

The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek (Kěbra Nagast)

translated by

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And she was exceedingly anxious to go to him, but when she pondered upon the long journey she thought that it was too far and too difficult to undertake. And time after time she asked Tâmrîn questions about Solomon, and time after time Tâmrîn told her about him, and she became very wishful and most desirous to go that she might hear his wisdom, and see his face, and embrace him, and petition his royalty. And her heart inclined to go to him, for God had made her heart incline to go and had made her to desire it.

24. How the Queen Made Ready to Set Out on her Journey

And the Queen said unto them, "Hearken, O ye who are my people, and give ye ear to my words. For I desire wisdom and my heart seeketh to find understanding. I am smitten with the love of wisdom, and I am constrained by the cords of understanding; for wisdom is far better than treasure of gold and silver, and wisdom is the best of everything that hath been created on the earth. Now unto what under the heavens shall wisdom be compared? It is sweeter than honey, and it maketh one to rejoice more than wine, and it illumineth more than the sun, and it is to be loved more than precious stones. And it fatteneth more than oil, and it satisfieth more than dainty meats, and it giveth [a man] more renown than thousands of gold and silver. It is a source of joy for the heart, and a bright and shining light for the eyes, and a giver of speed to the feet, and a shield for the breast, and a helmet for the head, and chain-work for the neck, and a belt for the loins. It maketh the ears to hear and hearts to understand, it is a teacher of those who are learned, and it is a consoler of those who are discreet and prudent, and it giveth fame to those who seek after it. And as for a kingdom, it cannot stand without wisdom, and riches cannot be preserved without wisdom; the foot cannot keep the place wherein it hath set itself without wisdom. And without wisdom that which the tongue speaketh is not acceptable. Wisdom is the best of all treasures. He who heapeth up gold and silver doeth so to no profit without wisdom, but he who heapeth up wisdom—no man can filch it from his heart. That which fools heap up the wise consume. And because of the wickedness of those

who do evil the righteous are praised; and because of the wicked acts of fools the wise are beloved. Wisdom is an exalted thing and a rich thing: I will love her like a mother, and she shall embrace me like her child. I will follow the footprints of wisdom and she shall protect me for ever; I will seek after wisdom, and she shall be with me for ever; I will follow her footprints, and she shall not cast me away; I will lean upon her, and she shall be unto me a wall of adamant; I will seek asylum with her, and she shall be unto me power and strength; I will rejoice in her, and she shall be unto me abundant grace. For it is right for us to follow the footprints of wisdom, and for the soles of our feet to stand upon the threshold of the gates of wisdom. Let us seek her, and we shall find her; let us love her, and she will not withdraw herself from us; let us pursue her, and we shall overtake her; let us ask, and we shall receive; and let us turn our hearts to her so that we may never forget her. If [we] remember her, she will have us in remembrance; and in connection with fools thou shalt not remember wisdom, for they do not hold her in honour, and she doth not love them. The honouring of wisdom is the honouring of the wise man, and the loving of wisdom is the loving of the wise man. Love the wise man and withdraw not thyself from him, and by the sight of him thou shalt become wise; hearken to the utterance of his mouth, so that thou mayest become like unto him; watch the place whereon he hath set his foot, and leave him not, so that thou mayest receive the remainder of his wisdom. And I love him merely on hearing concerning him and without seeing him, and the whole story of him that hath been told me is to me as the desire of my heart, and like water to the thirsty man."

And her nobles, and her slaves, and her handmaidens, and her counsellors answered and said unto her, "O our Lady, as for wisdom, it is not lacking in thee, and it is because of thy wisdom that thou lovest wisdom. And to for us, if thou goest we will go with thee, and if thou sittest down we will sit down with thee; our death shall be with thy death, and our life with thy life." Then the Queen made ready to set out on her journey with great pomp and majesty, and with great equipment and many preparations. For, by the Will of God, her heart desired to go to Jerusalem so that she might hear the Wisdom of Solomon; for she had hearkened

eagerly. So she made ready to set out. And seven hundred and ninety-seven camels were loaded, and mules and asses innumerable were loaded, and she set out on her journey and followed her road without pause, and her heart had confidence in God.

25. How the Queen came to Solomon the King

And she arrived in Jerusalem, and brought to the King very many precious gifts which he desired to possess greatly. And he paid her great honour and rejoiced, and he gave her a habitation in the royal palace near him. And he sent her food both for the morning and evening meal, each time fifteen measures by the *ḵōri* of finely ground white meal, cooked with oil and gravy and sauce in abundance, and thirty measures by the *ḵōri* of crushed white meal wherefrom bread for three hundred and fifty people was made, with the necessary platters and trays, and ten stalled oxen, and five bulls, and fifty sheep, without (counting) the kids, and deer, and gazelles and fatted fowls, and a vessel of wine containing sixty *gerrât* measures, and thirty measures of old wine, and twenty-five singing men and twenty-five singing women, and the finest honey and rich sweets, and some of the food which he himself ate, and some of the wine whereof he drank. And every day he arrayed her in eleven garments which bewitched the eyes. And he visited her and was gratified, and she visited him and was gratified, and she saw his wisdom, and his just judgments and his splendour, and his grace, and heard the eloquence of his speech. And she marvelled in her heart, and was utterly astonished in her mind, and she recognized in her understanding, and perceived very clearly with her eyes how admirable he was; and she wondered exceedingly because of what she saw and heard with him—how perfect he was in composure, and wise in understanding, and pleasant in graciousness, and commanding in stature. And she observed the subtlety of his voice, and the discreet utterances of his lips, and that he gave his commands with dignity, and that his replies were made quietly and with the fear of God. All these things she saw, and she was astonished at the abundance of his wisdom, and there was nothing

whatsoever wanting in his word and speech, but everything that he spake was perfect.

And Solomon was working at the building of the House of God, and he rose up and went to the right and to the left, and forward and backward. And he showed the workmen the measurement and weight and the space covered [by the materials], and he told the workers in metal how to use the hammer, and the drill, and the chisel (?), and he showed the stone-masons the angle [measure] and the circle and the surface [measure]. And everything was wrought by his order, and there was none who set himself in opposition to his word; for the light of his heart was like a lamp in the darkness, and his wisdom was as abundant as the sand. And of the speech of the beasts and the birds there was nothing hidden from him, and he forced the devils to obey him by his wisdom. And he did everything by means of the skill which God gave him when he made supplication to Him; for he did not ask for victory over his enemy, and he did not ask for riches and fame, but he asked God to give him wisdom and understanding whereby he might rule his people, and build His House, and beautify the work of God and all that He had given him [in] wisdom and understanding.

26. How the King Held Converse with the Queen

And the Queen Mâkêdâ spake unto King Solomon, saying, "Blessed art thou, my lord, in that such wisdom and understanding have been given unto thee. For myself I only wish that I could be as one of the least of thine handmaidens, so that I could wash thy feet, and hearken to thy wisdom, and apprehend thy understanding, and serve thy majesty, and enjoy thy wisdom. O how greatly have pleased me thy answering, and the sweetness of thy voice, and the beauty of thy going, and the graciousness of thy words, and the readiness thereof. The sweetness of thy voice maketh the heart to rejoice, and maketh the bones fat, and giveth courage to hearts, and goodwill and grace to the lips, and strength to the gait. I look upon thee and I see that thy wisdom is immeasurable and thine understanding inexhaustible, and that it is like unto a lamp in the darkness, and like unto

a pomegranate in the garden, and like unto a pearl in the sea, and like unto the Morning Star among the stars, and like unto the light of the moon in the mist, and like unto a glorious dawn and sunrise in the heavens. And I give thanks unto Him that brought me hither and showed thee to me, and made me to tread upon the threshold of thy gate, and made me to hear thy voice.”

And King Solomon answered and said unto her, “Wisdom and understanding spring from thee thyself. As for me, [I only possess them] in the measure in which the God of Israel hath given [them] to me because I asked and entreated them from Him. And thou, although thou dost not know the God of Israel, hast this wisdom which thou hast made to grow in thine heart, and [it hath made thee come] to see me, the vassal and slave of my God, and the building of His sanctuary which I am establishing, and wherein I serve and move round about my Lady, the Tabernacle of the Law of the God of Israel, the holy and heavenly Zion. Now, I am the slave of my God, and I am not a free man; I do not serve according to my own will but according to His Will. And this speech of mine springeth not from myself, but I give utterance only to what He maketh me to utter. Whatsoever He commandeth me that I do; wheresoever He wisheth me to go thither I go; whatsoever He teacheth me that I speak; that concerning which He giveth me wisdom I understand. For from being only dust He hath made me flesh, and from being only water He hath made me a solid man, and from being only an ejected drop, which shot forth upon the ground would have dried up on the surface of the earth, He hath fashioned me in His own likeness and hath made me in His own image.”

27. Concerning the Labourer

And as Solomon was talking in this wise with the Queen, he saw a certain labourer carrying a stone upon his head and a skin of water upon his neck and shoulders, and his food and his sandals were [tied] about his loins, and there were pieces of wood in his hands; his garments were ragged and tattered, the sweat fell in drops from his face, and water from the skin of water dripped down upon his feet. And the labourer passed

before Solomon, and as he was going by the King said unto him, "Stand still"; and the labourer stood still. And the King turned to the Queen and said unto her, "Look at this man. Wherein am I superior to this man And in what am I better than this man? And wherein shall I glory over this man? For I am a man and dust and ashes, who to-morrow will become worms and corruption, and yet at this moment I appear like one who will never die. Who would make any complaint against God if He were to give unto this man as He hath given to me, and if He were to make me even as this man is? Are we not both of us beings, that is to say men? As is his death, [so] is my death; and as is his life [so] is my life. Yet this man is stronger to work than I am, for God giveth power to those who are feeble just as it pleaseth Him to do so." And Solomon said unto the labourer, "Get thee to thy work."

And he spake further unto the Queen, saying, "What is the use of us, the children of men, if we do not exercise kindness and love upon earth? Are we not all nothingness, mere grass of the field, which withereth in its season and is burnt in the fire? On the earth we provide ourselves with dainty meats, and [we wear] costly apparel but even whilst we are alive we are stinking corruption; we provide ourselves with sweet scents and delicate unguents, but even whilst we are alive we are dead in sin and in transgressions; being wise, we become fools through disobedience and deeds of iniquity; being held in honour, we become contemptible through magic, and sorcery, and the worship of idols. Now the man who is a being of honour, who was created in the image of God, if he doeth that which is good becometh like God; but the man who is a thing of nothingness, if he committeth sin becometh like unto the Devil—the arrogant Devil who refused to obey the command of his Creator—and all the arrogant among men walk in his way, and they shall be judged with him. And God loveth the lowly-minded, and those who practise humility walk in His way, and they shall rejoice in His kingdom. Blessed is the man who knoweth wisdom, that is to say, compassion and the fear of God."

And when the Queen heard this she said, "How thy voice doth please me! And how greatly do thy words and the utterance of thy mouth delight me! Tell me now: whom is it right for me to worship? We worship the sun

according as our fathers have taught us to do, because we say that the sun is the king of the gods. And there are others among our subjects [who worship other things]; some worship stones, and some worship wood (i.e., trees), and some worship carved figures, and some worship images of gold and silver. And we worship the sun, for he cooketh our food, and moreover, he illumineth the darkness, and removeth fear; we call him 'Our King,' and we call him 'Our Creator,' and we worship him as our god; for no man hath told us that besides him there is another god. But we have heard that there is with you, Israel, another God Whom we do not know, and men have told us that He hath sent down to you from heaven a Tabernacle and hath given unto you a Tablet of the ordering of the angels, by the hand of Moses the Prophet. This also we have heard—that He Himself cometh down to you and talketh to you, and informeth you concerning His ordinances and commandments."

28. How Solomon Gave Commandments to the Queen

And the King answered and said unto her, "Verily, it is right that they (i.e., men) should worship God, Who created the universe, the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, the sun and the moon, the stars and the brilliant bodies of the heavens, the trees and the stones, the beasts and the feathered fowl, the wild beasts and the crocodiles, the fish and the whales, the hippopotamuses and the water lizards, the lightnings and the crashes of thunder, the clouds and the thunders, and the good and the evil. It is meet that Him alone we should worship, in fear and trembling, with joy and with gladness. For He is the Lord of the Universe, the Creator of angels and men. And it is He Who killeth and maketh alive, it is He Who inflicteth punishment and showeth compassion, Who raiseth up from the ground him that is in misery, Who exalteth the poor from the dust, Who maketh to be sorrowful and Who to rejoice, Who raiseth up and Who bringeth down. No one can chide Him, for He is the Lord of the Universe, and there is no one who can say unto Him, 'What hast Thou done?' And unto Him it is meet that there should be praise and thanksgiving from angels and men. And as concerning what thou sayest, that 'He hath given unto you the

Tabernacle of the Law,' verily there hath been given unto us the Tabernacle of the God of Israel, which was created before all creation by His glorious counsel. And He hath made to come down to us His commandments, done into writing, so that we may know His decree and the judgment that He hath ordained in the mountain of His holiness."

And the Queen said, "From this moment I will not worship the sun, but will worship the Creator of the sun, the God of Israel. And that Tabernacle of the God of Israel shall be unto me my Lady, and unto my seed after me, and unto all my kingdoms that are under my dominion. And because of this I have found favour before thee, and before the God of Israel my Creator, Who hath brought me unto thee, and hath made me to hear thy voice, and hath shown me thy face, and hath made me to understand thy commandment." Then she returned to [her] house.

And the Queen used to go [to Solomon] and return continually, and hearken unto his wisdom, and keep it in her heart. And Solomon used to go and visit her, and answer all the questions which she put to him, and the Queen used to visit him and ask him questions, and he informed her concerning every matter that she wished to enquire about. And after she had dwelt [there] six months the Queen wished to return to her own country, and she sent a message to Solomon, saying, "I desire greatly to dwell with thee, but now, for the sake of all my people, I wish to return to my own country. And as for that which I have heard, may God make it to bear fruit in my heart, and in the hearts of all those who have heard it with me. For the ear could never be filled with the hearing of thy wisdom, and the eye could never be filled with the sight of the same."

Now it was not only the Queen who came [to hear the wisdom of Solomon], but very many used to come from cities and countries, both from near and from far; for in those days there was no man found to be like unto him for wisdom (and it was not only human beings who came to him, but the wild animals and the birds used to come to him and hearken unto his voice, and hold converse with him), and then they returned to their own countries, and every one of them was astonished at his wisdom, and marvelled at what he had seen and heard.

And when the Queen sent her message to Solomon, saying that she was about to depart to her own country, he pondered in his heart and said, "A woman of such splendid beauty hath come to me from the ends of the earth! What do I know? Will God give me seed in her?" Now, as it is said in the Book of Kings, Solomon the King was a lover of women.²¹ And he married wives of the Hebrews, and the Egyptians, and the Canaanites, and the Edomites, and the *Îyôbâwîyân* (Moabites?), and from *Rîf*²² and *Kuërguë*,²³ and Damascus, and *Sûrest* (Syria), and women who were reported to be beautiful. And he had four hundred queens and six hundred concubines. Now this which he did was not for [the sake of] fornication, but as a result of the wise intent that God had given unto him, and his remembering what God had said unto Abraham, "I will make thy seed like the stars of heaven for number, and like the sand of the sea."²⁴ And Solomon said in his heart, "What do I know? Peradventure God will give me men children from each one of these women." Therefore when he did thus he acted wisely, saying, "My children shall inherit the cities of the enemy, and shall destroy those who worship idols."

Now those early peoples lived under the law of the flesh, for the grace of the Holy Spirit had not been given unto them. And to those [who lived] after Christ, it was given to live with one woman under the law of marriage. And the Apostles laid down for them an ordinance, saying, "All those who have received His flesh and His blood are brethren. Their mother is the Church and their father is God, and they cry out with Christ Whom they have received, saying, 'Our Father, Who art in heaven.'" And as concerning Solomon no law had been laid down for him in respect of women, and no blame can be imputed to him in respect of marrying [many] wives. But for those who believe, the law and the command have been given that they shall not marry many wives, even as Paul saith,

²¹I Kings xi, 1.

²²Upper Egypt.

²³See *Yâkût*, IV, P. 250.

²⁴Genesis xxii, 17.

“Those who marry many wives seek their own punishment. He who marrieth one wife hath no sin.”²⁵ And the law restraineth us from the sister [-in-law],²⁶ in respect of the bearing of children. The Apostles speak [concerning it] in the [Book of] Councils.²⁷

29. Concerning the Three Hundred and Eighteen [Patriarchs]

Now we ordain even as did they. We know well what the Apostles who were before us spake. We the Three Hundred and Eighteen have maintained and laid down the orthodox faith, our Lord Jesus Christ being with us. And He hath directed us what we should teach, and how we should fashion the faith.

[The Narrative of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba Continued]

And King Solomon sent a message unto the Queen, saying, “Now that thou hast come here why wilt thou go away without seeing the administration of the kingdom, and how the meal[s] for the chosen ones of the kingdom are eaten after the manner of the righteous, and how the people are driven away after the manner of sinners? From [the sight of] it thou wouldst acquire wisdom. Follow me now and seat thyself in my splendour in the tent, and I will complete thy instruction, and thou shalt learn the administration of my kingdom; for thou hast loved wisdom, and she shall dwell with thee until thine end and for ever.” Now a prophecy maketh itself apparent in [this] speech.

And the Queen sent a second message, saying, “From being a fool, I have become wise by following thy wisdom, and from being a thing rejected by the God of Israel, I have become a chosen woman because of this faith which is in my heart; and henceforth I will worship no other god

²⁵Compare I Corinthians, vii.

²⁶Compare Leviticus xviii, 18.

²⁷Guidi (apud Bezold) compares No. 19 of the Apocryphal *Canones Apostolorum*.

except Him. And as concerning that which thou sayest, that thou wishest to increase in me wisdom and honour, I will come according to thy desire." And Solomon rejoiced because of this [message], and he arrayed his chosen ones [in splendid apparel], and he added a double supply to his table, and he had all the arrangements concerning the management of his house carefully ordered, and the house of King Solomon was made ready [for guests] daily. And he made it ready with very great pomp, in joy, and in peace, in wisdom, and in tenderness, with all humility and lowliness; and then he ordered the royal table according to the law of the kingdom.

And the Queen came and passed into a place set apart in splendour and glory, and she sat down immediately behind him where she could see and learn and know everything. And she marvelled exceedingly at what she saw, and at what she heard, and she praised the God of Israel in her heart; and she was struck with wonder at the splendour of the royal palace which she saw. For she could see, though no one could see her, even as Solomon had arranged in wisdom for her. He had beautified the place where she was seated, and had spread over it purple hangings, and laid down carpets, and decorated it with miskât (moschus), and marbles, and precious stones, and he burned aromatic powders, and sprinkled oil of myrrh and cassia round about, and scattered frankincense and costly incense in all directions. And when they brought her into this abode, the odour thereof was very pleasing to her, and even before she ate the dainty meats therein she was satisfied with the smell of them. And with wise intent Solomon sent to her meats which would make her thirsty, and drinks that were mingled with vinegar, and fish and dishes made with pepper. And this he did and he gave them to the Queen to eat. And the royal meal had come to an end three times and seven times,²⁸ and the administrators, and the counsellors, and the young men and the servants had departed, and the King rose up and he went to the Queen, and he said unto her—now they were alone together—"Take thou thine ease here for love's sake until daybreak." And she said unto him, "Swear to me by thy God, the God of Israel, that thou wilt not take me by force. For if I, who according to the law

²⁸i.e., three courses and seven courses had been consumed.

of men am a maiden, be seduced, I should travel on my journey [back] in sorrow, and affliction, and tribulation.”

30. Concerning how King Solomon Swore to the Queen

And Solomon answered and said unto her, “I swear unto thee that I will not take thee by force, but thou must swear unto me that thou wilt not take by force anything that is in my house.” And the Queen laughed and said unto him, “Being a wise man why dost thou speak as a fool? Shall I steal anything, or shall I carry out of the house of the King that which the King hath not given to me? Do not imagine that I have come hither through love of riches. Moreover, my own kingdom is as wealthy as thine, and there is nothing which I wish for that I lack. Assuredly I have only come in quest of thy wisdom.” And he said unto her, “If thou wouldst make me swear, swear thou to me, for a swearing is meet for both [of us], so that neither of us may be unjustly treated. And if thou wilt not make me swear I will not make thee swear.” And she said unto him, “Swear to me that thou wilt not take me by force, and I on my part will swear not to take by force thy possessions”; and he swore to her and made her swear.

And the King went up on his bed on the one side [of the chamber], and the servants made ready for her a bed on the other side. And Solomon said unto a young manservant, “Wash out the bowl and set in it a vessel of water whilst the Queen is looking on, and shut the doors and go and sleep.” And Solomon spake to the servant in another tongue which the Queen did not understand, and he did as the King commanded, and went and slept. And the King had not as yet fallen asleep, but he only pretended to be asleep, and he was watching the Queen intently. Now the house of Solomon the King was illumined as by day, for in his wisdom he had made shining pearls which were like unto the sun, and moon, and stars [and had set them] in the roof of his house.

And the Queen slept a little. And when she woke up her mouth was dry with thirst, for the food which Solomon had given her in his wisdom had made her thirsty, and she was very thirsty indeed, and her mouth was dry; and she moved her lips and sucked with her mouth and found no

moisture. And she determined to drink the water which she had seen, and she looked at King Solomon and watched him carefully, and she thought that he was sleeping a sound sleep. But he was not asleep, and he was waiting until she should rise up to steal the water to [quench] her thirst. And she rose up and, making no sound with her feet, she went to the water in the bowl and lifted up the jar to drink the water. And Solomon seized her hand before she could drink the water, and said unto her, "Why hast thou broken the oath that thou hast sworn that thou wouldst not take by force anything that is in my house?" And she answered and said unto him in fear, "Is the oath broken by my drinking water?" And the King said unto her, "Is there anything that thou hast seen under the heavens that is better than water?" And the Queen said, "I have sinned against myself, and thou art free from [thy] oath. But let me drink water for my thirst." Then Solomon said unto her, "Am I perchance free from the oath which thou hast made me swear?" And the Queen said, "Be free from thy oath, only let me drink water." And he permitted her to drink water, and after she had drunk water he worked his will with her and they slept together.

And after he slept there appeared unto King Solomon [in a dream] a brilliant sun, and it came down from heaven and shed exceedingly great splendour over Israel. And when it had tarried there for a time it suddenly withdrew itself, and it flew away to the country of Ethiopia, and it shone there with exceedingly great brightness for ever, for it willed to dwell there. And [the King said], "I waited [to see] if it would come back to Israel, but it did not return. And again while I waited a light rose up in the heavens, and a Sun came down from them in the country of Judah, and it sent forth light which was very much stronger than before." And²⁹ Israel, because of the flame of that Sun entreated that Sun evilly and would not walk in the light thereof. And that Sun paid no heed to Israel, and the Israelites hated Him, and it became impossible that peace should exist between them and the Sun. And they lifted up their hands against Him with staves and knives, and they wished to extinguish that Sun. And they cast darkness upon the whole world with earthquake and thick darkness,

²⁹The remainder of this paragraph is a comment by the author of this work.

and they imagined that that Sun would never more rise upon them. And they destroyed His light and cast themselves upon Him and they set a guard over His tomb wherein they had cast Him. And He came forth where they did not look for Him, and illumined the whole world, more especially the First Sea and the Last Sea, Ethiopia and Rôm. And He paid no heed whatsoever to Israel, and He ascended His former throne.

And when Solomon the King saw this vision in his sleep, his soul became disturbed, and his understanding was snatched away as by [a flash of] lightning, and he woke up with an agitated mind. And moreover, Solomon marvelled concerning the Queen, for she was vigorous in strength, and beautiful of form, and she was undefiled in her virginity; and she had reigned for six years in her own country, and, notwithstanding her gracious attraction and her splendid form, had preserved her body pure. And the Queen said unto Solomon, "Dismiss me, and let me depart to my own country." And he went into his house and gave unto her whatsoever she wished for of splendid things and riches, and beautiful apparel which bewitched the eyes, and everything on which great store was set in the country of Ethiopia, and camels and wagons, six thousand in number, which were laden with beautiful things of the most desirable kind, and wagons wherein loads were carried over the desert, and a vessel wherein one could travel over the sea, and a vessel wherein one could traverse the air (or winds), which Solomon had made by the wisdom that God had given unto him.

31. Concerning the Sign which Solomon Gave the Queen

And the Queen rejoiced, and she went forth in order to depart, and the King set her on her way with great pomp and ceremony. And Solomon took her aside so that they might be alone together, and he took off the ring that was upon his little finger, and he gave it to the Queen, and said unto her, "Take [this] so that thou mayest not forget me. And if it happen that I obtain seed from thee, this ring shall be unto it a sign; and if it be a man child he shall come to me; and the peace of God be with thee! Whilst I was sleeping with thee I saw many visions in a dream, [and it seemed] as if a

sun had risen upon Israel, but it snatched itself away and flew off and lighted up the country of Ethiopia; peradventure that country shall be blessed through thee; God knoweth. And as for thee, observe what I have told thee, so that thou mayest worship God with all thy heart and perform His Will. For He punisheth those who are arrogant, and He showeth compassion upon those who are humble, and He removeth the thrones of the mighty, and He maketh to be honoured those who are needy. For death and life are from Him, and riches and poverty are bestowed by His Will. For everything is His, and none can oppose His command and His judgment in the heavens, or in the earth, or in the sea, or in the abysses. And may God be with thee! Go in peace." And they separated from each other.

32. How the Queen Brought Forth and Came to her own Country

And the Queen departed and came into the country of Bâla Zadîsârëyâ nine months and five days after she had separated from King Solomon. And the pains of, childbirth laid hold upon her, and she brought forth a man child, and she gave it to the nurse with great pride and delight. And she tarried until the days of her purification were ended, and then she came to her own country with great pomp and ceremony. And her officers who had remained there brought gifts to their mistress, and made obeisance to her, and did homage to her, and all the borders of the country rejoiced at her coming. Those who were nobles among them she arrayed in splendid apparel, and to some she gave gold and silver, and hyacinthine and purple robes; and she gave them all manner of things that could be desired. And she ordered her kingdom aright, and none disobeyed her command; for she loved wisdom and God strengthened her kingdom.

And the child grew and she called his name Bayna-Leḥkem. And the child reached the age of twelve years, and he asked his friends among the boys who were being educated with him, and said unto them, "Who is my father?" And they said unto him, "Solomon the King." And he went to the Queen his mother, and said unto her, "O Queen, make me to know who is my father." And the Queen spake unto him angrily, wishing to frighten

him so that he might not desire to go [to his father] saying, "Why dost thou ask me about thy father? I am thy father and thy mother; seek not to know any more." And the boy went forth from her presence, and sat down. And a second time, and a third time he asked her, and he importuned her to tell him. One day, however, she told him, saying, "His country is far away, and the road thither is very difficult; wouldst thou not rather be here?" And the youth Bayna-Leḥkem was handsome, and his whole body and his members, and the bearing of his shoulders resembled those of King Solomon his father, and his eyes, and his legs, and his whole gait resembled those of Solomon the King. And when he was two and twenty years old he was skilled in the whole art of war and of horsemanship, and in the hunting and trapping of wild beasts, and in everything that young men are wont to learn. And he said unto the Queen, "I will go and look upon the face of my father, and I will come back here by the Will of God, the Lord of Israel."

33. How the King of Ethiopia Travelled

And the Queen called Tâmrîn, the chief of her caravan men and merchants, and she said unto him, "Get ready for thy journey and take this young man with thee, for he importuneth me by night and by day. And thou shalt take him to the King and shalt bring him back hither in safety, if God, the Lord of Israel, pleaseth." And she prepared a retinue suitable to their wealth and honourable condition, and made ready all the goods that were necessary for the journey, and for presenting as gifts to the King, and all that would be necessary for ease and comfort by the way. And she made ready everything for sending him away, and she gave to the officers who were to accompany him such moneys as they would need for him and for themselves on the journey. And she commanded them that they were not to leave him there, but only to take him to the King, and then to bring him back again to her, when he should assume the sovereignty over her land.

Now there was a law in the country of Ethiopia that [only] a woman should reign, and that she must be a virgin who had never known man, but the Queen said [unto Solomon], "Henceforward a man who is of thy seed

shall reign, and a woman shall nevermore reign; only seed of thine shall reign and his seed after him from generation to generation. And this thou shalt inscribe in the letters of the rolls in the Book of their Prophets in brass, and thou shalt lay it in the House of God, which shall be built as a memorial and as a prophecy for the last days. And the people shall not worship the sun and the magnificence of the heavens, or the mountains and the forests, or the stones and the trees of the wilderness, or the abysses and that which is in the waters, or graven images and figures of gold, or the feathered fowl which fly; and they shall not make use of them in divining, and they shall not pay adoration unto them. And this law shall abide for ever. And if there be anyone who shall transgress this law, thy seed shall judge him for ever. Only give us the fringes of the covering of the holy heavenly Zion, the Tabernacle of the Law of God, which we would embrace (or, greet). Peace be to the strength of thy kingdom and to thy brilliant wisdom, which God, the Lord of Israel our Creator, hath given unto thee.”

And the Queen took the young man aside and when he was alone with her she gave him that symbol which Solomon had given her, that is to say, the ring on his finger, so that he might know his son, and might remember her word and her covenant which she had made [with him], that she would worship God all the days of her life, she and those who were under her dominion, with all [the power] which God had given her. And then the Queen sent him away in peace.

And the young man [and his retinue] made straight their way and they journeyed on and came into the country of the neighbourhood of Gâzâ. Now this is the Gâzâ which Solomon the King gave to the Queen of Ethiopia. And in the Acts of the Apostles Luke the Evangelist wrote, saying, “He was the governor of the whole country of Gâzâ, an eunuch of Queen Hendakê, who had believed on the word of Luke the Apostle.”³⁰

34. How the Young Man Arrived in his Mother’s Country

³⁰Acts viii, 27

And when the young man arrived in his mother's country he rejoiced there in the honour [which he received] and in the gifts [that were made] to him. And when the people saw him they thought him to be the perfect likeness of Solomon the King. And they made obeisance to him, and they said unto him, "Hail, the royal father liveth!" And they brought unto him gifts and offerings, fatted cattle and food, as to their king. And [the people of] the whole country of Gâzâ, as far as the border of Judah, were stirred up and they said, "This is King Solomon." And there were some who said, "The King is in Jerusalem building his house" – now he had finished building the House of God – and others said, "This is Solomon the King, the son of David." And they were perplexed, and they disputed with one another, and they sent off spies mounted on horses, who were to seek out King Solomon and to find out if he were actually in Jerusalem, or if he were with them [in Gâzâ]. And the spies came to the watchmen of the city of Jerusalem, and they found King Solomon there, and they made obeisance to him, and they said unto him, "Hail, may the royal father live! [Our] country is disturbed because there hath come into it a merchant who resembleth thee in form and appearance, without the smallest alteration or variation. He resembleth thee in noble carriage and in splendid form, and in stature and in goodly appearance; he lacketh nothing in respect of these and is in no way different from thyself. His eyes are gladsome, like unto those of a man who hath drunk wine, his legs are graceful and slender, and the tower of his neck is like unto the tower of David thy father. He is like unto thee exactly in every respect, and every member of his whole body is like unto thine."

And King Solomon answered and said unto them, "Where is it then that he wisheth to go?" And they answered and said unto him, "We have not enquired of him, for he is awesome like thyself. But his own people, when we asked them, 'Whence have ye come and whither do ye go?' said, 'We have come from the dominions of Hendakê (Candace) and Ethiopia, and we are going to the country of Judah to King Solomon.'" And when King Solomon heard this his heart was perturbed and he was glad in his soul, for in those days he had no children, except a boy who was seven years old and whose name was Îyôrbe'âm (Rehoboam). It happened to

Solomon even as Paul stateth, saying, "God hath made foolishness the wisdom of this world,"³¹ for Solomon had made a plan in his wisdom and said, "By one thousand women I shall beget one thousand men children, and I shall inherit the countries of the enemy, and I will overthrow [their] idols." But [God] only gave him three children. His eldest son was the King of Ethiopia, the son of the Queen of Ethiopia, and was the firstborn of whom [God] spake prophetically, "God sware unto David in righteousness, and repented not, 'Of the fruit of thy body will I make to sit upon thy throne.'"³² And God gave unto David His servant grace before Him, and granted unto him that there should sit upon the throne of Godhead One of his seed in the flesh, from the Virgin, and should judge the living and the dead, and reward every man according to his work, One to whom praise is meet, our Lord Jesus Christ, for ever and ever, Amen. And He gave him one on the earth who should become king over the Tabernacle of the Law of the holy, heavenly Zion, that is to say, the King of Ethiopia. And as for those who reigned, who were not [of] Israel, that was due to the transgression of the law and the commandment, whereat God was not pleased.

35. How King Solomon Sent to his Son the Commander of his Army

And Solomon the King sent the commander of his army, on whose hand he was wont to lean, with gifts and meat and drink to entertain that traveller. And the commander set out with a great number of wagons, and he came to Bayna-Lehkem, and embraced him, and gave him everything that Solomon the King had sent unto him. And he said unto him, "Make haste and come with me, for the heart of the King is burnt up as with fire with the love of thee. Peradventure he will find out for himself whether thou art his own son or his brother; for in thine appearance and in thy conversation (or, manner) thou art in no way different from him. And now, rise up quickly, for my lord the King said unto me, 'Haste and bring him

³¹I Corinthians i, 20.

³²II Samuel vii, 17; Psalm cxxxii, 11.

hither to me in honour, and comfort, and with suitable service, and in joy and gladness.'" And the young man answered and said unto him, "I thank God, the Lord of Israel, that I have found grace with my lord the King without having seen his face; his word hath rejoiced me. And now I will put my trust in the Lord of Israel that He will show me the King, and will bring me back safely to my mother the Queen, and to my country Ethiopia."

And Joas (?), the son of Yôdâhê,³³ the commander of the army of King Solomon, answered and said unto Bayna-Lehkem, "My lord, this is a very small matter, and thou wilt find far greater joy and pleasure with my lord the King. And as concerning what thou sayest, 'my mother' and 'my country,' Solomon the King is better than thy mother, and this our country is better than thy country. And as for thy country, we have heard that it is a land of cold and cloud, and a country of glare and burning heat, and a region of snow and ice. And when the sons of Noah, Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, divided the world among them, they looked on thy country with wisdom and saw that, although it was spacious and broad, it was a land of whirlwind and burning heat, and [therefore] gave it to Canaan, the son of Ham, as a portion for himself and his seed for ever. But the land that is ours is the land of inheritance (i.e., the promised land), which God hath given unto us according to the oath that He swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey, where sustenance is [ours] without anxiety, a land that yieldeth fruit of every kind in its season without exhausting labour, a land which God keepeth watch over continually from one year to the beginning of the revolution of the next. All this is thine, and we are thine, and we will be thine heirs, and thou shalt dwell in our country, for thou art the seed of David, the lord of my lord, and unto thee belongeth this throne of Israel."

And the headmen of the merchant Tâmrîn answered and said unto Benaiah, "Our country is the better. The air (i.e., climate) of our country is

³³There is a mistake here. The author had in his mind Joab, the captain of David's host. Several of the MSS. have the reading "Benyâs," i.e., Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada (see 1 Kings ii, 35), who was put in Joab's room.

good, for it is without burning heat and fire, and the water of our country is good, and sweet, and floweth in rivers, moreover the tops of our mountains run with water. And we do not do as ye do in your country, that is to say, dig very deep wells [in search of] water, and we do not die through the heat of the sun; but even at noonday we hunt wild animals, namely, the wild buffaloes, and gazelles, and birds, and small animals. And in the winter God taketh heed unto us from [one] year to the beginning of the course of the next. And in the springtime the people eat what they have trodden with the foot as [in] the land of Egypt, and as for our trees they produce good crops of fruit, and the wheat, and the barley, and all our fruits, and cattle are good and wonderful. But there is one thing that ye have wherein ye are better than we are, namely wisdom, and because of it we are journeying to you."

And Joas (read Benaiah), the commander of the army of King Solomon, answered [saying], "What is better than wisdom? For wisdom hath founded the earth, and made strong the heavens, and fettered the waves of the sea so that it might not cover the earth. However, rise up and let us go to my lord, for his heart is greatly moved by love for thee, and he hath sent me to bring thee [to him] with all the speed possible."

And the son of the Queen rose up, and arrayed Joas (Benaiah), the son of Yôdâhê, and the fifty men who were in his retinue, in gorgeous raiment, and they rose up to go to Jerusalem to Solomon the King. And when they came nigh unto the place where the horses were exercised and trained, Joas (Benaiah), the son of Yôdâhê, went on in front, and came to the place where Solomon was, and he told him that [the son of the Queen] was well-favoured in his appearance, and that his voice was pleasant, and that he resembled him in form, and that his whole bearing was exceedingly noble. And the King said unto him, "Where is he? Did I not send thee forth to bring him as quickly as possible?" And Joas (Benaiah) said unto him, "He is here, I will bring him quickly." And Joas (Benaiah) went and said unto the young man, "Rise up, O my master, and come"; and making Bayna-Lehkem to go quickly he brought him to the King's Gate. And when all the soldiers saw him they made obeisance unto him, and they said, "Behold, King Solomon hath gone forth from his abode." And when the men who

were inside came forth, they marvelled, and they went back to their places, and again they saw the King upon his throne; and wondering they went forth again and looked at the young man, and they were incapable of speaking and of saying anything. And when Joas (Benaiah), the son of Yôdâhê, came in again to announce to the King the arrival of the young man, there was none standing before the King, but all Israel had thronged outside to see him.

36. How King Solomon Held Intercourse with his Son

And Joas (Benaiah), the son of Yôdâhê, went out and brought Bayna-Lehkem inside. And when King Solomon saw him he rose up, and moved forward to welcome him, and he loosed the band of his apparel from his shoulder, and he embraced him, with his hands [resting] on his breast, and he kissed his mouth, and forehead, and eyes, and he said unto him, "Behold, my father David hath renewed his youth and hath risen from the dead." And Solomon the King turned round to those who had announced the arrival of the young man, and he said unto them, "Ye said unto me, 'He resembleth thee,' but this is not my stature, but the stature of David my father in the days of his early manhood, and he is handsomer than I am." And Solomon the King rose up straightway, and he went into his chamber, and he arrayed the young man in apparel made of cloth embroidered with gold, and a belt of gold, and he set a crown upon his head, and a ring upon his finger. And having arrayed him in glorious apparel which bewitched the eyes, he seated him upon his throne, that he might be equal in rank to himself. And he said unto the nobles and officers of Israel, "O ye who treat me with contumely among yourselves and say that I have no son, look ye, this is my son, the fruit that hath gone forth from my body, whom God, the Lord of Israel, hath given me, when I expected it not."

And his nobles answered and said unto him, "Blessed be the mother who hath brought forth this young man, and blessed be the day wherein thou hadst union with the mother of this young man. For there hath risen upon us from the root of Jesse a shining man who shall be king of the posterity of our posterity of his seed. Concerning his father none shall ask

questions, and none shall say, 'Whence is his coming?' Verily he is an Israelite of the seed of David, fashioned perfectly in the likeness of his father's form and appearance; we are his servants, and he shall be our king." And they brought unto him gifts, each according to his greatness. And the young man took that ring which his mother had given him when they were alone together, and he said unto his father, "Take this ring, and remember the word which thou didst speak unto the Queen, and give unto us a portion of the fringe of the covering of the Tabernacle of the Law of God, so that we may worship it all our days, and all those who are subject unto us, and those who are in the kingdom of the Queen." And the King answered and said unto him, "Why givest thou me the ring as a sign? Without thy giving me a sign I discovered the likeness of thy form to myself, for thou art indeed my son."

And the merchant Tâmrîn spake again unto King Solomon, saying, "Hearken, O King, unto the message which thy handmaiden, the Queen my mistress, sent by me: 'Take this young man, anoint him, consecrate him, and bless him, and make him king over our country, and give him the command that a woman shall never again reign [in this country], and send him back in peace. And peace be with the might of thy kingdom, and with thy brilliant wisdom. As for me, I never wished that he should come where thou art, but he urged me exceedingly that he should be allowed to come to thee. And besides, I was afraid for him lest he should fall sick on the journey, either through thirst for water, or the heat of the sun, and I should bring my grey hairs down to the grave with sorrow. Then I put my trust in the holy, heavenly Zion, the Tabernacle of the Law of God, that thou wilt not withhold it in thy wisdom. For thy nobles cannot return to their houses and look upon their children, by reason of the abundance of wisdom and food which thou givest them, according to their desire, and they say, "The table of Solomon is better for us than enjoying and gratifying ourselves in our own houses." And because of this I, through my fear, sought protection so that thou mightest not stablish him with thee, but mightest send him [back] to me in peace, without sickness and suffering, in love and in peace, that my heart might rejoice at having encountered thee.'"

And the King answered and said unto him, “Besides travailing with him and suckling him, what else hath a woman to do with a son? A daughter belongeth to the mother, and a boy to the father. God cursed Eve, saying, ‘Bring forth children in anguish³⁴ and with sorrow of heart, and [after] thy bringing forth shall take place thy return to thy husband’; with an oath He said, ‘Bring forth,’ and having sworn, thy return to thy husband [shall follow]. As for this my son, I will not give him to the Queen, but I will make him king over Israel. For this is my firstborn, the first of my race whom God hath given me.”

And then Solomon sent unto the young man evening and morning dainty meats, and apparel of honour, and gold and silver. And he said unto him, “It is better for thee to dwell here in our country with us, where the House of God is, and where the Tabernacle of the Law of God is, and where God dwelleth.” And the young man his son sent a message unto him, saying, “Gold, and silver, and [rich] apparel are not wanting in our country. But I came hither in order to hear thy wisdom, and to see thy face, and to salute thee, and to pay homage to thy kingdom, and to make obeisance to thee, and then [I intended thee] to send me away to my mother and to my own country. For no man hateth the place where he was born, and everyone loveth the things of his native country. And though thou givest me dainty meats I do not love them, and they are not suitable for my body, but the meats whereby I grow and become strong are those that are gratifying to me. And although (thy) country pleaseth me even as doth a garden, yet is not my heart gratified therewith; the mountains of the land of my mother where I was born are far better in my sight. And as for the Tabernacle of the God of Israel, if I adore it where I am, it will give me glory, and I shall look upon the House of God which thou hast builded, and I will make offering and make supplication to it there. And as for Zion, the Tabernacle of the Law of God, give me [a portion of] the fringe of the covering thereof, and I will worship it with my mother and with all those who are subject to my sovereignty. For my Lady the Queen hath already rooted out all those who served idols, and those who worshipped strange

³⁴See Genesis iii, 16.

objects, and stones and trees, and she hath rooted them out and hath brought them to Zion, the Tabernacle of the Law of God. For she had heard from thee and had learned, and she did according to thy word, and we worship God." And the King was not able to make his son consent to remain [in Jerusalem] with all [his persuadings].

37. How Solomon Asked his Son Questions

And again Solomon held converse with his son when he was alone, and he said unto him, "Why dost thou wish to depart from me? What dost thou lack here that thou wouldst go to the country of the heathen? And what is it that driveth thee to forsake the kingdom of Israel?"

And his son answered and said unto him, "It is impossible for me to live here. Nay, I must go to my mother, thou favouring me with thy blessing. For thou hast a son who is better than I am, namely *Ïyôrbe'âm* (Rehoboam) who was born of thy wife lawfully, whilst my mother is not thy wife according to the law."

And the King answered and said unto him, "Since thou speakest in this wise, according to the law I myself am not the son of my father David, for he took the wife of another man whom he caused to be slain in battle, and he begot me by her; but God is compassionate and He hath forgiven him. Who is wickeder and more foolish than men? and who is as compassionate and as wise as God? God hath made me of my father, and thee hath He made of me, according to His Will. And as for thee, O my son, thou fearer of our Lord God, do not violence to the face of thy father, so that in times to come thou mayest not meet with violence from him that shall go forth from thy loins, and that thy seed may prosper upon the earth. My son Rehoboam is a boy six years old, and thou art my firstborn son, and thou hast come to reign, and to lift up the spear of him that begot thee. Behold, I have been reigning for nine and twenty years, and thy mother came to me in the seventh year of my kingdom; and please God, He shall make me to attain to the span of the days of my father. And when I shall be gathered to my fathers, thou shalt sit upon my throne, and thou shalt reign in my stead, and the elders of Israel shall love thee exceedingly; and I will make a

marriage for thee, and I will give thee as many queens and concubines as thou desirest. And thou shalt be blessed in this land of inheritance with the blessing that God gave unto our fathers, even as He covenanted with Noah His servant, and with Abraham His friend, and the righteous men their descendants after them down to David my father. Thou seest me, a weak man, upon the throne of my fathers, and thou shalt be like myself after me, and thou shalt judge nations without number, and families that cannot be counted. And the Tabernacle of the God of Israel shall belong to thee and to thy seed, whereto thou shalt make offerings and make prayers to ascend. And God shall dwell within it for ever and shall hear thy prayers therein, and, thou shalt do the good pleasure of God therein, and thy remembrance shall be in it from generation to generation.”

And his son answered and said unto him, “O my lord, it is impossible for me to leave my country and my mother, for my mother made me to swear by her breasts that I would not remain here but would return to her quickly, and also that I would not marry a wife here. And the Tabernacle of the God of Israel shall bless me wheresoever I shall be, and thy prayer shall accompany me whithersoever I go. I desired to see thy face, and to hear thy voice, and to receive thy blessing, and now I desire to depart to my mother in safety.”

38. How the King Planned to Send Away his Son with the Children of the Nobles

And then Solomon the King went back into his house, and he caused to be gathered together his councillors, and his officers, and the elders of his kingdom, and he said unto them, “I am not able to make this young man consent [to dwell here]. And now, hearken ye unto me – and to what I shall say unto you. Come, let us make him king of the country of Ethiopia, together with your children; ye sit on my right hand and on my left hand, and in like manner the eldest of your children shall sit on his right hand and on his left hand. Come, O ye councillors and officers, let us give [him] your firstborn children, and we shall have two kingdoms; I will rule here with you, and our children shall reign there. And I put my trust in God

that a third time He will give me seed, and that a third king will be to me. Now Balt.âsôr, the King of Rôm, wisheth that I would give my son to his daughter, and to make him with his daughter king over the whole country of Rôm. For besides her he hath no other child, and he hath sworn that he will only make king a man who is of the seed of David my father. And if we rule there we shall be three kings. And Rehoboam shall reign here over Israel. For thus saith the prophecy of David my father 'The seed of Solomon shall become three heads of kingdoms upon the earth.' And we will send unto them priests, and we will ordain laws for them, and they shall worship and serve the God of Israel under the three royal heads. And God shall be praised by the race of His people Israel, and be exalted in all the earth, even as my father wrote in his Book, saying, 'Tell the nations that God is king';³⁵ and again he said, 'Announce to the peoples His work, praise Him and sing ye unto Him'; and again he saith, 'Praise God with a new song. His praise is in the congregation of the righteous, Israel shall rejoice in his Creator.'³⁶ Unto us belongeth the glory of sovereignty and we will praise our Creator. And the nations who serve idols shall look upon us, and they shall fear us, and make us kings over them, and they shall praise God and fear Him. And now, come ye, let us make this young man king, and let us send him away with your children, ye who possess wealth and position. According to the position and wealth that ye have here shall your children [rule] there. And they shall see the ordering of royalty, and we will establish them according to our law, and we will direct them and give them commands and send them away to reign there."

And the priests, and the officers, and the councillors answered and said unto him, "Do thou send thy firstborn, and we will send our children also according to thy wish. Who can resist the commandment of God and the king? They are the servants of thee and of thy seed as thou hast proclaimed. If thou wishest, thou canst sell them and their mothers to be slaves; it is not for us to transgress thy command and the command of the Lord thy God." And then they made ready to do for them (i.e., their

³⁵Compare Psalm xcv.

³⁶Compare Psalm xcvi.

children) what it was right to do, and to send them into the country of Ethiopia, so that they might reign there and dwell there for ever, they and their seed from generation to generation.

39. How They Made the Son of Solomon King

And they made ready the ointment of the oil of kingship, and the sounds of the large horn, and the small horn, and the flute and the pipes, and the harp and the drum filled the air; and the city resounded with cries of joy and gladness. And they brought the young man into the Holy of Holies, and he laid hold upon the horns of the altar, and sovereignty was given unto him by the mouth of Zadok the priest, and by the mouth of Joas (Benaiah) the priest, the commander of the army of King Solomon, and he anointed him with the holy oil of the ointment of kingship. And he went out from the house of the Lord, and they called his name David, for the name of a king came to him by the law. And they made him to ride upon the mule of King Solomon, and they led him round about the city, and said, "We have appointed thee from this moment"; and then they cried out to him, "Bâh. [Long] live the royal father!" And there were some who said, "It is meet and right that thy dominion of Ethiopia shall be from the River of Egypt to the west of the sun (i.e., to the setting sun); blessed be thy seed upon the earth—and from Shoa to the east of India, for thou wilt please [the people of these lands]. And the Lord God of Israel shall be unto thee a guide, and the Tabernacle of the Law of God shall be with all that thou lookest upon. And all thine enemies and foes shall be overthrown before thee, and completion and finish shall be unto thee and unto thy seed after thee; thou shalt judge many nations and none shall judge thee." And again his father blessed him and said unto him, "The blessing of heaven and earth shall be thy blessing," and all the congregation of Israel said, "Amen." And his father also said unto Zadok the priest, "Make him to know and tell him concerning the judgment and decree of God which he shall observe there" [in Ethiopia].

40. How Zadok the Priest Gave Commands to David the King

And Zadok the priest answered and said unto the young man, "Hearken unto what I shall say unto thee. And if thou wilt perform it thou shalt live to God, and if thou dost not God will punish thee, and thou shalt become the least of all the nations, and thou shalt be vanquished by thy foes. And God shall turn away His face from thee, and thou shalt be dismayed, and sad, and sorrowful in thy heart, and thy sleep shall be without refreshing and health. And hearken unto the word of God, and perform it, and withdraw not thyself either to the right hand or the left, in respect of that which we command thee this day; and thou shalt serve no other god. And if thou wilt not hear the word of God, then hearken to all the curses here mentioned which shall come upon thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the field, cursed shalt thou be in the city. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy land, cursed shall be the fruit of thy belly, and the herds of thy cattle, and the flocks of thy sheep. And God shall send upon thee famine and pestilence, and He shall destroy that whereto thou hast put thine hand, until at length He shall destroy thee, because thou hast not hearkened to His word. And the heavens which are above thee shall become brass, and the earth which is beneath thee shall become iron; and God shall make the rain [which should fall upon] thy land to be darkness only, and dust shall descend from heaven upon thee until it shall cover thee up and destroy thee. And thou shalt be smitten in battle before thine enemies. Thou shalt go forth to attack them by one road, and by seven ways shalt thou take to flight before their faces, and thou shalt be routed; and thy dead body shall become food for the fowl of the heavens, and there shall be none to bury thee. And God shall punish thee with sores; (or, leprosy), and with the wasting disease, and with the fever that destroyeth, and with the punishments (i.e., plagues) of Egypt, and with blindness and terror of heart; and thou shalt grope about by day like a blind man in the darkness, and thou shalt find none to help thee in [thy] trouble. Thou shalt marry a wife, and another man shall carry her away from thee by force. Thou shalt build a house, and shalt not dwell therein. And thou shalt plant a vineyard and shalt not harvest the grapes thereof. Men shall slay thy fat oxen before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat of their flesh. Men shall snatch away

thine ass, and shall not bring him back to thee. Thy sheep shall run to the slaves and to thine enemy, and thou shalt find none to help thee. And thy sons and thy daughters shall follow other people, and thou shalt see with thine own eyes how they are smitten, and shalt be able to do nothing. An enemy whom thou knowest not shall devour the food of thy land and thy labour, and thou shalt not be able to prevent him; and thou shalt become a man of suffering and calamity. When the day dawneth thou shalt say, 'Would that the evening had come!' and when the evening cometh thou shalt say, 'Would that the morning had come!' through the greatness of thy fear. [All these things shall come upon thee] if thou wilt not hearken to the word of the Lord. But if thou wilt truly hearken unto the word of the Lord—hear thou—the goodness of God shall find thee, and thou shalt rule the countries of the enemy, and thou shalt inherit everlasting glory from the Lord God of Israel, Who ruleth everything. For He honoureth him that honoureth Him, and He loveth him that loveth Him, for He is the Lord of death and of life, and He directeth and ruleth all the world with His wisdom, and His power, and His [mighty] arm."

41. Concerning the Blessing of Kings

"Hearken thou now to the blessing that shall come upon thee, if thou wilt do the Will of God. Thou shalt be blessed in all thy ways, blessed shalt thou be in the city, blessed shalt thou be in the field, blessed shalt thou be in thy house, blessed shalt thou be outside it, and blessed shall be the fruit of thy belly. And those who were gathered together said, Amen. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy land. Amen. Blessed shall be the fountains of thy waters. Amen. Blessed shall be the fruit that thou hast planted. Amen. Blessed shall be thy cattle-runs and the flocks of thy sheep. Amen. Blessed shall be thy granaries and thy barns. Amen. Blessed shalt thou be in thy coming in. Amen. Blessed shalt thou be in thy going forth. Amen.

"And God shall bring to thee thine enemies who have risen up against thee, and they shall be trodden small beneath thy feet. Amen. And God shall send His blessing on thy houses and on everything to which thou hast put thine hand. Amen. And God shall multiply for thee good things,

namely, children of thy body, produce of thy land, and births among thy flocks And herds. Amen. And in the land which He swore [to give to] thy fathers, He will give thee according to the days of heaven. Amen. And God shall open for thee the storehouse of the blessing of the heavens, and He shall give thee blessed rain, and shall bless the fruit of thy labour. Amen. Thou shalt lend unto many peoples, but thou shalt not borrow. Amen. Thou shalt rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over thee. Amen. And God shall set thee at the head and not at the tail, and thou shalt be at the top and not at the bottom. Amen. And thou shalt gather together of every blessing of the land for thy flocks and herds, and thou shalt take, the spoil of the nations for thine army, and they shall bow down to thee to the face of the earth, to thy sovereignty, because of the greatness of thy glory. Thine honour shall rise up like the cedar, and like the Morning Star, the brilliance of thy glory shall be before all the nations of the earth, and before every tribe of thy people Israel.

“For God shall be with thee in all thy ways, and He will perform thy will in everything that thou determinest. And thou shalt inherit the countries of thine enemy, and the greatness of thy people shall be praised because of the greatness of thine awesomeness, and because of the multitude of thy soldiers. And all those who do not perform the Will of God will fear thee because thou dost do His Will, and dost serve Him, and therefore He will give thee great majesty in the sight of those who see thee. Their hearts shall tremble before the bridle of thy horses, and the quiver of thy bow, and the glitter of thy shield, and they shall bow down to the face of the earth, for their hearts shall be terrified at the sight of thy majesty. And when those who are in the mountains see thee afar off they shall come down to the plain, and those who are on the seas and in the deep waters shall come forth, so that the Lord may bring them into thy hand, because they have transgressed the command of God. And thou, when thou doest His Will, shalt receive from Him everything for which thou, hast asked; for if thou lovest Him He will love thee, and if thou keepest His commandment He will grant thee the petition of thy heart, and everything that thou seekest thou shalt receive from Him. For He is the Good One to the good, and the Compassionate to the compassionate, and He doeth the

will of those who fear Him, and He giveth a reward to those who wait patiently for Him. Be patient in respect of wrath, and at the end He will make thee to rejoice; love righteousness and He will make life to blossom for thee. Be a good man to the good, and a reprover of sinners. And put aside the wickedness of the evil man by rebuking and correcting him, and condemn and disgrace the evil man who doeth violence to his neighbour in the court of law. And do justice to the poor man and to the orphans, and release them from the hand of him that doeth them wrong. And deliver him that is forsaken and the man who is in misery, and release him from the hand of him that causeth him to suffer. Judge not with partiality, and have no respect of persons, but judge righteously. When thou undertakest to judge, love not gifts (i.e., bribes) and accept not persons. And admonish thy governors (or, judges) that they be free from the taking of gifts, and that they accept not the persons of their friends, or of their enemies, or of rich or poor, in giving judgment; and they shall surely judge their neighbours in righteousness, and with a just judgment.

42. Concerning the Ten Commandments

“And hear ye, Israel, that which God commandeth you to keep; He saith, ‘I am the Lord thy God Who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. There shall be no other gods besides Me, and thou shalt not make any god that is graven, and no god that is like what is in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water which is under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, and thou shalt not serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. [I am He] Who visiteth the sin of the father on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, and I perform mercy to a thousand (or, ten thousand) generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

“Thou shalt not swear a false oath in the Name of the Lord thy God, for the Lord will not hold innocent the man who sweareth a false oath in His Name.

“And observe the day of the Sabbath to sanctify it, even as the Lord thy God commanded. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day, the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt do no work at all, neither thyself, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy nor thine ass, nor any beast, nor the stranger that abideth with thee. For in six days God made the heavens and the earth, and the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day, and because of this God blessed the seventh day and declared it free [from work].

“Honour thy father and thy mother so that may be good to thee th many days that thou shalt find in the land which the Lord thy God hath given thee.

“Thou shalt not go with the wife of [another] man.

“Thou shalt not slay a life.

“Thou shalt not commit fornication. Thou shalt not steal.’

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his house, nor his land, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his cattle, nor his ass, nor any of the beasts that thy neighbour hath acquired.”

This is the word which God hath spoken, His Law and His Ordinance. And those who sin He rebuketh, so that they may not be confirmed in error, and may restrain themselves from the pollution wherewith God is not pleased. And this is the thing with which God is not pleased, and it is right that men should abstain from it.

“No man shall uncover the shame of one with whom he hath kinship; for I am the Lord your God. The shame of thy father and mother thou shalt not uncover, for it is thy mother. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy father’s wife, for it is the shame of thy mother. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy sister who was begotten by thy father or thy mother. Whether she was born unto him from outside or whether she is a kinswoman of thine thou shalt not uncover her shame. Thou shalt not uncover the shame either of thy son’s daughter, or the shame of the daughter of thy daughter, for it is thine own shame. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of the daughter of thy father’s wife, for she is thy sister, the daughter of thy mother, and thou shalt not uncover her shame. Thou shalt not uncover the

shame of thy father's sister, for she is of thy father's house. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy mother's sister, for she is of thy mother's house. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of the wife of thy father's brother, for she is thy kin[swoman]. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy son's wife, for she is thy son's wife. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy daughter and the wife of thy brother's son, for it is thine own shame. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy brother's wife, for it is thy brother's shame as long as thy brother liveth. Thou shalt not uncover the shame of a woman and that of her daughter, nor that of the daughter of her son, nor that of the daughter of her daughter. Thou shalt not cause their shame to be uncovered; it is thy house and it is sin.

“And thou shalt not take to wife a maiden and her sister so as to make them jealous each of the other, and thou shalt not uncover their shame, nor the shame of the one or the other as long as the first sister is alive. Thou shalt not go to a menstruous woman, until she is purified, to uncover her shame whilst she is still unclean. And thou shalt not go to the wife of thy neighbour to lie with her, and thou shalt not let thy seed enter her.

“And thou shalt not vow thy children to Moloch to defile the Name of the Holy One, the Name of the Lord.

“And thou shalt not lie with a man as with a woman, for it is pollution.

“And thou shalt not go to a beast and thou shalt not lie with it so as to make thy seed go out upon it, that thou mayest not be polluted thereby. And a woman shall not go to a beast to lie with it, for it is pollution. And ye shall not pollute yourselves with any of these things, for with them the nations whom I have driven out before you have polluted themselves, and with them ye shall not pollute your bodies.

“And sanctify ye your souls and your bodies too God, for He is the Holy One, and He loveth those who sanctify their souls and their bodies to Him. For He is holy, and to be feared, and He is high, and merciful, and compassionate. And to Him praise is meet for ever and ever. Amen.”

43. How the Men of the Army of Israel Received [their] Orders

And the city rejoiced because the King had made his son King, and had appointed him King from his own territory to that of another. But the city sorrowed also because the King had commanded that they should give their children who were called "firstborn." And those who were on the right hand should sit in the same way as their fathers sat with King Solomon, even so should they sit at the right hand of his son David, the King of Ethiopia; and those who were on the left hand should sit as their fathers sat with King Solomon, even so should they sit on the left hand of his son David, the King of Ethiopia; and their rank should be like that of their fathers, and their names should be like those of their fathers. And each should be according to his ordinance, and each according to his greatness, and each according to his position of authority, and each according to his wages, and each according to his rank; in this wise shall they be. As Solomon did to his nobles so shall David do to his nobles; and as Solomon ordained for his governors so shall David order the direction of his house.

And the names of those who were appointed to be sent away were these:

'Azâryâs (Azariah), the son of Zâdôk, the priest, who was the high priest.

'Êlyâs, the son of 'Arnî the Archdeacon; now the father of 'Arnî was the Archdeacon of Nathan the prophet.

'Adrâm, the son of 'Ardêrônes, leader of the peoples.

Fanķêrâ, the son of Sôbâ, scribe of the oxen.

'Akônĥêl, the son of Tôfêl, the youth.

Sâmnëyâs, the son of 'Akîtâlam, the recorder.

Fiķârôs, the son of Nëyâ, commander of the armed men, that is to say, chief of the troops.

Lêwândôs, the son of 'Akîrê, commander of the recruits

Fâķûtên, the son of 'Adrây, commander on the sea.

Mâtân, the son of Benyâs, chief of the house.

Ad'araz, the son of Kîrêm, servant of decorations.

Dalakëm, the son of Mâtrêm, chief of the horse-soldiers.

'Adaryôs, the son of Nêdrôs, chief of the foot-soldiers.

'Awstĕrân, the son of Yôdâd, bearer of the "glory."

'Astar'ayôn, the son of 'Asâ, messenger of the palace (?).

Îmî, the son of Matâtyâs, commander of the host(?)

Mâkrî, the son of 'Abîsâ, judge of the palace.

'Abîs, the son of Kâryôs, assessor of taxes (tithes?).

Lîk Wendeyôs, the son of Nĕlenteyôs, judge of assembly.

Kârmî, the son of Ḥad.nĕyâs, chief of the royal workmen.

Serânyâs, the son of 'Akâz'êl, administrator of the King's house.

These are all those who were given to David, king of Ethiopia, the son of Solomon, King of Israel. And Solomon also gave him horses, and chariots, and riding-camels, and mules, and wagons for carrying loads, and gold, and silver, and splendid apparel, and byssus, and purple, and gems, and pearls and precious stones; and he gave his son everything that would be wished for in the country of Ethiopia.

And then they made ready to set out, and [though] there was great joy with the nobles of the King of Ethiopia, there was sadness with the nobles of the King of Israel, because through the firstborn son of Solomon, King of Israel, that is to say, the King of Ethiopia, the firstborn sons of the nobles of Israel were given to rule over the country of Ethiopia with the son of Solomon the King. Then they assembled together and wept, together with their fathers, and their mothers, and their relations, and their kinsfolk, and their peoples, and their countrymen. And they cursed the King secretly and reviled him because he had seized their sons against their will. But unto the King they said, "Because of this thou hast done well. Thy wisdom is so good that the kingdom of Israel, by the Will of God and by thy wisdom, extendeth to the country of Ethiopia. And God will gather together the other kingdoms [of the world] into thy hand, for thou hast a right mind towards God, and thou wishest that they shall serve the God of Israel, and that idols may be destroyed out of the world."

And they praised him and said unto him, "Now know we that God spake concerning thee to our father Abraham [when He said], 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.'" And they made their faces to appear happy, and they jested before him, and they praised him exceedingly (i.e., fulsomely) because of his wisdom. And when they said

these things unto him, he understood them in [his] wisdom, and bore with them patiently; now God beareth with us patiently knowing well all our sins. And the whole earth, and the heavens, and the ends of the world, and the sea, and the dry land, are the kingdom of God. He judgeth. And He hath given the earth to the king to be subject unto him, that he may judge (or, rule), as He doth, those who do evil so that he may requite them with evil, and those who do good so that he may reward them with good. For the Spirit of God resteth in the heart of the king, and His hands are in his mind, and His knowledge is in his understanding.

44. How it is not a Seemly Thing to Revile the King

Now it is not a seemly thing to revile the king, for he is the anointed of God. It is neither seemly nor good. If he doeth that which is good he will not suffer loss in three kingdoms: *FIRST*, God shall overthrow for him his enemy, and he shall not be seized by the hand of his enemy. *SECONDLY*, God shall make him reign with Him and with His righteousness, and shall make him to sit on His right hand. *THIRDLY*, God shall make him to reign upon earth with glory and joy, and shall direct his kingdom for him, and shall bring down the nations under his feet. And if he treateth God lightly, and doth not do that which is good, and doth not himself walk in the path of uprightness, God shall work as He pleaseth against him; on earth He will make his days to be few, and in heaven (sic) his place of abode shall be the habitation of Sheôl with the Devil. And on earth he shall enjoy neither health nor gladness [and he shall live] in fear and terror, without peace and with perturbation.

It is not a good thing for any of those who are under the dominion of a king to revile him, for retribution belongeth to God. Now the priests are like the prophets, only better than the prophets, for the mysteries are given unto them, so that they may lay hold upon the sun of righteousness, whilst the Seraphim, who were created out of fire, are only able to lay hold upon the mysteries with tongues. As for the priests He named them "salt," and moreover, He named the priests "lamp" and also "light of the world," and also "the sun that lighteneth the darkness," Christ, the Sun of

righteousness, being in their hearts. And a priest, who hath in him understanding, rebuketh the king concerning that he hath seen; and that which he hath not seen God will enquire into, and there is none who can call Him to account. Moreover, the people must not revile the bishops and the priests, for they are the children of God and the men of His house, for which reason they must rebuke [men] for their sins and errors. And thou, O priest, if thou seest sin in a well-known man, shalt not hesitate to rebuke him; let neither sword nor exile make thee afraid. And hear how angry God was with Isaiah because he did not rebuke King 'Ûzyân (Uzziah). And hearken also concerning Samuel the Prophet, how he rebuked Saul³⁷ the king, being in no way afraid of him, and how he rent his kingdom [from him] by his word; and [hearken also] how Elijah [rebuked] Ahab.³⁸ Do thou then fear not, and rebuke and teach him that transgresseth.

And Israel from of old reviled their kings and provoked their prophets to wrath, and in later times they crucified their Saviour. But believing Christian folk dwell in peace, without sickness and suffering, without hatred and offence, with our king³⁹ who loveth God and who removeth not from his heart the thing of righteousness, and faith in the Churches and in the believers. And his enemies shall be scattered by the might of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

³⁷See I Samuel, chap. xv.

³⁸I Kings, chap. xvii.

³⁹The name of the reigning king to be added by the copyist.