***Arise to Zion*** *In 1998 while attending ministry school, I was in a time of communion with God that was so intense that I was experiencing many wondrous supernatural encounters, healings, visions, dreams and revelations of Him—and learning His ways…*

*The schedule I maintained for most of my adult life was usually grueling.  This time was no different.  I awoke at 4:00am, showered, dressed and left to drive the 30-35 minute ride to the Tabernacle to have a couple of hours of prayer before school started.  I would stop each morning to grab some kind of chocolate cake, muffin or brownie along with a giant candy-bar and a 20 ounce black coffee.  (Breakfast of champions.)*

*Often, I would skip lunch and just have another 20-ounce coffee, (maybe more chocolate candy), and then have a light dinner. I’d take a third large coffee with a chocolate dessert before the evening services at ministry school.*

*One night I was sleeping soundly and without understanding at first why—woke up and was wide awake.  The voice of my Lord whispered to me from the darkness, “Would you like to fly with me?”*

*“Yes, Lord!”*

*Without another moment passing, we were flying in the Spirit, high over the lands and waters of the Earth. Looking down on the thriving civilizations below me I was amazed and I felt so special to be here with the Lord soaring above the clouds. I was trying to take in every detail and not miss anything.*

*I couldn’t see the Lord, only knew He was next to me.  I was flying like Peter Pan, swooping and swirling, diving and climbing, all the while feeling the Lord as though His arm was around me, keeping me—yet letting me be free in flight. It was wondrous beyond description!*

*We were approaching a huge mountain, truly the size of a planet it seemed.  I was amazed at the millions of people who were walking on the mountain.  There were very narrow ridges that went all around the mountain and people had to put one foot in front of the other in order to walk and not fall off.*

*There were people stopped in different places on the mountain and at various levels, and they were worshipping.  I could not see a “gate” but I knew it was there. Once people got to the end of a full circumference on the level they were walking on, they had to get permission to go higher, hence, closer to God…  It was something I seemed to know rather than understanding by seeing or hearing.*

*I landed on the mountain and had a sense that this is where I was in my journey with the Lord!  I was more than halfway up and that was somewhat comforting even though I wished that I were even higher and thereby closer to the Lord. That was the strongest desire I had-—****getting closer to the Lord.***

*The Lord spoke to me, “This is My mountain and these are My people.  I am going to open your ears, so you can hear.”*

*“Thank You, Lord.” I replied.  For a second I was thinking how amazing it was that I was so comfortable in this adventure... so privileged.*

*I heard a man praising the Lord with all his heart and I looked to see. .  He was positioned much further down on the mountain than I was; yet I could see and hear him so clearly, it was as though he was nearer.  He was standing at one of the “gates”.*

*His face was glowing with the evidence of The Holy Spirit as tears of joy careened down his cheeks.  His hands were raised in surrender and his praises were beautiful. I was moved at the sight and then I heard him say, “Oh Lord I want to be closer to You!  I love You so much!  I would go anywhere for You God!  I would do anything for You God!  Just tell me and I’ll go and I’ll do!  I love You so much!  So much! Oh Jesus. I love You so much!””*

*It was beautiful.  I felt tears burn, blurring my vision until they escaped onto my flushed cheek.*

*The faithful and glorious Lord responded, “Yes son. I too desire for you to come unto me. At this level smoking cigarettes was not offensive to me, but you must lay them down if you are to come any closer.”*

*I AM the Lord your God and I AM H-O-L-Y.*

*(What happened next will never leave me.)*

*The young man wiped his eyes and looked bewildered, discouraged and somewhat annoyed.  He responded, “Lord!  What does smoking cigarettes have to do with how much I love You?  You know me—I smoke. I love You, but I can’t quit smoking!”*

*The moment that he said that he couldn’t quit, this black substance which looked like tar or goo hit him—splat—covering one eye. It had tentacles and was actually alive! He seemed to be unaware of the being and tried to walk on, but he immediately began to stumble down the hill.*

*I gasped and cried out to the Lord to help him. “Lord don’t let him fall off the mountain!”  I pleaded.*

*The Lord’s voice came, bringing such peace and comfort, “Oh, don’t be alarmed, he is my son.  I AM with him.... but he needs to understand that I AM holy.*

*He was now walking way down the mountain from where he had just been only moments earlier.*

*While looking in that direction, I saw beyond him and noticed millions of people on the ground at the base of the mountain. They had not started to walk on the mountain, but they were all shouting and had their hands in the air.*

*In curiosity, I inquired of the Lord, “Who are they Lord?”*

*He replied, “ I will let you hear even at this distance.”*

*“Thank You Lord!”*

*At once, I heard their shouts and praises…”OH, Thank You Lord for making me a Baptist!  I love my church!”  “Oh, Thank You Lord for making me a Catholic!  Oh You are so alive in here!*

*I again asked the Lord, “Who are they Lord?”*

*He replied with such emotion, such sorrow, that the pain of it came into the words and pierced my heart through… “Yes. Please pray for them… they believe they are my people but they worship the mountain of God and not the God of the mountain.”*

*“Religion.”  I muttered, the torture of God’s sorrow now having burned a place in my heart for them.*

*After this, I again became acutely aware that I was standing on the mountain of God.  (No one stands still unless they are at one of the “gates” on the mountain.)*

*I said, Lord, I am at a “gate” and I desire to come closer to You.  I know that it is Your desire as well.”*

*“Beloved, you must put down coffee and chocolate so that you may come nearer to me.”*

*“Oh Lord I am grateful that You allowed me to see what happens… so that I would not ask You what coffee and chocolate have to do with coming closer to You.  I say to You, Yes, Lord!  Yes!  I will give up coffee and chocolate!  I truly do desire to come to You!  Help me Lord!  I love You so!”*

*“We must be getting back now.”  It was the voice of Jesus.*

*We took off again, one, two swoops and we were back! I was again in my bed.  Only I was wide-awake and really felt as though I hadn’t been dreaming.  I knew it was real.  Maybe I did go flying with Jesus, maybe I dreamt it…either way, I was giving up coffee and chocolate.*

*For the next three days my body was in withdrawal—caffeine withdrawal.  I suffered a complete shut down of many bodily functions.  The pain in my head had me thinking that I might die.  I was very sick.*

*My friends and classmates told me that I should be going to the hospital or the doctor’s office or something.  But I said that I was being obedient to God’s request, and He would deliver me, or not…It was over in a five day period and I really began to feel so different, better.*

*Closer to my God…(I heard* ***all*** *of the different denominations being called out, even Pentecostal and Charismatic ones.)*