

The Story of Zorah

*Past life recollections of
Marie Fox O'Brien*

A List of Books

Marie's Story - An Extraordinary Odyssey

Channeled Books

Martin's Original Writings
Revelations
The Divine Nature of Man
Lessons
A new Endeavor
Concepts
Prayers

Past Lives

Moses
Zorah
Rose
Joseph II
Edam the Elder and Saleh
and Inga - Pala - Bana
Peter and Ann
Romulus
Remembrances-The Holy Family
Martin's Life Rememberes

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Introduction

On Sunday, October 4, 1992, Martin wrote:

"Know always, my darling, that what you hear is truth. There is no error in your mind or in your heart. At all times I speak to you. At all times you hear me with love and with understanding. Know now, my dearest, that we shall soon begin again to write in the early morning hours and that we will continue both of our stories. Know that you will need to spend more time remembering and that your teacher will help you in this. I am always with you, my love. You know you can count upon my strength. Do not fail to recall always the intensity of your remembering your life as my sweet mother. You will know the same transporting pleasure in the remembering of the other lives we have shared. You will have all the help you need, my dearest, but you control your time, and you must be responsible for devoting the time necessary for this remembering. Begin today, my Marie, and let it be a part of each day

henceforth. There will be pleasure for you in this and satisfaction as well. Tell me now your faith in this."

1:40 PM

When I try to go back and do as Martin says in trying to recall when we first met, I can see the well I have recalled before. It is round with a kind of seat around it. I see a young girl who I think is I, sitting there silently, looking down at her hands which lie in her lap loosely relaxed.

I am feeling lonely and out of things. My two sisters stand nearby and they are chatting and giggling about all of the young men who admire them and they are saying that never will they agree to marriage with someone they do not love, someone not of their choice. They are very sure of themselves. This surprises me since everyone knows husbands must be chosen by our father. I know nothing of admirers. Perhaps that is why I feel so lonely, so out of it.

Just then I raise my head and not too far away I see two men standing, talking to each other. One is a stranger. He gives the impression of extreme darkness. His hair is black, his beard is black, his skin darker than I am used to. As I look, his

glance turns to me, and, embarrassed, I quickly lower my gaze and bow my head. My sisters do not notice my discomfort. After a while I am too curious to resist, and I look up to find his gaze upon me. Once more I am discomforted and look away quickly. I don't understand my feelings.

Just then my sisters tell me it is time to go, to pick up my water jug and to follow them. I do so, balancing it carefully on my head, holding it steady with both hands. I am careful not to look in the direction of the stranger, but as I turn to leave I cannot resist. I find him still staring at me. I am pleased. I don't understand completely why, but I am pleased and I can feel myself blushing. I follow my sisters and I hope he will notice when we turn into our gate.

I see all of us wearing loose long garments, with veils held in place by a circlet of some kind. It looks like twisted cloth. I think we are barefoot.

Tuesday 10/6/92 5:30PM

As we turn in the gate I look back. He is not

there. I am disappointed. I follow my sisters through the courtyard, and it seems to me that each of them bends one knee to the ground and that a servant takes the water jug from her head and puts it beside the wall. I cannot do this, but I try to stoop to make it easier for the servant. I am shorter anyway.

My sisters disappear into the house, and I wander about the courtyard still thinking of the stranger. I cannot resist looking once more out into the street, and as I do I draw back quickly. The stranger and his companion are almost abreast of the entry way, and I hear the words, "And this is the house of Jethro." I do not know what to think. I know I was caught. The stranger saw me as I looked out and smiled. His teeth were very white against the dark skin. I fled into the house once again filled with embarrassment, but embarrassment tinged with excitement.

I seem to see a meal. My two sisters and I sit on benches, my mother and father in chairs at each end of the table. My father speaks, and we all listen attentively. It is a rule that no one speaks to my father unless invited to, even my mother. I think back to my sisters' conversation this after-

noon and wonder where their bravery has gone. They eat, as do I, with eyes downcast, absolutely obedient to my father's words and wishes.

I seem to remember being called into a room by my father. With him is the stranger. He smiles at me and I look down, confused. My father speaks to the stranger as if I am not there. He tells him he would be better off taking one of my sisters as his wife. The stranger says gently that is not his wish. I don't know what to think but I am possessed by a wild hope. My father tells me to leave the room and to wait in the courtyard. I do so as if in a dream. I sit on a large smooth stone and clench my hands together.

After a while the stranger comes into the courtyard with my father and my father watches as he comes over to me and takes my hand and pulls me up. He leads me to a bench and sits beside me. He gestures to my father and my father goes into the house. He speaks to me words I hunger to hear. He would have me as his wife, he said, but he would have no wife who was not willing. He said he would go now and return in a few days. He asked me to consider him as my husband, that he knew instantly on seeing me that I

was his chosen one and that he dared hope I felt this magic too. I could not find any words. I looked at him with eyes wide with wonder. He put a finger over my lips and said he wanted no words now, but he hoped that on his return my words would fill him with joy. He said my father would speak to me of this. With that he released my hand, placing it gently in my lap, rose, bowed, and left.

My stranger, it seems to me, wears a headdress of striped material, held by a circlet. I have never seen fabric like this before. I know how to weave---it is one of my responsibilities--- but I have never woven anything that looks like this.

Thursday, 10/8/92

I think, my beloved, we are walking together, hand in hand, talking quietly. We come to the edge of a field. I am so full of joy. I need to express it. I let go your hand and lift up my skirts and run through the grasses. I surprise you when I do this, but only for a moment. I look behind me and see you pursuing me. You are laughing

too. I want to be caught, but I want it to take a while. I run in circles, dodging and weaving, and you get closer and closer. Finally you are upon me and you grab my shoulder. We fall together, laughing at ourselves and each other and sit there for a few minutes catching our breaths. Then you stretch out and pull me down so that I am lying with my head on your breast. The grass is tall. No one can see us. We can see no one. There is no sound but the sound of insects. The sky is very blue. I can feel your heart pounding. Never has anything been so beautiful to me as the pounding of your heart, as lying with you in this sweet silence. After a while you take my hand and open it and kiss my palm. I cannot imagine a more intense pleasure. Gently you turn my face to yours and you brush my lips with yours. Then we lie quietly again. Later, as we walk, you hold me in your embrace, one arm about my shoulder and the other holding my hand, my head resting on your chest. I can once again feel the beating of your heart.

We talked that day about our first meeting. As I lay there looking into my beloved's eyes, I told him once again of my feelings when I first

looked into his eyes. "Moses," I asked, "do you think God meant us to love each other instantly?"

"Zorah," he said, "God made you for me."

My father was not happy at my marrying before my sisters. He did not think that I was too young to marry. He thought them too old not to marry. But my beloved had his way, and I knew more joy that I thought possible. It was strange with Moses. I knew him instantly. I was as certain of my love as if I had known him forever. There was never a moment from the very beginning when we did not understand each other instantly, almost instinctively, sometimes wordlessly.

My sisters were envious, though they pretended not to be. They said they would never marry a stranger chosen by our father, someone I didn't even know. I did not tell them the truth about Moses' choosing me rather than either of them. I hugged my secret knowledge to me and I just smiled. They knew how handsome Moses was. I

could see their envy in their eyes when they thought I was not looking. But I was so happy that I could not bear for anyone to be unhappy, and I spoke to them in words of love of the perfect husbands they would choose to have in marriage. They had so many admirers, I said, so many to choose from. They smiled at this, at each other first and then at me, and I knew there was peace between us and love as well. If it pleased them to think me a victim, then I was pleased to play the role. In my heart I knew the truth, and so did our father, but his pride would not permit him to admit that this marriage was not solely of his making. I knew in time he would soften, and be glad. I had always been a dutiful daughter. Nothing would change that. Now I was to become a dutiful wife, and nothing would ever change that either. I prayed each day for God's blessing on this marriage. I knew He would not fail me.

Saturday 10/10/92 6:25 PM

I was sitting at my loom threading it when my sister came to say that my father wanted to speak

to me immediately. I asked her why. She said she did not know, but a mischievous smile played about her lips. I put the spindles into the little trough under the loom and wiped my hands on the rag in my lap. I straightened my robe as I walked toward the doorway of my father's room. The door was ajar, and I could hear no sound from within, I knocked timidly. There was no answer. Then I knocked again and this time my father told me to enter.

As I pushed the door wide I could see that my father was seated behind his work table, and beside the table sat the dark stranger I had first seen at the well and then later outside our gate. He smiled at me, but I did not smile back. My father rose and came toward where I stood, my eyes now downcast. He put a hand on my shoulder, and I knelt before him, as was customary, for his blessing. He placed his hands on my head and intoned the blessing, then moved away. He told me to stand. I did so. I dared not hope that my wildest dream could be coming true. I knew that the stranger must be a man of importance. Few men sat in my father's presence while he stood.

"You make a mistake," my father said. I thought at first he was speaking to me, but when I raised my eyes, I realized that he was speaking to the stranger.

"I make no mistake," the stranger said. His voice was firm, but gentle. There was authority in it.

"One of the others would better suit you," my father persisted.

"This one suits me well," the stranger replied. At that he rose and came to stand beside me.

My father spoke again. "This Egyptian would have you as his wife," I heard him say. My heart began to pound. "He would take you back to his land and his people."

The stranger interrupted. "I dwell in Egypt, sire, but I am by birth an Israelite. The Egyptians are not my people. Egypt is not my land. I will not die in Egypt."

My father did not reply. The stranger took my chin in his hand and raised my face so that my eyes met his.

"I am called Moses," he said. "For now, it is true, I dwell in Egypt. I have many friends among the Egyptians, but they are not my brothers in flesh.

It is a pleasant land." He stopped speaking. I did not know what to say.

"I am Zipporah," I said haltingly.

The stranger called Moses laughed. "I know what you are called. I shall call you Zorah. Will you like being called Zorah?"

I dropped my head and nodded. Would I like being called Zorah? My heart sang with joy at the sound of his voice. I knew that whatever he called me would be sweet to my ears. "Zorah" was especially sweet.

My father cleared his throat. You may go," he said abruptly to me. "Go back to your work."

As he spoke, Moses took my hands and turned me so that we were facing each other. Our eyes met and he smiled again, "Do not be frightened, Zorah. We will speak again soon. You have nothing to fear."

I could not suppress a smile. I could not believe my soaring joy. I dared not speak without my father's permission. I dropped my eyes once more and left.

10/14/92 10:25AM

I know you gave me a golden ring as a sign of our betrothal. It was too big for any of my fingers and we laughed about that, and I fashioned a fine cord and hung it about my neck. I often put this ring to my lips.

Our servant was very short, almost the size of a child of ten or so, plain faced, almost to the point of homeliness. She was always silent. She wore a turban like covering on her head all the time, and her clothing was generally loose and drab, loosely tied around the waist.

My sisters were tall and willowy, much taller than I and much prettier. They were close companions, close in every way -- age, looks, interests, temperament. They considered me even younger than I was. They were more than surprised at my betrothal. They were shocked and unbelieving at first. Then they pretended to pity me.

When the time came, we knelt in front of my father, Moses and I. I clasped my hands to my chest. Moses' hands, I could see out of the corner of my eye, hung loosely by his sides. We bowed our heads and listened to the words of my father as he gave me to Moses as his wife. I listened unbelieving. I could not believe this was really happening. I did not dare show my joy. I knelt with my head bowed low and silently exulted. I thanked God for this moment. I wanted to dance and shout and sing. I knelt quietly. I felt the strength of my beloved kneeling beside me and I exulted in that. There was no end to my joy.

Finally my father laid his hands on both our heads in blessing and it was over. I rose and accepted my father's embrace first, then my mother's, then finally my sisters'. I went to the servant who stood in the rear of the room and embraced her. A single tear trickled down her cheek. Everyone's eyes were moist, even my father's.

We drank sweet wine and ate sweetmeats afterward, and now emboldened, I could not take my eyes off my beloved, my husband. My father

chided me for my bold stare and as I cast my eyes downward, Moses took my face in his hands and lifted my eyes to his. "She will always be your daughter, sire," he said to my father, "but she is now my wife. Her gaze pleases me." And so we began our life of joy together.

10/17/92 1:32PM

It was a hot day. I sat on the ledge by the side of the well and listened to my sisters' chatter. They paid no attention to me as they spoke of all the young men who desired them and admired them. I listened amused as they agreed that never would they agree to be given in marriage to anyone they did not love. No, they agreed solemnly, they would rather die than marry someone forced upon them, someone chosen by others. I wondered at their bold speech. They knew very well that their husbands would be chosen by our father, that they would have no say in the matter. They would not dare talk this way in our father's hearing, or even in our mother's hearing, though she was the gentlest of women.

As I listened I contrasted myself with my sisters. I was younger, of course, but even when I grew to their ages I could not hope to compare in grace and beauty. I would never be as tall. I would never be as appealing. I looked down at my hands, loosely curled in my lap, as I contemplated these differences. Even my hands were less beautiful. Never had I felt so alone, so inadequate.

I grew impatient with myself suddenly for these useless thoughts, and shook them off. I raised my head and looked about the square. Nearby stood two men. One of them I had seen before, though I did not know his name. The other was a stranger, foreign looking in his darkness and his dress. His head covering was a stiff black material shot with what looked like silver threads which glinted in the sunlight. I had never seen such fabric and I thought he must be very rich. Just then he turned his head and our eyes met. He smiled directly at me. I had never seen such a brilliant smile, His teeth were white against the darkness of his skin, and his eyes were brilliantly black, or so they seemed to me. I looked away quickly in confusion. I did not want to be

thought bold.

Then my older sister spoke sharply to me and told me to stop dreaming. She gestured toward the water jug that was mine to carry. I picked it up and balanced it on my head with both hands and followed my sisters away from the square toward our house. I did not dare look at the stranger, though I was sure that his eyes were still on me. A strange feeling of joyous excitement filled me. As we turned to enter our courtyard I looked back quickly to see if I could see him. He was not in sight. I followed my sisters across the yard to the porch and watched as each knelt on one knee while the servant took the jar from her head and stowed it against the wall of the house. That was another way I was inferior to my sisters. I could not manage that graceful swooping to one knee, and the girl had to strain to remove my jug. I was shorter than they, but it was still a struggle each time for her to remove the jug safely without spilling a drop.

My sisters disappeared into the house and I was left alone once more. The servant looked at me with what I thought was sympathy, but she said nothing. She rarely spoke, and when she did it

was generally in answer to a direct question. There was nothing I had to do just then, and so I wandered about the courtyard, going over in my mind's eyes each aspect of the stranger's appearance. He was very handsome, I decided, with his dark good looks. His smile was wonderful, his eyes full of expression. I hoped I would see him again. I wished I could walk by myself back to the square. I sat near the entry way idly tearing a green leaf into shreds when I heard voices in the lane. Curious, I went to the entry way and looked out. There, a few feet away, I saw him and his friend. I pulled my head back inside, but I think not before I was seen. As I fled, I heard the words, "And this is the house of Jethro....."

Wednesday, 10/19/91 2:45PM

When Moses said those words, I was sure I saw my mother begin to smile. Then she straightened her skirts and resumed a solemn face. She would not, I knew, ever embarrass my father, never seem to be less than absolutely loyal to his authority, but I knew in my heart that she was

pleased that my husband was a man of such strength and devotion. We were much alike, my mother and I. My sisters favored my father in looks and temperament, but my mother and I looked alike, felt alike, thought alike. It was hard not to know I was her favorite, perhaps because I was the last, but more, I think, because there was so much of her in me.

And so I knew she was pleased with Moses' love of her youngest child. There had been no talk of our returning to Egypt in my presence, and I had not asked Moses. I did not care. I wanted only to be with him. I knew that we would for now be staying in my father's house, that a room had been prepared for us to live in as a married couple, and that we would be expected to act as daughter and son-in-law to Jethro so long as we dwelt in his house, and so I was glad that my beloved was making it clear that I was his now, that I obeyed no other first.

Strangely to me, my father was not affronted by Moses' words. He was startled at first, began to speak, then thought better of it. He patted my arm and nodded to Moses. No words were necessary. Then the rejoicing began. Friends, neigh-

bors, relatives came all at once to give their blessing and to see the stranger now family. The courtyard and the house were crowded with people, and I moved among them with Moses by my side as if in a dream, hearing words of love and joyful praise, embracing and being embraced, and knew with a sense of absolute wonder that from now on nothing could ever go wrong that my beloved could not set right. There was no man so perfect ever I thought to myself over and over, no woman ever so fortunate, so full of life's blessings.

Soon, the sounds of merry making began to blur in my ears, and Moses led me to a seat. He sat beside me, my hands in one of his, and it was hard to take our eyes off each other. Finally, one by one, all of our guests left, and we were free to leave ourselves. I told my mother that we would be back for the evening meal, and then hand in hand we walked out of the courtyard, man and wife for all the world to see. There was no need for words between us as we walked down the lane through the square, past the well which would be forever blessed for us. My pride knew no bounds each time I looked up into Moses'

loving eyes. Soon we were past the houses and on the edge of the fields. As we walked I was so full of joy I needed to express it. [10-9]

Tuesday, 10/20/92 5:05PM

After that day when I first knew that I was to be the wife of Moses, he came often to speak to me. He had told me that he wanted to be sure of my willingness to share his life, that he would not choose to take an unwilling wife. "I have won your hand," he said to me that day. "Now I must win your heart."

I could not tell him that my heart had been his from almost the very first second our eyes had met, that never had I been so affected by any man, and so I nodded silently and wondered if I could please this man, my betrothed, who seemed to me so sophisticated in his foreignness. I wondered if I could find words to match his. I doubted it. But I knew in my heart that I was meant for this man and he for me and that he would be patient with me.

And so he was. He came often to see me in the

afternoons. Always he would first present himself to my father and ask permission to speak to me and to my mother and sisters. Then he would seek out my mother and ask her permission as well, though he knew and she knew that he did not have to do this. She was pleased, though, with this courtesy, and pleased when he asked her to join us in the garden of the courtyard where we chose to sit. When my sisters were about he never failed to greet them and speak pleasantly to them, all too often, I thought, flattering them, telling them of all he had heard of their charms and coaxing a smile from each of them.

All these things having been done, my beloved and I would sit side by side in the garden, decorously, not touching, at least at first. When Moses first began these visits I listened to his words with rapt attention, but I could not imagine myself talking so freely of myself as he did of himself. He told me of his growing up years and of the love he had known. He told me of the privileges that had been his, and of the conflict he sometimes felt in himself. He did not then tell me of his dreams. That came later. But

he asked me how I would feel living in a different place. This thought frightened me a little. I knew I wanted to be with Moses wherever he was, but I wanted also to be near those I had known and loved since birth. I had dared hope that he would become one of us. I could not answer my beloved when he first asked me this question. I begged to speak later of this. I begged him to speak further of himself.

Each time we met my heart was easier. I knew I was right in loving Moses and wanting to share his life. Each time we spoke I became a little bolder in speaking of myself, and Moses encouraged me in this. When my mother joined us, and it was only once, I listened with pleasure to the conversation between them, Moses gently drawing her out and her gentle responses to his interest. When Moses left that day, I spoke to my mother of my heart. I told her of my instant love for this man as I lay curled in her embrace, a comfort I had always known, and I expressed the misgivings I felt and had not expressed about living far from the home I had always known. My mother held me tightly and spoke of love. I knew when she had finished speaking that

I had nothing to fear from following my heart, and I knew that always my heart took me to my beloved Moses wherever that should be.

My mother's wisdom was not widely noted, but I thought that day that never would I know wisdom more valuable to me, never would I be more reassured that what my heart told me to do was truth and wisdom, not to be denied.

Monday, 10/26/92 10:03AM

In those days and weeks following our marriage, my life did not change markedly in appearance. I still had the same household responsibilities as before. I spent much time at my loom. I gardened. I helped my sisters with the water hauling. I helped my mother with the household chores. There were some outward differences. My sisters treated me with a new respect. My father deferred always to Moses where I was concerned. I was accorded by all the respect due a married woman.

Inwardly, all was changed. I sang inside. My heart was bursting with love. The more I loved

my husband the more I loved everyone else. I was constantly intent for the sound of his footsteps, of his voice, telling me that he was home, and at the sound of either I would stop whatever I was doing and fly to the courtyard to greet him. We would clasp hands each time and Moses would pull me close to him without embracing, and kiss me tenderly on the forehead. I would raise his hands and hold them to my lips, and then we would stand silently for a moment gazing into each other's eyes. There was such beauty in those greetings.

Then one day I knew something wonderful had happened. Moses' footsteps were quicker than usual, his voice charged with excitement.

"Zorah," he cried as he pulled me to him, "come, let us walk." We slipped out of the entry way unobserved and walked quickly to the edge of town. I was bursting with curiosity, but Moses said not a word until we sat at the edge of a field. Then he told me, and I did not know whether to rejoice or to mourn. It was safe now, he said, for him to return to Egypt and his people. I had not known that there was any danger. We would be leaving, he said, as soon as he

could make arrangements. I wanted so to rejoice with Moses. He was so clearly pleased. But I could not. I was full of apprehension. I had never known any other home. I had never been parted from my mother. It was she I knew I would miss the most. I had known this day was coming sometime, but I was not ready for it.

I sat listening to Moses' words, full of joy and excitement, and not hearing them. I so wanted to share his joy. I couldn't. Finally Moses stopped speaking. I knew he had asked me a question. I did not know what the question was. I raised my eyes to his and could not hide my feelings of dread and sorrow. Moses was instantly penitent, and spent what seemed hours reassuring me, telling me wondrous tales of the land that we would know as home, of the people I would grow to love and to be loved by, his family and his friends. So much, he said, to be happy about. I told him I could not bear the thought of never seeing my mother again, and he scoffed at this fear. We would visit, he promised, and if it could be managed, we would be visited. I did not really believe this possible, but I found comfort in it. The more Moses spoke, the

more I began to share his excitement, to feel a little of his joy.

When we arrived back at my father's house, Moses went directly to speak to him. They were closeted together for a very long time, and I walked about nervously, doing things which did not need to be done. I was too distracted to weave, my usual diversion from care. Finally, my father and Moses came together into the garden, Moses' smile as radiant as it had been earlier, my father's face grave as it always was. I stood as they approached, not knowing which one to turn to first, and it was my father who came to me, put his hands on my face and bent to kiss me on the forehead. He said no words. He bowed to Moses and left.

Tuesday, 10/27/92 10:50AM

The days of preparation went by quickly --- too quickly, it seemed to me in one way. I was torn. I dreaded leaving and I rejoiced in leaving. I knew the pleasure of Moses' anticipation of a return to his home, and I wanted to share it fully, but

part of me held back, reluctant to leave the familiar, the loved.

My mother was insistent that we take with us adequate supplies for our journey, and pressed upon me beautiful lengths of fabric that she had stored for many years. I protested, and I saw signs of envy in my sisters' eyes, and we finally agreed that I would take my fair share of these treasures, no more. Each day more and more friends and relatives came to make their farewells, each bearing gifts for us to take to our new home, until in the end Moses had to secure another donkey to carry all these generous offerings.

I was terrified too at the thought of riding a camel, and to reassure me, Moses brought home a camel right to the entry way one evening, and took me by the hand and led me to open space where he showed me how to mount and how to keep my balance while the camel rose to full height. I was sure I would fall, but I did not, and as the awkward beast moved bumpily along I found myself enjoying the experience. A small band of children had followed us, and they chattered noisily. I was sure that they were wagering

on the length of time I would stay secure. After a little while I signaled to Moses that I wished to get off, and I held on even more tightly as the camel lowered itself to its knees. Moses laughed as I scrambled off and to my feet, and I could not help joining him. I felt foolish. I was sure I looked foolish.

The children thronged about us and begged Moses for rides, and he cheerfully indulged them two at a time in the little seat, and their excitement knew no bounds. Finally it was time to go home and they vied with each other for the right to lead the camel. Moses and I walked behind the procession, hand in hand, in a peaceful silence. At our gate he told the oldest of the boys where to return the camel and promised him a coin for this favor when they next met. Moses said to me laughingly that when next they met would be the next morning when he found the boy waiting for him at the gate. And so it was.

All too quickly, in one sense, our day of departure arrived. The night before, after our evening meal, my father had given us both his blessing for a good journey, and he and Moses had withdrawn to talk privately. Left to ourselves, my

mother and my sisters and I made our last farewells. My mother and I had had many long talks before this, and she had been insistent that I follow my husband willingly with no regrets, no hesitation in my heart. She repeated this advice now, and I knew that happiness lay in her words. My sisters each pressed upon me a small piece of jewelry, a remembrance, they said, so that never would I forget them for a single day. I could not help shedding a few tears, nor could they, but in all of our hearts there was a certainty that we would see each other again, sometime, somewhere, that this was not a final farewell. Moses came back to take me by the hand to lead me to sleep, and before leaving the room he embraced my sisters in turn and then finally my mother. He whispered words to her that I could not hear, but I could guess their content. My mother smiled as she listened.

The next day at dawn, we left. The boy was at the gate with the camel and led him to the edge of town where two others waited with the laden donkeys. My mother did not walk with us, but my father did, and almost magically scores of others emerged from lanes and houses to walk

silently with us. When we reached the edge of town, Moses silently embraced my father and then I clung to him for an instant before he pushed me gently away and bade me go with his blessing.

I knew his concern about the journey. He had urged Moses to take with him one or two men until we reached the caravan we would join, but Moses refused steadfastly. Then he tried to persuade him to take our servant to care for my needs both on the journey and in my new home. She had known me almost since birth, my father said. She would go willingly. I was surprised at this offer and felt that perhaps it had been my mother's suggestion, but it didn't matter. Moses as insistently and gently as he could refused to consider this. I would be well cared for, he told my father. He had nothing to fear.

And as I mounted the camel, I felt a huge lump in my throat, and despite myself, tears blurred my vision. I was glad no one could see. As we moved off, I turned every so often to see the figures get smaller and smaller, and finally when I turned they were gone. That was when I knew that my life as the daughter of Jethro was finally

and completely over, and that my life as the wife of Moses had truly begun.

Thursday, 10/29/92 8:45AM

I soon tired of riding atop the camel. It was not only uncomfortable being jounced about, but I looked down at Moses striding purposefully across the empty space and I wanted to stride along beside him and occasionally reach out and touch him to reassure myself that this was not a dream, that I was truly going to a strange place to begin a new life with my new husband, the love of my life.

As I rode, I looked about me and marveled at the vastness and emptiness of the sandy waste we were traversing. I wondered how Moses could be so sure of his direction. He had explained to me that the sun guided by day, the stars by night, but I did not understand and did not question further. I did not want to be thought stupid, though I knew Moses was too kind to have such a thought. I determined to listen more closely the next time I asked for an ex-

planation.

When we stopped at a watering hole I told Moses that I wanted to walk rather than to ride. He protested at first and then relented when he saw my disappointment. I loved the walking. The camel lumbered along unprotesting and the two donkeys as well, needing only occasional prodding to maintain the pace. The day went by quickly. It was hard to tell how much progress we had made by evening. There was such a sameness everywhere, nothing to measure by, but Moses was well pleased.

The moon was so bright that night that it was almost like day. Moses tethered the animals as I looked through the bags my mother had prepared to find our evening meal. She had packed well, and I thought of her as we ate. Already I missed her and my father as well, and most surprising of all, I missed my sisters. I had not expected that. But when I looked at the face of my husband and saw his gentle smile of love I knew I had made the right choice.

I slept deeply that first night of my new life, though I had not expected to, and in the morning when I awakened, I found that Moses had

prepared our morning meal and fed the animals. I could not believe I had slept through all this activity, and Moses laughed as I rubbed my eyes and stretched and tried to be fully awake.

When we set out he insisted that I ride for a while and conserve my energy, and I did as he asked, and then, as on the day before, walked later. We talked more that day as we walked and I asked endless questions about what I could expect. Moses was infinitely patient with me, and his descriptions made me anxious to be there.

Well into the afternoon, Moses pointed out tiny irregularities in the levelness of the horizon, minute shapes. "That," he said, pleased, "is our destination. They are waiting for us." We hastened our pace, and as we neared the shapes grew larger and more distinct -- wagons, animals, people. The sun was just beginning to set when we reached the caravan. At the end we were almost running, and even the animals quickened their pace without prodding. When we got close enough to distinguish clearly I looked in vain for a woman in the group that waited for us. Several of the men rushed toward us and greeted Moses like a long lost friend. He glowed as he greeted

each one in turn.

I stood behind him, feeling forgotten. Then he pulled me forward and introduced me as his wife. I did not know what to say, so I said nothing. They made me welcome with their smiles, and one of the men led us to a wagon. The interior was piled with rugs and fabrics, clearly a place of comfort. Moses told me to rest and that he would soon return. I stretched out, and as I lay there I could hear the murmur of the men's voices, Moses' among them. and occasionally a loud laugh. I dozed as I waited and realized I was hungry again. I seemed to be hungry constantly lately.

Sunday 11/1/92 1:25PM

As I lay there I wondered how long it would be before Moses came back. It seemed a very long time that he had been away. I suddenly realized that in my whole life I had never been totally alone for this long. Even in sleep there were others in the room with me. At this thought I was swept with loneliness -- loneliness for my

mother, my father, my sisters, my friends, most of all for Moses. I knew he was only a short distance away, but it was too far. I knew I should not feel sorry for myself, but I did. I felt abandoned. I closed my eyes tightly to hold back the tears, but they came anyway and I hastily brushed them away. I tried to sleep again, but I could not. I could barely see in the darkness. I could still hear the murmur of men's voices. They now seemed further away, or perhaps I was imagining this. Occasionally there would be a loud burst of laughter and this laughter made me lonelier still. I longed to be a part of it. I longed to be with Moses.

A fresh burst of tears took me by surprise, and I hid my face in the coverings. I began to wonder if I had made a bad choice. Immediately I berated myself for such a thought. Of course I had not made a bad choice. I loved Moses. I wanted to be his wife. I would never change that. I was being silly. Nothing I said to myself was consoling enough, and I sobbed as I dropped off to sleep once more.

Suddenly I felt Moses' presence and opened my eyes. He knelt beside me, his face troubled. His

fingers lightly stroked my tear streaked face. All my unhappiness burst forth in a torrent of words. Moses made soothing noises and held my hands in his firm grasp. When I had finished I turned my face away. He gently turned it back and asked me to look at him. When I did I wondered how I could ever have doubted his love, his desire to please me. It had not been a very long time he said. I had just imagined it so. Even so, he said, he regretted leaving me alone. He had not imagined it would cause me such distress. Then he spoke softly and gently, holding me in his arms, of what I must try to do. There would be many times that he could not be with me, he explained, but never would I be out of his thoughts, never would I feel truly alone as long as I remembered this. He told me that when I felt lonely I should remember how much I was loved -- by my mother, my father, my sisters, all my relatives and friends, and above all by him. I should think about this love, Moses said, and he would know, they would know. I could never be truly lonely if I remembered this, he said. Would I promise to remember? I nodded my agreement as I snuggled closer in the warmth of his embrace. He kissed me gently on the fore-

head, much as my father did, and I did feel newly safe. We lay there silently for a few minutes, and then I told Moses how hungry I was. He threw his head back and laughed. He laughed for so long I could not help joining in.

There was such a tenderness about Moses. He told me to stay where I was and left to get me food. In no time he was back with fruits, dried meat, and milk which was much too sweet for my taste, but I drank it anyway. The rest I ate gratefully, and Moses watched me, pleased with my new found cheerfulness. He would eat with the men, he said, and made me promise that I would not be upset about being left alone once more. I promised, and promised to do as he had told me. This time I fell asleep thinking of Moses' arms about me, of Moses whispering words of love in my ear. I slept dreamlessly.

Friday, 11/6/92 2:25PM [Martin is writing.]

In all ways our journey was pleasant. At all times my love for Zorah sustained her and gave her the strength she needed, not only for the journey

itself, which was in some ways rigorous, but for the prospect of beginning life anew in a strange place among strange people whom she was expected to both love and like.

We spent much time on the journey in conversations which were far ranging and permitted us to get to know even more about each other than we did already. Each of us was absolutely certain of the rightness of our love, of the perfection of our union, and it was an added joy to discover hidden facets of each other's personalities that bolstered even further our faith in the rightness of our love and which permitted us the pleasure of gentle teasing and gentle remonstrance, and above all a fuller understanding of the miracle that our new life together represented.

I think perhaps that it was Zorah who was the more surprised of us at the absolute joyfulness of our companionship. She was, after all, a very young girl, inexperienced in all ways, and I realized anew each time we spoke the wonder of our meeting and the inevitableness of our immediate love for each other. Zorah asked endless questions about my family, about my childhood, about my experiences as a young man. She

wanted me to describe each day of my life before we met, it seemed to me, in absolute detail, and I had to admit the pleasure I derived from the hunger she felt to know all there was to know about me.

In turn, I slowly drew from Zorah an account of all she was feeling about what lay ahead, and I was consequently able to assuage her fears, to answer her questions with comforting candor, and above all to assure her that at no time would she ever feel alone, at no time would she ever regret that her love for her husband had so altered her life. I was able to persuade her that her life would be rich and full and satisfying, and that she would be well loved by all who were ready to welcome her into her new relationships. She was particularly interested in all I had to say of my brother Aaron, as if she sensed the closeness that they would know in days to come. It was easy for me to speak of my brother in glowing terms and to promise Zorah that she and Aaron would find in each other the pleasure that we knew in each other, and that he would be to her the brother she never had. Occasionally Zorah would fall silent and wistfully stare off into

space, and I knew then that she was thinking about the loved ones she had left behind, and I would hasten to assure her that her separation was only for a time and that I would bend all my efforts to assure her of that. In the end, I think I convinced my beloved of my sincerity in this promise and of the joy she would know in her new found family.

Those were beautiful days for both of us, days of leisurely communication, of new commitment to our love, of continued reassurance each to the other that never had there been such a love, that never would this love know a moment's denial but would rather grow and flourish all the days of our lives. And indeed there was not the slightest doubt in my mind that this was the case, that I had been blessed beyond all others in finding my beloved and in knowing the beautiful acceptance of her love. We were one in mind, in heart, in soul, and the beauty of our love seemed to grow with each passing day. Zorah said that never had she imagined the sheer wonder of the love she felt for me, for the total joy of all our words, of the infinite possibilities that lay ahead.

On my part, I reveled in the completeness of her acceptance of all I said, all I did, all I asked of her. I knew without a single doubt that I had been destined to meet Zorah, that all of my life had led me inexorably to that moment when our eyes first met, and I counted myself blessed in every way by the God I called mine. I knew the depth of Zorah's commitment to this God, of her desire to please Him as she pleased me. I knew too that in times of travail, should they occur, both of us would gain strength and courage from this divine love we shared.

There was nothing but perfection, I thought over and over again those halcyon days. What lay ahead had great promise. I could not ask for more.

6:30PM

I could not believe how happy I was. I could not believe that with each passing day my love grew, my fears lessened, my trust became complete. It was such a sweet time. Most of the time, I walked with Moses, mostly by ourselves, but oc-

asionally one of the men would join us. At those times I listened to their conversation and then growing tired of it, I would spin day dreams of what lay ahead. When we walked alone we talked endlessly of what lay ahead. I could not hear enough. Moses spoke too of his childhood and its strange mixture of indulgence and deprivation, of divided loyalties, of his growing awareness of the need he would one day have to end the duality of his existence and feel fully a part of his people by heritage. When he spoke of this coming day his face would darken briefly, but most of the time when he spoke of returning home his face was radiant with joy and expectation, and I saw often that brilliant smile I so loved.

When he spoke of his brother Aaron I could hear the love in his voice and see the love in his eyes. I had never asked why Moses had left his home. I had been told that the danger was now past, but I had not been told the nature of this danger. Now Moses told me of that black day when he had been forced to flee the blind rage of the Pharaoh who had believed stories told him of Moses, stories with no basis in fact, but

told so artfully that the Pharaoh did not hesitate to believe and swear vengeance. When he spoke of this time, Moses' voice deepened and slowed, as if the pain of remembrance was almost too much to bear. He spoke of the farewells to his family and of leaving in the dark of night, not sure where he would seek safety but knowing that if he stayed he was doomed. The rage of the Pharaoh was well known. It was Aaron who had warned him, who had secreted him until his departure, and had risked death in assuring him passage to a safe refuge. In my heart I thanked Aaron for sending my beloved to me, and I grasped Moses' hand more tightly. His face brightened as he related receiving the message from Aaron of the danger having passed and of the arrangements made for his safe return.

Each day brought new revelations about my beloved, and each day I rejoiced in knowing more and more of this man I had loved instantly. To be in his tender embrace each night of our journey was to know absolute beauty, absolute love, absolute trust. When I thought of all those I had left behind, my unhappiness was never more than momentary. What would I

choose, I asked myself sternly, the old days or the husband I loved more each day? And of course there was no choice, no choice at all. At such times of momentary unhappiness, Moses would inevitably sense my mood and in words of total tenderness and caring cheer me with promises. "You have not left them for good, " he would say over and over. "You must trust me in this." I did.

Just as I thought the journey would never end, Moses came back from talking to the men and said that we were within a day of our destination. Immediately I was assailed anew with doubts. Would they like me? Could I do all that would be expected of me? Was I really good enough for Moses? Could I live up to his expectations? And then I would hear his voice and all the words of love and assurance he had given me these past days, and I would dismiss my doubts and welcome joy into my heart.

Tuesday, 11/10/92 6:43AM

[Martin is writing.]

It was not much later that I knew without question that my Zorah was with child. She did not speak of this in her innocence. She did not in any way act differently, but there was no question in my mind, and I determined to speak to her gently of this.

I took the occasion to ask her of what she knew of these things one day as we walked to the bazaar. At first she was silent. Then with an effort she began to speak. She said that she had feared that all she was feeling was the result of being in a strange place and knowing so much uncertainty that her very being had been affected. She thought, she said, that she had been so affected by change that she was changing herself. I asked her gently what her mother had told her of such things, and she said that when we had been betrothed her mother spoke to her at length of women's matters and of the nature of marriage, but that she had not understood all of what she had heard, and that it was not her nature to ask questions but rather to seek under-

standing within herself when she did not grasp things immediately. She was, she said, overcome by the nature of her mother's words and her comprehension was therefore limited.

I asked her to be patient and trusting with me and answer my questions carefully. The more we spoke the more certain I was, and the more we spoke I could almost see the relief in Zorah's face. Her expression changed from troubled and confused to joyful and understanding, and she begged me to reassure her. I told her that I felt it would not be long before she felt this new life stirring in her womb and that she must realize the absolute miracle that her body had become.

It was never so clear to me how very young and vulnerable she was. I asked Zorah to speak to me of her feelings, though all of her demeanor told me what I longed to know. "Moses, " she said without hesitation, "I have never been so happy, so sure of my happiness. Each day I think I am not capable of more love and each day I am proved wrong." We stopped walking and stood hand in hand looking at each other, and knew that our lives were changing at that very moment, that our love would be enriched in

every way by this child.

Wednesday, 11/11/92 10:40AM

We stayed for a short time in Aaron's house while Moses sought a place for us to live. It was not unpleasant, but I longed for my own home and for being alone with Moses, my husband. I still could not quite believe that I was truly a wife, and the wife of the most perfect of husbands. Each day my love grew until I thought I would burst with it. Each day I thanked God for this great gift and each day I tried to be worthy.

When Moses told me he had found a place for us to live I was overjoyed. I do not know what I expected -- certainly not a spacious home like that I had left -- but I was not prepared for what was to be my home. It was so small and dark, hardly more than one large room with an alcove. The only light came from the doors and from openings cut high in the walls, back and front. The entry was through a narrow corridor from the busy street, and there was no front courtyard. Beyond the house was a small courtyard

used for cooking by several houses which opened onto it.

I had hoped for a garden, however small, but when I saw the joy in Moses' face I knew that a garden was of little importance, that this first home of mine would prove perfect, and indeed if it did not prove perfect, it proved adequate in all ways. I delighted in making it as attractive as the space allowed. I learned much from my neighbors about food preparation and was pleased with this learning. It gave me great pleasure to see my beloved enjoying food that came of my labors, and his praise was sweet.

In time, I grew contented to be alone when Moses was away from me, and I learned to be at ease among strangers. Moses' family was at all times loving, but I hesitated to intrude into their lives too much. So I was dependent upon my resources. I had brought a small loom and it gave me pleasure. I made some friends. The well seemed a magic place to me. It was at a well I had first met Moses, and at this well I met a young girl, not much older than I, who became close to me. The first time I saw her I noticed immediately that she was carrying a child. As I

looked at her swollen belly I tried to imagine what it must be like, and a wave of longing swept over me. I wanted to ask her many questions, but I did not dare. There was much I needed to know, and I wished I had listened more closely to my mother when she spoke to me of womanly things.

As it happened, it was Moses who first spoke to me of these things, and in his loving way answered all my questions about myself and what was happening to me. At first I could hardly speak of such things, but Moses was so gently persistent that it was impossible not to be open and trusting, and when the full impact of his words became clear to me I was shaken, but almost immediately all fear was swept away by the love I felt for Moses, by the realization that I was finally, fully a woman, a mother. The thought of a life growing inside me made me giddy. Then above all came a surging rush of love for my Moses, my beloved Moses, father of my child, the most wonderful of men. I could not imagine greater joy, and I told Moses this, and in his face I saw my joy mirrored.

Immediately then, I thought of my mother and

knew I must get word to her of this wonder. I wished I had wings and could fly to her like a bird and whisper the news in her ear and see her face light up with happiness. I hoped there was a way to let her know, but that could come later. For now it was enough to share this joy with my husband, my true love, my Moses.

Thursday, 11/12/92 1:40PM

[Recently incidents remembered seem to be in correct sequence, but this is written out of order. Martin had me remember this incident earlier, and it was not until I was transcribing that I realized that I had not written of it.]

In his eagerness, Moses strode at the front of the caravan with me beside him. Every so often I would have to run a few steps to keep up with his long stride. The reason for Moses' excitement became clear as a figure which had for some time seemed only a speck on the horizon grew larger and larger, and Moses knew with absolute certainty even before he could clearly distinguish the features that this was Aaron. Moses

grabbed my hand and we ran toward him. He ran too, and suddenly we were in Aaron's wide embrace. With one arm about each of us, he kissed us alternately, and I thought I would smother in the intensity of his grasp as my face was pushed against the rough fabric he wore. I did not come even to his shoulder, and realized that he was even taller than Moses, though not by very much.

Finally he loosened his grasp and it was Moses' turn to speak. Before he could, Aaron broke in, repeating his words of welcome directly to me and calling me by name and calling me sister. I was flustered and murmured my thanks unintelligibly. Moses laughed at my confusion and joked about Aaron's forceful nature. "You will get used to him," he said. I blushed even more and determined to learn to be more at ease. As we walked toward the town, Aaron and Moses spoke of all that had occurred in my husband's absence and of the family that eagerly awaited his return. Turning to me he added that all were equally anxious to welcome me. I liked Aaron. Beneath that rough exterior was a warm and affectionate nature. Moses had told me this of his brother,

and I knew now how truly he had spoken.

Aaron decreed that we must go first to see their mother and then to his house where we would stay, and where, he said sternly, his wife would insist that I rest and recover from the journey. Rest was the furthest thing from my mind, but I did not say so. I nodded my agreement. Moses' mother was waiting in the doorway of her small house, her face alight with pleasure at the sight of her son. He enveloped her in his arms for a long silent embrace and then pulled me to him and presented me to her. I could see when she smiled where Moses had got his radiant smile, and I immediately felt comfortable in her presence. Next we greeted Moses' sister, who was standing quietly in a corner of the room when we entered, and I watched once again the joy of reunion on both their faces. Miriam's welcome to me was equally heartfelt, and I knew with even more certainty that I would be happy in this family.

Aaron was insistent that we make our stay short, and with assurances that we would see each other again soon, we departed for Aaron's house. Waiting for us there was Aaron's wife,

along with three small curly headed boys so close in size that they seemed almost the same age. At once I knew that Accara and I would be friends and that the boys would be an endless source of pleasure. After the pleasantries of welcome were finished, Moses and Aaron left to return to the caravan and arrange for the transport of all our goods to Aaron's house. They took with them a tall young man, a neighbor of Aaron's, to help. Left alone, Accara and I were awkwardly silent for a few moments. Then we spoke both at once. Laughing, she insisted that I should withdraw to the bedroom to rest. I felt comfortable enough to say that I did not really need rest, that I was anxious to talk with her. I surprised myself with this statement. I was not a good talker. Fortunately, Accara was, and we sat at the table each with a hot drink she had prepared and became friends. She was a plain woman, a few years older than I, but with a face that glowed with goodness and kindness, expressive always. Her eyes were large and luminous, her mouth constantly smiling. I hardly needed to ask a question as she told me all I longed to know about all of the family and friends I had yet to meet, about

Aaron and her children, whom she clearly adored, and of all the things I would need to know about my new town. As she spoke I found myself getting drowsy. It became harder and harder to keep my eyes open. Noting this, Accara laughed at her own garrulity and gently shepherded me to the room Moses and I would share. I protested feebly and ineffectively, and I do not even remember falling asleep. By the time I awakened, Moses and Aaron were back, and it was almost dark. I lay there for a while listening to the pleasant babble of sound from the next room -- voices old and young intermingled. Moses came to the doorway, and seeing me awake, came and sat on the side of the bed. He took my hands and pulled me into a sitting position and then into his embrace. We knew each other's happiness. There was no need for words.

Monday, 11/16/92 3:03PM

Moses was so kind and caring all those weeks and months as I grew larger and larger with child. The wonder of this new life stirring inside me made each day a miracle, and each day Moses

shared my joy and expressed his caring in every way. He made me rest more than I needed to rest. He made me eat more than I needed to eat. He would not let me fetch the water from the well -- too heavy, he said, for me to carry. He hesitated to leave me alone, until I told him he was being foolish, that I had learned to like solitude. He insisted I spend more time with others, with his mother, with his sister, with Aaron's wife. I loved going to Aaron's house and trying to imagine what my life would be in a house full of children as lively as these. Everyone shared our happiness. No one could do enough.

As the months went by, I began to be a little concerned about how little space we had. There was barely room for the two of us. Moses had spoken confidently of finding a more suitable place to live in the very beginning, and when I mentioned it gently to him once or twice afterward, he assured me that I need not worry. I obeyed Moses in all things, but if I did not worry, I could not help thinking about it.

It was on a day that I had spent with Moses' mother and Accara sewing that my surprise came. Moses came to get me as he always did in

the latter part of the afternoon, and I should have known that something had happened. My beloved was more casual and off hand than was usual for him, and I sensed a suppressed excitement in his manner. I questioned him, he professed not to know what I was talking of, but I caught a look he exchanged over my head with his mother, and I was all the more certain that Moses was hiding something from me. Then as we talked, Moses seemed to be acting more like himself and I dismissed my suspicions as fanciful imagining.

The sun was beginning to lower in the sky when we made our farewells and began the short walk home. I was totally unprepared for what waited for me. I walked first through the door to our house and stood still, shocked and unbelieving. The house was totally bare, not a piece of furniture, not a single belonging, nothing. I turned to Moses in shocked disbelief, and as soon as I saw his broad smile I knew what had happened. He took hold of my hand, and large as I was, we fairly flew down the lane and around several corners before we arrived at an entryway. Moses stopped abruptly and pulled me toward the en-

tryway. I stepped into a tiny garden which had been lovingly cared for by someone and then into a large room, off which opened a second room. Carefully arranged were all our belongings -- furniture, clothing, trinkets. The room was so much larger that it looked bare, but it could not have been more beautiful to me. I cried out my pleasure and threw myself into Moses' arms. He held me and patted my head and insisted I speak to him of my pleasure in this surprise.

I was overcome. I could not speak. My voice broke as I tried, and I tried to catch my breath and compose myself. All I could do was nod and smile my pleasure. It was so much more than I had dared dream for, this new house. Moses led me into the other room, and I saw it had a window looking out onto a shaded courtyard, much like that of the other house, but this was larger and more pleasant, with greenery and benches, and I was pleased to see a young girl with an infant, sitting crosslegged by a small fire across the yard. I could not see what she was cooking, but it smelled delicious. I knew we would be friends, and as I looked out the window she saw me and waved. I marveled as I waved back that my life

could be so perfect.

Aaron had found this, Moses said, and he had conspired with Moses to surprise me in this way. Soon, Moses added, we would find furniture to meet our needs and our added space, particularly a chest to store all my cherished fabrics. Before Moses had finished speaking, we heard excited voices outside, and into the room came Aaron, Accara, and the boys. With their presence, this new house became truly a home, a place of love shared. I finally found my tongue and told them all of how they had succeeded in pleasing me beyond measure. When they had left, Moses and I sat quietly in the softly darkening night and exchanged words of love and gratitude, each to the other, and to the God we loved who was so good to us. It was the first of many happy nights in our new home.

Thursday, 11/19/91 2:00PM

Each day I grew more impatient for the birth of our child. I busied myself with things that did not really need to be done to make the time pass

more quickly. I fussed over the garden, already perfect. I cleaned a house already clean. I wove, but sitting for too long was so uncomfortable that I accomplished little. I visited my neighbor, my new friend, and we spoke of the wonders of her child and of her joy in him, and she counseled me in many things. Above all I spent time with Accara. She brought many new things for our new house. Her generosity knew no bounds. The crib was hers, used for each of her boys and then by a friend for her children, and it sat beside our bed waiting.

Moses was as anxious as I. His solicitude pleased me. He arranged for a young neighbor boy to bring our water from the well and to run any other errands I needed. He was instructed by Moses to check on my needs several times a day, and he was to tell Moses whenever I knew the baby was coming.

All the preparations for the birth had been made weeks in advance. There was nothing Accara had forgotten, and she had talked reassuringly to me of all I could expect. She made it sound like a great adventure, and soon I began to see it as exactly that. Each evening before we slept I would

relate to Moses all the events of the day, all that Accara had said and done, all that I had thought and dreamed. Never had I envisioned love like that I knew from Moses, perfect love, perfect caring, perfect understanding. Each day and each night brought new awareness of the richness of our marriage, of the joyful anticipation we shared.

When the time came for the baby, I was almost surprised. I had begun to think the wait was endless, but as I worked in the garden one midafternoon, I felt a sharp pain. My first thought was that I had strained something bending over, and when I straightened up, the pain disappeared. I was not expecting the second pain some minutes later, and a thrill of recognition shot through me. I was not even sure that pain was the right word, the sensation was so welcome, so exhilarating. Accara had told me so completely what to expect that I knew that there was no urgency, but I so wanted to share all of this experience with Moses that I sent the neighbor boy to get him.

I waited for him outside the door and saw his worried look the moment he entered the gate.

When he saw my look of joy, worry vanished instantly, and he held me in his arms as I told him of what I knew. It was hard to convince him that I felt no real pain, that each contraction brought such a sense of fulfillment with it that the experience of pain was almost negligible.

And so it went through the rest of the afternoon and evening. Accara came and went several times and then arrived to stay for the night. I had no thought of sleep. Accara propped me up with pillows until I was half lying, half seated, and I told her each time I felt a contraction. They seemed almost continuous when she told Moses that it was time for him to leave, that he would know the moment he was a father. "Listen," she said, "and you will know." And so it was. The glorious wail of the newborn brought Moses back into the room, Aaron just behind him. Accara took the baby, wet and glistening, and laid him in front of me. She gave me a damp rag to wipe off my new born son. I was barely able to hold the rag with excitement, but I did as she said, marveling at this squirming bawling child that filled my heart.

Moses watched, beaming, and when I was fin-

ished I wrapped the baby tightly in a cloth and handed him to his father. Instantly he quieted and stared unblinking into Moses' eyes. I had been sure it would be a boy. We had not even considered names of a girl, and as I lay there tired and blissful in a room filled with love and joy, I hoped that this child would grow to be a man exactly like his father.

I don't know how much later it was that Moses and I were left alone with our child, but I remember the perfect peace we knew as we sat and stared wordlessly at this miraculous product of our love, and when he slept, we slept. We were soon to learn that when he awoke, we awoke, and it was with a fresh sense of wonder and euphoria each time I picked him up and held him to my breast, and each time I stared into those intent little eyes and wondered what thoughts lay behind them. They were so wise, those eyes.

Friday, 12/4/92 5:35AM

All those months after the birth of Gershon

were glorious ones. He was an easy child and the focus of so much love. Each day began with a smile. We would take him into bed with us each morning and marvel over him. Each step in his growth was a miracle to us. As he grew I was more and more aware of the strong resemblance he had to my father. At first I had been disappointed that he did not look exactly like Moses. He was fair rather than dark, his eyes light, his hair fine and almost blond. When he smiled you could see a resemblance to Moses, but most of the time when I looked at him I saw my father. This was strange to me, since I so strongly resembled my mother and my father not at all. I could see my sisters in him too.

Moses seemed to be always busy during the day, and so I would spend much time alone with Gershon. He seemed to grow so fast, and before long was crawling and trying to talk. I loved taking him to visit Accara and the boys, and would carry him while he was still small in a sling, holding him close to my body. Accara had shown me how to do this, and she had given me a stout basket with two handles large enough to carry him. I loved it when Moses took one handle and

I the other and walked with our child between us. Moses seemed to know everyone, and when we walked we were stopped constantly by his acquaintances. They were, of course, all admiring of our child, and it pleased me to hear their words of praise. I spent some time with my neighbor and her child, and we often went to the market together. My weaving was almost forgotten those busy days, and I kept promising myself that I would find time to do what I so loved.

There was a great deal of quiet love in my life. Moses was busy, but seemed content with his life. I did not understand completely what occupied all of his time. I knew that he visited the court often and would occasionally undertake to adjudicate disputes between the authorities and the subject people and keep the peace. Sometimes he seemed greatly troubled when he came home at night, but he did not speak to me of such things. Sometimes I saw him and Aaron deep in conversation and longed to listen, but I knew it was not my place to be concerned about such things. In other ways, Moses was very open with me. He spoke freely of his dreams, of his desire to be a leader of his people. These were

vague dreams at first, but gradually I began to have the feeling that Moses had more in mind that he was expressing to me, but I had learned from birth to keep my tongue silent, and I did so even when I was bursting with curiosity.

All in all, I was happier than I had ever dreamed possible. I missed my family, particularly my mother, but that was all that was less than perfect. I could not believe how much my love for Moses grew each day. I saw him leave in the morning and missed him the minute he was gone. He rarely came home for his noon meal. When he did it was a treat, and he always allowed time to play with the baby. I always urged him to come home in the evening as early as he could, and the three of us enjoyed this quiet time together. I kept trying to remember my life before Moses, and it seemed very far away, like another existence. I wondered if my sisters had found this kind of happiness. I hoped so. I hoped one day I would know. I wished I could share my perfect world with my mother. That was all I lacked, but I found a mother in Moses' mother. She was always kind, and treated me as her own daughter. I was grateful to her for this,

and grateful for all the family feeling I had for Aaron and Accara and their children and they for me. It was hard to imagine what could make me more content, but I was soon to know.

Saturday, 12/5/92 1:00PM

Midway through Zorah's second pregnancy I knew that we would need to make another move, that there was once again simply not enough space for our growing family. I did not speak of this to my beloved, though I knew she must share my concern, but I hesitated to make promises I could not keep. It was not easy to find spacious living quarters in the city. There were many smaller houses, such as the one we occupied, but few larger. It would not have been impossible to manage with another child where we were, but it would not have been comfortable for Zorah, and I knew that she would appreciate a change. Besides that consideration, I was beginning to realize that this coming child might not be the last, that many could follow, and that I should plan accordingly.

Aaron was sympathetic to my plight, experienced as he was in fatherhood, and undertook to aid me in my search. In the course of his trade as an ironmonger, he met many people, and he was in an ideal position to aid me. It was with delight that he reported to me after only a week or so that he had not only found living space he was sure we would find acceptable, but he had found this space close to where he lived, so that Zorah and Accara could spend time together easily and could share the joys and travails of motherhood more completely. An elderly widow was leaving her house to live with her son. Beset as she was with infirmities, she had found living alone too difficult. She was fond of Aaron and had promised him that she would not let her quarters to anyone else before I had seen them. When Aaron took me to this house I could not believe my good fortune. Cluttered as it was with the belongings of a long life, it still had a feeling of space and light. There was no doubt in my mind that Zorah would like this new home, but I decided that this time I would seek her approval. That evening we spoke, and although Zorah expressed misgivings about leaving a home she had

grown to love, she agreed with me that it was wise to plan for the future. I knew that my Zorah would defer to my judgment in this as in all things, but I insisted that she see this new place before I made any further commitment. Consequently we went the very next day, and the elderly lady was most kind in showing Zorah and me her home and expressing her hopes that these rooms she was vacating would once again resound with the laughter of children. Zorah smiled at this thought and thanked her for her kindness. She was particularly enchanted by the proximity of the house to that of Aaron and Accara and delighted as well by the spacious garden area in the rear. The garden had clearly once been lush but lately neglected, and I knew it would be no time before Zorah and Accara restored it to its full glory.

So it was agreed that we would move once again, hopefully for the last time for many years, and, as always, Aaron proved a source of great assistance. Not only did he contribute his own time and energy in preparing this home for its new occupants, but he enlisted the aid of his artisan friends, and in a short time it was ready for us.

Moving our belongings was made equally easy by Aaron's resourcefulness, and the actual day of moving came quickly

I could tell by Zorah's quiet thoughtfulness the last few days in our old home that her pleasure in having more space and being closer to Accara and her children was mixed with regret at leaving these familiar surroundings she had made so attractive and comfortable, but Zorah was at all times responsive to my needs and wishes, and her demeanor when she knew I was observing was one of cheerful compliance. I came upon her the last day, when the house was almost emptied of our belongings, staring wistfully out the window opening onto the courtyard where she and Gershon had spent so many happy hours. She had already made her farewells to her friend, who was tearful at the prospect of losing Zorah's companionship. They promised each other frequent visits.

When I put my arms about my beloved, she rested her head on my shoulder and turned it sideways.

"It will be wonderful in our new home, my love," I said to her. You will love being so close to Ac-

cara and the children. You will love having more space for the babies."

I think it was the use of the word "babies" that brought a smile to her face. She turned to face me.

"I know I will, Moses. I know how very blessed I am. I thank you for your caring. Our babies thank you, too."

How like Zorah, I thought, how good, how gentle, how compliant. I resolved that I would never let her forget her worth, her importance to me, my overwhelming love for her. Not for an instant would I permit her to forget these truths.

We walked hand in hand to our new home and found it full of friends and family and love. It was a joyous evening, a fitting beginning to a new chapter in our lives.

Tuesday, 12/8/92 8:30AM

I remember sitting cross legged in a garden. I think it was Accara's garden. It was big, and I was alone in the garden for some reason when you came and gave me your two hands to pull

me to my feet. I was so big that it was hard to get up without help, and if I hadn't been so disturbed we would have laughed about my awkwardness.

It was not quite time for the baby to be born, but I had not felt life for much too long. When I told Accara her face grew grave and she questioned me closely. I sensed her alarm as we spoke, and I had a sinking feeling. Then, abruptly, Accara laughed and said we were both being foolish, that it was just a good quiet baby resting for the job ahead. Being born, she said, was hard work, and she told me that there has been times when she had not felt life for days at a time. Perhaps, she said, the movements were so small I was not noticing. Then she asked again how long it had been.

I did not want to tell Moses and cause him to be alarmed --- he was so pleased at the prospect of another child --- but I could not completely hide my concern from him. Gershon was a distraction from my preoccupation. Accara asked me each morning and then several times each day if there was any change. When my time was almost up, she said that I should tell Moses, and I did

so. His caring made it easier. He spoke of hope. But I had hoped for too long. Now I knew despair. I knew my child was dead.

In the end, the birth was normal except for the awful, total silence. Accara had obtained herbs to ease my labors, and I felt detached, an observer. Moses stayed with me, a tower of loving strength, and when the baby was born it was he who took her from Accara, wrapped her in a cloth, and handed her to me, perfect and lifeless. Moses held both of us close to him, and Accara left us alone. I had not imagined that the feeling of loss would be so profound. Neither of us spoke for what seemed hours. Then, finally, gently, Moses took our child out of my arms and carried her out of the room. I wanted to cry out in protest, but I couldn't even do that. Left alone, I stared numbly.

Then the door opened, and Moses came in with Gershon. He was subdued for Gershon, and Moses led him to me. He clambered into my embrace and lay there quietly where his sister had been, and Moses once more held the two of us in his embrace. Now the silence was sweet. It was Gershon who broke it. He was hungry, he

said, and he wanted to go for a walk.

Saturday, 12/12/92 4:44PM

I was sad for such a long time afterward. I tried not to show my sadness during the day. Gershon needed my cheer. I knew that, and Moses did too, but at night I would lie there in the darkness and remember, and the tears would flow. Moses always sensed my needs, and even if he was asleep, he would know my sorrow and awaken and pull me to him and hold me close and gently wipe away my tears.

"There will be another child, my Zorah," he would say over and over again "Soon there will be another child to fill you heart with joy." At such times I would nod my agreement, but I could not speak of another child. I was too frightened.

And when I knew I was carrying another child I was still frightened. Moses spoke to me of how groundless my fear was. Accara spoke to me of how foolish my fear was. Even Aaron felt moved to speak words of comfort and reassurance to

me. As the months passed, my fear lessened. I did not think of it as often, in any case, but not until I held my son in my arms, alive and whole, did I lose my fear completely.

When I first looked at Ezekiel, I knew that he was the child I had dreamed of from the very beginning. He was the image of his father.

Moses protested when I told him this that he looked like any other baby, that I was seeing what I wanted to see. But as the months passed I teased Moses more and more often, for this child was in every way a duplicate, an absolute replica, of his father. There was nothing of me in him. I stared at him for hours, enchanted with this stunning resemblance even when he was a tiny baby, and as he grew each time I looked at him I saw my beloved --- the same coloring, the same flashing eyes, the same brilliant smile, the same sunny disposition.

After the death of our daughter, Moses had surprised me with a new larger loom, and I spent day after day happily weaving as my two boys played under my watchful eyes. I could not believe how quickly the days and weeks and months were passing, but each time I looked at

my growing children I was sharply reminded. Moses spent more and more time with his dreams. He and Aaron joined together to instill into their brethren a sense of identity, a feeling of cohesion, a belonging. There were many meetings, and after each one, Moses and Aaron would talk for hours. The dream of a new life in a new land began to grow more real, and Accara and I talked often of this dream. We feared to believe in it too completely, but Moses' and Aaron's words filled us with hope. It would take time, they told us, but we could be sure that it would be a dream become reality. I spent a lot of time as I wove dreaming of what it would be like to live in a land as beautiful as Moses promised, and each time I dreamed of it, it became less of a dream and more something that would really happen. Accara and I asked what we could do to help, and the men said that the time for us to help was not yet, but that it would come. I hoped it would hurry.

