this remarkable scene again when he repeated:

“The crop is ripe and ready to be harvested.”

For a long time, I stared at the pastures as they gently moved in the wind.

“Sky, I promise that I will go. I will carry on until my days are numbered. This undertaking is my kiss on your lips.”

Whether he heard what I was saying I will never know, because the next moment he was gone. High up at the summit a mountain-breeze was drying the last moisture from my face while in the distance the golden cornfields proudly displayed their message.

The vision ended but I could not leave the closeness and the comfort of my prayer room. Treasured in my heart were the richest of memories, more valuable than the purest fine gold. I immediately missed Sky and the memories of my time and walk with him became glowing embers that warmed my heart.

Time passed and for days I waited on my Abba Father to inform me when He wanted to release the declaration in the spirit through me. One night while praying on my own I felt the urgency to open the window from where I could see the millions of dazzling stars in the heavenlies. An awareness was present that it was time for the declaration.

Like red-hot coals the words started to glow in my deepest and I could not stop. Declarations gushed uncontrollably from my spirit-fountain as if someone else was in command:

“I declare the veil removed in front of the spirit-eyes of the house of Judah and that she will acknowledge Yahushua the Messiah as her Saviour and Redeemer.

“On behalf of the house of Ephraim I repent because she divorced her Husband and sinned against Him and I beg for forgiveness for her rebellious lifestyle.

“I agree that the redeeming blood of our Messiah will renew us and lead us into a deeper and purer relationship with Him.”

Herewith the seed was sown in the spirit as commissioned by Abba Father in the cave. Growth will become visible in the natural realm at His appointed time and season.

Afterwards life went on as usual. I tried to stay connected in the spirit and I spent a lot of time in the Word and in prayer, but the days when I became despondent because I missed Sky tremendously, were many. However, the hope that we will one day meet again, never faded. Many times when I was openly talking to him, I wondered if he could perhaps hear me.

As time passed and reality slowly returned, I more often realised that the journey with Sky has indeed come to an end. I sometimes begged Abba Father for a special favour; to allow me to see Sky for one more time.

In the days that followed, I patiently waited on Abba to show me the way ahead, and for quite some time I sensed that somehow, He was busy building a bridge for me to cross into my next season. One morning, for a moment inside my quiet place, things unexpectedly happened.

From my regular viewing point at the summit of the mountain I was again overlooking the beautiful wheat fields. A breeze was still playing through the golden blanket of ripe grain and I remembered my promise to Sky that I would spend the rest of my time on bringing in the harvest. The peacefulness around me carried me away for a moment and holy memories started to return. Though, when someone suddenly called my name, I was all ears.

“Little maiden!”

There was only one who used to call me ‘*little maiden*’ and that happened to be my friend, Sky. I thought my heart was skipping a beat when I noticed him. Patiently as always, he was watching me this time from the shade of a terebinth tree. Nothing could stop me, and I immediately ran towards my lovable desert-companion I lacked for so long. My excitement however suddenly changed into a major surprise. At first, I thought that I was dreaming but reality struck me like a shooting star. My beloved Yahushua was slowly walking up to me from underneath the overhanging branches. There was no sign of Sky anymore.

The very first thing I observed was that He was bare foot as usual. Could it be that the Messiah ...? Was my Master hidden inside the celestial stallion, Sky, the one I so honestly trust and adore? Many questions remained unanswered for the moment.

The enjoyment to see Yahushua was rushing through me like a bubbling stream. Then it was Him all the time, my Yahushua Himself, Who became my dearest, honest loving Friend, Sky! There was no time to ponder over the reason why He operated in this manner. I just wanted to be with Him. I went down on my knees and caressed His bare feet. As I looked up, He reached out towards me, allowing me to gently touch the scar in His nail-pierced right hand. His eyes reflected the final evidence. Only Sky had eyes with this astounding bright-blue colour, eyes that were bathed in a heavenly image. For a moment it was as if I was able to gaze deep into the heart of heaven.

“Dearest Yahushua, why did You pretend to be Sky?”

“Little one, I had to do it this way because I knew that it would be exceptionally difficult for you to trust anyone again after all the hurt you went through. I wanted to teach you to surrender and love Me unconditionally, but I had to teach you My way, an unusual way.”

I got to my feet and for a moment it appeared as if I could vaguely recognise an image of Sky under the terebinth tree. I lifted my hand but the image disappeared. Yahushua however continued as normal.

“Little one, you were watching the harvest on the field and promised me that you would continue with your ministry. I also told you that the meadows were ready for the harvest to be collected.”

I realised that He knew everything about my commitment because it was indeed He Who was there with me.

“Yes, and that I will serve You through the ministry until my days are over,” I eagerly added.

A few nights prior to this experience I dreamt that I was expecting a baby. My Yahushua was with me in my dream and said: *“You will give birth to a baby. It is a girl and her name will be Susannah. Watch over her because she is very precious to Me.”*

The following day I inquired about the meaning of the name Susannah and discovered that it actually means; lily or rose, but also bride. Without any doubt I knew that I have to minister to the bride of our Yahushua Messiah. I used this new opportunity to ask Him about my perception of the dream:

“Dear Yahushua, but how will I be able to continue with the ministry after my recent medical setback?”

“Hephzibah, less is more. What you can handle, I can multiply in My hand. Give Me your small portion and I will feed many. Do you remember what happened with the five loaves and the two small fish? I am capable of doing much more than what you could imagine.”

I closed my eyes. Listening to my Yahushua was so precious.

“Did you enjoy your time with Sky?” He tenderly kept our conversation alive when He saw me getting sad.

“Yes, very much and I will always cherish our relationship.”

“You were so deeply disappointed in people that you did not even trust Me when I approached you through the Word to tell you that I love you. You also did not know what love means and therefore I had to teach you My way. Yes, I had to prepare you for your commission, and had to mature you first and teach you how to really surrender and die in yourself. All this was My choice because I want you to believe in Me and trust Me unconditionally. Now I am going to keep you in My desert forever.”

I looked up, not fully understanding what He had in mind.

“I am the Desert, the Wilderness I want to take you deeper into, little one. That is where you will seek My face and unite with Me.”

“Thank You my Yahushua. I want to sit at Your feet like Mary Magdalene. Today I want to bring my tears of a lifetime to wash Your feet and express my love for You. You are a good, good Companion and I love You so much.”

Peace wrapped around me and a sabbath shalom filled my spirit. While tears washed my eyes, I whispered:

“Abba Father, it could only have been my dearest Yahushua Who could demonstrate to me the true meaning of unfailing love. He Who surrendered and Who was prepared to appear as Sky, in order to break down my self-imposed barriers and win my faith. The fact that He has done it all for me, goes beyond my understanding by far.”

I again felt the sling of the leather-covered Book around my shoulder and held the precious Word close to my heart. In the blue of my own eyes, a light was shimmering like the glow of the bright Morning Star.

Abba Father, I love You.

Your little maiden.

Hephzibah.