

A NEW DAY

The river began to slow its pace and returned to the early, easy flow. The banks were now a stone's throw on each side of the raft. An ever deepening peace settled over Aaron. Any traces of fear had long since evaporated. He looked into the depths of the water and saw his reflection glowing more brightly than even the shiny gold waters. Then he turned to say something to his friend. The sight that met his eyes made him tremble all over and he quickly turned away. For though Aaron shone brightly, he was like the moon in comparison to the sun-like brilliance that seemed to flood from his friend's face. A thought struck him that maybe the way he now saw things and the way he himself looked were because of the light that poured from his companion.

But then the same familiar voice spoke, comforting and assuring him that what mattered was that they were together. To let that be his encouragement. To draw strength from that fact. Aaron rested afresh and felt joy beam from within him once again.

The river went past some waterfalls that gave off a familiar song as the water splashed over rocks. Farther up there was another waterfall and then another and another each singing a special melody of its own for any and all to hear.

Eventually the raft pulled alongside the bank where Aaron and his friend climbed off. They would walk the final distance, he was told. Aaron wondered about the final distance to where? Then his eye caught hold of the spectacular landscape. He had no words to describe the beauty he saw. Wonder upon wonder. It was breathless.

Trees climbed into the sky. Others hung heavy with fruit. All colors, streaked with golds and silvers and jewels, were woven into every growing thing he saw. He was struck by how perfectly clean everything was. Pure and clean. Mountains and clouds, valleys and meadows, endless variety made brilliant by a wonderful light that fed all that was, bathing, clothing and nurturing.

From a high hillside he looked down in amazement and saw the little ribbon of gold they had been on move along in the direction they were headed. But more awesome was a larger river of water that blended

into an endless sea. Aaron thought of the great world oceans. This, he thought, must be the greatest of all. Aaron could see distant coastlines stretching off until they faded from sight. This ocean went on forever and ever. Aaron doubted if there were any eyes that could see beyond it! His friend urged him along.

"This ocean does have an end and a beginning, Aaron. But not one that any man can really understand. For men and women, and especially children," he continued, "it is endless. A body that pictures the forever that was before, the forever that includes now, and the forever to come. It is for them to look at and to learn from. All this in hopes that they will want to somehow see its source. Sadly few are the eyes that do."

Aaron asked several more questions about the source and about the ocean, its waves in particular. The answers he got were again simple and fully satisfying. He had never heard these things and wondered why he hadn't. So many other things are more important to people and yet they keep looking for more and better ones to replace the pile they already have. They want to be happy, but then really they don't. Because if they did, they would search with all their hearts for the lasting source, the final treasure. Neither the ocean nor the great river was the Source for Aaron. But he knew in his heart, he had an inner knowing that he was somehow close, very close to what he was seeking.

Many thoughts were running through his mind. So many that he hardly noticed what appeared to be the sun starting to rise over a small hill they were climbing. When he first saw it he accepted the new glow as the beginning brilliance of a new day. Then he remembered what he had been told. This couldn't be the sun! The sun had sunk down behind them just a short while ago. Then what was this radiance. A quick glance to his friend was met by a look that said to wait.

Up and up the hill they climbed. The ball of white light got brighter and amazingly brighter. Finally Aaron stood on the crest of the hill silent. He was in awe, speechless for off beyond a valley stood a huge, walled city set like a jewel on top of the highest hill that could be seen! It pulsed with light and a life of its own. He could never have imagined anything like it. Never.

"Come, Aaron. They're expecting us," he said. Aaron eagerly followed his footsteps. Those eyes blazed with something that gave Aaron a rush of joyfulness. The feelings surged down from above and flowed into his head and down to his toes. Then it returned upwards into a bursting smile. Just the sight of their flash!

It felt as if they were gliding into the valley expanse, at least to Aaron. Off near the city he could barely make out crowds of people fanning along either side of the beautiful road. They were waving their arms, acting as if a jubilant parade was about to pass by. As they got closer to the multitudes, Aaron finally realized that they were indeed truly waiting for them. It was a giant welcome! Aaron moved closer to his friend for comfort and assurance.

What sounded like rumbling from a distance became cheering and the joyful roar of the crowds amassed along the final mile or so into the glowing city. All types of people waved flowers and sparkled with smiles. Many had tears of happiness running down their cheeks. His friend confidently led the way looking with those blazing eyes seeming to fix upon each person as if they were the only one. Aaron was caught up in the love that flowed between his friend and the numberless people. Some of that love overflowed onto Aaron.

Soon they were at the massive city gate. An immaculately dressed royal guard lined the final way. These stood with gleaming swords drawn that looked much like flames or torches. Aaron immediately thought of the two soldiers who stood over him that first morning on the mountain. Wherever his eyes went there was tremendous power displayed. Yet the power wasn't hard or calloused like the strength and authority of regular human armies. Instead the display was tender and calming and true. Fearless as a young lion or a raging fire, yet delicate as the purest blossom.