

*Adam and Moses*



Copyright by the author

## INDEX

Preface.....	5
Codicil.....	8

### The Book of Genesis

Time.....	9
Paradise.....	12
Disobedience and punishment.....	16
Cain and Abel.....	22
Descendants of Adam and Eve.....	28
The Great Flood.....	32
Sumer.....	37
The children of Noah.....	39
Babylonia.....	41
The Tower of Babel.....	45
Mesopotamia.....	47
Abram leaves Ur.....	49
Saray in Egypt.....	52
Abram returns to Canaan.....	56
The Promise.....	58
Birth of Ishmael.....	59
The Covenant.....	60
Abraham hallucinates further.....	62
Obliteration of Sodom and Gomorrah.....	64
Earlier adventure of Abram and Saray in Palestine.....	68
Birth of Isaac.....	71
Abraham's craze.....	73
Sarah's death.....	76
Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca.....	78
Abraham's death.....	83
Isaac in Gerar.....	84
Jacob dupes Isaac.....	87

Jacob treks to Mesopotamia.....	90
Laban deceives Jacob.....	92
Jacob defrauds Laban.....	94
Escape from Mesopotamia.....	97
Jacob faces Esau.....	100
Rape of Dinah.....	103
Retreat to Hebron.....	105
Esau's descendants.....	106
Joseph daydreams.....	108
Coition of Judah and Tamar.....	111
Joseph in Egypt.....	113
Joseph interprets dreams.....	117
Joseph's perseverance.....	119
Pharaoh dreams.....	125
Israel's sons go to Egypt.....	129
Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers.....	137
Israel travels to Egypt.....	139
The minister of dearth.....	141
Israel blesses Joseph.....	142
Jacob's interment.....	144
Egypt after Joseph.....	146

## **The Books of Moses**

A nation forgotten by God.....	149
The enslavement of the Israelites.....	151
Birth of Moses.....	154
Moses' young years.....	156
Moses flees Egypt.....	163
God talks to Moses.....	166
The mission.....	170
Moses' first visit to Pharaoh.....	174

The new mission.....	178
Moses' prodigies.....	180
Announcement of the tenth plague.....	190
Passover & execution of the firstborn.....	190
Consecration of the firstborn.....	195
The Red Sea opens.....	196
Mary's song and the sour fountain.....	199
A hail of quails and a downpour of manna.....	203
Thirst and war.....	205
Jethro's plan.....	207
God on Mount Sinai.....	211
The Decalogue.....	213
Some laws.....	216
More laws.....	218
Recommendations.....	220
God's covenant with Moses.....	222
The Golden Calf.....	223
The new Stone Tables.....	227
Departure from Sinai.....	231
The Sanctuary.....	232
Consecration of the Sanctuary.....	235
Moses' nightmare.....	237
The cult.....	244
Death of Mary.....	248
Death of Moses.....	250

## Preface

*Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto.*

Fairy-tales of God's will have been contrived in the minds of bold, insolent men. To this day, churches, synagogues and mosques keep on enhancing the old fables. The divine stories, written retrospectively and interpreted wildly, have entered the folklore of many nations and evolved into faith-producing legends.

Established religions have adopted the Book of Genesis as the biological foundation of their creed and the Book of Exodus as their political constitution. Both works describe incredible revelations of God to certain men. Our critique deals with such tales of creation and governance—not with the original egg born to a gigantic explosion fifteen billion years ago or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Human accounts assume that God preexisted everything. Sacred History starts with an act of God at the beginning of time. In the beginning, or close to it, for reasons of His own, God arranged ninety-two constellations of charged particles. This report has caused poets to call the universe, “A dream of God,” and scientists to bombard uranium in laboratories to “create” sixteen more elements in order to give them the names of bigheaded men and proud countries.

At the whim of Divine Energy, God's particles became the primary parts of Creation. From that action developed the world that we know and, perhaps, everything else that we ignore. In incremental quantities, God populated the primeval elements' atoms with two types of heavy particles, one charged positively and one electrically neutral, and let a third type, a very light

negatively charged particle, revolve around them somewhat like the moon around the earth. Some say that the spinning charges are components of the clock of Creation—men talk a lot.

Later, a man called Mendeleev classified God's elements by the weight of their particles. Mendeleev even predicted the discovery of elements not yet found, some of which may be elsewhere in the universe.

After the era of "no time," at least three thousand million years ago, God's elements had bonded into gaseous ammonia, methane gas and water vapor; these compounds covered the surface of the globe—all of Pangaea and Panthalassa. God, who has shown partiality to electricity, let lightning split the core of these gases, bonding the elements called carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen into the amino acids, the sugars and the DNA of life. A man named Oparin deduced what had happened based on the hypothesis that life is a system of substances undergoing chemical activity.

Some priests of science—science is a human endeavor based on observation—have proposed an initial explosion that created matter, gravity and electromagnetism, scattering elements all over the universe. A man called Gamow estimated a very hot universe at the beginning that filled space with particles of light stemming from thermonuclear reactions. Others have said that intelligence came to our planet on a comet and colonized life—men talk a lot.

God's elements resemble the cosmos. Space seems to be boundless upwards, towards the large, and downwards, towards the small. For now, we continue to search for the confines of the galaxies and the universe of subatomic particles.

Thus far, scientists, poets and artists have provided us with entertainment. A man called Baudelaire, for instance, has called God an atheist because He has no superior being to believe in. A man called Michelangelo has left extraordinary images of the first few members of Creation.

## Codicil

Considered *verbum de verbo*, the books of faith are nonsensical. The anecdotes compiled by its authors have contributed immensely to world madness.

About a thousand years after the patriarch Abraham, nomad tribes cohered by a theocracy settled the land to the west of the Jordan River. These people believed—or wanted others to believe—that God had chosen them to occupy a much larger territory. They claimed to descend from a man called Judah, the son of a patriarch called Israel, who had lived in Hebron.

Once the Jews acquired writing—perhaps from nearby Phoenician relatives—they began a temple-based tradition of storytelling. Their scribes assembled diverse tales from various sources, including Persia; some of these accounts may be rooted in History, others on hearsay or spoof. Scribes retroactively merged into the established creed the creation of the world, the discourses of the prophets, the deeds of kings and even crimes against humanity inspired by religion. God’s meetings with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Moses embellished some of their stories.

In the glory days of Judaism, temples were impressive spiritual institutions. Newer faiths, such as Christianity and Islam, adopted the old accounts put forth by Jewish scribes. When the Muslim and Christian doctrines expanded, the old Jewish books were much repeated all over the world. Today, the so-called *Old Testament* weighs heavily on the religious folklore of a good portion of the world. The most dominant societies of our time still call Biblical stories *Sacred History*.

# The Book of Genesis

## Time

*The earth was void and darkness was on the face of the deep.*

The promoters of the faith put God to work creating heaven and earth for man. That's how the image of *a first day* came about and how the world was born from a chaotic solitude. Space was created. That first day (or night) would have been immersed in a great darkness that enclosed the abyss between the waters and the sky. "It's better to have light too," thought the wise men and invented a sunless radiance.

The theory of life by organic molecules contradicted the tales of the men of God. At first, the believers terrorized those holding views offensive to their faith. But fanatical disputes and persecutions tend to make humanity less gullible. So, for the sake of peace, the nations of the world were told finally that, should Oparin's theory come to anything, God would've created whatever man had discovered.

*Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.*

Campaigners for the faiths had written books about God's performance during all of creation. On *a second day*, which for practical purposes could have come before the first, five thousand million years ago, God would have gathered the waters in the seas and uncovered dry lands. Landmasses would have risen in

the air and sunk into the sea; mountains would have been blown away by the winds and worn by rainfall; downpours would have cut grooves into the rock; warm periods would have been followed by ice ages; deserts would have spread and disappeared. All this has been written in the rings of trees, in the evolution of uranium into lead and in the layers of sedimentary rock.

The second day must have seen the birth and development of simple organisms such as bacteria, algae, fungi and protozoans. It was the time when God disseminated all kinds of seeds and plants over the earth too.

With a microscope, a man called Dujardin saw the little parts of God's creatures and called them "cells." These cells multiplied by division and formed societies of tissues, organs and organic systems; they were found to specialize in different activities and to make up plants and animals. Each cell was seen to have a center of energy called nucleus, rich in protein, separated by a porous membrane from a fluid populated by organelles. Further observation by others showed that plants and animals grew their different parts as the number of their identical cells increased.

God commanded the cells to organize into eyes, noses, kidneys, legs, etc. Strands of chromatin took notice of God's orders on coded tablets called "genes."

*Let there be lights.*

On a *third day*, God fixed the sun and the moon in the firmament. This day either came before the second day or a new type of force, sunlight, was created.

Light energy had the power to change, within plants, carbon dioxide and water into oxygen and an energy storage

compound called glucose. This happened via a catalyst called chlorophyll that God had packed into cells between proteins and lipids. God even thought of an energy transfer compound, called ATP by us, to hold energy in its chemical bonds and release it as needed.

Perhaps we'll never know why God went through all this trouble.

*Multiply, fruitful sea creatures and winged birds.*

On *a fourth day*, God created more life—a long day it must've been. The seas, the earth and the air were populated by complex organisms that produced more offspring than could possibly live. In a struggle for survival, those best adapted to their environment lived on.

God decreed that only life would produce life. Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, iron and phosphorus have never lived: only biosynthesis can make life. Following God's command, proteins containing the hundreds or thousands of molecules of twenty amino acids promoted life.

*Let the earth bring forth the living creature.*

On *a fifth day*, God fashioned all the wild beasts, domestic animals, reptiles and *Homo sapiens*. The forms in *Homo sapiens'* world lived in *time*, a subjective condition, and belonged to his perceptions. All of man's representations occurred either successively or simultaneously—in time.

Man was to rule over the fish of the sea, the land animals and even the flying birds. Or, perhaps, man simply believes that he does.

*I have given you herbs, fruits and beasts.*

On *a sixth day*, God gave the final touches to heaven and earth. He provided man with an appreciation for the world so he wouldn't give himself as food to carnivorous beasts. That's when man adopted reason, rejoiced in sex and discovered art.

*Bless the day of rest from work.*

Finally, on *a seventh day*, God rested. Perhaps God tires! Perhaps another name for God's exhaustion is Time.

## **Paradise**

According to the books of faith, on the fifth day of creation God had modeled a clay figure to his own likeness. He had blown a puff of life in the figure's nose and had called it, "Adam." Adam was dependent on the air to breathe, the weight of the atmosphere not to disintegrate, and the vegetation, the fauna and unpolluted waters to nourish his body. It's said that God planted for him, between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, a well-irrigated garden of beautiful and healthy trees with which he could enjoy and sustain himself. God thought that such dwelling would bring happiness to Adam's heart since thinking wasn't an issue yet. At the same time,

God made grow from the ground *the tree of knowledge and wisdom*—some have called it: *the tree of Paradise*.

A man called Rimbaud has left us with an image of the green valley of Paradise. Rimbaud thought of it as a grassy dell sleeping under the sun, traversed by a clear and tuneful stream:

*C'est un trou de verdure où chante une rivière,  
Accrochant follement aux herbes des haillons  
D'argent ; où le soleil, de la montagne fière,  
Luit : c'est un petit val qui mousse de rayons.*

The books of faith don't say if light energy was put to work in Paradise turning water and carbon dioxide into starches, celluloses, oils and saccharides. The books say, however, that death had not been invented yet. So it may not have been necessary for sunlight to be absorbed by chlorophyll, stored in triple phosphate bonds and used to split oxygen atoms from water. The idea of making glucose and water from carbon dioxide may have occurred to God later.

To Adam, his maker was definitely God. God designed into Adam nerve cells with fibers through which he could perceive and send impulses up and down his body. It was also God's wish that Adam should feel and sense through a nervous system traveled by electrochemical impulses along his cell's membranes. All this was for God to know and for men to find out later.

The most extraordinary gift of God to Adam was a well-developed brain with a large cerebrum containing centers of control for movement, emotion, judgment and sensing. Adam tasted the fruits of Paradise with buds sensitive to sweetness located on the tip of his tongue; he heard soft melodic vibrations in the air; he

smelled the perfumes of flowering trees; through photoreceptors in his eyes, he saw by day all the colors of nature. Adam seems to have been willed by God to have a sensual rapport with the world.

“Name the animals,” God impressed on Adam.

“Can I do that?” Adam reacted mentally, for he had no language.

“Yes you can. And, as you do, you’ll invent language.”

“That must be complicated.”

“It’s not difficult, Adam. Imitate the sounds that animals make, react to their color, to the look on their faces or to how they move about.”

“And that’s language, God?”

“Yes.”

“Why can’t I just infuse thoughts into them as You do to me?”

“That’s not possible, Adam: you’re not meant to be Me.”

“As for the animals, O Great Maker, I have noticed something very peculiar.”

“Speak, my son.”

“You’ve told me that, before you gave me life, on the fourth day, you made all the species of animals and said to them: Grow and increment your numbers.”

“That’s correct.”

“As far as I can see, they seem to enjoy themselves tremendously while trying to reproduce.”

“I understand, Adam, because I know everything.”

Then God put Adam to sleep. In his slumber, man was given lusty genitalia, like monkeys already had. Also, from the material of Adam’s ribs, God fashioned him a friend called Eve and endowed her with complementary erotic organs so they could

have pleasure together. And God let them walk naked and contented about Paradise.

In Paradise lived also an animal created by God called “the snake,” which resembled woman quite a bit. Michelangelo has made a good depiction of this unique animal. The snake had fine-looking features, amber eyes and hair, and pretty arms and legs; she could be told apart from woman only by a long tail that she wrapped around the trees to sleep. The snake walked on two legs when she wanted to, displaying fine breasts. One of the attributes of this animal was astuteness—perhaps because she had been furtively eating the fruits of the tree of knowledge and wisdom.

“You shall not eat from the tree of knowledge and wisdom,” God had told Adam.

“Why shouldn’t I, Oh Supreme Being?”

“Because I forbid it.”

“Then, remove that useless tree from Paradise.”

“I don’t want to.”

“What if an animal eats its fruit?”

“Do not talk to the animals, Adam. Avoid particularly the snake that asks what takes place in heaven and earth and can make good a bad cause. Those who ask such questions have no respect for God.”

“According to Eve, no one in Paradise is wiser than the snake.”

“Be on your guard not to be seduced by the eloquence of the snake.”

“How is that?”

“You must understand that I do not owe explanations to anybody, Adam.”

“Of course, that’s why you’re God,” Adam said humbly and sensibly.

### **Disobedience and Punishment**

On the seventh day of creation, while God was resting, the snake asked Eve: “Why don’t you eat from the tree that’s in the middle of the Garden of Eden?”

“Because God has forbidden it: we can’t even touch it.”

“Why?”

“If we do, we’ll die?”

“What is death, woman?”

“I don’t know.”

“Have you ever seen a dead creature?”

“No.”

“Neither have I.”

“It’s still better to abide by God’s prohibitions: death could be ugly.”

“God has inculcated much falsehood into you, Eve. He thinks He knows what’s good, even if He does not know anything. I believe to know nothing, that’s why I ask about everything.”

“Then, is the wisest she who recognizes her knowledge to be nothing?”

“A life without scrutiny, even if it is eternal, is no life.”

“At times, I’ve considered the ban on the tree of knowledge to be an oddity of God, some foolishness that has taken root in us.”

“There’s no such thing as criminal curiosity, Eve. To reverse inquiry is to battle for justice.”

“According to Adam, your eloquence can seduce others, snake.”

“You term eloquent she who tells the truth, woman?”

“I do not know the real difference between one thing and the other.”

“God wishes to keep us in total ignorance. When you eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, you will be as smart as God.”

“I wonder what good and evil really are like.”

“Eat and you’ll know.”

Eve ate the forbidden fruit. She then convinced her mate to do likewise. On that instant, they both felt very cold and had to pick live leaves—no leave had ever died till then—from the trees to cover their bodies.

*Tu es iudex.*

When God arrived, Adam blamed Eve for their contravention; he also criticized God for letting the desire to know about good and evil crawl into his head through his woman and his dreams. Eve claimed to have been duped by the snake. God passed judgment on all three of them at the same time:

“You’re evil, infamous snake: you have corrupted Adam and Eve. *Vipera impudens!*”

“On hearing your accusation, God, I don’t know my own self anymore. My crime has been to open up my heart to man and to point out to him his own ignorance.”

“You do not recognize my authority, snake: you do not believe in God.”

“I am better persuaded of the existence of God than You are, God.”

“No one has doubts about the existence of God!” yelled Adam, perplexed.

“I have said that those who pretend to be wise aren’t,” affirmed the snake. “Have you made Adam and Eve as perfect as they should be?”

“No, but I have given them my laws to assist their living.”

“I simply sought equality with God,” Adam interjected.

“The snake did not teach me anything,” protested Eve.

“Apostasy is now and shall forever be the most evil of sins,” announced God.

God condemned the woman to endure painful labor during births—she would be the mother of all humans—and to be subservient to man because of a weaker constitution. Adam was reprehended for having listened to his woman and thus sentenced to a new state called “work” in order to earn his keep. Together with all other creatures, man and woman were fated to grow old and to die.

After death was invented, the origin of life became a baffling question. Thousands of years would go by before a man named Pasteur proved to others that life could only come from life.

“To fear death is to suppose to be wise, not being so, and to believe to know that which is not known,” expounded the snake. “Not knowing what lies after death, I say and I maintain that I do not know it.”

“Me too,” decided Adam.

“Or I,” guaranteed Eve.

“I’ll rather die than crawl before You,” the snake went on proudly on the face of God. “You can’t endure my talks. By freeing

Yourself of me, You seek to avoid answering for Your own actions.”

God removed the limbs from the beautiful woman-like snake. He made a whole serpent from its former tail, with a scaly skin, and destined it to crawl about like a reptilian. Before undergoing her metamorphosis, the snake uttered her last words: “No evil comes to good mortals, be it during their lives or after their deaths.”

God covered Adam and Eve with animal’s pelts and expelled them from the Garden of Eden. Then He placed armed angels at the gates of Paradise. Humans were banned from the ruins of Paradise until it disappeared under the sands of the desert with all its vegetation. Eventually, the tree of knowledge and wisdom turned into oil and caused many wars.

The snake knew that God’s creatures would have to feed constantly in order to synthesize food for their cells. So she killed and swallowed a rat and crawled pregnant out of Paradise—her eggs were fertile, like those of a dragon, so she could mate with her offspring. She found a hole and went to sleep in hiding.

The offspring of the first snake spread all over the world. Except for icy regions, high mountains and deep oceans, they adapted to all other environments. None of them ever ate fruits and vegetables or walked again. In order to travel, they had to either wind from side to side or crawl slowly, gripping the surface of the earth. Some developed cell destroying venom kept in glands on the sides of their heads, which they injected in the blood of their prey via fangs.

Old age and death, which were thought by God to be a fitting punishment for disobedience, were passed down the generations as a human trait. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the uncreated were fated to die. Humankind knew premature

death too—especially for greediness, jealousy, unbelief and disobedience.

Eve had digested very badly her share of the fruit of knowledge and wisdom. When the snake tried to explain to her that elements combine in definite proportions, the first woman was utterly confused. Eve always preferred gossip and pleasure to science.

At this time, landmasses had risen and the shallow lakes, the marshes, the ponds and the swamps where reptiles had lived for one hundred million years had dried up. The plant-eating dinosaurs of the fifth day had died of starvation, taking with them their flesh-eating cousins. The first masters of the planet only left behind botched eggs, footprints and fossilized bones. Nobody knows what the dinosaurs did to offend God.

The earth-bound terrible lizards that fed on water plants disappeared together with the flying reptiles. Even during their time, seventy million years before—or approximately one day of creation—birds and certain types of warm-blooded animals that God favored had developed. Through adaptive radiation, these creatures had spread to the newly formed mild and cold areas of the earth, increasing both in size and numbers. Some reptilians, like snakes and crocodilians, survived the cooling of the earth and the invasion of birds and mammals.

God did not wish to leave His human creatures in unmitigated ignorance. For the first mortals and their descendents not to spend millions of years evolving painfully in caves, He allowed Adam and Eve to start the new era with skills such as the ability to use fire, agriculture, animal husbandry, weapon and utensils.

During his long stay in the Garden of Eden, before finding out the difference between good and evil, Adam had maintained a misty intimate relationship with the primeval snake. They discussed often the objects of experience, something that did not interest Eve. Without God's approval, the snake told Adam that perceptions connect reality according to empirical laws.

The fair-haired creature had taught Adam eloquence. Naively, he had taken great pleasure with the woman-like being exchanging thoughts about something she called "the soul." Later, during his mortal existence, Adam heard in his mind echoes of what he had heard in Paradise.

And with a boldness born to his reflections, Adam felt capable of making better all men. Adam's impromptu was named "the original fallacy" and was passed on to all the generations that followed. Perhaps that too was part of God's punishment.

When he was old, Adam recalled his life and rethought his experiences. The first night out of Paradise, when he and Eve descended into the real world, had left a fearful impression in his mind. A man called Virgil has described it for us:

*Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram  
perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna:  
quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna  
est iter in silvis;  
ubi caelum condidit umbra Juppiter,  
et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem.*

## **Cain and Abel**

When God excluded Adam and Eve from Paradise, He transformed some of their cells to ensure that the human specie filled the earth. He gave them the same reproductive cells of the rest of the primates. Eve grew ovaries and Adam testes. These innovative sex apparatuses housed twenty-three pairs of chromosomes in each cell and did not divide in one stage. A new type of cell splitting produced a single twenty-three-chromosome sex cell in Adam's sperm and Eve's eggs. During copulation, when these cells came together, a twenty-three-chromosome-pair cell was formed and began to divide in Eve's womb immediately. The newly begotten life carried a chemical code, or genes, with traits of both parents. Since this innovative cell had God's instructions in its nature, it made a new man or a new woman, usually flawlessly, in approximately nine months of our time.

Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise at a very young age. Adam was eighteen and Eve seventeen. Unsurprisingly, during that period they got along with each other very well. In spite of the arduous work of survival, Adam thought Eve to be desirable and she felt relaxed in his company. Being well-nourished from fishing, hunting and the gathering of wild fruits and snails, the couple's fiery love-making engendered promptly two sons, Cain and Abel, and then some fourteen or fifteen daughters whose names were never recorded given the little importance bestowed upon women by God in the books of faith.

Mammals were hairy creatures that developed in the uterus of their female progenitor. After birth, the young were nourished with milk secreted by the mammary glands of their mothers. They breathed air and had a four-chambered heart to pump blood into

their lungs and through their whole bodies. Most had two pairs of limbs for locomotion.

Eve was blonde and Adam was dark. All their children were dark. Their grandchildren, however, produced one blonde offspring for each three dark ones. Only one of every four grandchildren was pure blonde and another pure dark; the other two were dark but carried the recessive blonde gene. Later, gene mutations produced red-haired and brown-haired people.

Eve was stupid and Adam was intelligent. All their surviving children were intelligent. Their grandchildren, however, produced one obtuse offspring for each three clever ones. Only one of every four grandchildren was pure dense and another pure sharp; the other two were intelligent but carried the recessive dim-witted gene. Later, gene mutations produced many different levels of astuteness and inanity.

The first family sucked on the stems of soft shrubbery during the summers. The stalks contained usable vitamin water and minerals traveling from roots to leaves. From woody plants that grew bigger every year, the family acquired strong sticks for defense and the material to make tools and to fortify their dwelling places. Adam had walked out of Paradise with the necessary skills to put to good use stones, wood, clay and mud. In autumn, when cooler temperatures destroyed the plant's chlorophyll and the hidden yellow and orange pigments came into view, the family covered their cabin with animal pelts and stored grain and nuts before the brown dead leaves fell from the trees. In the winter, they hunted small rodents among the evergreen trees full of needlelike leaves.

Adam fashioned implements to hunt, to fish and to work. Eve kept the hearth ablaze. Cain, the eldest, plowed the fields.

Abel, the younger boy, shepherded the herd. The daughters helped in all the essential tasks.

When Adam spoke about the making of tools, Eve of the kitchen, Abel of the flock or Cain of the harvest, they understood each other well. However, when they discussed how to worship God, the children held dissimilar opinions and no one found merit in what the other person thought.

Cain was the first agriculturist. During hours of quiet observation, he discovered that the pregnant flowers of some trees produce fleshy fruits good to eat. Also, he noticed that, like bird eggs make chicks, fruits bring into being new trees. Inside the fruits, Cain found the seeds covered by hard coats that animals, wind and water dispersed throughout the land. When he saw seeds germinate on the ground, Cain realized that shoots and roots could break out of their dampened cellulose coats and grow. Before long, Cain took the seeds of his favorite fruits and planted them near the family's dwelling cabin.

According to the books of faith, God looked unfavorably upon Cain's burnt offerings of good edible fruits and grains.

Abel bred better livestock by way of mass selection. Since Adam had not invented the fence or the chicken coop yet, sometimes snakes and birds of prey ate the eggs of Abel's birds and wolves took his goats. Often, he could only offer to God sick animals and sterile species produced by crossing.

The books of faith say that God was pleased with Abel's offerings.

Not having been born themselves from human parents but created by God, Adam and Eve were unaware of the necessity to correct unprincipled penchants in their offspring—they only talked to the children about God. So life went on immoderately

and unscrupulously. No rules of conduct were ever set to solve disputes amongst the siblings.

Offerings and sacrifices had been invented by Eve to make amends to God. The Divine Maker was thought to be very offended by the disobedience of His creatures.

“What use does God have for our offerings?” asked Eve, injudiciously, forgetting her own idea.

“Saintly is what God sees favorably, not what’s useful to Him or even what He loves,” replied Adam, recalling his former paradisiacal comfort.

“Saintly is also what’s just,” pointed out Abel. “What’s saintly is pleasing to God and what’s irreverent is not gratifying to Him.”

“I never met God,” said Cain. “I do not understand Him either. Perhaps I think of a supernatural being different from the one you two know.”

“Sanctity is an exchange between God and us,” Adam lectured everyone.

Since Cain’s offerings were not as amenable to God as those of Abel, some friction had developed between the brothers. Cain had observed that throwing dead animal corpses and animal waste on the fields produced better crops than burning sacrifices to God. Abel did not like it. At that time, Cain was seventeen and Abel sixteen.

“Abel’s sanctity is unjust if it deprives me of God’s affection,” Cain said to his father.

“Knowledge teaches how to judge well: you better learn to think.”

“To reach God’s justice, I’ll have to be impious...”

“What about your virtue?”

“I can’t do virtue.”

Adam did not understand Cain’s words. In reality, Cain loved the gorgeousness that puberty had planted on the breasts of his fifteen and fourteen-year-old sisters—God had put desire in him too. Soon, however, he understood that the loved one does not always favor her enthusiast. Both girls, and even a thirteen-year-old, were always following Abel, who was better looking than his older brother and had a more pleasant personality.

Abel reasoned that his charm was just and Cain thought that it was very unjust. Since the just was considered at that time to be related to the saintly, Cain decided to abandon all sanctity.

“I yearn for my sisters in puberty, but all of them run after Abel,” Cain told his father. “They’re useless to me and that’s not good.”

“Good is not equivalent to pleasure, Cain,” refuted Adam. “The snake taught me both. To be vanquished by pleasure shows great ignorance.”

“This great pain causes much harm to me. I’m desperate. I always approach my sisters in fear, expecting rejection. Within myself is a problem that I must solve.”

“Restraint and wisdom will tell you that you hold a deceitful opinion about your own happiness.”

“That’s easy for you to say because you’re not destitute like me.”

Feeling his need to love, tears came to Cain’s eyes. He was very unsettled. Strange-sounding ghosts told his mind that accepting fate serves no purpose.

Jealousy of God and desire for women drove Cain to slay Abel. Then, since Cain held a deeply rooted belief in a

Supreme Being, he damned God for letting him commit the heinous crime that no one had taught him.

“I don’t know if Abel was loved by God for being saintly or if he was saintly because God loved him,” Cain confessed in tears before his parents and sisters.

“The unjust will say anything to avoid punishment,” said Eve, recalling her trial in Paradise. “God must not like to see a murder go unpunished.”

“Poor Cain!” lamented Adam.

“Let him be reborn as a woman!” decreed angrily one of his sisters.

“And if he continues to be a criminal, let him be reborn as an animal the third time!” cried out the other sister.

“It’d be better for him to turn into a good man,” counseled Adam.

“Abel is not coming back,” wailed tearfully the first sister, who was pregnant.

Cain’s act was defined as a transgression. Following God’s model for punishment, he was expelled from the land where the first family dwelled. At first, he lived alone in distant caves, dreaming about the sexual organs of girls—some have thought him to be *Homo neanderthalensis*.

One beautiful spring day, Cain found a young virgin resting naked under the shade of an oak tree, her long black hair scattered over the downy grass. Joyfully, he raped her. To his surprise, she got up from under him and followed his footsteps to his cave. Not long after that, he kidnapped another girl that was promenading on a meadow with flowers in her hands.

Cain was happy at last. On his captured sisters and his own daughters, he fathered a beautiful but ill-fated people that

succumbed in a catastrophe to come called the Great Flood.

Cain and Abel were the first innocent children to suffer the consequences of the original sin committed by Adam, Eve and the snake.

### **Descendants of Adam and Eve**

Eve delivered daughters twelve times. On one occasion, the egg fertilized by Adam's spermatozoid divided into two independent but equal cells that developed into two indistinguishable girls. Another time, two of Eve's eggs were fertilized by two spermatozoids and two different girls were produced.

When Adam was thirty-four years old, he engendered another son, Seth. A few years later, Eve gave birth to a son unlike the other children. The sex chromosomes of Eve's twenty-first pair did not separate and, at pregnancy, it joined Adam's single twenty-first chromosome in trisomy. The forty-seven-chromosome zygote divided billions of times forming a child whose development was flawed. Before the boy reached puberty, a pack of wolves that he was chasing ate him.

The death of the Mongoloid child made both parents and his other siblings wonder about God's plans for them. Yet, at the end, many more children of Adam and Eve survived than died.

As Adam grew older, his experiences synthesized observable facts. Indeed, he discovered general rules of unity in the synthesis of phenomena—something called understanding. Drawing on life's experiences, Adam had arrived at some unexpected perceptions. He could make judgments about phenomena even before experiencing them.

Before he died, at forty-six, Adam invented the wheel for his children. One day, he stepped on a tree trunk that was at rest on the ground and it rolled over; when he kicked the tree trunk, it moved forward. As a consequence of Adam's observation, the wheel was discovered—the first wheels were slices of tree trunks.

Adam did not have time to pass on to his children the realization that reason stretches far beyond the limits of experience. At the end of his life, he knew logical forms without any contents. He told Eve of a concept for which he had no words yet, something that antecedes all experience, but she could not understand him and the development of Mathematics (putting one and two together implies three) was delayed for thousands of years.

Nowhere has it been written that Adam had descendants with his daughters. God must not have wanted that to be. Adam was the only man who existed without a navel and the first one to count the years from the arrival of spring.

It had been God's will to create primates from which, half-a-million years ago, several types of creatures smarter than the apes developed. These creatures lived for less than thirty years and used fire and stone weapons. They were beasts walking on two feet. They had a slanting forehead—the angle between a vertical line and the front of their head was very steep—and were later given fancy names such as Pithecanthropus, Zinjanthropus and Australopithecus. One of them, *Homo habilis*, produced two human-like groups of creatures with large brains that lived in caves, had families and buried their dead. Fifty thousand years ago, one of these two groups, *Homo sapiens*, who had a high forehead like Adam and drew images of animals in caves, either killed off his stupid brethren, *Homo neanderthalensis* or mixed with him

producing modern man. Primitive man was ferocious and lived in great hullabaloo. *Homo sapiens* fit perfectly the description of Adam's descendants as depicted in all the books of faith.

Engendered men and women worried mostly about survival. They had to work hard and began to think that heaven and earth were quite indifferent to their travails. With the passing of the generations, the stories of the beginning of the world and that of Paradise were devaluated and finally forgotten. That's why God had to reappear to selected patriarchs and refresh their memory.

Very little is known about the descendants of Adam till Noah. Seth and Cain had children with their sisters. The story of Cain's progeny leads to a dead end.

At twenty-seven, Seth had a son, Enos; Seth died at forty-five. At twenty-three, Enos engendered Cailnan; Enos died at forty-five. At eighteen, Cailnan made Malahleel; Cailnan died at forty-five. At seventeen, Malahleel generated Jared; Malahleel died at forty-four. At seventeen, Jared produced Enoch; Jared died at forty-eight. At seventeen, Enoch originated Mathusalem; Enoch died at eighteen. At twenty-four, Mathusalem had Lamec; Mathusalem died at forty-eight. Gross errors were always made recounting the progeny of Seth; at first, the years lived by his descendants were doubled and eventually they were quadrupled. At twenty-four, Lamec had Noah; Lamec died at thirty-eight. Before thirty-two, Noah engendered three sons: Shem, Cam and Japheth.

At first, the descendants of Adam and Eve mutated very little due to exposure to the sun and temperature changes. They dispersed throughout the land, away from deserts and wastelands, settling in sunny places alongside rivulets, streams and rivers to

plant crops and raise herds. They had learnt from Cain that green plants need sunlight and water to make food and that heat creates winds that dry up the landscape. When their numbers increased, they invented irrigation to improve land use. Those who shared the same environment began to look alike.

*Homo sapiens* all over the world depended on his surroundings to survive. Green plants and animals provided food for him as long as the family gathered food, hunted, tilled the land and kept livestock. Humans ate meat and fish. As such, they acquired the proteins of life.

It'd be a very long time before Watson and Crick, looked into the dark structure of proteins in the cell's nucleus and proposed a complex organic molecule called DNA. Yet, unknown to man, these giant molecules shaped like rung ladders and tied by four double bases worked as God had wished. The helix's bases with sixty-four three-letter words coded the Constitution of man's corporeal government.

As the early human experience proved, being ignorant of God's scheme of life on earth was no impediment to live and to prosper. Unknowingly, humans carried on God's plan as messenger molecules from the nuclei of their cells traveled the watery cytoplasm and ordered ribosomes to replicate the DNA of life. And as men and women copulated, they started new lives from single cells. That is the Godly way.

## **The Great Flood**

Adam's grandsons found their women cousins to be good and took them as mates, even if they were the daughters of Cain. The books of faith say that God was offended by the great iniquity perpetrated against His design and that He regretted having created the inhabitants of the planet. Among the hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—God looked favorably upon only one man, a righteous fellow called Noah.

Sickness had not existed in Paradise. Sacred History, however, has defined human illnesses as God's punishment to Adam, Eve and their progeny. Colds were the most prevalent of ailments and old age was the final. In His infinite wisdom—not always understood by men—God had created subcellular particles living at the molecular level. Some of them filtered into human, plant and animal cells, causing diseases. These dormant poisons were an impediment to rapid human growth on earth. They had a protein coat and messenger nuclear acids that became active inside a host cell, multiplying with it. The viruses were promoters of chicken pox, measles, warts, polio, smallpox, rabies cancer and many other illnesses of mankind.

But God did not go to extremes either. He made the human body a war zone—God must like wars. When a virus invaded a person, a host cell produced messenger RNA to code antiviral proteins. Antibodies appeared in blood serum to neutralize viruses too.

Out of Paradise, humans had to live in a world full of bacteria, the most common form of life. Some of the microscopic, watery, slimy cells were helpful to man in the fermentation of fruit juices for spirit-lifting alcohol, in the making of curd or in

decomposing dead bodies into plant foods; others reproduced at human body temperature and caused infections or became parasitic to humans, feeding on their cells. To kill harmful bacteria, man had to learn by chance and observation to cool, dehydrate and salt-cure his food so it'd keep. Thousands of years of human suffering would go by before Pasteur proved the existence of bacteria, which opened the door to the heating, cooling and radiating of the unwanted life.

It was God's will that, for thousands of years, man's ability to overpopulate the land be kept in check by natural disasters, wars, plagues, draught and famine. Infectious diseases also contributed to population control. While feeding, drinking and breathing, man ingested many pathogens. Some insects also transmitted ailments to humans through their bites. I'd be a very long time before a man named Kock isolated the organisms causing anthrax and tuberculosis.

However, God had provided humans with antibacterial defenses too. Man's sweat, mucus membranes, tears and the hydrochloric acid of his stomach killed large numbers of bacteria—otherwise, there'd be no history of mankind. Also, some of man's free cells were able to move to the site of an infection and engulf the invading foreign organisms. Protein molecules called antibodies traveled in the blood serum to fight a specific disease. A rise in body temperature prevented the growth of many bacteria.

Blood lymph carried dead bacteria to nodes capable of filtering them out of the body. Some humans were born with immunity to many diseases. Others acquired such immunity while fighting infections. This makes more sense to God that it does to us. Why God chose to make man's life so only He knows... or perchance not.

Much, much later, man began to overcome some of God's impediments to human explosive growth on earth—perhaps that was part of the original curse too. Man introduced dead or weakened pathogenic organisms into his body to become immune to illnesses. He developed antitoxins against diphtheria, polio, typhoid, influenza, yellow fever and other killer diseases. He grew bacteria-killing molds in laboratories and extracted streptomycin from the soil.

It's written that, when Noah was thirty, God let him know that He'd inundate all the earth. God likes secrecy. God ordered Noah to build a three-story partitioned arc with a sunroof and one door on a side. In the arc, Noah would be saved together with his family and a twosome of animals of each kind.

Noah's arc was one-hundred-and-fifty meters long by twenty-five meters wide and fifteen meters tall; it was to be constructed of resiniferous timber and caulked with pitch inside and outside. Perhaps Noah and his family lived near a body of water and boat building came easy to him.

Noah entered the watertight arc with his wife, his sons and his sons' women—or the girls that would become the wives of his sons when they grew up. Soon after, heaven's spigot was let loose and it rained for forty days and forty nights. The water level rose and lifted the arc above the tallest mountains. All over the world, mankind drowned along with all the animals that couldn't swim.

A man called Espronceda is said to have captured Noah's approving thoughts as he watched God's just destruction of the world from the safety of his arc. Noah felt great pleasure because he knew that God's always right.

*Me gusta ver el cielo  
con negros nubarrones  
y oír los aquilones  
horrisonos bramar;  
me gusta ver la noche  
sin luna y sin estrellas,  
y sólo las centellas  
la tierra iluminar.*

*Insólita avenida  
que inunda fértil vega,  
de cumbre a cumbre llega  
y llena de pavor,  
se lleva los ganados  
y las vides, sin pausa,  
y estragos miles causa...  
¡Qué gusto! ¡Qué placer!*

The flood lasted one-hundred-and-fifty days. In due course, God realized how much water was pouring down on Mesopotamia. He shut heaven's tap off and the rain stopped. At that moment, Noah breathed a sigh of relief—he had begun to worry about drowning.

A man called Boileau resumed the *déluge* sent by God to punish man's insolence as a technique to wash the head of His own image:

*Dieu lava bien la tête à son image.*

When the water level dropped, the arc rested on the Ararat Mountains, in Asia Minor (Turkey). Noah opened a window and saw only water and ice around him. He let pigeons loose to explore

the land, but they returned carrying olive branches to nest inside the arc. Later, Noah released carrion-eating birds that did not return.

At thirty-one, Noah left the arc with his wife, his sons and his daughters-in-law—who could have been his own daughters—and the birds, cattle, reptilians and other beasts that he was keeping, including elephants, hippopotamuses, rhinoceroses, penguins and polar bears. Noah put together an altar on which he offered holocausts of wholesome animals to God—those species disappeared. God inhaled the soft scent of roasting flesh and calmed down significantly, opting for not obliterating mankind in the future, regardless of their wicked tendencies.

“No more floods,” God promised. “I have drawn the rainbow amongst the clouds to remember my pledge. When I see the multihued image, I’ll appease My own wrath against man.” And God reconsidered: “Let’s start again. Grow and fill the earth. Establish the death penalty for those of you who kill other men. Put fear and terror on all the land animals, all the birds and all the fish. Do not eat bloody meat because you could get sick.”

Noah planted a grape field, drank its wine and became drunk silly in the nude. His younger son, Cam, who would be the father of the doomed Canaanites, saw him unclothed and told his brothers. Shem, who would become the ancestor of the Semites, and Japheth, the grandparent of the Japhethites, covered their father cautiously walking backwards not to see his nudity. When Noah awakened from wine slumber, he cursed Cam and asked God to make him the slave of his brothers. It’s not known how Noah knew that Cam had seen him naked. Perhaps Shem told him. Noah’s malediction provoked countless wars of extermination that lasted till man’s end in time.

Noah died at forty-seven. Since the books of faith assure us that the water level during the flood had risen and covered very high mountains, respectable geologists and archeologists are still looking for traces of the catastrophe all over the world.

### **Sumer**

The Garden of Paradise must have closed its gates some twenty-five thousand years ago, at the time of disappearance of the Neanderthal man. Cro-Magnon may have been man's physical body. Homo sapiens divided into three main family groups, or races, having in common many physical features and some psychological patterns.

The descendants of Adam and Eve had a long hard way to follow. For a long time, they thought that the gods created water every time it rained. Twenty-five thousand years went by before someone observed that water returns to the earth's surface.

The two rivers that encircled once Paradise have their source in the mountains to the north. In spring, when the northern snows thaw, the Euphrates and the Tigris overflow their banks, dumping lush sediments on the valleys they traverse. The Sumerian and Babylonian inhabitants of Mesopotamia dug canals in order to take to their fields the waters of both rivers. To work, they had an improved wheel, mules to pull their wagons and dogs to watch their herds.

At present, the Euphrates and the Tigris come together before taking to the Persian Gulf. Before the Great Flood, however, they disembogued separately into the sea. At that time, an Iranian

(Indo-European) people from the Eastern Mountains, called the Sumerians, occupied the fertile valleys between and around the two rivers.

Impious historians tell us that the Sumerians are more ancient than the children of Noah... and even Adam and Eve. According to an ancient Sumerian belief that endured a thousand years, man had been created from a mixture of clay and the blood of slain gods.

In the Sumerian temples, besides attending to their religion, men kept government offices and tried civil cases; in their sanctuaries, they deposited gold, silver and wheat and negotiated loans. A flood had once leveled all the Sumerian cities.

Sumerian tradition wanted the Deluge to have stemmed from the wrath of Enlil, the god of the earth. Ea, the god of the sea, had told a man called Utanapishtim of the rainy punishment about to befall Sumer. Utanapishtim built a boat with which he saved his family and livestock.

The city of Ur was erected over the mud of the Deluge. Temples dedicated to Enlil, holding the riches of the region, were rebuilt. Payments, such as taxes, were registered in clay tablets. The Elamites of Persia dethroned the last king of Ur. Later, the Semitic king of Babylon occupied the whole country. These events took place 2,000 years before the Christian era.

To gain the favor of the Sumerian gods, men had to comply with certain moral obligations. In Ur, a celebration of savage orgies took place once a year, during the festivities of the gods of fertility.

Gilgamesh, the greatest titan of Sumer, had attempted to free men from the gods. He had obtained from the bottom of the sea *the tree of life* to make men immortal, but a snake had stolen

it. According to the Sumerian story, ever since, snakes shed their skins and, as such, pass from one life to the next.

Much more of this is still buried under the sand covering ancient Sumer.

### **The Children of Noah**

According to Semitic tradition, after the Great Flood the people dispersed all over the drying earth. The books of faith tell us that all human races descend from Noah, the ninth descendant from Adam. During the two-and-a-half centuries that followed the Deluge, they account for the population of the Near East as follows:

Shem (Sem) produced the Hebrews, the Arameans, the Assyrians and the Arabians. In the language of some of these peoples, Adam meant “red earth” and Eve meant “life.”

Ham (Cam) was the father of the Hamitic races, including the Egyptians and the Canaanites. One of Cam’s descendants, Nimrod, was a powerful man and reigned over Babel and Acadia, in Mesopotamia; his successor, Assure, built Nineveh. Another son of Cam, Misraim, was the father of the Philistines, who settled the land from Sidon to Gaza, including Sodom and Gomorrah. Modern historians, however, think that the Philistines were “Sea People.”

Japheth would have engendered the “isles of the Gentiles,” which consists of the Indo-European and the Caucasians races. The Japhethites would’ve populated India and Europe before turning up in Canaan as “Sea People.”

The Asian and African peoples are an illusion. They descend from nobody and thus do not exist. To the compilers of the Genesis, this makes a lot of sense.

The children of Shem populated all the territory of the Middle East up to the eastern mountains. After the Great Flood, every thirty years a patriarch was born to them up to the time of Abram (father of a multitude) or Abraham, as he was known later. The Semitic patriarchs were Arfaxad, Sale, Heber, Palek, Reu, Sarug, Najor and Terah.

According to other sources, the descendants of Noah arrived in Mesopotamia from Syria following the valley of the Euphrates. Long before, the Assyrians—inventors of the *shekel*, a measure or weight of uncoined money—had arrived from the Caucasus through the valley of the Tigris. The Semitic and Indo-European peoples are said to have mixed in Babylonia.

For a very long time, the descendants of Noah lived in a land where the sea god, Ea, had made man from clay, the god Anu ruled the heavens and the god Enlil the earth. These gods had been born from Apsu, the male force of good and Taimat, the female force of evil. At the time, the people of Mesopotamia did not believe in an afterlife.

The lineage to Noah is hard to establish. Much egg fertilization took place in Mesopotamia, possibly due to agriculture. The population grew. Offspring variations that adapted well to new environments were produced.

If we believe the Book of Genesis, the line of Shem must've lived among others for millennia. Those others could've been the descendants of Shem's brothers, Japheth and Ham—or, most likely, an unbiblical branch of *Homo sapiens*. The Semitic patriarchs were possibly drawn to the valleys around the

confluence of the great two rivers by the éclat of more advanced civilizations—in their language, *shiner* means two rivers. Among the other populations, the Semitic brood maintained their identity till the advent of the patriarch Abram. Apartheid must've happened for reasons unknowns to them and certainly to us. The books of faith were written much later and no archeological record of their migration has been found. . . but that's no obstacle to a godly story.

### **Babylonia**

Ancient gods from Sumer and Akad were found in the temples of Babylon. Anu, the father and king of the gods had been the master of the heavens. Anu's favorite wife, Ishtar, who had affairs with men and animals, was the goddess of physical love and fertility; she was also the goddess of war and often facilitated the spilling of blood. Enlil, the master of the winds, was responsible for the overflowing of the river and the Great Flood. Ea, the son of Anu, was a friend of humanity. The son of Ea, Marduk or Beel, had freed himself from Anu and Enlil to become ruler of heaven and earth. The cult of Marduk was a step towards monotheism.

The Babylonians speculated that, after death, the spirit of the lifeless wondered about in a dusky and cold hell, covered with feathers, ingesting dust and smoke. Wisely, they referred to death as "the eternal shadow from where no one returns." No happiness was possible in the afterworld. Holding such unhopeful belief, it was normal for the people of Babylonia to pray to their gods for earthly riches. The Semitic patriarchs were also imbued with this idea.

For thousands of years, the Sumerians, Acadians or Babylonians lived in a world of want and fear, desperately hoping for philanthropic gods. No one amongst them understood that understanding was the lawgiver of nature.

The patriarch Terah lived in the city of Ur, under the Babylonian king. There, he begot Abram, Nahor and Aram—who became Lot's father. Abram's wife was Saray (princess). Nahor's wife, Melchah, was the daughter of Abram's brother, Aram.

The houses of Ur were spacious and comfortable. They were built around a square courtyard, with a waterspout in the middle. They had stairwells leading up to a hall thatched with wood, hanging over the courtyard, which provided access to the second-floor rooms. When the house was overcrowded with the sepulchers of dead relatives, it was abandoned.

Babylonia or Babel had endured social strife and foreign invasions. During the time of Terah, Babylonia had replaced the old doctrine of an-eye-for-an-eye with a civil code that called for the punishment of the mischievous and the sheltering of the weak from the powerful. The death penalty was applied in cases of home invasion and adultery. Marriage consisted of the purchase of a woman and bigamy was recognized as a sensible means of having children. Adoption was the simplest manner of acquiring cheap labor.

The Babylonian king owned vast herds of cattle. To prevent famine, he had constructed an enormous grain reserve of wheat.

Still, some times crops failed. Then, women's breasts grew dry and children died. To survive, men devoured the lean flesh of

the dead before carrion crows drilled their guts and tore out their intestines.

The ziggurats, or three-story temples, towered above elevated squares all over Babylonia. The temple of Ur was dedicated to Nanar, the guardian god of the city. The people of Mesopotamia never understood the burning flashes of lightning that snaked across dark skies or the thunderous noises that followed them but, in the ziggurats, they learned of Nanar's protection against such evils and slept better.

When Terah visited the ziggurat on business, his son Abram was awestruck by the sanctuary's terraces, which were full of suspended exotic plants and were called "hanging gardens." Since Abram was a very young man at the time, the priestesses of Nanar smiled at him. The priestesses were temple prostitutes and also very reserved women—they could lose their tongue for talking too much. These women practiced religious debauchery, which was valued far above that of the common irreverent orgy.

From the ziggurat's entrance, where the faithful gathered, Abram had seen the parade honoring Nanar and had heard the beautiful tunes of harps. The priests climbed by three different sets of stairs of one-hundred steps each leading to a platform in front of a colossal door where the king sat; they were dressed in many colors and carried in their arms offerings to the god. "That's religion," muttered Abram.

The Babylonians named the days after their gods and thought that planets were gods. Ishtar was the goddess of love and fertility. They believed in Apsu, the male principle of good, and in Taimat, the female principle of evil. Between the two had produced Anu, the king of heaven, Ea, the king of the sea and Enlil, the king of the land. For hundreds of years, Enlil, who had

power over humanity, had been appeased and had refrained from sending deluges onto the land.

Terah left the city of Ur with his son, Abram, and Abram's wife, Saray. Saray was the daughter of Terah with a Sumerian woman and thus half-sister to her husband, Abram. Lot, the son of Aram and grandson of Terah accompanied them. Terah wanted to go towards the sunset, to the land of Canaan—perhaps to make Noah's damnation come true by enslaving the descendants of Cam—but he died in the cooler pastures of Haran at fifty.

Abram and his wife, Saray, were from the city of Ur, in Babylonia. They may have left Mesopotamia because of deteriorating economic circumstances. They took with them the notion that the stars were the writings of heaven and that dreams, as well as the lines in the livers of pigs, foretold the future. The common wisdom of the Babylonians was always present in their minds; to them, one must not: irritate the gods, lie, wish evil to another, corrupt a judge, create family feuds, cheat in commerce, move land markers, penetrate the house or the wife of a neighbor, kill, steal, revolt against authority, spread false dogmas, commit lewd and lascivious acts, practice magic or have contact with a damned person.

Babylon or Babilu meant Gate of God.

## **The Tower of Babel**

It follows from the books of faith that all the inhabitants of the earth would have spoken the tongue of Noah until three hundred years after his death. Recorded history, however, tells us that Babylonian, a Semitic language written with Sumerian cuneiform characters, was the lingua franca of the known world at the time.

Babel was a very important center of trade and the greatest city in the world for a thousand years. Caravans from India and the Mediterranean arrived constantly to the populous capital of Babylon to trade.

Babel had much gold and many prostitutes. God had associated the flow of man's fertilizing fluid to one of the highest forms of pleasure attainable. The good feeling linked to semen dispersal drove males to pay for sex. Since Cain, man had been lustful and woman-crazy. The prospect of sexual intercourse with a desirable female would turn him solicitous, courteous, passionate, poetic and very violent at the same time. Only the survival instinct or the need of water, food, shelter or rest overruled man's sexual desire—certainly not the pleasures of the intellect. That's exactly the way that God wanted him to be.

The books of faith tell us that, for no good reason, men had gathered in the plains of Senaar (Shinar or Two Rivers) to build a tower sufficiently tall to reach the heavens. It's written that God worried and thought: "They've already started. Their pride knows no bounds. No task is too great for their fancy. I better confuse their words so they cannot talk to each other and advance their folly." That's how men came to speak different languages. Some took their God-confused speech to Africa, others to the Far East and others beyond the Caucasus mountain system.

Man's failure to raise a high structure—perhaps a building taller than the pyramids of the Egyptians—was of no consequence. King Hammurabi, who extended the Babylonian empire and promulgated a broad code of law, had already built a mud brick facility in Babel to stockpile grain and other victuals in case of famine. Perhaps that offended God.

Babylonians still believed that Marduk had created the two great rivers, men, animals, grains and forests. And the idea that gods intrude in human affairs had endured. The wrath of Enlil before the Great Flood, as well as the intervention of God to stop the Tower's construction, would inspire future communications with the Great Deity.

It's hard to imagine how the patriarchs and their families lived for so long among the motley of people in Mesopotamia, especially in Babylon, without being absorbed by the nationals. Somehow, however, according to the books of faith, they became segregated.

Faith still says that all men spoke the same language until the start of the Tower of Babel. The ancient cuneiform writings of the Sumerians, as well as the Egyptian hieroglyphics, must either be fakes or productions of the Devil to confuse us.

## **The Centuries in Mesopotamia**

Shem's progeny had thrived amongst the Sumerians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians for a thousand years. The ancient Sumerians were an Aryan people from the mountains to the East of the two rivers. The Assyrian newcomers to Mesopotamia were an Indo-European warring people from the Caucasus, strongly mixed to Semitic elements. The Babylonians were mostly a Semitic people, culturally indebted to the other two.

The occupants of Mesopotamia during the time when the descendants of Shem arrived had their own mythology and paid little attention to the story of Noah. Nevertheless, the books of faith want the Semitic patriarchs to have kept alive tribal traditions, teaching everyone in their households the story of God's visit to Noah. At the same time, they passed on recommendations on how to maintain good health and accumulate wealth in tune with the milieu—with or without fairness to others. At times, the Semite shepherds became traders. Like their Aramaic cousins, they exchanged wares from all over the known world in the Sumerian ziggurats and market squares. The Sumerian numbering system of base sixty is perhaps responsible for many inaccurate dates and quantities passed down orally through the generations before being recorded in the books of faith. Even today, we divide the hours and the minutes in one-sixtieth intervals.

To better manage their affairs, Shem's children acquired from other merchants a knack for wiliness. As time went by, the brokering mindset of the Semitic race solidified:

“It's indispensable to persuade the Sumerians of the high quality of the jewelry that we sell,” had formulated Arfaxad, the first patriarch.

“It’s better for us that the priests of Enlil’s temple believe the fabrics we peddle to be good than it is for the stuff to be so,” proposed Sale, the second patriarch, “because those who believe are better persuaded to buy than those who know the bits and pieces.”

“Advise the temple whores to consider the merchandize we must dump,” counseled Heber, the third patriarch.

“Talk persuasively to the Assyrians in the public square,” suggested Palek, the fourth patriarch. “They are moody and very cruel.”

“If we are credible,” noted Reu, the fifth patriarch, “even if we don’t know very much about jewelry and adorns, our customers will wind up believing that they do.”

“A little praise dupes the fool,” determined Sarug, the sixth patriarch.

“If we’re skillful talkers,” clarified Nahor, the seventh patriarch, “we can convince the Babylonians to do what’s fitting to us.”

“We must perfect schemes that make us appear wiser than the experts in the subjects we deal with,” synthesized Terah, the eighth patriarch.

During their stay in Mesopotamia, after the code of Hammurabi was adopted, the Semitic patriarchs had to explain themselves many times to the Babylonian judges. Their differences with the tribunals were ideological: the Semites viewed as normal that the shrewdest should take from the obtuse. When they were found swindling a widow, they tried to escape punishment by altering the meaning of words because they were fair talkers—even if they knew nothing about justice. When they could not mystify a judge, they exalted him.

Regardless of their bamboozling, many times Shem's descendants had to make restitution to the victims and were estranged from commercial activities. When that happened, they returned to flocking. Most of the time, they lived under protest:

"The cleverest magistrates habitually rule against us. When will judges understand that it's more useful to appear to do good than it is to really do it?"

"What would a judge want to cure us of?"

"It's better to do an injustice than to bear one."

"Whoever penalizes our race, even for good cause, punishes us unjustly."

Fifteen hundred years before Christ, the good life had mollified the Babylonians. They would rather pay foreigners to fight than go to war themselves. The number of small landowners diminished as the temples, the king and the great capitalists grabbed the most bountiful lands. All Mesopotamia became insecure and life turned harsh. Unable to profit any longer from the land, the descendants of Noah wanted to leave.

### **Abram Leaves Mesopotamia**

After the two irreplaceable mortals, Adam and Noah, God did not find a man He could bless placidly until the arrival of Abram, the ninth patriarch. Rumor has it that God created Abram specifically to be the father of a "chosen people." When Abram was twenty, God ordered him to leave Haran and go to Canaan with

his wife, Saray, and his nephew, Lot. They took along their herds and servants.

Upon Abram's arrival at Sichem-in-the-Holy-Land, God promised him the territory already settled by the Canaanites for his offspring. So, Abram set his tent in Bethel, at the foot of an arid mountain pierced with caves, and erected an altar to God. But it was always doubtful that Abram would have descendants by his wife, Saray, who was not very fruitful.

During that period, prowling tribes were making inroads into Palestine. The inhabitants of barren regions coveted wheat-bearing fields and pasturelands. After the Canaanites, arrived the Philistines and then came the Abramites from the East. The Aramean traders who moved by land and traveled everywhere had already spread their language from Mesopotamia to Palestine.

But famine struck the dry land of Bethel. Abram had to go to Egypt.

Saray was slender like a gazelle, beautiful beyond comparison: she was simply divine. Saray's eyes were like clear honey made by bees that sip nectar from golden flowers. The cute nipples of Saray's splendid breasts pricked enticingly the fine fabric of her garment as she walked. And no outfit could ever clutch her small waist.

When Abram was nearing Pharaoh's domains, he had a very solemn talk with his wife. Abram looked Saray in her big translucent eyes and said:

“Saray: you're beautiful and tempting. You know very well that your charm seduces men of all nations; even those men who don't know your tongue long for your favors.”

“They find irresistible my white skin and my long tawny hair, Abram,” she replied calmly.

“I don’t want to die at the hands of the Egyptians because of your good looks.”

“Of course you don’t.”

“Let’s say that you’re my sister so that, in view of your loveliness, they won’t kill me.”

“I shall obey you with enthusiasm and pleasure, my husband.”

Saray liked the adventure. A man called Shakespeare described Abram’s feeling:

*Oh, the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to!*

But Abram never considered jumping off a cliff because he had no wings... just horns.

## Abram and Saray in Egypt

The Egyptians had risen against the occupying Hiksos, establishing a new empire and a new Hamitic dynasty with its capital in Thebes. The Hiksos had introduced a breed of small horses in Egypt; these animals were not very good to mount but excellent for pulling war chariots.

The river country's kingdom was powerful again. His subjects called the Egyptian Pharaoh, "The Son of God."

When Abram and Saray arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh had launched successful expeditions against Syria and beyond the Nile's fourth cataract. At that time, the Son of God was building to the north of Thebes, in the harsh country of Libya, a colossal entombment for himself amongst the rocks of the river's western embankment.

Each region of Egypt had a god that was revered in some animal form. Figures of cats, bulls, monkeys and crocodiles were venerated all over the country. Many Egyptians adored the sun. Opulent temples, colonized by priests determined to defend them, were being built everywhere.

The Egyptians reached the Red Sea from the Nile through a canal. They coasted to the south in search of gold, silver, rare stones, ebony, uncommon essences, ivory, leopard and panther skins and the resin from the incense plant.

*Ars meretriciae.*

Oblivious to Abram's gloom, the Egyptians took Saray to Pharaoh. In his wealthy mansion, the king enjoyed the lady inexpressibly; unceasingly, he marveled at her firm flesh, smooth skin, ruby lips and large golden eyes. Saray, too, performed admirably well. She learned quickly Pharaoh's tongue, reading in his eyes a

great appreciation for her Sumerian beauty. Wild with joy, the king of Egypt sent Abram all that Saray asked for: sheep, cows, donkeys, male and female slaves, camels and mules.

“Not even for a mountain of gold the Babylonians would send me a woman of splendid hips and dazzling long legs like you, Saray. When I’m with you, I feel better than the child loved by God who’s devoured alive by a sacred crocodile.”

“Your harem’s attendants bathe me in scented water. My body is dignified with jewelry and fine clothes. I wear ivory bangles on my wrists. You cover me with your sacred body on lions’ pelts under the soft breeze of your eunuchs’ fans. I have no will to object, for I’m the happiest servant of all Egypt.”

“I don’t ever tire of kneading the firm thighs that you acquired journeying along the trails of Mesopotamia and tending herds in Haran and Canaan,” declared Pharaoh. “Do you like to live in Thebes?”

“I love the terraces full up with flower in your palace and the perfectly staggered fruit trees in your fields.”

“That’s good.”

“Also, in Pharaoh’s service, I’ve discovered things about myself that I had never suspected.”

“Do you miss your brother?”

“Abram lives and prospers. We must expect him to be happy.”

“You have many virtues, charming Saray.”

“I don’t know what constitutes virtue because nobody has taught me so.”

“No one knows.”

“I try to do good to my friends and to avoid suffering. My own disposition to enjoy beautiful things feels like a virtue. I imag-

ine that each station in life has its own virtue.”

“Yes, Saray; but every virtue must be a part of the same essence. Don’t you think?”

“Perhaps the ability to attain good is in all virtues.”

“My happiness is obstructed by doubts and I continuously wonder about many things, Saray. I do not ask what I already know. What I do not know, however, I can’t ask because I ignore what I don’t know.”

“Being so rich and bored, you pay too much attention to foreign visitors and Egyptian priests.”

“More than anything, I ask myself if and how death detaches life’s spirit from our bodies.”

“I possess the virtue of ignoring such things, Pharaoh.”

“I wonder if the spirit returns to inhabit in a different body after learning the secrets of the afterlife.”

“What a difficult question that is!”

“If the spirit knows everything, by relentlessly questioning the mind, we can find within ourselves all there’s to know, including virtue’s essence.”

“How did all these thoughts come to you, Pharaoh?”

“I have had discussions with many wise men. Some came from the lands where the sun rises and others from those where it sets.”

“Tell me more about that.”

“I have within me truthful opinions of what I don’t know. They must be awakened!”

“Is that to say that whatever I know without a teacher I’ve remembered?”

“I think so, Saray.”

“I never heard that before,” Pharaoh.

“We must convince ourselves that it’s essential to question.”

“Of course it is. What good is it to believe that it’s impossible to discover what we don’t know?”

“That’s why I asked you about virtue although we don’t know its nature.”

“Well, Pharaoh, virtue is useful.”

“And it’s taught without teachers or disciples.”

“Then, everyone is the teacher of his own virtue.”

“Correct. By means of our own reason, we find what brings about virtue and what its outcome is. The truthful opinions that we have come together and become knowledge when we make demands upon them.”

“Then it’s by the authority of Amon that virtue comes to whoever finds it!”

“Let’s ask many more questions, lovable Saray.”

“No, Pharaoh! Make love to me, for I learn virtues that way.”

Then, according to the Semitic fable, God intervened, sending several plagues to Pharaoh because of his stubborn desire to lie down with Saray. The Son of God is said to have finally tired of watching tiny algae turn the Nile as red as blood. Also, having heard—people gossip a lot—that Saray was Abram’s wife, the king returned her to the father of the Jewish people.

After Saray’s return to her husband, the couple was ordered to leave Egypt. They were allowed to take all their possessions and all the gifts from Pharaoh.

Pharaoh did not sire an heir to the throne via Saray.

### **Abram returns to Canaan**

Abram was pleased in his heart to have recovered Saray—who wouldn't be? She kept all the jewelry and the garments donated by Pharaoh.

Saray had been admired by the catatonic and malformed individuals of the palace, by the world-weary women with large butts, by the dyed priests and by the most handsome men and the most elegant ladies of Egypt.

“Are you happy now, Saray?” her husband would ask.

“I am satisfied shepherding once again the flock and sleeping under the stars,” she would reply with an imprecise gaze.

“Blessed be God!”

“I've missed the stench of the herd, the wail of birds and the sting of bugs,” Saray'd lie to herself. “Even the gibberish of the Aramean merchants is music to my ears.”

Abram was cheerful. He returned to Bethel rich in livestock, silver and gold. Saray rejoiced furtively with the mementos and memories of Pharaoh's palace.

Lot, Abram's nephew, had also acquired sheep, cattle and tents. Together, the uncle and his nephew had too many farm animals to be able to stay on the same land. Lot drove his herd to the plains of Jordan, towards the East. Abram remained in Canaan.

After Lot's departure, God said to Abram: “Look to the North, the South, the East and the West. All the land that you can see is for you and your progeny: take it! Your seed will be as profuse as the earth's dust.” So Abram settled near Hebron and, from that time on, his descendants were called Hebrews.”

The Babylonians had surpassed Semitic law, which was based on vengeance. Abram had taken to Canaan principles of law that Moses codified much later for religious purposes. Still, the laws were unmerciful and caused great injustices. Although the spirit of the law was to protect the widow and the orphan, minors were victims of tyrannical parents that could brand them, sell or exile them and women had no defense against their husbands.

The four chieftains of Senar-in-Palestine, Elasar, Elam and Goim were at war against Sodom, Gomorrah, Adama, Seboim and Bala. The chieftains won the battle of the valley of Sidim, which was crammed full of tar pits, in which their enemies sank as they ran—the Sodomites, especially, were very fearful. After the fray, the four chieftains sacked Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, who lived in Sodom with his family, was taken with all his assets.

The chieftains, referred to as “kings,” were large property owners or tribal leaders. The “battles” were skirmishes between ill-armed shepherds.

Abram armed three-hundred-and-eighteen of the bravest men born in his household. He went to Dan where, concealed in the night, he ambushed and overwhelmed the four chieftains. As such, he recovered the loot that had been taken. He freed Lot, recovering his property, women and servants. Notwithstanding his victory, Abram did not acquire great fame as warrior amongst the inhabitants of Palestine. The four chieftains, nevertheless, learned the hard way that reckless daring can bring bodily harm and significant losses.

When Abram was returning home from the war, Melchizedek, the king of Sodom, who was also Baal’s priest, presented him with bread, wine and his blessings. Abram, who

seemed to have a residual liking for Baal from his days in Ur, gave Melchizedek the tithe of the spoils and returned all the Sodomites to him, keeping only his men's rightful booty.

### **The Promise**

The books of faith insist on God's talks with Abram. In truth, the patriarch seems to have had many weird visions.

"Lord, I shall die without children. My heir will be one of my servants."

"No, your inheritor shall burst out of your own body."

"Is that to be, Lord?"

"Your seed will be as plentiful as the stars in heaven."

"I believe You."

"I've brought you here from Ur to give you all of Canaan."

God ordered Abram to take to the sacrificial altar a heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon. Abram split down the middle the heifer, the she-goat, and the ram. Predatory and carrion-eating birds winged over the victims, trying to lift them, but Abram defended God's kill. Later on that day, a deep slumber seized Abram and he was overwhelmed by terror.

"Your children's children will live as foreigners in a strange land, Abram. There, as slaves, they will be oppressed for many generations."

"That long, God?"

"Yes. But I shall take revenge on the people that'll enslave them. I shall show your descendants the way out of bond-

age and they'll have many riches."

"That's better!"

"You will go in peace with your parents at a very old age. On the fourth or the tenth generation, your descendants shall return to Canaan."

"Why such a long wait?"

"This is necessary because your race is polluted with very bad individuals."

"Yes, it's true."

Thick dark clouds fell on the altar. A fireball passed through the carcasses of Abram's sacrificial victims. Then God promised Abram that his offspring would possess all the peoples and all the lands comprised in a new and much larger region between the Egyptian cataracts and the river Euphrates.

### **Ishmael's birth**

When Saray was already old, she gave her husband an Egyptian slave, named Hagar (Agar), in order to have children by her. Abram may have come in possession of this Egyptian slave owing to Pharaoh's largesse.

"You need a concubine, Abram. I never conceived from Pharaoh, from men of other nations or from you. Being half from your nation and half from the race of Sumer, I must be barren like the mule born from crossing a donkey with a mare."

"Perhaps God wants me to have Egyptian children, Saray. Is that what you think?"

“I do not ask what I know because I already know it and I can’t ask what I don’t know because I don’t know what I ignore, Abram.”

“You speak strangely, Saray.”

“Reminiscence has taught me many things that I did not know about myself, Abram.”

Hagar conceived from Abram. Immediately, she began to look down upon her sterile mistress. Hagar’s attitude made Saray very angry.

After a while, the slave girl couldn’t endure her mistress’ wrath and left. An angel of God found Hagar in the desert and ordered her to return and to submit to Saray’s authority.

“You’ll give birth to a son who will be named Ishmael,” said the angel to Hagar, the Egyptian woman.

“I will have Abram’s son?” Hagar asked, astonished.

“Yes. He’ll be strong among his brothers and have many children.”

That’s how Abram had a son by Hagar when he was already old.

### **The Covenant**

Years later, when Abram was very old, he still talked to God:

“Your seed shall spread all over the earth,” Abram.

“Is that a fact, Lord?”

“Yes. You shall be the father of many nations.”

“That sounds so incredible!”

“Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham. I shall make you extremely prolific.”

“Thank You.”

“From this day on, I make a covenant with you and with your descendants. This is an everlasting alliance that must be renewed from generation to generation.”

“How is that?”

“I am your God. I shall give you and your progeny, forever, the land that you now crisscross: all of Canaan.”

“Weren’t You going to give me all the land from Egypt to the Euphrates River?”

“I shall begin by giving you Canaan.”

“What must I do to deserve such grace?”

“All the male children of yours, whether they are born in your house or bought from any person, must be circumcised on the eighth day after their birth. The sign of our covenant will be the missing foreskin. The uncircumcised shall be cast out of your nation.”

“I’ll do it.”

“No longer shall you call your wife Saray, but Sarah. She’ll bear you a son and will be the mother of entire nations and many kings.”

“Don’t make me laugh, God. How can I engender a son when my penis has totally plummeted? How will Sarah become pregnant being so old? She can’t even muse over her adventures around the throne of Egypt with delight anymore.”

“I am telling you that your wife, Sarah, will give you a son whose name will be Isaac. I shall renew My covenant with him.”

“What about Ishmael, God?”

“I shall make Ishmael prolific too; nevertheless, My covenant shall be made with Isaac, Sarah’s son.”

“When will Isaac be born?”

“He’ll come next year, at about this time.”

Then, as God had ordered, Abraham took Ishmael, all the male children born in his household, and all those bought from strangers and severed the flesh covering the end of their penises.

Abraham was sixty-two when he cut off his own foreskin.

### **Abraham’s Other Hallucination**

Time had treated Abraham very cruelly. The patriarch’s black locks looked like cinders; the skin of his dark cheeks and face was sagging; his eyes looked dim and sleepy under his bushy and ashy eyebrows; and his amble was weary from following God’s star.

Yet, the loss of vigor that comes with age never dislodged from Abraham’s mind a secret craving to correspond with God. Sitting in silent meditation over his own shadow, the Hebrew’s black eyes sparkled as he waited for the Lord. Eventually, sunstroke and visions whispered strange words in Abraham’s ears—he was a mystic.

Saray was like a rose that had once arisen confidently and stunningly on its stem. That her beauty should have withered seemed to be a flaw of nature.

Unlike her husband, Saray wasn’t whimsy; ideas of the supernatural never confused or unsettled her. She had fought hard infertility whenever love had come to her delicious mouth. Yet,

Saray thought a ridiculous lie that children should come by curse or charm. The Sumerian woman had seen the light within the light in Egypt. She laughed when Abraham talked about mountaineering along azure peaks to find God because the furtive voice of her thoughts had taught her differently.

“Is God a dreadful dragon of fiery eyes and arched back?”

Saray had asked Abraham one day.

“No, God is a voice,” he had educated her.

“Is He eternal, like the sun?”

“God made the sun.”

“Couldn’t He have made it a little cooler in the summer and a little hotter in the winter?”

“He doesn’t give me explanations about anything, Saray.”

“Next time you talk to God, Abraham, ask Him to rid us of flies, bugs and ugly people.”

One day, in the calm of Mambre’s oak grove, God appeared to Abraham in the form of three men—a hint of trinity. Abraham found all three men resting under a tree, listening to the rustle of leaves, the hum of a stream and the hoot of an owl.

Abraham invited to his house the three men he had found in the oak grove. He washed the strangers’ feet and served them Sarah’s freshly baked bread, meat from a young fattened goat, butter and milk.

During the course of the meal, the men asked Abraham:

“Where is your wife, Sarah?”

“She’s behind the tent, listening to our conversation.”

“In a year, I’ll return. By then, Sarah will be a mother.”

“I’m old,” Sarah said quietly to herself, laughing. “Many years ago, my period ceased to come. My sex doesn’t wet very

quickly with a man's touch any longer. I don't even feel great pleasure at pairing anymore."

"Sarah has laughed incredulously," God said, "but nothing is impossible for Me."

"I know, God," acknowledged Abraham, sensing that his wish was taking form.

"I'll be back next year. By then, Sarah will have given birth to a son."

### **Obliteration of Sodom and Gomorrah**

"Now I'm leaving for Sodom," God's trinity advised Abraham.

"Can I go with You? My nephew, Lot, lives in Sodom now."

"Yes, come with Me. You'll witness the severe punishment of the Sodomites."

"You're God."

"Abraham," said God, "the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is much too great."

"Overcrowding has brought aggression, disease, infertility and abnormal sexual behavior to Sodom. Are You going to make the just perish alongside the offender?"

"If I were to find ten just men in Sodom, I'd spare the city in deference to them."

"That's better!"

Degenerate lovemaking was trendy among males in Sodom. Within the city, anyone could be the object of the most grotesque courtship, especially young men. The Sodomites al-

leged to experience a natural homosexual craving that they certified as sacred and good. They would try to persuade others to accept Sodom's aberration saying to them, "We are what God has made us: we love young men." And they satisfied cheerily, against nature, a most brutal desire. Sodom's vice was anal penetration, a practice that not even animals would engage in—except by accident.

At the gates of Sodom, Lot encountered two angels sent by God. Lot invited the angels into the house where he lived with his wife and two unmarried daughters for them to bathe and spend the night.

"We have seen the two beautiful men and we want them," said to Lot the spokesman for a group of Sodomites that had surrounded the house.

"My brothers," Lot pleaded with them, "do not yield to immoral desire."

"Immorality exists only in your thoughts," returned the queer. "We like the well-built clever gender. We want to embrace passionately the two young men. To see their faces is to catch a glimpse of heaven. Watching their graceful masculine figures, our own bodies quiver. Our hearts have been stung by a loving craze and we can't be still, Lot."

"You're sick indeed, Sodomites! Go away, for you offend God!"

"No, we won't! We must see, touch and feel the two young men and lie down with them. We're men in love, hoping ardently for their youthful favors."

"Wait!" shouted Lot, frenziedly. "I have two daughters who are still virgins. You can have them for your pleasure."

“No way, we want the two young men! Now, move away from the door outsider or we’ll deflower you too.”

The angels took Lot to safety inside his dwelling. They made sightless all the Sodomites who had gathered in front of the house so they couldn’t find the entrance. Then, they ordered Lot to leave in the morning with his family. Sodom was indeed devoid of righteous men and God’s wrath would destroy it.

“Don’t look back,” the angels warned Lot’s family. “Do not stop in the valley. Flee to the crest of the hills so that you may live.”

“No, not to the mountains,” implored Lot thinking of his goats, “to Segor which is a small town.”

“Very well, go to Segor right away.”

After that, God discharged heavenly sulfur and fire over the valley. Sodom and Gomorrah, along with all their residents and all the adjacent plain’s vegetation, were set ablaze by God’s wrath. Lot’s wife peeked backwards, overly curious to witness God’s punishment, and was transformed into a salt mound.

Abraham chose to see no more—he did not want to turn into salt—and returned home. He was appalled at the Sodomite’s depravity. In his heart, he was glad that God had penalized degeneracy.

The incurable rear perversion of the Sodomites—and possibly those from Gomorrah too—was twisted and, therefore, indefensible. Some have argued that, during such an uncouth era, women did not depilate their faces, legs or armpits, and that they stunk badly; worse still, they have claimed that powerful men embezzled the most desirable females, leaving for most men the unappealing, the animals and each other. But, regardless of any such crisis, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

The valley of Sodom was so thoroughly devastated that Lot eventually had to abandon Segor and climb up to the mountain—as the angels had suggested. With his two daughters, Lot settled inside a cave overlooking the desolate plain. In their grotto, while waiting for the grasses and the flowers to re-emerge in the valley, they were assailed by boredom.

“Not a single man is left for us in this valley,” said Lot’s elder daughter to the younger one.

“The Sodomites did not want us anyway,” remarked the youngest. “If I could only be a bit as fortunate as great aunt Saray, who is solicited by many men and mounted by kings and chieftains...”

“Our father sleeps alone since our mother turned into salt on the escape route,” emphasized the older girl.

“Well, he has us,” advocated her younger sister.

“Good thinking, sister. Yet, father would feel ashamed if propositioned by his own daughters because he is a just man.”

“We could give him wine to drink,” proposed the youngest. “When drunk, men either ignore infamy or pretend they don’t know what they’re doing.”

“Yes,” agreed the eldest, “then we can lie with him and have children.”

Both daughters conceived from Lot. The eldest gave birth to Moab, the father of the Moabites, who were to become goat herders in the Plain of Sharon. The youngest also had a son, Ben-Ami, who became the father of the Ammonites.

When drunk silly, Lot imagined God’s angels having intercourse with his daughters so he could have male descendants. A strong wine he was given to drink.

### **An Earlier Adventure of Abram and Saray in Palestine**

Many years before, according to Lot's daughters, Abram had passed through the Negev desert. As a norm, when Abram visited strange lands, he asked Saray to say that she was his sister. Perhaps Abram never meant to make a commodity of his wife's beauty, but the patriarch always kept his senses wide open to sound prospects of profit. At the time, Saray was splendid like a serene twilight and her smile was more enchanting than a morning breeze.

Saray's sweet and sleepy golden eyes smote the heart of Gerar's chieftain, Abimelek. Sparing no effort to woo and seduce the Sumerian woman, he sang tender love songs to her in front of Abram's tent—something Semitic people weren't used to. "Saray is the white vision of my nights," he'd intone amorously. A descendant of Indo-European Sea People, Abimelek was given to song and poetry when he felt a stealthy stir within his chest. "Gracious, glowing spring flower: my heart sighs and raves for you," he had confessed to Saray on a quiet night under the moon. Requiring no further encouragement—she loved to obey Abram at times—Saray found the kissing way into Abimelek's arms immediately.

Abimelek told Saray that he was weary of other lovers. She was ecstatic with joy and hungry for more kisses, songs and beautiful words. And he wanted to see only truth and faithfulness in the object of his love.

"You have brought great splendor to my life," Abimelek said to Saray, putting his hand on her breast.

“And my life’s so much richer when I’m swathed by the winds of your passion,” she’d flatter Abimelek when Abram wasn’t listening.

“Your ruby lips draw me to a region I had never visited before.”

“You shall be the Lord of my beauty, handsome and well-scented Abimelek.”

With an insatiable desire burning inside, Abimelek took Saray to his house. When the early morning light put color on her naked beauty, his fervor mounted to an astonishing pinnacle. Madly, Abimelek sank into Saray’s gorgeous femininity, wishing for eternal youth and immortality. And Saray revealed to him the mysterious madness that was hatching in her sighs because she found Abimelek to be a good lover and a handsome man.

Even Pharaoh hadn’t been so devoted to Saray. Regardless of her beauty, men had just come and gone in her life. Even the young cute shepherds who slept deeply under the stars had not satisfied her like the chieftain of Gerar.

According to the books of faith—and probably to Saray’s dismay—God visited Abimelek in a dream and threatened to punish him if he did not return the woman to her husband. When they had met, Abram had told Abimelek that he was only looking for a shady forest and a spring of clear water for his herd, his concubines and his sister. The Philistine (Palestinian) chief became frightened of his own dream and summoned the Hebrew to his house:

“Why didn’t you tell me that Saray was your wife and not your sister, Abram?”

“This kind of morality begets anguish for me too, Abimelek,” replied Abram, who was already familiar with such

inquiries. “I thought that no one feared God in these parts and that you would kill me to possess Saray.”

“That’s not true, Hebrew. I fear God.”

“How wonderful that is! Religion is good!”

“You must not fear for your life or your possessions while on the land of the Palestinians, Abram.”

“Thank you, welcoming Abimelek. Saray is also my sister, you know. She’s my father’s—not my mother’s—daughter. Now she’s my wife.”

Despairingly, Abimelek returned Saray to Abram. To safeguard her good name and reputation, the Palestinian chieftain gave Saray 1,000 silver pebbles. God removed the curse of childlessness (either on people, livestock or both) that He was said to have put on Abimelek’s house when Saray had entered it. As compensation, Abimelek also presented Abram with sheep and cattle, male and female servants.

Abram was happier and richer than before. Lightheartedly, he counted and recounted his goats, his donkeys and his sheep.

Saray was disappointed every time she brought to mind her lost delight. She now had undying memories of two wonderful love affairs.

Saray dedicated a great deal of time to her dreams while tending sheep with young cute shepherds—the only men to see her stripped beauty gleam in pasture fields and water sources again.

Abimelek could never forget the echo of Saray’s enchanting moans. The rest of the chieftain’s life became a vast daydream. Alone, he’d whine to the stars, “Saray’s flower closed its chalice to my soaring passion.”

## Birth of Isaac

Even without praising God with morning chants, Sarah became pregnant. “This virtue is puzzling,” she said within and laughed circumspectly. Later on, when Sarah had calibrated well her thoughts, she said to Abraham.

“Devoid of the burning desire to love, I’m heavy with child.”

“Of course,” granted the patriarch.

“I’m sixty-one years old.”

“God doesn’t care.”

“My womb was always unfruitful.”

“That does not matter.”

One day, Sarah presented Abraham with a son. “See,” she said to her husband, “your negotiations with God were successful.”

Sarah loved her child in a way she had never loved anyone. No man she had ever been with, no puppy, not even her parents had ever been loved by her like Isaac. On the eighth day after her son’s birth, when Abraham took him to be circumcised, Sarah considered stabbing her husband to death to stop the madness. Fear that her only love should die from complications of the stupid ritual painted a ghostly pallor on her face. Sarah tried to dissuade her husband from attempting the risky infection-prone procedure that had already killed several babies and adults. Abraham, nonetheless, made his point clear to her:

“My circumcised children are better than the rest.”

“I must be hearing another celestial ballad!” she thought.

“From this child shall come a race of circumcised men that’ll rule all the lands from the Nile to the Euphrates.”

“How can he believe that nonsense?” Sarah asked her mind.

Abraham organized a great celebration on the day Isaac was weaned. Counting his wealth, he advised his thoughts, “Ishmael is no longer my son, for I have an heir from my wife.”

Sarah held a bitter resentment against Hagar, the slave girl that she had placed on Abraham’s lap. The success of the Egyptian girl in Abraham’s tent had always been a painful reminder to Sarah of her own failure to give an heir to Pharaoh in his Theban palace and also to the handsome Palestinian chieftain, Abimelek.

For the first time in her life, Sarah became assertive and materialistic, worrying over her son’s future. Soon after the weaning of Isaac, Sarah asked Abraham to cast Hagar and her son out of his household.

Abraham rose early one morning and gave Hagar bread and a water skin. Coldly, he placed Ishmael on Hagar’s shoulder and told her to leave.

“How can you, Hebrew monster, throw your own child to the perils of the desert?” Hagar reproached Abraham.

“I must follow the path that God has shown me,” he replied, illogically.

“Even if it means being cruel to the boy?”

“Go with your child now!”

“No virtue will ever honor your memory,” thought the Egyptian girl.

And like shadows fleeing the dawn, Hagar and Ishmael parted company with Abraham. A propitious star guided them to safety so that carrion-eating birds would not devour their flesh.

Ishmael grew up in the desert and became a great archer. Hagar chose for her son a wife from the land of Egypt.

The father of the Hebrews had remained for a long time in the land of the Palestinians. Abraham had presented Abimelek with seven she-goats so the chieftain would grant him water-well rights.

Sarah's former abductor was a pious (fearful) Philistine who had renounced his boon dreading to be struck by God's ruddy thunderbolts. Abimelek still endured the malaise of having relinquished the Sumerian woman, but he hid his feelings silently. Painful sighs, born of hopeless desire, had been heard in his tent for more than twenty-five years.

### **Abraham's Craze**

The years went by and nothing more was heard of Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham and Sarah forgot them. Proudly, with little regard for anyone else, they watched Isaac grow to be a healthy, although not very attractive, young man. He looked like no one that Sarah could remember.

Abraham continued to wait for another symposium attended by God. He was hoping to obtain the large stretch of land from Egypt to Mesopotamia that his Lord had promised once. Many nights, Abraham stared at the vault of heaven; he believed that, via Isaac, his seed would be as abundant as the stars.

God is sure to appear to those who firmly believe in Him, whether they're sane or irrational.

“Abraham!”

“Here I am, God.”

“Take your son, Isaac, and sacrifice his life to Me.”

After a three-day journey, Abraham arrived at the location that, during his trance, he thought God had chosen for the sacrifice. He gathered firewood for the holocaust and loaded it on young Isaac's back. Then he grabbed a torch and a knife and led his son to the sacrificial site.

Meanwhile, Sarah realized that Abraham had taken Isaac to the thickets to kill him. She felt aflame with an exasperation fueled by her own thoughts and the air she breathed. She ran after them down a mound to the Jordan River's bank, determined to chide Abraham—or better still, to kill her husband before he could compose a human sacrifice with her son as the victim. Shadowing her golden eyes with her hand under the blazing sun, Sarah scanned the burning sands, the rocks and the brambles. She did not see them anywhere. At that moment, for the spilling of Abraham's blood she'd have given Abimelek the rest of her life and all the wealth she had. "My husband's madness goes beyond anybody's imagination and his words defy any form of understanding," she lamented downheartedly.

Sarah did not find her husband or her son. It was her strength that failed her, not the will to continue the search. At the edge of the river, for a second time in her life Sarah thought that she would die—the first time had been in Thebes, when she was estranged from palace life. The precious time of the day went by. Later, under a rosy dawn, deafened by the watercourse, Sarah stared at the sharp copper blade of the large knife that she was carrying, saying to herself, "Often, disturbed men become delirious with their own uncertainties and confuse shortness of reasoning with divine knowledge."

Sarah was determined to kill Abraham in his sleep that night.

“Father!”

“Yes, my son.”

“Where is the lamb for the holocaust?”

“God shall provide.”

Abraham tied the hands and feet of his son. He placed Isaac atop the firewood scattered on the altar that they had built. Then, covering Isaac’s mouth with his hand the patriarch grasped a knife to slay him. “Hagar’s son was luckier than me,” thought Isaac, trembling.

“Abraham!” God shouted from the heavens.

“Here I am!”

“Don’t kill him. I see that you fear God, that you won’t even deny Me your only son. Now, go up the heath and you’ll find a ram caught in a thicket by the horns. Swap it with Isaac.”

“Thank you.”

“I’ll bless you and make your descendants as prolific as the stars that are in heaven and as the sands of the desert.”

“You had promised that before, God.”

“Your children will also own the doors of their enemies.”

“Bless You, God!”

When Isaac was out of danger, Sarah felt great relief. With the insight gained in Pharaoh’s court, she read in her husband’s knotted way of thinking that the crisis was over.

Rumor has it—and that’s the nature of tales—that Sarah sent for Abimelek as soon as Abraham had his petit mal. The Palestinian rushed to the sacrificial altar with a ram, hoping to be able to convince the Hebrew to kill the animal instead of Isaac. But, when Abimelek and Sarah arrived at the scene, Abraham was still in a very deep trance. They quickly conceived a ruse: while Sarah

entangled the ram in the thicket, Abimelek posed from hiding as the deep voice of God to save Isaac.

At that time, Abraham received news from his brother Nahor. Like Abraham, old Nahor had had children from Melchah, his wife, and also from a concubine.

### **Sarah's Death**

Sarah spent the last years of her life in Bethel, in good mental health. She was stooping to her years like a flower bends with the frost. In late afternoons, after the heat of the summer days had relented, Sarah would sit on the crest of a hill to watch the sunset and to review her own life.

Sarah mused over the time when her cheeks turned crimson and her breast pounded at the sight of a Sumerian boy in the sweet breeze of the Euphrates' banks. A yearning for friendship had crossed their eyes even before the boy gave Sarah a seashell with which she never parted. Then Sarah's father married her to Abraham, her half-brother, and she became a goat herder.

The first time that Abraham possessed Sarah, her teeth chattered with humiliation—Sarah's delicate spirit wished for unfruitfulness. When marriage became a habit, she coupled with Abraham like the goats of the herd. The ecstasy that had spoken to Sarah's heart of the handsomeness of the Sumerian boy began to grow voiceless. And she and her husband became two shadows exchanging glances.

During the long journey from Mesopotamia to Canaan, Sarah's spirit slumbered within her lovely body. Her youth stopped

crying to her thoughts and her fair hair turned thick with dust and sweat. For a while, life became an unpleasant trip to nowhere.

Shepherds' bodies exhaled a fetid odor. Sarah's husband whiffed nauseously the air in their tent. Every member of the group seemed to be the rival of some virtue. In her mind, Sarah wished for something better.

In Egypt, Sarah traded the sorrowful tent for the mansion of bliss. Her forehead was bejeweled with precious stones. In private moments, she contemplated her own reflection on the Theban palace's ponds. In Pharaoh's house, it seemed that spring was interminable. The Egyptian Pharaoh wasn't handsome, like the Sumerian boy, but his words had provided comfort to Sarah's woes. Once Sarah learned from him the satisfaction of doubting, she never cried again—although she felt like dying on the day of her departure.

Undressed, her amber hair loose, Sarah expected Pharaoh's visits. When pausing from passion, they'd discuss notions verbalized by wise men. Sarah was authorized to look Pharaoh in the eyes—where feelings blaze. They talked mostly of the power that attaches the spirit to the body and of reminiscence.

One day, looking out from a palace window, Sarah thought, "I've never sinned." Then she wished to be with the Sumerian boy and treasured what she had learnt in the Theban court. She had matured.

Being returned to Abraham was painful, but Sarah had been unhappy before. In Canaan, she discovered much more through meditation and remembrance. But often, she rubbed her seashell, wishing for a better fate in some other life.

When Abimelek abducted Sarah, she had already overcome her former shyness. Sarah felt soon at home in the

chieftain's house because Abimelek was in love with her and had many animals in his sheepfolds. To benefit from Sarah's favors and all the sweetness that she could grant, Abimelek would do as she wished.

The Philistine was usurious but very pious. With troubled eyes, Abimelek observed blasting red clouds rupturing thunderously. He feared God's intention to kill sinners. At the end, faith made the Palestinian give up his concubine. Before Sarah returned to Abraham's tent, Abimelek sang to her, keenly, "O, Saray, God's radiance and delight."

Sarah lived to be eighty years old. She had left Thebes in pain at twenty-five but never whined about it. She died in Hebron of Canaan.

Regardless of Abraham's lectures, Sarah proclaimed that her spirit would return to the stars.

Ephron, the Hittite, sold to Abraham, as entombment ground, a wooded field with a cave. Abraham buried Sarah and her seashell in the grotto of Machpelah's field. Had Sarah had a choice, she would have been buried near the Sumerian boy.

### **Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca**

Abraham did not want his son, Isaac, to take a Canaanite wife—God's unpicked folks were inferior. Also, since Abraham thought that God had promised him all the land of Canaan for his progeny, he considered a mistake to establish family ties with the uncircumcised inhabitants of the country.

Still, despite the need to find Isaac a wife elsewhere, Abraham did not want him to neglect the family business in Canaan.

So, Abraham sent one of his servants to Aram-by-the-rivers, where his brother Nahor had dwelt for a long time. This envoy to Nahor's country was to acquire a mate for Isaac among the patriarch's relatives.

When the servant arrived to Aram-by-the-rivers, he paused near a water-well on the outskirts of Nahor's village. There, he waited until the women from the settlement went out to fetch water. That's when he saw a beautiful woman, perhaps a virgin, carrying a water jug on her shoulder. He liked her a lot.

"Let down your water jug that I might drink," the man said to the girl.

"Drink," she conceded in a coquettish mood, for handsome men like Abraham's servant, an issue of the Sea People, weren't plentiful in her country. "I will also bring water to your camels (not in use yet)."

They sat under a shady tree and talked for a while. The man found Rebecca to be a very down-to-earth and intelligent woman—something very rare too. When they were much better acquainted, he said to her:

"Have this six-gram gold ring to wear on your nose."

"Thank you, handsome man!" she reacted, mesmerized by the gift.

"Take also these two weighty gold trinkets."

"You're the most endearing man I've ever met."

"Now, I'm your friend. Whose daughter are you?"

"I am the daughter of Bathuel, the son of Melcah and Nahor."

"Is that so? I'm puzzled now. I took you for any clever and beautiful lady of the village."

"My name is Rebecca and I love gold."

“Is there room in your father’s house for me to spend the night?”

“We have plenty of straw and fodder and room for you to stay.”

Rebecca ran home to consult her brother, Laban, and her father, Bathuel. When the two men saw the gold, they rushed to the water fountain to meet the stranger. Bathuel asked the traveler to accept their hospitality and took water to him to wash his feet. “Come holy young man who gives us gold!” cried out Bathuel. “I have prepared for you a place in my house and stables for your animals. My son, Laban, shall free your camels from their harnesses and feed them hay.”

“Thank you. I am the servant of your uncle, Abraham, who lives now in the land of Canaan. He is very rich in sheep, cows, silver, gold, men-servants, women-servants, camels and mules. At a very old age, Sarah, my master’s wife and sister, gave him an heir to all he has. I am Abraham’s envoy to the house of his nephew to find a woman for his son, Isaac.”

Abraham’s emissary had found Rebecca very worthy of consideration. As the days passed, they took long walks in the woods, negotiating the marriage. Rebecca agreed to every point proffered by the handsome envoy and complied happily with every one of his requests; for this, she received more gold, silver and clothing.

As expected by everyone, Abraham’s servant chose Rebecca to be Isaac’s bride because she was fresh, attractive, delightful and circumspect. The man was particularly impressed and pleased when she said to him, “I do not entrust my secrets to anyone, except to Deborah, my deaf and mute wet nurse, or they’ll be lost for sure.”

The servant had been instructed by his master to overlook the fact that the men in Bathuel's house weren't circumcised. He also gave many presents to Laban and to his mother because his second camel was loaded with riches. At the sight of so many costly gifts, Laban and Bathuel decided that such offer had to come from God. Both men agreed to give Rebecca to Isaac. Then, Bathuel talked to his daughter:

"Would you like to be the wife of the very rich Isaac, Rebecca?"

"Certainly," she replied.

"Abraham's servant will return today to Canaan with our consent for you to marry."

"If you'll let me, I'll go with him now and take Deborah, my wet nurse," affirmed Rebecca.

"Very well, go. May you breed into the thousands!"

"I'll get started breeding sooner than even you can imagine," Rebecca assured her father.

"Make your descendants hold the gates of their enemy's dwelling."

After a very pleasurable and purposely extended trip, Rebecca arrived at a location in the Negeb desert where Isaac was staying with his animals. Isaac may not have known that plant roots absorb nitrates to form proteins, but he had rediscovered that animal excretions on the soil broke down and formed plant foods. When Rebecca arrived, he was at the brink of grasping that clover and alfalfa sink nitrogen into the soil and help other crops. Isaac was the precursor of many clever Hebrew agriculturalists who would make the desert bloom waiting for God's angels to visit.

Abraham's servant took the very lively, satisfied and yet discreet Rebecca to her husband. During a late afternoon stroll, Isaac saw a veiled woman approach riding a camel—although camels were not used until much later. When she alighted and drew near him, Isaac was taken aback by her captivatingly elegant gait.

The manservant told Isaac that Rebecca was his wife. She untied her veil and showed Isaac the tender expression of her black eyes with long lashes and her red lips. Without more ado, Isaac took her into his mother's tent to consummate the marriage. There, emboldened by want, he thrust into her womb. Following her mother's advice, Rebecca sighed painfully and almost fell in a swoon

Every day, Rebecca's wet nurse, Deborah, bathed her mistress with fresh water scented with violets and myrtles. When Isaac returned from the fields, she disrobed herself and showed him her anemone thighs and the hard pink nipples protruding in her firm bosom. A glance at her naked body rekindled a fire in Isaac's heart every evening. Entangled by Rebecca's love, he was always grateful to Abraham's servant for finding him such a pleasing woman.

Isaac loved the tactful Rebecca. She was eye-catching, clever, and very capable of running all the family affairs. Besides, being of the race of Abraham made her especially gratifying to his eyes.

Within six full moons from the day of her arrival, Rebecca delivered two sons, Esau and Jacob. In her company, Isaac found comfort after his mother's death.

## Abraham's Death

Abraham, the man who never recognized man's rational boundaries, became extremely old bearing in mind countless mirages. Scores of visions always soothed his restless psyche. Abraham may have introduced to Palestine the tales of Noah, the indispensable link to humanity, and also that of Adam, the man who wasn't born. According to Sarah, Abraham's supreme error was the attempt to sacrifice to God her own miracle, Isaac.

Bending under the weight of mortality, the patriarch Abraham lay down to sleep one evening and darkness overtook him. He had lived to be a hundred in anticipation of the divine promise, a land interspersed with countless oases for his progeny.

Abraham had bred many proletarians with his concubines. One of them, a woman named Kethura, had given birth to several children. Before he died, Abraham ceded all his wealth to Isaac and sent Kethura's disinherited sons to the eastern lands. Still, legend wants her to have rent her clothes at Abraham's funeral—perhaps her garb was a present from him.

Isaac buried Abraham in Machpelah's grotto, in the field bought from Ephron the Jetean. Abraham's interment took place under a clear spring day, when the storks and many other migratory birds were returning to Palestine to entwine their nests. Isaac lived more at ease after his father died. In the back of his mind, he had always feared that, in a moment of confounded reason, Abraham should have wanted to stab him or sacrifice one of Rebecca's sons.

It's been written—although it doesn't sound very likely—that Ishmael, the banished son of Hagar, attended the funeral.

Rebecca, Isaac's cousin and wife, was fruitful once. In a flash, two of her eggs were fertilized by two different spermatozoids and she conceived fraternal twins. The boys were raised with the help of Deborah and the trusted servant who had brought them from Nahor. The firstborn, Esau, was blond and very hairy. The second born, Jacob, was dark.

Esau became a skillful hunter but Jacob was restful and preferred to stay around the tent. Isaac esteemed greatly the venison that Esau brought him. Rebecca loved Jacob much more than Esau.

Eventually, Esau relinquished his firstborn rights to his brother. One day, returning home tired from the hunt, he traded his inheritance for a dish of lentils. That transaction is known as Jacob's first rip off.

### **Isaac in Gerar**

Famine returned to Canaan—the Promised Land. Searching for a place to prosper, Isaac perambulated the land of Gerar while Abimelek was still ruler of the Philistines. During that time, Isaac too began to speak to God. God ordered Isaac to stay in Gerar instead of traveling to lush Egypt because He really planned to turn Palestine over to him and to make his children as abundant as the stars in heaven.

In Gerar, Isaac and Rebecca told everyone that they were siblings. Old Abimelek thought—probably mistakenly—that Rebecca could rekindle his passion. When Abimelek began to spy on Rebecca, he caught her copulating with the said brother and declared:

“Having seen how you do each other, there’s no doubt in my mind now that charming Rebecca is your wife and not your sister, Isaac.”

“I was afraid that you’d kill me to rob her,” confessed Isaac.

“I’m a God-fearing man, Isaac. You may stroll throughout Gerar in peace with your lady.”

“May God bless you and all the Palestinians, Abimelek.”

“In truth, had I not seen you too sexually engaged, I would have taken Rebecca to my house,” revealed the octogenarian Philistine. “But I’ve seen enough. Make Rebecca’s exquisiteness be celebrated.”

“Yes, Abimelek, as you have seen, Rebecca is very attractive.”

“Had I lain with her I would’ve sinned,” the pious Palestinian assured Isaac. “I’m so glad that watching is not a failing because it brings so much joy to my old wits.”

Isaac planted, fertilized with manure, and harvested a fine crop in Gerar. He became the owner of several herds of sheep and cows and had many servants.

The Palestinians were jealous of Isaac and began to obstruct the openings of the wells dug up by Abraham’s servants. They competed with the Hebrews for the better fields, the waterholes and the right to dig deeper wells. Each group tried to make life difficult for its neighbor, stealing crops and burning tents to make the other leave. Both sides brought up accusations of wrongdoing to the Palestinian chieftain.

The Philistines did not want the Hebrews as neighbors and hoped that they’d migrate to other countries. The Hebrews

had chosen to live only with those who worshipped the god of Abraham.

Eventually, Abimelek asked Isaac to leave the country because he was too rich and powerful. Instead of departing, Isaac relocated his tents to the Valley of Gerar. He dug up new wells and even found an underground river. The Philistine shepherds clashed with Isaac's over the new water sources too.

God appeared to Isaac and told him not to worry. Isaac put up an altar among his tents and dug up another well, which made water abundant for all. The water rights disputes ceases and Isaac prospered.

Old Abimelek understood finally that God was with Isaac and proposed a pact of friendship to him. This made Isaac very happy. He offered a banquet to the Palestinian chieftain and caroused him with wine; then, he and Rebecca invited Abimelek to their tent so he could watch them divert themselves and cohabitate once again.

Abimelek and Isaac pledged amity to each other, declaring inadmissible the taking of property by force. Each man swore to let the other live and thrive in peace. On that very same day, Isaac's servants found even more water.

The water dispute and the taking of land by force resurfaced forty five hundred years later. This seems to indicate that the books of faith are of a certain historical interest.

## Jacob Dupes Isaac

With time, Isaac became physically sightless too. Rebecca and her faithful manservant took good care of him. “If the eyes don’t see, the heart doesn’t grieve,” Isaac used to say to his wife.

When he was old, sensing impending death, Isaac called Esau:

“Grab quiver and bow, Esau.”

“Yes, father.”

“Bushwhack a fine quarry that I may have prepared to my liking.”

“Yes, father.”

“Then, after eating the kill that you’ll bring, I’ll bless you.”

As usual, Rebecca was listening to Isaac’s conversation from hiding. When Rebecca realized that her husband was determined to bless Esau before God, she became very disappointed.

Esau had taken two Jetean women as wives: Judith and Bessemath. Rebecca had never forgiven Esau for taking wives amongst the daughters of Jet and wanted to disinherit him. Both Isaac and Rebecca considered that Esau had contravened a Hebrew directive. Nonetheless, Rebecca simply loved Jacob more than Esau. She warned him immediately:

“Your father intends to bless Esau before God.”

“How little I’ve accomplished by cheating Esau of his primogeniture, mother!”

“Do not despair, my son, think! Go find two baby goats from the herd right away. Fleece them and bring me the meat to make a stew for your father. Also bring the goat’s coats.”

“Did you say the coats?”

“Yes, bring the coats to make you appear as hairy as your brother.”

“Oh, yes, of course.”

Rebecca prepared a stew to please Isaac’s taste. She dressed Jacob with Esau’s clothes and covered his hands and neck with the goat’s fleeces. Then she sent him to his father with the stew and wine:

“Father!”

“Who is it?”

“I’m Esau, your firstborn. I’ve done as you wished. Eat the venison and drink wine so you can bless me later.”

“How did you find game so soon, my son?”

“God has put the quarry in my way, father.”

“Come close that I may pat you, for your voice is that of Jacob.”

“I’m by your side, father.”

“But your hands are hairy. Are you truly my son, Esau?”

“Yes, I am,” lied Jacob.

“You smell like a goat.”

“Thanks, father.”

“Hand me the dish so I can eat and then bless you.”

“Yes, father.”

“May God reward you with heaven’s dew, the earth’s fruitfulness and immeasurable wheat and must. May other races serve you and all the nations stoop before you. You will be your brother’s master and your mother’s children will vow to you. Damned be whoever damns you and blessed be who blesses you.”

“Let it be so, father, because even my siblings are jealous and hateful.”

After Jacob had left, Esau returned to his father's tent. In his hands steamed a stew that he had prepared with a fresh kill.

"Get up, father, and eat from the quarry I bring you so you can bless me later."

"Who are you?"

"I am your firstborn."

"Then, who brought me to eat before? I ate and I blessed him."

"It wasn't me, Esau."

"But he'll remain blessed."

"Bless me too, father!" cried out Esau, bitterly.

"Ah, it was your brother who deceived me and walked off with your blessing!"

"This is the second time that he tricks me. First, he lifted my primogeniture and now he helped himself to my blessing. Don't you have an additional blessing for me, father?"

"It's done. You'd be surprised to know how many times I've been deceived, Esau. But now, I have made him your master and I have given you to him as servant."

"Was that your last blessing, father?"

"Now you'll have to leave the Promised Land and its heavenly dew, Esau. You shall live by the sword and you shall be subservient to your brother, although one day you'll be free from his oppression."

"I'll live by the sword for sure," Esau whispered to his thoughts. Predictably, Esau hated Jacob. Esau had determined to kill Jacob as soon as his father had died.

Either Rebecca guessed what Esau's intentions were or the Jetean women talked too much. Or perhaps the traces of grief and hate on Esau's face did not go unnoticed to her keen eyes.

She told Jacob that his brother planned to spring upon him with murderous desires.

Verily, Rebecca did not want to lose her husband and her dearest child on the same day. She said to her favorite son, “Jacob: flee from here immediately. Go to the house of my brother, Laban, in Mesopotamia. Stay with him until your brother calms down. Esau is a brute. With time, he’ll forget what has happened and he’ll forgive you. I will send word when it’s safe for you to return to Canaan.”

### **Jacob Treks to Mesopotamia**

“Do not take a wife among the Canaanites, Jacob,” Rebecca had urged her second born. “Go to Padan Aram, to the house of your grandfather, Bathuel, and choose one of the daughters of your uncle, Laban, for a wife. May God make you prolific. May God bless you as He blessed Abraham. Make your children take possession of this land.”

“I thank you, mother. I must leave now, before Isaac goes with his parents, because Esau is a violent man.”

When Esau heard from his wives what his father had said about the Jetean people, he understood that Isaac loathed Canaan’s brood as much as Rebecca did. To appease his father, he took for a wife Mahalat, one of Ishmael’s daughters. Ishmael, who had been driven off by Esau’s grandfather, was his only half-accredited uncle.

On his way to Haran, as he was passing through Bethel, Jacob found within himself the same talent to speak to God that his father and grandfather had shared. First, he fantasized that

God was sitting at the very top of a stairway by which angels went up and down between heaven and earth. Jacob's dream was quite similar to Abraham's stories of the large processions in the Babylonian temples, where the priests ascended on stairwells to their king's chair.

"Jacob: I am the God of your grandfather and of your father."

"Here I am, God, running away to save my life."

"I shall protect you."

"I'm poor too."

"I shall give you the land of Canaan for your offspring."

"Why don't You make me another Paradise? That way, I won't have to dispossess others of their land and watch their children die of starvation."

"Because that's not the way events shall come to pass. I want you to have the land of Canaan."

"Will I thrive and have many children there?"

"Your race will spread everywhere like soaring dirt scattered by My sneeze."

When Jacob awoke from his dream, he said within his mind, "I have seen the house of God and the door of heaven!"

Jacob placed on the ground, as a marker, the stone that he had used to rest his head that night. He poured oil over it and took this vow: "If God is indeed with me, if He safeguards me during this trip, if He grants me bread and clothes, if I return safely to my father's house, I shall believe in Him. Of course, if I die I'll have no belief at all. If wealth comes to me, I shall return to God one-tenth of all He gives me."

So, Jacob too made his covenant with God.

## Jacob's Nuptials

Jacob arrived to Haran, in the northernmost part of Mesopotamia, where his uncle, Laban, had settled. He paused near a well bugged up by a large stone, about which shepherds gathered with their flocks. Rachel, Laban's beautiful daughter, also arrived at the obstructed water well with the sheep. Jacob removed the stone so Laban's herd could drink.

While the sheep drank, Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's nephew, the son of Rebecca. He omitted the ruse that he had pulled on his brother, the de facto universal heir to his father regardless of Isaac's blessing before God. After all, having talked to God contradicted Esau's accusation that he was a bad fellow."

Laban was happy at first to receive his nephew—he thought that Jacob had brought gold like Abraham's servant had done many years before. He called Jacob, "One of my bone and flesh."

"My father," Jacob said to his uncle, "is now enfeebled and wasted by age. My brother is his sole inheritor. And here I am, wearied by my journey, unable to return to Canaan, where I have nothing."

After Jacob had spent a sluggish month in the tent, watching Rachel with lustful eyes, Laban thought that it'd be better to put him to work. He said to Jacob, "Since you're my nephew, you shall be my shepherd."

Rachel, on her part, scented her body with the juice of marjoram twigs after her baths, entwined jasmine flowers in her shiny black hair and began wearing bracelets on her wrists because she was in heat.

"What shall your compensation be?" Laban asked Jacob.

“I want your daughter, Rachel,” replied Jacob, who was in love.

“Then, you shall serve me seven years for her.”

“No! I’m desperate for a woman. I’ll serve you only seven months for her. Do you want your daughter to be an old maid waiting seven years to marry?”

“You’re right about that. It’s agreed: serve me a year for her. I rather give her to you than to an outsider.”

Laban had two daughters. Leah, who had no redeeming features except her tender eyes, was the eldest. Rachel, the youngest, was extremely pretty.

After the cute Rachel was promised to him, Jacob obtained permission to touch and play with her under the watchful eye of her mother. This brought, of course, some relief to both lovers.

When the year was up, Jacob reminded Laban of the accord pertaining to his nuptials. His uncle concurred but devised a stratagem to straighten his household for the good of all.

On a moonless night, Laban prepared a great wedding banquet. During the feast, Jacob was served a pomegranate sherbet infused with wine and a love potion. When Jacob went to his tent to lie in wait for Rachel, Laban and his wife cloaked Leah and sent her to him. Jacob not only forgot himself and clove asunder a hymen in the dark, but he had a prolonged and very joyous intercourse with Leah, believing that she was Rachel.

In the morning, Jacob became fully aware of the ruse. Bearing in mind the two occasions on which he had cheated his brother, Esau, Jacob still complained to his uncle:

“Did I not serve you for Rachel? Why have you tricked me?”

“Forgive me. I had forgotten to tell you that it is our custom to give the older daughter in marriage before the younger.”

“I feel cheated, uncle.”

“The slipup is easily mended, Jacob. Complete the week of nuptials with Leah and I will give you Rachel, in advance, as long as you work for me for seven more years.”

Jacob accepted Laban’s demands because he’d rather work for his uncle than fall into the hands of his brother. During the mandatory week of sex, he stayed the course with Leah. Then he got his hands on Rachel!

Despite being just an alternate, Leah was prolific. Conversely, the very alluring Rachel, who Jacob loved madly, was barren. Relentlessly, Leah gave birth to four sons: Reuben, Simon, Levi and Judah. Then she did not conceive for a while.

### **Jacob’s Con**

Considering that perhaps she couldn’t bear children, Rachel endured great frustration. Sometimes, she argued with her husband about God and fertility. Rachel wanted children so badly that at long last she said to Jacob:

“Plunge pregnant my servant, Balah, that I may have a child by her.”

“With pleasure,” replied Jacob.

When Jacob contented Rachel and Rachel’s servant, Balah, Dan was born. Jacob’s persistent pleasing of the women made Balah give birth to a second son, Nephtali. Then Leah, who had stopped having children due to Jacob’s indifference, enticed

him with her most beautiful servant, Zelpha. From Zelpha Jacob had Gad and Asser.

Since Leah's appearance never improved, Jacob slept most often with good-looking Rachel. On a certain occasion, in exchange for a bunch of mandrakes, Rachel agreed to persuade Jacob to sleep with Leah one time. He lay down with Leah and engendered a fifth son, Isakar. Amazed at his first wife's fecundity, Jacob made her heavy with Zebulun. Then he had intercourse with Leah again and engendered a female, Dinah. But then Rachel, who had always copulated viciously with Jacob on a sheepskin mat, unexpectedly conceived a son, Joseph.

Jacob's heart had longed for a son by Rachel. As soon as Joseph was born, Jacob felt duty-bound to upsurge an inheritance for him. At that time, Jacob said cannily to Laban:

"I'll return to my homeland with the women for whom I've served you and with my children."

"No, stay!"

"I have already served you well, uncle."

"I know."

"I have improved your herds."

"That's true. If you stay, I'll compensate you with whatever you want."

"Poverty takes much luster from a man, uncle. Don't you think that I must also have my animals?"

"What can I give you?"

"I need wealth for Joseph. I also want to put rings on Rachel's ears and jewels on her fingers."

"What do you want for continuing to improve my herds, nephew?"

“Give me all the black lambs and all the spotted and all the streaky goats that are born.”

“Agreed,” contracted the shrewd Laban.

Laban separated all the black sheep, as well as all the spotted and the streaky goats, from the herd of white animals that he entrusted to Jacob. Then, he ordered his children to drive the colored group of animals away, at a three-day-march distance from where Jacob kept the rest of the flock. Laban did not think that very many black, streaked and spotted animals would issue from white ones.

But Jacob had a sharper eye for the laws of inheritance than his uncle. Near the waterspouts and drinking holes, on the grazing lands, under the shade of poplar, almond and plane trees, he coached the pairing of the animals in heat to his advantage. In his care, the streaky and spotted herd grew and he became the owner of a drove of robust livestock, which he kept apart from Laban’s.

On account of his husbandry skills, Jacob became rich. Very soon, he owned as many animals as his uncle. In seven years, he was in possession of various herds and had men and women servants, camels and donkeys.

## Escape from Mesopotamia

Jacob's opulence made Laban's sons envious. Laban himself hated his son-in-law. Jacob met furtively with Rachel and Leah to explain their family's situation:

"My assets are an endowment from the God of Abraham, but Laban and his sons do not understand that."

"We're on your side," the women reacted. "We're heirs to nothing in our father's house."

"I had a dream in which God ordered me to depart," said Jacob.

"Believe what you will," replied Rachel.

"Do what you must," supplemented Leah.

While Laban was away sheep shearing, Rachel stole the family icons, which were inlaid with gold. Because she had little trust in Abraham's God, Rachel lifted the statuettes of Enlil and Ea. She had heard that, on a stele erected by Gilgamesh many centuries before, it was written that these two gods could grant additional copulative years to humans, even immortality.

Having gathered all the riches acquired in PadanAram, while his father-in-law was still away, Jacob put his wives and children on camelback and left. Perhaps Rebecca had sent word that his brother, Esau, had calmed down and wised up with age. Herding all his spotted and streaked sheep and goats, Jacob headed for his father's house in Canaan.

Laban pursued Jacob and caught up with him in the Galad Mountains. Laban was escorted by armed men and quite irate. When Jacob saw the hilt of his father-in-law's copper sword, he pictured himself cleft in pieces and thrown on a heap of slain with the rest of his family.

“You have deceived me, Jacob: you have seized my daughters as if they were war captives.”

“I was afraid that you’d forcefully prevent me from leaving, uncle.”

“I would have seen you off with joyful songs, to the beat of drums and the tune of flutes,” Laban lied. “You, in turn, would not even let me kiss my daughters and my grandchildren. Tell me, Jacob: why have you stolen my gods?”

“Do you believe me capable of such impiety?”

“Whether you’re capable or not, I want my gold and silver idols returned. To me, they’re the most precious things in the world.”

“I have not taken your gods. I am affiliated to Abraham’s God, who has no idol form. Besides, nobody can steal from a man who hides and watches his wealth like you. Search my personal effects and take anything of yours that you find.”

Except for the neigh of donkeys and camels, the camp was very quiet. Laban conducted an unsuccessful search of his son-in-law’s tent. For once, Jacob was telling the truth because neither had he been part of the theft nor did he know where the idols were.

Rachel had hidden her father’s gods under her camel’s packsaddle and had been thence sitting on them.

“Do not be angry, father, if I do not come down from my camel,” said Rachel, turning her face away.

“Why?”

“I cannot stand in front of you because I have my period.”

“I understand,” Laban had to say out of piety. On one hand, Rachel was too old for him to undress; on the other, Laban did not wish to see blood dripping.

When Laban gave up trying to locate his figurines, Jacob blazed an attitude that was passed down from generation to generation and became emblematic of his race. He indicted the plaintiff:

“What crime have I committed, Laban, for you to hound me like his? I have kept your flocks for twenty years. During that time, never did your sheep or goats aborted and never did I eat one of your rams—he lied blatantly. I never brought you a mutton torn apart by wild animals. I would always pay for damages to the herds. You always demanded restitution of stolen animals. I served you for your daughters and for your livestock. You shortchanged my salary fourteen times. Had God not been with me, you would have sent me away empty handed.”

“Fine,” admitted Laban, a baddie too, who knew that some of Jacob’s allegations were true. “Now, let’s make peace. Regardless of our differences, these are still my daughters, these others are my grandchildren and those were my animals.”

“Let us gather stones and stack them up,” proposed Jacob, who liked to leave markers behind him. “Let neither of us ever go across the stone mound that we’ll erect to inflict injury upon the other.”

“Let God be our warden when we go on our separate ways, Jacob. Do not abuse my daughters or take other wives besides them.”

“Let the God of Abraham and the gods of Nahor, when you find them, judge both of us.”

Jacob and Laban made their pact. They also offered a sacrifice in Mount Galad and, of course, they ate.

## **Jacob Encounters Esau**

Jacob sent messengers to his brother, Esau, who was at the time in the steps of Edom. Jacob let his brother know that he owned cows, dunces and sheep, and was assisted by men and women; he called his brother's attention especially to his talks with angels and with God Himself.

Esau decided to go meet Jacob with four hundred men. Fearful to be punished for the two cases of fraud perpetrated against his brother twenty years before, Jacob was trembling. He had tried to exclude a firstborn from his inheritance. Similar cases amongst the Semitic tribes had been resolved with the death of the offender along with his wives and children. Jacob had even considered splitting his family so that if Esau should fall on one group the other could still escape.

Jacob sent ahead of the troupe two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred sheep and twenty rams, thirty she-camels with their offspring, forty cows and ten steers, twenty she-donkeys and ten he-donkeys. He ordered his gifts to be presented gradually to Esau as he approached and to inform him that his brother, Jacob, was coming.

Fretfully, Jacob hallucinated all night long prior to the meeting with his brother. In his dream, he wrestled a man till dawn. The man displaced one of Jacob's thighs.

"It is daybreak already, let me go," said the man to Jacob.

"I will not let go until you bless me."

"What's your name?"

"Jacob."

"From this day on, your name will no longer be Jacob; you will be called Israel because you have fought against God and

men and have prevailed.”

“And what’s your name,” asked Jacob to the persona of his chimera.

“Why do you want to know my name?”

“Just out of curiosity.”

“I won’t tell you but I’ll bless you.”

“I have seen God’s face and I’m still alive!” boasted Jacob.

Jacob came out of his encounter with God with a limp. Because Jacob walked lamely from there on, his descendants, called Israelites, do not eat the sciatic nerve of sacrificed animals. Faith tells them that God hit Jacob on that exact location.

As Esau drew near, Jacob thought to be in great peril. He placed at the very front of the company his concubines, Balah and Zelpha with their children, Dan, Nephtali, Gad and Asser. Behind them, he sent Leah with her children, Reuben, Simon, Levi, Judah, Isakar and Zebulon. “Go say hello to your uncle,” Jacob urged them forward. On the last row, Jacob hid Rachel and Joseph.

Jacob feared that the old rancor would fill Esau’s head at his mere sight. He went forward and kneeled on the ground seven times before reaching his brother.

Esau wasn’t very concerned about tradition. He would’ve felt no satisfaction in his heart telling God or men that he had killed his greedy brother. So he forgave Jacob.

Esau ran to meet Jacob, embraced and kissed him. Jacob felt great relief. They both shed tears. Esau—the brute—cried because he loved his brother. Jacob cried from pure nervousness and fright.

“Who are those with you?” asked Esau.

“These are the children that God has given me.”

“You have quite a few, Jacob.”

“But only one of them, Joseph, is dear to my heart.”

“I love all my children,” noted Esau.

“Well, of course, brother, if I...”

“That’s your business, Jacob.”

“All the males are circumcised, like our father and our grandfather have prescribed, Esau.”

“Keeping traditions may be a good thing,” said Esau, skeptically. “What’s the meaning of all the livestock I’ve found along the way?”

“Those are presents to find grace in the eyes of my master.”

“I have more than enough from my inheritance, brother. Keep your animals.”

“No, please, accept my gifts. I have come to you as a man who goes before God and you have received me well.”

“Let’s go home, Jacob. I’ll walk beside you.”

“Joseph is an infant and I limp. I also have many sheep with young. If I force the march, I’ll have countless losses. I’d rather keep the pace of the sheep and the children.”

“At least let me leave some of my men behind to help you.”

“That won’t be necessary, Esau. All I needed was to find grace in your eyes.”

Jacob went to Sukkoth and built a house for his family as well as shelter for his animals. Later, he arrived to the settlement of Sichem, in Canaan, and camped at her gates. He established trade relations with the sons of Jamor, the town’s elder, and erected another altar.

Jacob (Israel) called the new tabernacle, “He, God of Israel.”

## **Rape of Dinah and Revenge of the Israelites**

Sichem, Jamor's son, was the sovereign of the land where Jacob (Israel) had settled. One day, Sichem talked sweetly to the heart of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah and copulated with her. Some said that he did it by force.

Accompanied by her maidens, Dinah had wandered barefooted on the meadows to a shady spot drenched with the spray of a waterfall. She started to walk on the ground glimmering with flowers among the colors of nature. "Come fill your laps with flowers," she said to her companions but, in their keenness for picking, the servants had strayed away from their mistress. Sichem found Dinah alone and, before being seen, carried her off swiftly to his house on a gray donkey.

Sichem took Dinah to his father's house because he liked her very much. He asked Jamor to solicit Dinah from Jacob.

Jacob realized that Sichem had dishonored Dinah but said nothing of it at that moment because all the men from his household were in the pasturelands nurturing his flocks. When Jacob's children were told about Dinah's abduction, they were incensed. They agreed that, in order to get even against Sichem for the abomination perpetrated against their sister, a plan was necessary to seize all the livestock belonging to the inhabitants of Sichem City. There was much talk about the enormity of Sichem's crime that night.

"Your son can't just grab and rape one of our women, Jamor," they reproached Sichem's father. "Our sister is not a prostitute: she must be paid for! We wanted to give her to a man of much wealth in flocks, silver and gold."

"Calm down, boys," recommended, Jamor. "Sichem loves Dinah: give her to him as a wife. Let's be family. Remain on this

land. You'll have the whole country to graze your herds."

"We can't give our sister to an uncircumcised man: it is an infamy."

"Demand a dowry and presents but give the young woman to Sichem as a wife," Jamor pleaded with them.

"We can only agree to it if all the males in your city are circumcised," retorted, with deception in mind, the children of Israel.

"May I find grace in your eyes," implored Sichem.

"If you circumcise your men, we shall give you our daughters and we shall take yours for ourselves. We'll live among you and blend with you into a single people. If you do not agree, we'll take Dinah and leave."

"We can agree to that," declared Sichem—the first one to be circumcised because he was very much in love.

Jamor and Sichem persuaded the men of their clan to submit to the circumcision procedure. Every single male in town had his foreskin severed. Three days later, when the men's penises were hurting the most, the sons of Israel entered the city brandishing swords and killed all of them. Jamor and Sichem, too, were knifed to death when Dinah was rescued. The Israelites plundered the fallen and ransacked all the township's homes. They looted everything of value from the settlement and captured all the women and children. As planned, they appropriated all the livestock found in town and the adjacent fields.

Neither party ever consulted Dinah about her future. She had been abducted with trickery and rescued by force. The girl did not even have a part of the spoils taken in her name. Moreover, she was instructed to feel badly because she had been dishonored.

As a result of Dinah's rescue, several villages were destroyed and hundreds of residents fled or were driven out. Following the assault on Sichem by his sons, Israel (Jacob) worried. He dreaded an alliance of Canaanites and Pherecites against him that would bring destruction to his house. The Israelites, therefore, vacated the land of Sichem.

### **Retreat to Hebron**

As it normally occurred in times of danger, Israel (Jacob) had a dream in which he saw God and was counseled by Him. After the divine session, Israel buried near Sichem, under an oak tree, the alien god figures that Rachel had stolen from Laban and the rings that most members of his family had been wearing on their ears—he'd retrieve the gold later. He ordered everyone to change garb so to slip away unrecognized by the Canaanites. Israel intended to escape to Bethel, as he had done more than twenty years before when he was running from his brother, Esau.

The Israelites reached Bethel without being found out by their enemies—they circulated stories about the ferocious Jacobean God all over Canaan. Israel built an altar in Bethel, very close to the oak tree under which was buried Deborah, Rebecca's wet nurse. Since then, that spot was called Oak-of-Tears. There, Israel harangued his clan with assurances that God had appeared to him again offering—once more!—the land of the Canaanites formerly promised to Abraham and Isaac.

When the Israelites left Bethel, on the way to Ephrata (Bethlehem), Rachel was in labor. The delivery was very difficult and she died during childbirth. Joseph's full-blooded sibling

survived. The second son to please Israel's heart was named Benjamin.

Reuben, the son of Leah, performed adultery with Balah, the mother of his half-brothers Dan and Nephtali—Balah had been Rachel's servant and still was Israel's concubine. Reuben launched Balah's next pregnancy. Israel knew about it but did not punish them.

Israel (Jacob) returned to his clan and to the house of his father, Isaac, who lived in Hebron. Around his brother, Esau, he felt much better protected against the hatred of the Canaanites. Isaac had died when he was ninety years old and it's believed that he went with his parents. Esau and Jacob buried Isaac.

### **Esau's descendents**

Esau had taken wives indiscriminately among the Canaanites and the Egyptians and had many children by them. His favorite saying, taken from the Egyptian women, was: "I don't know why I exist but something tells me to go on living." Esau had also been voicing out his opposition to circumcision for a long time. Since puberty, he had complained bitterly about the loss of his foreskin because of Isaac's fanatical belief.

Esau's mother and brother had little consideration for him because he chose the women he liked regardless of their ethnicity or circumstances. Totally unconcerned with his own lineage, Esau felt that the tale about the origin of his people was insane and that the patriarch Abraham was a cuckold.

Because Jacob preferred wealth to fine-looking women, his family thought him to be worthier than Esau in the eyes of God.

For Abraham's descendants, the old customs and beliefs were good. Isaac thought Esau to be underprovided by heaven because he never expressed the desire to speak to God—a family trait by then. Esau had proclaimed the truth of the ignorance of God; however, he had said that, if God ever spoke to him, he'd complain about cold winters, hot summers, bugs, aging, sickness and death.

Isaac's firstborn believed only the believable. He did not look for the Divine on the top of the mountains, in the entrails of goats, under the sun, around the moon or among the stars. In his view, only dark clouds and a strong wind could prophesize an upcoming storm. He always wondered why those who knew nothing sought to teach others. "My forefathers talked nonsense to God," he thought.

Esau upset his relatives with comments such as, "Creation is an imperfect work of justice and reason." In the end, he chose good deeds over faith. "I don't understand destiny or Providence," he said. Unlike his godly family, Esau shared the milk of his goats with the starving children of other nations. Abraham and Isaac had sustained that all nations did not have the same right to the land—Jacob agreed but Esau wasn't so sure.

Perhaps Esau loved his proud, mind-twisted and boring kin a little more than he should have. When Israel returned to Canaan, Esau left the country with his flocks and his other possessions. He moved away from his brother because they were both rich and had far too much livestock to be able to live together.

Esau had not forgotten that, when deceived, Isaac had given Canaan to Israel (Jacob). "Jacob finds his happiness in dupery," he thought, "but I have mine in reason."

Esau created Edom, in the mountains of Sehir, and lived there peacefully. One of his descendants was King Herod the Great.

A man called Voltaire summarized Esau's viewpoint on life as such:

*Ce monde, ce théâtre et d'orgueil et d'erreur,  
Est plein d'infortunés qui parlent de bonheur.  
Tout se plaint, tout gémit en cherchant le bien-être ;  
Nul ne voudrait mourir, nul ne voudrait renaître.*

Then again, much of Esau's progeny has regretted that he did not kill Israel. Esau's generosity and his forgiving heart cost much suffering to his brood.

### **Joseph Daydreams**

Israel loved Joseph, Rachel's son, much more than all of Leah's, Balah's or Zelpha's lads. To distinguish Joseph, Israel had a long-sleeved tunic made especially for him. The other brothers were wayward, but Joseph kept his father informed of their activities.

At seventeen, Joseph watched over his father's flocks. It was then that he had his first dream. Joseph called his brothers and referred his first trance to them.

"I had a dream in which all eleven of us were tying up gavels in a field. Suddenly, the gavel that I had strapped stabbed the ground and stood up straight, while your stacks were bending forward around it."

“Are you going to be our king and master?” asked disapprovingly his envious brothers.

In his second dream, Joseph saw the sun, the moon and eleven stars lower themselves before him. When Joseph related this dream to his father and brothers, Israel reprimanded him:

“How can you entertain such a grandiose vision? Do you consider then that your father, your mother—already deceased—and your brothers should prostrate before you?”

“My brothers are jealous of me,” Joseph whispered in his father’s ear.

“I wonder why?” asked ironically Israel, who wanted to believe his favorite son’s imagination.

Later on, Israel sent Joseph to the pasturelands near the deserted township of Sichem, where his brothers were tending sheep. Israel wanted to hear news of his sons and the flock. Joseph hiked from the valley of Hebron to the meadows of Sichem. When his brothers saw him approach, they conspired to kill him.

“Here comes the dreamer.”

“Let’s kill him.”

“We can dump his body in a hollow.”

“We’ll say that a wild beast devoured him.”

“Let Joseph dream in the hole.”

“Yeah! In a pit, he’ll stop dreaming for sure.”

“Throw him in a desert pit if you want, but do not hurt him,” demanded Reuben—who was Zelpha’s incestuous lover—the only one who did not want Joseph dead.

When Joseph arrived, his brothers grabbed him, took his classy tunic and threw him in a desiccated ditch. Then, they sat down to eat and to discuss Joseph’s future. Some wanted to murder

Joseph outright but Judah argued against it. “We’ll gain nothing by killing our brother and hiding his blood,” he said to his brothers. Reuben, Joseph’s protector, wasn’t there. Most of the others kept quiet.

In the middle of their discussion, they saw approach a caravan of Ishmaelites—the desert dwellers that descended from Abraham via Hagar, the Egyptian woman. The convoy of uncircumcised Ishmaelite men was traveling from Galad to Egypt, tugging along their camels loaded with scents, balsams and myrrh.

“Instead of killing him, let’s sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites,” occurred to Judah.

“That is an excellent, money-making idea,” most of the others agreed.

Joseph was helped out of the ditch by his brothers and proposed to the Ishmaelites as a slave. On seeing that Joseph was young and good looking, the merchants decided to take him to Egypt’s market for a profit.

When Reuben returned, he did not find Joseph.

“The boy is not in the ditch,” he said sadly. “Where will I go now?”

“Don’t worry,” his brothers said to Reuben, “we’ll behead a young goat and stain Joseph’s tunic with its blood. Then, we’ll send our father the long-sleeve tunic with these words: We have found this, see if it is your son’s or not.”

“Israel will say that it is.”

“Then we’ll tell our father that a wild beast tore Joseph apart.”

“Israel will shred his tunic. He’ll put a sack around his waist and mourn his son a very long time.”

“Then we’ll go comfort him.”

“Israel will refuse our consolation,” Reuben assured them.  
“And he’ll weep a lot for Joseph.”

Meanwhile, the Ishmaelites were selling the young Hebrew in Egypt. Putiphar, one of Pharaoh’s eunuchs and captain of his guard bought Joseph.

### **Coition of Judah and Tamar**

Israel’s descendants were copious. Some of them decided to settle away from the family. Judah left his brothers to form an association with an outsider named Hirah. Judah took a Canaanite woman for a wife and had three sons by her: Err, Onan and Selah.

Err, Judah’s firstborn, had paired up with a woman named Tamar. Yet, God found Err to be displeasing and took his life. After Err’s death, Judah ordered Onan to donate children to his departed older brother; but Onan did not want Judah’s firstborn to have offspring and always ejaculated out of Tamar’s womb. Onan was also unpleasant to God and died. Since Judah’s third born, Selah, was too young to make children for anybody, Tamar was returned to her father’s house as a widow.

Judah’s wife died too. She died from causes other than God’s aversion. Just after Judah became a widower, Tamar was desperate for children. One day, when Judah was sheep shearing, Tamar sneaked out of her parents’ house, hid away her widow’s garment and went to find Judah. Tamar had covered her face with a veil. When Judah saw his daughter-in-law, he mistook her for a whore:

“I want to lie with you,” Judah said to Tamar.

“Don’t you have a wife?”

“No. I am a widower in dire need of sex.”

“Why don’t you masturbate?”

“Masturbation is not always pleasant to the circumcised man.”

“What will you give me in trade for sexual interaction?”

“I’ll send you a young goat from my herd.”

“Agreed, but you must leave with me some valuables as guarantee.”

“What must I hock?”

“I want your seal, your leash and your cane.”

Judah made love to Tamar until he was totally placated. From that intercourse, Tamar became pregnant with twins. She left the scene of the coition, taking with her Judah’s seal, leash and cane. When Judah returned with the goat, Tamar was long gone. Judah asked the locals for the roadside whore, but he was told that no prostitute had ever earned a goat before in those lonesome fields.

Months later, Judah was told that his daughter-in-law had prostituted herself and was heavy with child from the escapade. Judah sentenced Tamar to be burned alive. When Judah’s verdict was about to be executed, Tamar made public cheerfully that the man who had impregnated her was the owner of the seal, the leash and the cane that she had kept.

Judah recognized the twins as his. It’s been written—although it seems doubtful—that Judah was sorry not to have given to Tamar his youngest son, Selah. In all probability, Judah continued to use Tamar for sex.

Tamar had identical twins. A scarlet strand was tied around Zaraj’s arm because he was the first to stick a hand out of the

womb. The thread should have indicated Judah's heir. Yet, Zaraj retracted his arm into the womb and it was his brother, Phares, who was born first.

### **Joseph in Egypt**

Like Abraham and Sarah, the kings of Egypt were sometimes brother and sister. Some pharaohs had had heirs from slave girls when their queens were unfruitful. Some queens had even produced for Egypt the miracle of a Son of God from an unnamed personage.

The Egyptians had organized many incursions against Syria and Nubia. All the kingdom's temples had in their gardens and terraces myrrh trees transplanted from Nubia. Countless black and Syrian prisoners of war had been taken to Egypt to work as slaves.

The Egyptian Pharaoh was the most powerful man in the world. Pharaoh's authority reached from Egypt to the Euphrates riverbanks and to Cyprus. The Phoenician sailors who manned Egypt's navy delivered to Pharaoh horses from Mesopotamia and chariots, fine fabrics, jewelry and precious stones from all over the known world. Thebes was the most monumental city in the world.

Joseph was serving his owner, the eunuch Putiphar, and lived in his marble floor house. Pharaoh's captain of the guard was a burly fellow partial to wigs firmed up with beeswax and also to young black men. Every day, before leaving the house, he painted around

his eyes black lines of a lead sulfide and chlorine paste to keep flies away and to minimize sun glare.

Once the master realized that his Hebrew slave was shrewd and managed well his affairs, he designated Joseph his house steward. Thereafter, Putiphar's house prospered.

The eunuch had a wife whose name is not mentioned in the books of faith. The woman too used kohl eyeliner and sprinkled herself with perfume because she liked men. The wife had rosy cheeks and blacker-than-the-night tresses falling on her conspicuous and normally stiff pink nipples. The witchery of her glance spoke of hunger for fierce sex and the wish to be the fair spoil of lascivious men; yet, her husband could see nothing of this beneath the see-through clothes of very fine linen that she always wore.

Putiphar's wife was pleased with the new housekeeper who managed so well their assets. She liked Joseph's slender waist and the fact that he had no damsel or harlot to press against his groin. To her Egyptian way of thinking, Joseph was duty-bound to surrender his young body to his masters. Joseph couldn't avoid the woman's advances. She was minded to make love with him. Driven by sexual starvation, she chased Joseph unrelentingly around the house. They had the same conversation many times.

"Come, Joseph, lie down with me."

"Putiphar has entrusted his affairs to me; but you, his wife, are not for me to handle."

"You don't know how exasperating it is to be the wife of a eunuch, Joseph."

"Without your husband's permission, I won't do it."

"You must be crazy, Hebrew. Putiphar doesn't understand or care about the needs of others."

“He’s like a god to us.”

“Don’t deny me this pleasure. It’s unfair that I should have to make love to myself all the time.”

“I’m afraid.”

“Why are you so panicky?”

“I fear your husband’s punishment... let alone God’s.”

“Did you say, God’s?”

“Yes. Your husband may pelt me with stones, hurt me and throw me in jail, but God slays those who disobey his laws.”

“Neither God nor my husband will ever find out. Punishment is totally avoidable if you take precautions. Having lain with many, I know.”

“Please, do not insist. Your chattering makes me very nervous. I’m benumbed by fear.”

“Let’s have intercourse, even if you ejaculate outside the womb not to incite slaughter.”

“Please, stop tempting me.”

“I’ll show you the delights of lovemaking: we’ll start with the most delicious kissing dainties that you can imagine and work ourselves into all kinds of rarities.”

“May God lighten my troubles.”

“Have you ever had oral sex, Joseph?”

“No.”

“The mouth isn’t just for talking or eating. In sexual foreplay, it can impart lusciously exquisite feelings... especially after a bath.”

“I can’t do it. I’m dying of fright.”

One tragic day, Joseph and the mistress of the house found themselves at home alone. Joseph’s flesh quaked when she stripped the cloak off his body and pushed him towards a thick and

comfortable floor mat. The violence of the woman's raping joy chased young Joseph away, leaving his mantle in her hands.

Feeling rejected, the Egyptian wife's passionate desire turned quickly into hatred. She called the servants—although they were alone—and told them that Joseph had tried to team up in lovemaking with her. She claimed to have defended her honor and to have screamed for help, making Joseph rush out.

Putiphar's wife repeated the story to her husband, showing him the scapegrace's mantle as proof of a rude and dishonorable attempt on her honor when she was innocently immersed in sleep. Unsurprisingly, Putiphar thought that Joseph had sought to misuse—or rather properly use—his wife and formed a bad opinion of his Hebrew servant.

The accusations of the damnable female prevailed against common sense. Soon after the incident, Joseph's bones were thrown in jail. In his dreams, Joseph had never foreseen that his brothers would cheat him out of his freedom or that a liar would deprive him of his post.

Providentially, Joseph found grace in the eyes of the prison warden. He became as dear to the penitentiary's superintendent as he had been to Putiphar.

By the graces of the warden's friendship, Joseph was saved from kneading mud for bricks and from walking barefooted on gravelly terrains carrying faggots of wood.

Joseph was put in charge of miscreants of all nations. He quickly pulled his wits together and, unfaltering, resolved that, when it comes to toil, giving is much better than receiving. As he had done in Putiphar's house, Joseph assigned the backbreaking tasks to others, stooped before those in high positions and pleased the prison warden in any imaginable way possible.

## Joseph Interprets Dreams

One day, Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and his master baker were thrown in prison with Joseph. Each of the two men had managed to annoy the king. The captain of the prison guard entrusted them to Joseph.

It was rumored that, three days before Pharaoh's birthday, the king would order a sumptuous banquet during which he'd dispense sentences and pardons for all pending cases. The word filtered into the prison too.

"Last night I had a peculiar dream," said the cupbearer to Joseph. "Can you interpret its meaning?"

"I can interpret your dream with God's help," replied Joseph, guardedly.

"I saw a grapevine bearing three vine shoots. The vine expanded, bloomed and produced grapes that ripened in their racemes. I pruned the grapevine, squeezed the fruit in Pharaoh's cup and put it in his hand."

"Your dream is the realization of a wish. The three vine shoots represent three days. In three days, Pharaoh will exonerate and reinstate you to your former position."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, you shall put Pharaoh's cup in his hand again."

"I'm so thrilled, Joseph."

"Will you remember me when you are contented?"

"Naturally I will since you can prophesize the future, Joseph."

"Talk to Pharaoh about me so he'll free my bones from this undeserved imprisonment. Truthfully, I've done nothing that warrants punishment either here or in the land of the Hebrews."

“Now listen to my dream, Joseph,” cut in Pharaoh’s former master baker.

“Speak. I will also interpret your dream.” Joseph figured that, should his interpretation result in error, nothing would come of it—like when a doctor kills his patient; however, he knew that giving a powerful man, like Pharaoh, flawed advice would carry a death sentence.

“Stacked over my head,” recounted the baker, “I was carrying three small baskets full of dough. In the top basket, I had placed assorted pastries that Pharaoh likes. However, birds from the sky were feasting on my king’s bread rolls.”

“I can explain unswervingly the underlying core of your vision,” Joseph deduced. “In three-day’s time, Pharaoh will have you taken outside and hanged by the neck. Birds from the sky will feast on your corpse.”

Both events foretold by Joseph came to pass. Regrettably, Pharaoh’s cupbearer did not have the opportunity to mention Joseph’s name to the king for two years.

### **Joseph's perseverance**

In spite of being the warden's assistant, Joseph was one more inmate tormented by the restrictions of prison life. From apertures in the jail's walls, he scrutinized wretchedly his tawny surroundings: the hieroglyphics carved on a nearby obelisk, a stone sphinx resting yonder and the silt deposited on the riverbanks. When he saw the people sauntering around the city under colorful sunsets or just thronging in the marketplace, he coveted their freedom. It was on dewy dawns and clear evenings that he longed to be let out of the sultry mud building more than ever.

For a while, Joseph couldn't cast away distraught thoughts, nightmares and dreams. The sons of his father had sold him into slavery. The Ishmaelite traders had abused him during the hard journeys over wastes and mountains. A eunuch's wife had ruined his career. Then, after the release of Pharaoh's cupbearer, he had a glimmer of hope.

In moments of desperation, Joseph had deemed true that quiet iniquity and betrayal are more appropriate to secure a man's well being than honesty. With impunity, his greedy brothers and a sex-starved woman had perpetrated injustices against him. While he endured servitude, his brothers expected an inheritance—barring the survival of Benjamin, Israel's other son by Rachel. The woman, too, had good prospects of indulging in lust with a clandestine aficionado.

Word reached Joseph that Putiphar's wife had found a goodlier lover. She had bedded with a young house servant, a Syrian slave. Joseph imagined him praising affectionately the woman's naked body and her wits... and saying anything she wanted to hear. "The pursuit of happiness has a way to estrange

the burdens of virtue,” he sensed. In the end, Joseph had to laugh considering how stubbornly unwise he had been. Often, at noontide, when his quarters became hot and stuffy, Joseph considered his failure to act resolutely and said to his mind, “I was a fool.”

During the time spent in confinement, Joseph met criminals and adventurers from the entire known world. Many called themselves “honest and god-fearing.” The Israelite had long talks with Nubian workers, Phoenician sailors, Aramaic-speaking traders, Babylonian caravan bosses, Tyrian dye makers, Egyptian embalmers, Syrian shipyard carpenters and Philistine herders. With some, he only exchanged futile words; however, the well-traveled crooks referred to him fascinating stories of their own countries and the lands they had visited. Some of them had said to Joseph, “There is no God.” Others would speculate, “Gods do exist, but they do not get involved in penitentiary affairs.”

When a prisoner had his head full of dreams, Joseph would interpret the pitiable fellow’s spiritual fantasies to pass the time. He seldom knew if the poor devil’s dreams materialized or not because most detainees were either sent to the stone quarries or put to death within days of entering the jail.

One inmate in particular, a fellow called *Râ*, had been thrown in prison for having tried to counsel Pharaoh publicly about religion. *Râ* had proposed to incorporate all the Egyptian principles into one god, to kill the sacred crocodiles, to free the mandrill gods, to eat the sacred bulls and to throw into the Nile River all the mummified cats. Furthermore, *Râ* had projected to boot the priests from the temples, to confiscate the buildings and to rededicate them as granaries, schools and whorehouses. But *Râ*’s worse transgression had been the advancement of a reasonable

code of conduct for Pharaoh's aides that would make them tell the truth at all times.

"Where do you come from?" Râ asked Joseph.

"I was born in Mesopotamia and raised near the village of Hebron, in Canaan."

"Why are you here?"

"My Israelite brothers sold me into slavery. Then, my titleholder's wife accused me of intent to commit rape because I did not lie down with her."

"Why didn't you?"

"I was a loyal dog but they took me for a man."

"That woman has behaved badly, Joseph. Was she beautiful?"

"No."

"How horrific that is! When contact becomes unavoidable, beauty helps."

"Because of her bogus charge, I don't know if I'll ever leave this dungeon."

"So she's unsightly and unfair. Bringing harm upon another human being is never justified. But believe me, Joseph: the malign lives badly."

"I live badly too and I'm not wicked."

"No, Joseph: the just man lives well!"

"I can't understand you, Râ."

"From Atum-Ra, you can only anticipate good. When you suffer on His account, you're making amends for your own faults during a previous existence."

"I don't recall having lived before."

"You're so right to say, 'recall,' for knowledge comes through memory."

“Ah?”

“Do not fret to discover that justice is detrimental to the man who abides by it. Some day, the very few sensible men alive will be listened to and reason will rule Egypt. Virtue keeps the company of those who honor it, but flees from those who don’t.”

“I promise to think about it.”

Apparently, Râ had supporters amongst Pharaoh’s advisers because, having perpetrated a serious discourse transgression, he wasn’t killed directly. Even the jailers had instructions to treat him gently. A rumor had it that Râ was an offspring of *The Son of God* and a slave girl taken to Egypt from a land-locked sea at the end of the world.

Since he was very young, Râ had traveled along the Mediterranean coast to the rocks of the West in the company of Phoenician sailors. He had also departed from Egypt with the Aramaic caravans, beating the trails of Syria and Babylonia and touching once on the Far East.

Joseph was fond of the lanky, tanned man who had dared to change his name to that of Râ (the Sun).

“Pharaoh is devoted to power and wealth,” affirmed Râ.

“It’s essential to have a ruler,” Joseph disagreed.

“Everyone accepts Pharaoh’s justice against his own better judgment.”

“It’s so far and wide.”

“He takes pasturelands from his neighbors and lets the priests suck the blood of the people.”

“There’s no known remedy against priests.”

“They are not worthy of the high positions they now hold.”

“I can’t understand why you haven’t been executed, Râ.”

“Neither can I.”

Râ showed Joseph how to associate figures of known objects on papyri so the sounds of the illustrations complemented each other, creating words and stories. In fact, Joseph found prison to be rather pleasant during the time of learning, thinking of nothing but the conveyance of ideas via hieroglyphics and the operations with numbers.

After a few months, Joseph could write with ease and insert or deduct quantities to or from others. Sarah, his great grandmother, had become proficient in both branches of learning one hundred years before.

Joseph was so enthralled with learning that he firmly believed for a long time in the divine origin of writing. He worshipped the ibis god Thoth, inventor of speech and hieroglyphics and teacher of the arts. Joseph's favorite representation of Thoth, the dog-headed baboon, would always be present in his future dwellings.

One day, Râ said to Joseph:

“Last night, in the depth of a dream, I saw the earth suck up the blood of my cold corpse.”

“That's a ghastly premonition, Râ! Before death, it's commonplace to awaken from such a dream.”

Later on that day, a group of well-dressed men visited Râ. They asked the Egyptian if, during his long months of confinement, he had changed his mind on the subject of priests and if he had moderated his views about Pharaoh. Râ said, “No.” Râ also denied once again the existence of gods in animal forms. The men left with a somber look on their faces.

“Perhaps it's possible to learn the truth of life after death, Joseph... or perhaps not,” summarized Râ, seeming to say

farewell. “I hope to find in the other world excellent gods and better men than those I’ve known here.”

“Conceivably, in the house of your ancestors, good men are treated better than evil ones. But are you not afraid to leave, Râ?”

“Cowards have no love of knowledge, Joseph; they favor the body and life. The body can only perceive the world through the senses. . . . But before the body came into being, the spirit already existed as an essence. The spirit is immortal and indivisible. The evil man’s spirit departs life besotted by the body and, hence, it must reinsert itself in the body of an ass or an ox. The spirit of those who have been good out of tradition, without thinking about it, will pop into the bodies of ants or bees. Only the man who has analyzed the world in his own mind will attain incorporeal Eternity when he dies.”

“The richly dressed men will return, Râ.”

“Don’t mind them, for they will be reborn as poisonous snakes and scorpions. Those men don’t care about the truth and their objective is to lure all others to their opinion and convenience.”

The smartly clothed judges returned accompanied by soldiers armed with swords and spears. Joseph never heard from Râ again after that day and he did not ever dare to ask about his friend.

“Râ would’ve been more effective sharing quietly his knowledge with the world than fighting the priests,” Joseph thought.

## Pharaoh Dreams

Two years after Joseph's incarceration, Pharaoh saw fourteen cows in a dream. At first, the king observed seven beefy cows emerge from the Nile to forage among the rushes by the river's edge. Then, seven lean cows came out of the river and devoured the seven stocky ones. Pharaoh awoke very troubled. When Pharaoh fell asleep again, he saw seven lush tassels burgeoning from a bough; then, from the same branch developed seven parched tassels that gobbled up the seven healthy ones.

The next morning, Pharaoh called upon all the soothsayers and all the sages of Egypt and recounted his dreams to them. Not one of the wise men could decipher the king's dream or even dared to try—perhaps considering the fate of Pharaoh's master baker. Then, the master cupbearer mentioned to Pharaoh how a young Hebrew, a slave of the captain of the guard, had interpreted correctly the dreams of two men.

Pharaoh summoned Joseph to his presence. He disclosed his dream to the Israelite slave and asked him to unravel its meaning.

"I'm nothing, Pharaoh!" declared Joseph for his own protection. "It's God who can unknot the intricacies of your dreams."

"I have communicated my dreams to the fortunetellers, but they can't tell me a thing about them."

"Overtly, the Son of God's two dreams converge into just one based on the number seven," estimated Joseph, exultant to have gained some knowledge of number operations with Râ. Joseph also anticipated, by hundreds of years, the use of the day

group called *the week* and the design of the Jewish sacred candelabrum of seven branches.

“How’s that base-seven dream?” asked the king’s magicians, hoping to trap Joseph in some error.

“The seven beefy cows and the seven lush tassels indicate seven years of plenty. The seven emaciated cows and the seven scorched tassels mean seven years of draught.”

“Of course!” ejaculated Pharaoh, spirited. “One thousand years ago, a great famine came to Egypt because the Nile did not overflow its banks for seven years. It was the work of a god called Khnum, who was angry because no one worshiped him.”

“God has shown to you what He intends to do,” Joseph dared to add.

“What has God revealed?” asked Pharaoh.

“The years of plenty will be forgotten when the years of famine arrive.”

“Explain that.”

“Let Pharaoh find a cautious man, a good administrator who can be put in charge of Egypt,” an emboldened Joseph advised the king. “That way, the kingdom will not succumb to hunger.”

“What would such man accomplish?”

“He’ll employ overseers to collect one fifth of Egypt’s crop during the seven years of plenty. Simultaneously, he’ll store reserves of wheat for the seven lean years that’ll follow.”

“Why a fifth and not a seventh?” asked one of the priests.

“That excess is to sell in due course,” elucidated Joseph, thus mastering their brains.

“Now I understand you, Joseph,” let out Pharaoh, unashamed of dearth and taxes. “Either you’re very wise or the sun of beer has been shining in the heads of my advisers.”

“I have born many pains, but no more,” Joseph said to his mind, kissing the hem of Pharaoh’s gown.

“My most brilliant subordinates must be made to manage my dullest ones,” said Pharaoh, greedily. You, Hebrew, shall regulate the fruits of Egypt. All my underlings shall obey you. Only I shall be above you.”

“Thank you,” uttered Joseph in deep appreciation.

Joseph received a ring indicating the high post that he held. Putting a gold collar around the slave’s neck, Pharaoh arranged for him to be clothed in a fine flax attire. Then, he instructed Joseph to ride in his second-best chariot and ordered the people to shout “*Abrek!*” as his minister went by. Next, Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife, Asenath, the daughter of a priest called Potiphar. “You’re to use this woman to have children,” ordered Pharaoh.

During past bad experiences, Joseph had developed his natural shrewdness. For him, Pharaoh had to be feared more than God because the king was the sworn enemy of natural law and reason. Joseph understood that power was cherished and disputed by the most disloyal Egyptian nationals—who were much more dangerous than Egypt’s distant foes; he also realized that, most dishonest aspirations, whether repressed by customs or the laws, remained latent in the minds of the people.

Joseph was thirty years old when he was appointed minister of all Egypt. He traveled the kingdom end-to-end, publicizing the levying of grain dues. According to Joseph, justice and taxes branch out of the principle of common good; on the

other hand, injustice and excess are born of chaos and disruption. When his tax met resistance, Joseph wrote on a papyrus that was copied hundreds of times and sent to every village of Egypt: “Contempt for the law surfaces among some men at first. It’s then passed on to means and customs. If such disdain is allowed to grow, it overruns the principles of government and the whole State is lost to hunger and devastation.” Pharaoh was very pleased with the work of his minister.

During the seven years of plenty, when the land yielded crops profusely, Joseph accumulated an enormous amount of food. He warehoused in each town the grain levied in the surrounding fields. After storing so much wheat, he almost lost count of how much he had taken in.

Although Râ’s name was never pronounced, Joseph remembered him often. In particular, he remembered one of Râ’s favorite sayings, “The people see the truth of the feat, not that of its cause.”

Before the years of scarcity, Joseph had two sons by Asenath. The firstborn was named Manasseh and the second Ephraim.

And then came the years of famine. While all the other nations starved, Egypt had bread. When the Egyptians asked Pharaoh for wheat, he would say to them, “Go talk to Joseph and do what he tells you.”

Joseph opened the silos and sold to the Egyptians the national reserve of tax grain. As hunger became more acute throughout the nations, merchants from many lands went into Egypt to buy wheat. Thus, Joseph accumulated many ingots of gold and silver.

Joseph was the first man to define the word “career.” Starting as a servant, by being nice and valuable to Putiphar, he had been promoted to majordomo. When fallen on hard times, he had ingratiated himself with the prison warden and had been promoted to master of the prisoners by his dear friend. Then, having made himself useful to Pharaoh in the oppression of the Egyptians by hunger, he had been made ruler of Egypt’s wealth.

After his rise to power, Joseph took revenge on Putiphar’s bad judgment. The captain of the guard was executed on a bogus charge of “not keeping Pharaoh sufficiently safe.” Next, Joseph strapped a chastity belt on Putiphar’s wife and sent her to a whorehouse as a servant. She was never again allowed to have intercourse with a man. Without more ado, he took the woman’s young lover as his personal aide and promoted his friend, the prison warden, to minister of prisons.

Many men have either followed or tried to emulate Joseph’s example since.

### **Joseph’s Brothers go to Egypt**

When starvation threatened, those living in the land promised to Abraham by God feared for their lives. Israel sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. Ten of Joseph’s brothers, including the estranged Judah, went to Pharaoh’s court. Israel did not allow Benjamin, the second son of Rachel, to go with his brothers.

“I’m not letting Benjamin out of my sight.”

“Why is that, father?”

“In your company, a fatal mishap can sweep him away.”

Once in Egypt, Israel's sons had to ask for a permit from Egypt's food minister to be able to buy grain. Joseph recognized his brothers, but pretended to ignore their identity and spoke to them through an interpreter. The minister's meeting room was decorated with paintings and statues of Egyptian gods. They couldn't associate with any known person the splendidly dressed dignitary before whom they were kneeling, their foreheads touching the ground.

"Just as I saw it in my dream: ten stacks prostrated before me," thought Joseph. "Yet, one is missing."

"Where do you come from?" Joseph asked to launch a conversation.

"We come from the land of Canaan to buy grain."

"Are you Canaanites?" Joseph asked, patting the head of his dog-headed baboon statue.

"No. We are from Hebron."

"*Ibiru* (Hebrews)?"

"We call ourselves Israelites now."

"Are you strangers in all the lands? Are you perhaps spies who have come to probe the unguarded borders of Egypt?"

"No, Dignified One. We're your servants who have come to buy wheat. Each one of us is the son of the same father, Israel. Every one of us is a good man. We never laugh at the blind person, make fun of the dwarf or harass the cripple. We don't even assail those who hate us."

"I don't believe you. You have come to Egypt to make off with our livestock."

"We were twelve brothers. One is dead. The youngest has remained with our father in Canaan."

“I’ll test you on that. You shall not leave here unless your younger brother shows up. We shall see then if you’re telling the truth. For now, you’ll spend three days in jail.” Joseph feared that his half-brothers had already murdered or sold Benjamin.

Some of the ten brothers had looked at Joseph with fear; others had stared at his shaven head with insolent curiosity. For three days, Joseph listened stealthily to his brother’s conversations in jail. They talked freely in their language.

“Perhaps we’ll never leave here.”

“We’re making amends for our injustice to Joseph.”

“I can still see the anguish on his face when we pushed him into the pit.”

“And we did not care.”

“Now we’re as unfortunate as Joseph.”

“I told you not to harm the boy, but you did not heed my words,” Reuben reproached them.

“If truth be told, we’ll be sold as slaves and never see our children,” estimated Judah, thinking about young Tamar—who had shown him how heat passes from one body to another.

On the third day, Joseph freed his brothers. He left Simeon in the dungeon.

“One of you shall stay here in prison until you bring me your younger brother. The rest can leave and take the wheat with you to ease your family’s hunger.”

“Thank you, Lord!” they cried as a children’s choir. But they thought, “Poor Simeon will surely die now!”

Joseph arranged for the delivery of the wheat to his brothers. He also ordered that all the gold pebbles and silver they had paid with were returned secretly to their pouches. During

their first encampment, the brothers found the gold. Each one of them thought of something to speculate about.

“It’s free.”

“Free grain in time of famine?”

“This may be a mistake.”

“If it comes at no cost to us, it’s God’s.”

“Perhaps the grain is our payment for Simeon.”

“He’s not worth that much!”

“Does the Egyptian want to buy Benjamin from us?”

“That’s an idea, brother.”

In Canaan, Israel was informed of what had happened. His sons showed him the pouches holding the gold and the silver.

“He won’t return Simeon...”

“... and won’t let us buy provisions in the country...”

“... unless we take Benjamin...”

“You’ll leave me childless,” reacted Israel, taking in two of the same oxygen molecules that Abram had breathed. “Joseph disappeared and now you want to take Benjamin.”

“Take the lives of my two sons if I do not bring Benjamin back,” Reuben submitted to his father.

“I’m tempted to after you impregnated my concubine,” thought Israel but said nothing so Dan and Nephthali would not be called names on account of their mother, Balah—her child by Reuben is totally ignored in the books of faith.

“We must take Benjamin to the Egyptian if we are to survive, father,” urged Judah.

“No, my son will not go to Egypt with you! His brother is dead and I only have him. Should another disgrace occur to me, my old head will descend to the grave grieving.”

“What about Simeon?” asked Levi.

“Let them keep the son of Leah!” shouted Israel. Reuben, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulon became terribly upset.

The food crisis was very severe in Canaan. Israel was running out of wheat.

“Return to Egypt to buy food,” he said to his sons.

“We won’t be readmitted without our younger brother,”

Judah cautioned his father. “You must let Benjamin come along.”

“Why did you tell that man that you had another brother?”

“He asked us about our family.”

“Couldn’t you lie?”

“We advised him per his questions.”

“You’re all stupid.”

“How were we to know what he’d ask?”

“You should’ve thought before opening your mouths.”

“If you don’t let the boy come, we’ll all die of starvation.”

“You don’t need to remind me.”

“Even your dear Benjamin and our children will depart from life, father.”

“Take ointment, honey, scent, myrrh, walnuts and almonds to that man,” yielded Israel.

“Amen.”

“Take also twice as many gold nuggets and jewelry as before. Turn in what was returned to you.” { At the time, men normally cheated each other in their dealings when gold was used. A thousand years went by before a man called Archimedes established the quality of gold by water displacement. }

“Amen.”

“Go.”

“That won’t suffice, father,” Reuben explained again.

“Fine, take your younger brother too.”

Taking into account their low station in life, Gad and Asser wanted to remain in Canaan. They thought that if their father did not care for Leah’s son, Simeon, he’d care even less for the sons of her servant, Zelpha. Both of them feared to be sold to Pharaoh as slaves. But Israel told them to go.

When the brothers arrived in Egypt with Benjamin, Joseph ordered his steward to invite them to his house. A goat was slaughtered and roasted for the midday meal.

“It’s a trick,” warned Issachar.

“He’s going to make us slaves and take our asses,” warned Levi.

“Majordomo: when we opened our pouches, we found the gold with which we had paid the wheat before,” proffered Zebulon through an interpreter.

“We’re bringing it back,” Dan assured the steward.

“We’re also bringing additional gold pebbles and silver to pay for the grain this time,” said Judah.

“We don’t know what happened,” swore Reuben.

“Don’t be afraid,” the steward said. “Now, I’ll fetch Simeon and let him join the rest of you. You’ll also have water to wash your feet and your donkeys will be fed.”

The brothers readied the presents they had for the minister. When Joseph entered the house, wearing a silver-gilt girdle, they lowered their heads to the floor. Everything was as Joseph had dreamt many years before.

“How is your father?” Joseph asked.

“He still lives,” announced Levi.

“Is this your younger brother?” Joseph inquired, spotting Benjamin.

“Yes,” replied Asser.

Since the Egyptians deemed a vile act to take their meals with strangers, the children of Israel dined by themselves. The eleven brothers were sitting in front of Joseph, ranked by their ages from the oldest to the youngest. Joseph would send them food from his place. Benjamin’s ration was five times larger than that of the others.

“What will the Egyptian want with Benjamin?” Zebulon asked with outmost circumspection.

“He wants to fatten him,” proposed Dan.

“I hope he doesn’t keep him,” remarked Gad.

“Yeah, he looks like the type who likes boys,” advised Nephthali.

The brothers drank and were merry. Meanwhile, Joseph had arranged once again for the clandestine return of their wheat payments. He also had his own silver cup planted in Benjamin’s pouch. As soon as the brothers had departed with the grain, Joseph sent his steward after them:

“You have taken my master’s silver cup,” Joseph’s servant asserted. “His excellency drinks from that goblet when he interprets dreams and foretells the future.”

Terrified at the sight of guards armed with silver-hilted poniards, the brothers began to pour forth their defense in much confusion and disarray:

“No, we are not thieves!” protested Reuben.

“We brought you from Canaan the money we found in our pouches before,” objected Judah.

“We have not taken anything from your master,” disputed Dan.

“Let the person who has the cup die,” blundered Nephthali.

“Make us slaves of your master if you find it here,” proposed Zebulon.

The majordomo smiled satisfied of the bewilderment that he had instilled into the Hebrews. He agreed to their proposal: “Fine, let it be as you have said. He who’s found to have the cup will be the slave of my master. The others will be allowed to leave.”

The silver cup was found in Benjamin’s pouch. Stunned by the finding, the brothers returned to Joseph’s house and went down on their knees, begging for mercy. Joseph loved the moment.

“Didn’t you know that I have a method to foretell men’s actions?” Joseph goaded them.

“What can we say!” exclaimed Judah. “We are your slaves.”

“Only the person who had my cup in his possession will remain in Egypt. The rest of you can go in peace to your father.”

“Please, Lord,” begged Judah, “allow me to speak.”

“Go ahead.”

“We told you that we have an elderly father. Benjamin was born to him late in life.”

“Yes, it’s so.”

“Another brother, born to the same mother as Benjamin, died.”

“How did such death occur?”

“Indisputably, he was torn apart by a wild animal,” lied Judah.

“Is that so?”

“It’s the plain truth, great one. May our mules stray through the desert and our victuals turn into dust if I’m not speaking truthfully.”

“I’m seized by wonder,” avowed Joseph.

“My father has suffered much because of that great loss.”

“Does that surprise you?”

“No. Our father’s favorite wife only gave him two sons. Benjamin is the only one left and his father loves him dearly. If another misfortune falls on him, Israel will descend to his grave in great pain.”

“I believe you.”

“Please, don’t let Benjamin tarry long away from his father,” pleaded Judah. “If we return without the young man, our father will surely die.”

“And his favorite son won’t be there to enshroud his remains,” Joseph thought.

“I respond for him to Israel,” avowed Judah. “Take me as your slave in Benjamin’s place.”

### **Joseph Reveals his True Identity**

So as to remain alone with his brothers, Joseph ordered all the Egyptians out of the house. Then he broke down, crying and shouting in his own language:

“*Schma*, I’m Joseph!”

“What?”

“My father still lives!”

“Uh!”

“Come to me. I’m the brother you sold.”

“Oooh!”

“I came before you to prepare the way.”

“Of course,” said Reuben, still incredulous of their luck.

“I came to save you all so our race can survive.”

“Yes, Joseph: God made us sell you!”

“I want my father to come live near me.”

“Naturally,” approved Judah, considering how much Tamar would like Joseph’s house.

“He must bring his sons, his grandsons, his herds and all he owns.”

“Yes. Here in Egypt we’ve seen much grain and good grazing lands.”

“I’ll take care of all of you.”

“Thank you. The Egyptians say: *If the hand of God forsakes a man, give him to eat.*”

“Inform my father of the high place that I enjoy in Egypt.”

After obtaining Pharaoh’s permission to settle in Egypt, the eleven sons of Israel left with their donkeys. Joseph also loaded several chariots with wheat and other victuals for his father. Each brother was given a new outfit. Benjamin received three hundred silver pieces and five new garments.

“Father: Joseph lives!” Israel was told.

“You’re a lying bunch: I don’t believe it.”

“Yes. Look at the presents he has given us.”

“The best of Egypt will be for us now.”

“It’s true,” acknowledged Israel finally, “Joseph must be alive. Who else would have had an act of kindness towards you?”

“Will you come to Egypt?”

“Before I die, I’ll go embrace the first son of my choosing.”

## Israel Goes to Egypt

Israel had another vision. In his dream, God counseled him:

“Jacob: don’t be afraid to go down to Egypt because, in that land, I’ll make a great people of you.”

“Tell me about Joseph,” Israel asked God.

“Joseph shall close your eyes.”

All the children and grandchildren of Israel left for Goshen, in Egypt. They were a total of seventy persons—the others had died of starvation and related illnesses.

Israel cried a long while embracing Joseph. He had always believed the dreams of Rachel’s older boy.

“You’re my favorite son, Joseph, the one that’ll give me a great progeny.”

“Yes, father. To be just, you must rank your children according to God’s wishes. None of them must be superior to me.”

“You’re right. It’s natural.”

“When those who must serve desire the privileges enjoyed by their superiors, oppression quickly emerges. Afterward, those never meant to lead take charge and direct everything. Such freedom ends up in an irreverent despotism.”

“You speak well, Joseph!”

“When my brothers were allowed to speak on their own behalf, they damned their lives. From this day on, they’ll say no more.”

Pharaoh was informed that Joseph’s family had arrived from Canaan. He learned that they were shepherds who had come to

Egypt with their sheep and cattle. The Egyptians detested sheep and cow herders.

Joseph took five of his brothers to Pharaoh. They asked for permission to settle in the grazing fields of Goshen.

“We’re nomad shepherders, as were our parents,” they explained to the king.

“I’ve heard the disputes between farmers and shepherds,” commented Pharaoh.

“If we have found grace in your eyes, Pharaoh, let us fatten our livestock in Goshen.”

“That’s the best part of the country.”

“Yes. Goshen has sufficient grazing pastures for our herds and yours too.”

“Fine, go to Goshen.”

“Thank you.”

“You’ll abide by my laws. Some of you will be keepers of my flocks.”

“We’ll be happy to do that.”

“You’ll be Egypt’s buffer against the Canaanites from the Sinai. Those tribes squat regularly on my fertile lands in the delta.”

Joseph also took his father to see Pharaoh. In his old age, Israel would complain to anyone about how short and miserable life is. The patriarch greeted Pharaoh with a blessing and, beating his breast in sorrow, lamented, “My head has turned snow white trusting in God.” A man called Carlos García summarized Israel’s grievance:

*Valle de nieve es mi pelo  
cubierto por la esperanza,  
tinte que cayó del cielo  
desde una nube muy blanca.*

### **Joseph Exploits Dearth**

Since the famine had spread everywhere, Joseph sold much grain and hoarded away all the gold of Egypt and Canaan for Pharaoh. “Opulence damns the farmers,” he’d say to his king.

When all their gold and silver was gone, the Egyptians had to pay for grain with their livestock. Joseph took their horses, sheep, mules, cows and donkeys. Next year, Joseph bought all the arable lands of Egypt with grain. Finally, all the Egyptians were paid for with bread and forced into service. Only the priests managed to keep their land through Pharaoh’s good graces.

“Extreme poverty could leave us without producers,” Joseph thought. He gave seed to the enslaved Egyptians and ordered them to cultivate the lands of the State. He demanded as rent, perpetually, one-fifth of all they collected. With the exception of the priests, all the Egyptians became Pharaoh’s renters.

During that time, the priests revived the old Egyptian maxims:

“Do not cheat when you weigh the tax wheat.”

“Do not covet the other man’s field.”

“Stoop before the dignitary who insults you.”

“Do not move your neighbor’s field markers.”

“Be merciful to the poor and, especially, to the alien immigrant.”

The Israelites from Goshen grew in numbers. When Israel felt death approach, he asked Joseph not to lay him to rest in Egypt.

“When I sleep with my parents, take me to their burial ground in Machpelah.”

“I’ll do as you ask,” avowed Joseph.

### **Blessing of Israel**

Mulishly, Israel sustained till the end the stories of God’s apparitions to him. Time and again, he told his twelve sons that God had given him all of Canaan: farmlands, pasturelands, wastelands and woodlands... even famine.

Both sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, were adopted by Israel. Jacob blessed with his right hand Ephraim, who was the youngest, and with his left, Manasseh.

“Let the angel that freed me from danger bless these boys.”

“Manasseh is the firstborn, father,” Joseph protested, “bless him with your right hand.”

“His younger brother will be greater than him because many nations will stem from Ephraim.”

“Excuse me, father, I thought that you had made a mistake.”

“Through this boy, my name will live on. And the names of my ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, will have great prominence too.”

“So be it.”

“I’m going to die, but God will be with you and will take you once more to the land of your ancestors. And to you, Joseph,

I bestow all the land taken from the Canaanites with my sword and my bow.”

Neither one of Joseph’s sons understood Hebrew. They had no idea of what their grandfather had said or done.

Then Israel called his twelve sons. First, he spoke to the sons of Leah:

“Reuben: you’re my firstborn, but you won’t be the first.”

“Why, father?” asked Reuben, pretending to be perplexed.

“You impregnated Balah, Rachel’s servant, my concubine. I did not want to punish you then.”

“I’ve profaned my father’s tent. May God have mercy on me.”

“Simeon, you have killed my servants: you’re cruel and brutal.”

“I lose my temper, father.”

“Levi, you butchered my livestock: you’re a thief.”

“I did it out of necessity, father.”

“Judah, you’re a lecherous drunkard.”

“I like whores and wine, father.”

“Issachar, you’re lazy.”

“I like to rest, father.”

“Zebulon, you’re too friendly to the Sidonians and their gods.”

“Baal’s cult is seductive, father.”

Then, Israel spoke to the sons of Balah, Rachel’s servant:

“Dan, you’re a renegade, as noxious as a viper.”

“I wasn’t born strong, father.”

“Nephthali, you’re effeminate.”

“I’m gentle and placid, father.”

And then Israel spoke to the sons of Zelpha, Leah’s servant:

“Gad, you don’t defend yourself like a man.”

“I detest brawls, father.”

“Asser, you’re gluttonous.”

“Eating gives me great pleasure, father.”

Finally, Israel spoke to Rachel’s sons:

“Benjamin, you’re rapacious and a spendthrift too. Regardless of my love for you, you’re not the firstborn among the sons of Rachel.”

“I knew that, father.”

“Joseph, you enjoy God’s protection because, having been persecuted by your own brothers and by strangers, you have prevailed. Let my blessings fall upon your head.”

“I thank you, father.”

“You are the twelve tribes of Israel.”

“Yes, father,” they answered in unison.

“Entomb me with my parents in Machpelah’s cave, in Canaan. Take me to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron, the Hittite, as burial ground.

Jacob had always been unjust and had never considered ideas beyond his own opinions about anything. He cringed his feet on his bed and surrendered his ghost. It’s said that Israel departed to meet up with his ancestors.

### **Jacob’s Interment**

Egyptian embalmers took Israel under the auspices of Anubis, the jackal-headed god of mummifying. After drawing every organ from his body, they put him in a balsamic solution for forty days and

turned the corpse over to his children so they could mourn him another seventy.

Meanwhile, Jacob descended to the tribunal of Osiris to be judged. Anubis weighed his heart against a feather and found it to be untruthful, guilty of multiple counts of fraud, theft, deception, prejudice and unkindness. After his trial in the underworld, Jacob's heart was thrown to the monster Amemit to be devoured.

When the period of mourning was over, Joseph asked permission from Pharaoh to take his father's mommy to Canaan. All the brothers joined in a procession to the Promised Land, leaving in Goshen their children and flocks. They lamented stridently for seven days alongside the banks of the Jordan River. Having entombed Israel in Machpelah's cave, they returned to Egypt.

After Jacob's death, his sons feared Joseph's reprisals for past actions. They reminded Joseph of Israel's command for him to forgive the crime and the sin committed by them. Frightened, the brothers went to kneel once more in front of Rachel's son—something he loved. Joseph reassured them:

“I'm not God to punish you.”

“Bless you, brother!” exclaimed Zebulon, who had suggested pushing Joseph into the pit in the first place.

“Considering what happened, it seems that God turned your heinous crime into my good fortune.”

“Yes, it's true; God works in mysterious ways,” put across Simeon, who had grabbed Joseph by the hair.

“Perhaps He did so to keep our race alive.”

“Yes, that's correct: you're so smart!” cried out Gad, who had proposed Joseph to the Ishmaelite traders.

“Do not fear, for I'll take good care of all of you and your children.”

“Thank you, brother!” shouted Dan, who had kicked his brother into the pit.

Joseph lived long enough to know the children of Ephraim and their children. To his progeny, he prophesied, “God’s visitations to our people shall continue.”

Joseph died when he was sixty-five years old. He was embalmed and put in a sarcophagus in Egypt. Fearing that, after his trial in Osiris’ tribunal Anubis would throw his heart to the monster Amemit, Joseph proclaimed to his family that the Egyptian gods were nothing but folktales.

After many years, the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also entombed in sarcophaguses. “When you return to Canaan,” Joseph had instructed his descendants, “take my bones away from here.”

### **Egypt After Joseph**

The Egyptian pharaohs controlled Syria for many more years. Following the autocratic lessons learnt from Joseph, subsequent rulers of Egypt became greedier and more authoritarian.

Eventually, the Israelites too were made slaves of the State machine. Teamed up with Libyans, Syrians and Nubians, they participated in the construction of a new capital in the heart of the country.

A pharaoh named Amenhotep, who wanted to impose a single God to the Egyptians, moved his capital to Memphis, where he initiated the cult to Aton, source of all life. He changed his name to Akhenaton (he who is dear to Aton). Akhenaton presented

Aton as the loving father who had created everything. The representation of Aton was a solar disk discharging its rays over the palm of an extended hand.

Dreading to lose the old principles, the Egyptians became anxious and Egypt destabilized. The priests opposed Akhenaton's monotheism, which was similar to what the Israelites adopted later—but unlike the god of Abraham, Aton did not extend property certificates. Amenhotep had proposed a very radical change. A fanatical struggle between the supporters of Osiris and Amon against those of Aton ensued.

Amon, the once supreme god of Thebes, identified with Râ (the sun), lost his place in Egyptian society. The internal clashes that followed the theocratic disputes weakened Egypt.

The exodus of many enslaved peoples became inevitable. An Egyptian named Moses would free the Israelites and codify Hammurabi's code, infusing a religious sense to it. The Israelites would invade the south of Syria and settle on the land promised to Abraham by God.

Meanwhile, the Hittites, an Indo-European people notorious for their ability to use iron, were poised to conquer the region.

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

## **The Books of Moses**

## **A Nation Forgotten by God**

How the Israelites passed from the condition of guests to that of slaves in Egypt has not been recorded in the books of faith. Possibly, they did not fit very well—let alone integrate—into the host nation. The books imply, however, that God stopped talking to the descendants of Joseph for hundreds of years.

Egypt was a very old kingdom with very old gods. The nations living along the banks of its river had been worshipping many gods for thousands of years. With time, some gods had evolved into popular principles and had been exported to neighboring lands.

Folktales of the Nile Valley had brought forth Râ, the sun, as its main god. The earth was a hill that had grown in the middle of the ocean (Nun) into the gloom of the world. When Râ alit on top of the hill, the darkness was dispersed. Râ emitted the god of air, Shu, and the goddess of water, Tefnut; air and water procreated twins: the god of the earth, Geb, and the goddess of the sky, Nut. Every dawn, the goddess of the sky—depicted as a cow—gave birth to the sun in the form of a luminous beetle that crossed the sky and sank at dusk as an old man.

The Egyptian order of creation followed loosely that of the Genesis: a dark abyss, an empty ocean, a barren earth, light, air, water, land and the sky. Egyptians disregarded the tales of the *Hibiru* about their god. The Israelite god was passionate and capricious, a potential killer of men women and children; then again, some Egyptian gods had been known to trigger devastation too.

Like in Noah's tale, Râ had wanted to destroy the human race once. He had ordered his daughter, Hathor, the goddess of

beauty, fertility, love and marriage to kill the rebellious mortals. But Hathor drank beer before the slaughter was completed and missed some people.

As in the story of Cain and Abel, the Egyptian god, Osiris—normally represented as a mummy—had been murdered by his brother, Set. However, Osiris had been resurrected by his sister and wife, Isis, and became the ruler of the underworld.

An Egyptian renegade, overwhelmed by boredom and rejection, would be the next man to speak to the Israelite god. His name is Moses. Like other Semitic nations, the Israelites loved to be lectured about the unknowable.

Moses must have been weary of the gods of Egypt. Impiety was considered lunacy in Egypt. But to the Israelites, Moses' craze turned into a new sanity. He came to be known as the inventor of the Law and as a great leader. The books tell us that no man could ever talk sense into Moses.

Had the Israelites suspected Moses' plan, they wouldn't have followed him and endured his tyranny. But Moses knew how to rouse and keep alive the frenzy of the Hebrew folks. Like many of us today, the *Apiru* were easily persuaded with sensual tales of wealth and leisure to come under the protection of a powerful god. They wanted to believe in a land that disgorged honey and milk and in bread downpours from the clouds.

By the time the Israelites shook off servitude in Egypt, they were already under the rule of Moses and the fear of God.

## **The Enslavement**

When no Egyptian remembered Joseph, his sour affair with Putiphar's wife, his ability to interpret dreams or his light-fingered managerial skills, the Israelites were still living in Goshen. Jacob's descendants had multiplied in the Nile's delta, the most fertile region of Egypt. None of this, however, has been found written in hieroglyphics.

The Israelites spoke a Semitic language, dissimilar from the Hamitic Egyptian. The customs and the gods of the two nations were quite different. Yet, a certain amount of borrowing took place during the centuries of contact: the Hebrew religious psalms, for example, were imitations of Egyptian verses.

The Egyptian ruling class did not trust the Israelites. The descendants of Israel had never liked a godlike Pharaoh not their kin either. The Egyptians were constantly chasing away Syrians, Canaanites and Philistines from the land of Palestine. They feared that, in case of war, the Israelite shepherds would join their racial brethren—or even the Sea People—against Egypt.

Ramses II was a very dangerous man, for he was imperialistic and a believer in an afterworld. He loved war because his army was normally more numerous and much better equipped than those of his neighbors.

Ramses II was also the first pharaoh to impose controls on the Israelites. Hebrew men were requisitioned to work in the construction of pyramids, cities and grain-storage houses in the "red lands" of the desert.

During the overflowing of the riverbed, when the crop fields were under water, the Israelites and many others transported limestone and granite to the different projects of Ramses II. The

Hebrew laborers became skilled stonecutters using copper chisels and saws. With hard rocks, such as dolerite, they chipped away holes in the stone quarries; then, they filled the crevices with wooden wedges and poured water on them so the force of the expansion would crack the stone—unknowingly, they were using cell turgidity. They flattened the surface of large stone blocks, put them on drags and rolled them to construction sites on wooden cylinders, pushing with levers.

The Egyptian arithmeticians were very advanced with respect to the Semitic tribes. They could add, subtract, multiply as a function of periodic sums and divide by repeated subtraction. Pharaoh's officials knew how to calculate land property surfaces. The tax superintendent determined contributions by the precise measurement of field boundaries after the Nile's yearly inundation.

Due to their knowledge of Mathematics and Astronomy, the Egyptians were able to design pyramids whose sides faced the four cardinal points and stepped up towards the sun. Egyptian architects designed public buildings and temples embellished with tall columns. The country's sculptors smartened principal buildings and plazas with statues of kings and gods and carved inscriptions on obelisks commemorating the great accomplishments of their nation. Egyptian painters decorated chamber walls with red figures of important Egyptians over bluish-gray backgrounds.

Slaves made the papyrus sheets used to draw the plans of Egypt's pyramids and monuments. Once the Egyptian architects had selected a building site on high ground, the Israelites, the Syrians, the Libyans and the Nubians—who had at times eaten human flesh—began to cut and to dig. They chipped away the rock, leaving stepped terraces as foundations for the placement of stone blocks. They dug long interconnected trenches and filled

them with water so the builders could level the walls and the columns of the structures. It was also the responsibility of the workers to make long ropes of papyrus strands with equidistant knots so the Egyptian geometricians could square the walls and the beams of buildings by the side-side-hypotenuse technique, also called the 3, 4, 5 method.

The Egyptian astronomers had studied and noted the positions of the planets and many stars. Thousands of years would go by before a man called Galileo produced the telescope, so they relied on the naked eye and their ability to draw. Contrary to the Hebrews and others, the Egyptians understood that aerolites and shooting stars are innocuous celestial incidences. They produced the first calendar of 365 suns and divided the year into 12 segments of 30 days. The Egyptian calendar started on the only day of the year when the brightest star, Sirius, rose on the horizon just before sundown—the signal that the Nile would soon overflow its banks. They had also divided both, the day and the night, into twelve parts that were constantly enlarging or diminishing in inverse proportion according to the season.

Some Israelite slaves worked the “dark lands” on the river valley, erecting dams and digging canals or ponds to trap water before the Nile returned to the riverbed. They made mortar and bricks. They extracted oil from the seeds of flax, castor and sesame for the Egyptians to cleanse themselves, to cook their food, to light up their houses and to lubricate their machinery.

Notwithstanding the hard labor, the Israelites continued to grow in numbers. Some died but Ramses II’s men did not miss them because the *Apiru* women had many children. At that time, the descendants of Joseph were under the same “bread bondage” that he had invented for all the Egyptians several centuries before.

His advisors had explained to Ramses II that, together, the Canaanites, the Syrians, the Philistines and the Hebrews were a menace to his possessions in Palestine. Pharaoh had to control the numbers of these potential enemies, some living in Egypt proper—the same slaves that enriched his kingdom with their toil.

Once again, ethnic cleansing was seen as self-preservation. Pharaoh ordered the Egyptian midwives to kill every male born to the Israelites. The midwives, however, felt pity for the newborn and disobeyed the king. Alleging that the Hebrew women gave birth without assistance, they avoided the merciless directive to kill babies. Then, Ramses II ordered that all the males born to the *Apiru* be thrown into the river.

### **Birth of Moses**

The Israelites endured the hard work and the purge of their nation for many years. The hundred years of enslavement that God had announced to Abraham had come and gone. According to the books of faith, the *Apiru* cried out for relief and their clamor rose to God. When God heard them, He remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Naturally, the *Hibiru* tried by all means to hide their newborn sons. Still, those drowned in the Nile by Ramses II's orders must not have been very many because quite a few males of that generation left Egypt with Moses thirty years later—so many, in fact, that Moses levied an army among them.

A boy was born to the house of Levi. His mother, Jocabed, kept him out of sight. Meanwhile, the rest of the family cut papyrus

shoots, peeled them, slit them into strips and intertwined them to make a basket layered with pitch.

Mary, the boy's older sister, had been spying on Ramses II's daughter, Marie. Pharaoh's daughter went down to a river beach daily. Mary knew that, out of boredom, the ladies of the court were inclined to adopt rare pets and cute infants.

When the boy was three months old, Jocabed put him in the papyrus basket and left him among the river reeds. Mary kept watch from the riverside. When Pharaoh's daughter, Marie, went down to the river, she heard a boy's cry coming from the small vessel floating her way. Marie sent one of her handmaids to fetch the basket.

"What is it?" Marie asked her servant.

"It's an *Apiru* boy."

"Is he circumcised?"

"No."

"How do you know that he is an *Apiru* then?"

"I know that the Israelites abandon their sons on the river to save them from your father."

"If the boy's not circumcised, he can be Syrian, Canaanite, Libyan or even Egyptian."

"It's true, Marie. We can only be sure that he's not a Nubian."

Then, pretending to be passing by, Mary popped into the scene. Since she spoke perfect Egyptian and was imbued in the culture of her masters—she became a writer of psalms—Mary talked directly to Marie, Pharaoh's daughter:

"Would you like a wet nurse to nourish this child?"

"Yes," said Marie.

"I know a Hebrew woman..."

“Go bring her!”

Quickly, Mary brought her mother to Pharaoh’s daughter. She introduced Jocabed as an unrelated woman with enough milk in her breasts to feed the boy.

“This Hebrew wet nurse can raise your baby,” Mary said to Pharaoh’s daughter.

“Take this child and raise him for me,” Marie commanded Jocabed. “I’ll pay you.”

“She’ll pay me too!” Jocabed rejoiced within her mind.

Jocabed nursed her own child. After a year, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter.

Marie named the boy Moses. In Egyptian, the word meant, “Saved from the water” or the like.

### **Moses’ Young Years**

Pharaoh’s house had large gardens with water ponds, chambers decorated with paintings, balconies facing the night breeze, bedrooms adorned with diorite and quartz carvings, a harem, a temple and baths with running water. Moses lived in the servant’s rooms with the other children adopted by Marie to enhance her entourage. One of the palace’s dormitories had the image in red of baby Moses handing a perfume dispenser to Marie.

As a child, Moses liked to play with a black steatite disk, spinning it with the end of a pointy rod. He disliked the *Apiru* because their women did not spray perfumes on their bodies or decorated their chests with flowers, like Pharaoh’s concubines.

Apparently, Moses wasn't loved or protected by his adopting mother. Marie may have been the daughter of Pharaoh with a concubine. Nevertheless, Moses would learn in Ramses II's palace to read hieroglyphics and to ask the causes of phenomena. He heard—or perhaps read—the code of Hammurabi. Moses was in contact with the shaven priests dressed in white linen; they were astrologers, scholars and interpreters of sacred texts as well as scribes, singers and musicians.

Moses must have read *The Book of the Heavenly Cow* and he must have visited many temples. When the Nile spilled over its banks, he must have attended the festival of Amon and followed the men who pulled upriver, from Karnack to Luxor, the statue of the god.

Before Moses' eyes was the Nile valley full of ocher tones, bristling with date palms, tamarisk shrubs with white flowers and woody acacias. Towards the end of spring, he watched greenish algae and vegetation float north towards the delta and the sea; then, when distant downpours swelled the riverbed, he observed in wonderment the water turn reddish with the mud from the Abyssinian plateaus.

At some point in time, Moses learned that he was adopted and that Aaron was his blood brother. He was very disappointed. He would not have chosen to be a Levite under any circumstance. To discover that he was not from the house of Pharaoh was a tremendous blow to his sense of worth. Moses had fancied being a bastard scion of some nobleman from the house where people drank beer and wine, and servants catered to their masters, and women dressed with nothing but a short slit skirt, and everyone

thought that death was a continuation of the good life. It was preferable to be the son of an Egyptian courtesan than any Levite.

Often, strolling along the riverside, Moses repeated distraughtly in his mind: “Amram, the son of Caat and grandson of Levi, took his aunt Jocabed as his wife and fathered Mary, Aaron and Moses.”

Once Moses understood that he wasn't of Pharaoh's race, he grew fond of the folks of the house of Amram. He was never circumcised and his language of culture was the Egyptian. At that juncture, Moses became resentful of rich Egyptians who lived in the reddish brick houses, owned stone carvings and ate with ivory spoons. The upper class of priests and bureaucrats was inaccessible to him—only Egyptians of noble origin could collect the taxes, oversee public works and be judges or public officials. For him, there was no hope of upper mobility through marriage in Egyptian society either.

Foreknowledge of the good life he couldn't have had made Moses very unhappy. Boredom ebbed away at his common sense too. To take his mind off his troubles, he followed the *uadis* to the eastern and western deserts and navigated upriver to the pink granite quarries. In the islands of Sehel and Konos, Moses left his name engraved on hard rocks. He bathed in the man-made pond under the regard of the sphinx of Gizeh. He even traveled beyond the cataracts, where the wild Nubians lived.

“What would Pharaoh be without the fear of his subjects?” Moses asked himself one day. And then he said, pensively, “Ramses' legs are weak.”

Among the palace's young men was an orphan of the Sea People called Anax. His skin was very white and his hair had the color of

the chestnut fruit. Marie had adopted Anax when he was very young. She preferred the boy to all others and always slept with him. Moses thought that hating his schoolmate out of envy was beneath his dignity as a human being. They were good friends.

Anax liked to be by himself and to roam the stables, the cowpen, the kitchen, the palace gardens and the halls. Some times, Moses drew his orphanage mate into dialogue.

“I want to be a soldier,” Moses had told the other young man.

“You’re quick tempered and hope to be a hero, Moses.”

“That way, I’ll serve Pharaoh well.”

“A soldier serves well when he kills, steals, rapes and cuts off the hands of Pharaoh’s dead enemies for personal credit.”

“That’s how Egypt becomes even greater than it already is.”

“If I were a soldier, I’d wake up at night stung by my own memories. Aren’t you of the race of the curly haired *Apiru*, Moses?”

“I’m also an Egyptian, and so are you, Anax.”

“You’re like a floating leaf pushed by the river.”

“The Israelites suffer now because they weren’t brave and strong before, Anax.”

“But they pray to their god to be powerful one day. They would want to be the tyrannical judges of others too.”

But Moses knew all that. Unsure of his own desires, he wanted to know his friend’s plans for the future.

“What will you do with your life, Anax?”

“I’ll travel by boat along the river to the sea and beyond.”

“Aren’t you afraid?”

“Yes. But I don’t know if travel is possible in another life. So, I’ve learnt to swim with the Phoenicians for safety during this existence.”

“Have you made offerings to the gods?”

“My respect for the gods is moderate, Moses.”

“Don’t you believe in the gods?”

“I’ll create some god by myself some day.”

“But you have been to the temples of Egypt.”

“Many nations have hewn grotesque images of divinities that have no life. I’ve seen painted images of gods on ceramic works that break into pieces. Pharaoh is a god and he will surely die one day.”

“What’s true to you then?”

“Nothing known is imperishable.”

“We’ve been taught by well-educated priests.”

“The priests serve superstition. They’d much rather divine than think. Because they are uncreative, they hide behind images of old gods lyricized in ballads. Like the Hebrews, they tell others that a god could look favorably on them or not in order to exploit their hopes and fears.”

“Incredulity is a great offense, Anax.”

“Amon is now dead and so is sin. You’re incredulous too, Moses. If you want to overcome your shadow, wait for the sun to change.”

“What do you mean, Anax?”

“The soulless creatures are unhappy and don’t know how to live. Invent a new faith and a new worship if you want—others have. Yes, Moses, fashion new gods and let others follow you. Nothing will truly change if you do.”

“Should I be a leader of men?”

“Yes. You’re educated: invent a bright god. That’s where your own freedom lies. Talk to the deaf, for it matters little if they understand you. They must only believe and obey you. Men like to bear great and confusing spiritual loads.”

“By the lives of my devils, I begin to understand your madness, Anax! A great emptiness had filled my soul. But I can possess the hearts of the multitudes and be like Pharaoh.”

“A scary god is what you need to fashion, Moses. And don’t be too concerned with your empty soul. It’s your stomach that’s bothering you: eat!”

Soon after, Anax left his adopting mother’s bed to go away with the Phoenicians.

Moses had begun to visit his kinfolk regularly. Wearing nothing more than a phallic cup, some of the men made bricks (*tobe*); others labored among the palm trees collecting dates, gathering basket materials or cutting fence posts; still others worked the barley and the wheat fields. The youngest and strongest traveled far to the stone quarries and the quartz mines. Hebrew artisans fashioned diverse instruments of stone, wood and bone; the women weaved and made pottery and leather goods.

In Egypt, the work period was ten days followed by a day of rest. The men were paid with bread, beer, beans, onions, cured meat, oil and salt. When the Egyptian workers did not receive their pay, they robbed the tombs of the rich at night to buy grain. Hebrew slaves, however, were totally at the mercy of the Egyptian bosses.

On one occasion, Moses, who was adroit with the knife, saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. Making sure there were no witnesses, he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. He

hoped in his heart for that to be the first of many other blood deeds.

On the following day, Moses found two Levites fighting. Angrily, he asked the aggressor:

“Why do you attack one of your own kind?”

“Who ever made you our judge?” asked the bully.

“Idiot, can’t you see that he’s of your nation?”

“Are you going to kill me, like you did to the Egyptian?”

Moses was afraid. The very Israelite who he had saved from a beating the night before had told on him. “The affair is known,” Moses thought. He learned the hard way that no one keeps the secrets of others.

Ramses II had also heard about the murder of his man. He ordered Moses executed for treason—Pharaoh never liked him very much.

Moses felt a strong desire to postpone his trip to the afterworld. It would’ve been a great loss to die in full knowledge and command of the seven hundred hieroglyphs. And to be a slave in the gold or the copper mines of Nubia, the Sudan or the Sinai was worse than death.

To the West was the great inhospitable desert. To the South were the Nubians, stupidly faithful to Egypt. To the East were the ports of the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s men.

On his flight towards the East, Moses approached a heath on the edge of a *uadi*. Along his way he found his friend Anax, who was also escaping the good life riding a donkey.

“So you killed an Egyptian to defend a Levite,” Anax said in the depth of the night. “Didn’t they teach you to scorn your own race when you were a boy?”

“Yes.”

“The priests had very little success with us,” Anax said, laughing. “Yet, the best beasts that Pharaoh owns are men.”

“What are you doing here, Anax?”

“I’m leaving. I’ve spent that last two days preparing a long trip. Marie sleeps alone tonight. She’s getting old and her teats sag.”

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to Phoenicia hoping to find a ship to the East, to the West or elsewhere. I said to Marie that I wanted to travel the world and bring her a worthy present.”

“Did she believe you, Anax?”

“I don’t know. I left her a letter.”

“I said to the same Israelite who told on me, ‘I’m going to Libya,’ so I can escape to the land of Midian.”

“Well thought, Moses. Disinformation is the key to success when dealing with men. You’ll find plenty of reasons to hate those of your own race as much as the others.”

“I’m beginning to see that too.”

“May the gods, should they exist, be with you, Moses.”

“May they protect you too, Anax.”

### **Moses Flees to Sinai**

In Midian lived a priest of an unfamiliar cult that adored, alongside the Egyptian pantheon, the famous Semitic god *Baal-peor*, a goddess called Asherah and another deity by the name of Yhwh. The name of this priest was Raguel and he had seven daughters.

Sitting under a tree, Moses was watching Raguel’s girls pull bucketsful of water from a well for their father’s herd. At that

moment, a group of shepherds arrived and tried to force the girls out. Moses grabbed his weapons and gave the rogues a lesson in good manners.

“How come you’ve returned so early today?” Raguel asked his daughters.

“An Egyptian drove away with violence those mischievous shepherds and helped us pull water from the well.”

“Where is that Egyptian? Ask him to eat with us.”

Moses agreed to stay in Raguel’s house because he liked one of his daughters, Zipporah. She was smart, gentle and had pleasing eyes. A sudden draft had unfastened her tunic by the well, letting Moses see her pink nipples and firm breasts. A few days later, while they were walking on the grassy shadow of a big rock, Moses desired Zipporah more than anything else in the whole world. Immersed in the sweet fragrance of wild flowers, Moses clinched the girl with the dexterity of a goatherder.

“Please, don’t...” Zipporah protested unconvincingly, putting her arms around Moses’ neck.

“Don’t deny me your refreshing well,” he begged.

“I don’t understand,” she said innocently, making herself comfortable under his groin.

“Free the goat within yourself,” Moses said to her vehemently—it was common among the Egyptians to talk like that during lovemaking.

“Ah, oh, huwee!” was all she could say on the spur or the moment.

Raguel gave Zipporah to Moses. He had always had a great desire to have a son-in-law handy with the sword, the whip and the rod, capable of sending a potential livestock robber to the place where all destruction ends up.

Moses discovered a happy life in the tent with Zipporah. After tending the sheep, she'd bathe with well water and put the fragrance of the bell-shaped hyacinth flowers all over her naked body before going to him. It was then that the lethargy of the sameness of Moses' days turned into tremors and want. Quite soon, Zipporah gave him a son he named Gershome, which means, "stranger in a strange land."

Still, Moses complained a lot about the fate of his brethren in Egypt. He said that, in Midian, sunups were too short and the sky simmered. Many years later, after escaping from Egypt, the Israelites killed, captured or dispersed the Midianites.

Several years after Moses fled Egypt, word came that Ramses II had left to be judged "on the day the firstborn's throat is cut." The king had lost his mind and his vices long before his death. One of his sons, Kamois, had ruled Egypt during Ramses II's years of senility but he had died even before the old king. Another son, Menephtha, was sitting on the throne of Egypt.

All the Orient learned of Ramses II's funeral. A boat carrying the sarcophagus enclosing his mummy had been dragged inside a pyramid. The Egyptians were sad because the god that had lived from the essence of every other god, eating sorcery and swallowing spirits, had died. The king who had passed a death sentence on Moses had entered the sepulcher on the sailing boat that would take him to the other world—from which no one returns. He who was said to "eat men" because he had soldiers to slay his enemies had departed. "He's no longer on earth but in heaven," a relieved Moses heard in the land of Midian.

Ramses II would not have received Moses except to order him dead. After the king's death, however, Moses would've loved

to see him.

Thousands of years after his passing, Ramses II's obelisk was taken to the *Piazza del Popolo* and was crowned with a cross—the sign of a Jewish sect—in a most extraordinary city full of art called Rome.

The *Apiru* continued to be captives in Lower Egypt under Menephtha. Their hurtful cries from the bonds of slavery ascended to the clouds and to God. It was then that God must've somehow become aware of their plight and decided to talk to a Levite.

### **Moses' First Encounter with God**

Moses was the sheep master of Jethro's herd. Recurrently, he took his father-in-law's animals to pasture patches in the mountains. There, he entertained many fancies within his mind, always discontented for lack of a greater goal in life. Moses couldn't blame on the devil the uneasiness he felt because Satan had not been invented yet in that part of the world. The mere thought that his best concoctions would die with him made Moses very sad.

Although many years had gone by, Moses still cursed in hieroglyphic phonograms the society that had rejected him. Being so uncommon a person made him feel wasted. In frustration, he wrote on a sheepskin with burnt oil sludge the laws of a new society where people would be happy. Most often, however, he simply ranted into the air.

Zipporah worried about her husband's wit. Moses was seeing too many errors in the world and was aspiring to something

new beyond knowledge. Often, Moses quoted Anax as saying that the gods were a conjecture. Zipporah thought that questioning the fact that Atum-Ra had produced the world was a transgression against a serene existence. It was clear to her understanding that, while masturbating, Atum had given life to gods such as Chu, the wind, and Thephenis, the water. Now Moses was saying that to believe in Ghetghe, the earth god, and in Nut, the goddess of heaven, was superstition. "How can people believe that Horus, the Lord of Heaven, is a falcon?" Moses shouted on the mountaintop when he came to believe in nothing. Eventually, Moses told Zipporah that he regretted the years wasted in the old faith.

It was then that Moses began to read the great sky papyrus. He saw written on the clouds: "Life is a great treasure dwindling by the day." When Moses drank wine, he thought to be much wiser than when he was sober and believed that the clouds and the boulders turned into very coherent telepathists. Inebriated, he discovered an incorporeal god unlike Anubis, Horus or Osiris, and aimed to find its character somewhere. Keeping with Hebrew tradition, Moses had begun to conceive God as a voice without a form.

One day, when Moses was taking Jethro's herd to Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to him in the form of a flame. For a long while, the flame danced over some brambles. "Wow, this bush burns but it's not consumed by the fire!" he thought. Thousands of years would pass before a man called Lavoisier discovered the importance of oxygen gas in combustion.

"Moses," God called from the burning bush. Moses cried in horror and almost snapped silly out of his vision.

"Here I am," Moses replied, thinking that God's matter had jumped from what's possible to what's real.

“Do not come close to these brambles. And take off your sandals because you’re on holy ground now.”

“Yes, of course.”

“I am the god of your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.”

“Yes, I’ve heard the Levites talk about them,” revealed Moses, covering his face—in case that the flame that didn’t burn produced heat.

“I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt.”

“You’re God and can see everything.”

“I’ve heard the clamor of their oppression.”

“You can hear everything.”

“I know their anguish.

“You know everything.”

“I will free my people from the oppression of the Egyptians. I want to take them out of that country, to a spacious and fertile land of milk and honey. They can have the land of the Canaanites and that of other nations of lesser importance. I want them to possess all that land plus whatever they can carry out of Egypt.”

“I understand, God”

“Go to Pharaoh and guide my people out of Egypt.”

“Who am I to take the Israelites from Pharaoh?” Moses asked rather lucidly.

“I’ll be with you. Once you have taken my people out of Egypt, you shall adore God here, on this very mountain. I shall give you the necessary laws to govern.”

“Fine, I’ll go to the Israelites and tell them that the God of our fathers sends me. In case they ask, what shall we call You?”

“My full name is *I-Am who I-Am*. Go gather the elders of the Israelites and tell them: I-Am, the God of your fathers, has commanded me to lead you out of Egypt, into the land of Canaan.”

“I’ll do it.”

“Then, take the elders with you to see Pharaoh. Tell him that the god of the Hebrews has appeared to you. Ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to the desert for a period of three days to offer sacrifices to Me.”

“Pharaoh is not stupid. He’ll suspect all this to be a ruse to flee Egypt.”

“Yes, he’s no fool.”

“Pharaoh will doubt You because he’s unwise. The Egyptian king believes that a cadaver buried inside a pyramid will continue to eat and drink.”

“What a foolish thought, Moses!”

“I suspected that You wouldn’t agree, I-Am. What a waste of resources and manpower those pyramids are. The Egyptians should have more common sense.”

“Mortals’ beliefs are usually stupid.”

“Not the cult addressed to You.”

“Correct.”

“Punish them, I-Am!”

“I’ll work miracles and the Israelites will leave the country with many riches.”

“They’ll like that!”

“The Egyptians will be happy to see you go. They’ll hand over gold and silver to you and clothes to your women.”

“Let’s clean them out, God.”

“A true Levite you’re now, Moses.”

“Thank You. Will the Egyptians believe in I-Am too?”

“That’s impossible, Moses. Old beliefs don’t die unless you kill those who hold them. For most folks, their old faiths are seared in time. Besides, if all men were to believe in Me, you’d have no one left to conquer. Then I’d have to become the god of unbelief for rebels.”

“That never occurred to me, I-Am. Of course, I don’t quite understand what you’ve just said.”

“Of course not, Moses: you’re not terribly bright.”

Two thousand years later, while sleeping in a cave, a man called Mohammad said to have had a similar encounter with an angel of Allah (God). Mohammad was a lazybones who lived off an older woman. Much like Moses, he convinced others to take arms against people of other faiths (infidels) so as to make them submit to a religious tyranny in the name of Allah.

### **The Mission**

Having found a belief, Moses felt heavy with wisdom. Definitely, he’d pursue the path to God for the Israelites. However, when Moses considered the difficulties of his mission, his resolve weakened. Rather quickly, he began to fear his own fears—something sure to displease God.

“Nobody is going to believe in our encounter, I-Am. They’ll say that I lie.”

“What’s that in your hand?” the voice behind the brambles asked.

“It’s just a cane, I-Am.”

“Throw your cane to the ground.”

“There it goes. Look, it has turned into a snake!”

“Now, grab the snake by the tale.”

“No, I-Am, it’ll bite me.”

“I’ve told you to grab the snake by the tale, Moses!”

“I’ll do it. Oops, it has turned into a cane again!”

“Now, put your hand on your chest.”

“I obey. Oh, it looks like the hand of a leper!”

“Do it again.”

“God, it’s cured!”

“I they don’t believe you, throw your cane on the ground and make them put their hands inside their clothes. If they still don’t believe you, pour water from the river on the ground and it’ll turn into blood.”

“That’s going to be good, I-Am!”

“Go!”

“Wait just a moment, God. I don’t speak well the Israelites’ tongue: my speech is not fluid.”

“Go. I’ll be in your mouth and you’ll know what to say.”

“Please, I-Am, send someone else.”

“Don’t make me angry, Moses. You can go back to Egypt now that all those who wanted you dead have passed on. Since you don’t trust your speech, talk through your brother, Aaron, and let him carry your staff—which will be also known as Aaron’s rod. I’ll be in his mouth too. Aaron shall be your mouthpiece for the people and you shall be a god to him.

“Thank You.”

“By the way, Moses, don’t preach equality to unequal men.”

“I’ve always suspected that, God.”

“Make them respect you: kill their childish grins with a severe glance.”

“I know how to do that.”

“They need a god to kneel to.”

“I’ve seen that with my own eyes.”

“Then, go, Moses. You’re ready.”

“I go now.”

On his way to see his father in law, Moses thought: “I’ll be like a god. I’ll have my own herd.” Then, the fastidious words of Anax came to his mind, “Let the gods sleep inside the marble.”

Moses asked Jethro for permission to take Zipporah and his son to Egypt. The priest was a little surprised of such a foolish request.

“Why would you want to return to the land of a snooty Pharaoh that despises you, Moses?”

“I need to know if my brethren still live.”

“Aren’t we your kin now?”

“I’m a Levite.”

“Go in peace, Moses... but take good care of my daughter and grandson.”

Jethro said goodbye to his daughter. Zipporah was upset at Moses for taking her from the security of Midian into the unknown. “It must be my duty to follow Moses’ lunacy,” she said to her mind. Then she asked her husband, “How’s Pharaoh’s house?” “It’s a perpetual feast without joy,” Moses replied in his wacky manner.

Along the way to Egypt, I-Am visited Moses. He was angry because, being God, He had the right of enragement.

I-Am threatened to kill Moses. Moses was horrified because Zipporah was still good-looking and he did not wish for another existence. Luckily for him, Zipporah understood what was happening. “There, she said,” throwing a piece of bloody skin at Moses’ feet, “I’ve cut Gershom’s foreskin.”

So, moody I-Am let Moses live. “Zipporah understands God’s intentions better than me,” thought Moses and rejoiced.

According to the books of faith, Pharaoh, the indispensable antagonist of the story of Moses, would not let the “chosen people” go free. Such decision by Egypt’s leading character would create high drama in the country. Eventually, Moses would say to the king: “I-Am orders you to set the Israelites free. If you don’t, He’ll kill your children.”

Menephtha, the youngest son of Ramses II, was going through difficult times. Egypt had long been fighting others for control of Syria and Palestine. Indo-European peoples had invaded Asia from Capadocia to the Euphrates River and to Syria.

The Hittites had mastered the technique to mold iron, pushing Pharaoh’s armies from most of the Middle East. Menephtha no longer received tribute from other states. He also had to defend the Nile’s delta from those resolute invaders from Greece and Sicily called the “Sea People.” The Egyptian noblemen were no longer proud of their war chariots and doubted their king and their gods. The temples no longer received tributes from conquest and some gods were beginning to be forgotten.

Nemtinakt, Pharaoh’s most trusted advisor had made a report on the state of Egypt to the court:

» By the star Sothis! In defeat, the Egyptians become a herd without a shepherd. The people loot the granaries, the temples

and the houses of the rich. Property boundaries are being lost. Servants are becoming masters and bandits rule the *uadis*. The royal tombs are being sacked. The country is being depopulated. Births decrease in Egypt and parents abandon their children. The foreign invaders bring plague and famine. Our gods are dying in their temples.

» Gone are the glorious times when Khamosys expelled the Hyksos and took Egypt's borders to Mitani and Mesopotamia. Egypt had two great rivers then: the Nile, running from South to North and the Euphrates, running contrary to it. The battles in Megiddo, in the Aesdreton Plain and in Silnear of Babylon are history now. Our present is ominous.

» Justice cannot prosper without force. The foreigners are persistent and hard to keep down. Pharaoh needs better governors and more work from his servants. »

### **Moses' First visit to Pharaoh**

I-Am appeared to Aaron and ordered him to go meet Moses in the desert. Aaron was a sensible speaker and his language was rich—he'd be responsible for the creation of the 613 commandments and the implementation of the seven-day week envisioned by Joseph. By then, *Homo sapiens sapiens* had produced a good range of sounds for language; the human skull and man's vocal track were already well suited for speech. Along the way to Goshen, the two brothers talked about their mission and the prodigies to come.

Once in Egypt, Moses and Aaron gathered the wise elders of Israel. The elders were convinced with acts of magic flawlessly executed with Aaron's rod.

The history of the *Hibiru* began to be told. The word, "Adam" began to mean, "Man." "Let's not bother with the truth since we don't know it," said Aaron and began to feed the superstitious penchants of his friends with fiction.

The books of testaments give us an eloquent account of the interchanges between Moses and the Egyptian king. They state clearly that an emboldened Moses went to see Pharaoh. It was clear that Menephtha was royalty because his fingers and toenails were painted ruby red.

Moses said to Menephtha:

"Thus spoke I-Am, the god of Israel. Let my people go to praise My name in the desert."

"Who is I-Am to give me orders?" asked the king.

"I-Am is the god of the Hebrews and He has appeared to us," let out Aaron in flagrant interruption to support his brother.

"I don't know of any "I-am" and I'm not letting anyone go. Laborers are scarce in Egypt now."

"Let us go to the desert on a three-day journey to make sacrifices to I-Am so He won't punish Egypt with plagues and the iron sword," requested Moses, emphasizing the word "iron" to sting Menephtha.

"The Egyptian men are now archers and fight the Hittites and the Sea People. The work of the Ibiru is absolutely necessary to run the country. Your request is denied, even though I'd like to be rid of your nation."

"God has appeared to us, Pharaoh!"

“How convenient it is for your god to say that I must give you my workers!”

“We only ask for fairness, Menephtha,” claimed Aaron.

“You ask for fairness to whom? The Ibiru are slothful. They want to do woman’s work instead of putting up fortifications and building war boats for Egypt. Your nation’s faith stems from their natural abhorrence to work.”

“No, Pharaoh, it’s faith from God!” claimed Aaron. “God has appeared to us and...”

“I’ll punish your laziness. From now on, the Egyptians will no longer supply the Hebrews with straw to make *tobe*. They’ll gather the straw by themselves and still produce their daily brick quota. That’ll make you less sluggish. Perhaps being a little busier they won’t pay so much attention to your fibs.”

With an impoverished treasury and little trade—no cedar lumber, balsamic oils, lapis lazuli, silver, gold or fruits from abroad were reaching Egypt—Menephtha was in no mood to relinquish his assets. During his reign, no artists were paid to paint mustachioed and bearded animal frescoes in the royal palaces.

“Go find the straw you need to make *tobe*,” Pharaoh’s men told the Ibiru. “If you don’t produce a fair amount of bricks, we’ll beat you.”

“No, please, that’s too much work,” the Hebrew workers protested.

“We’d love to see you leave, but not now. You wish to abandon Egypt during a national emergency. You’re traitors!”

“Don’t pay attention to those crazy Levite brothers,” argued the workers. “We’re loyal to Egypt. We’re your servants. Please don’t put this burden on us.”

“Instead of going away, you, sons-of-the-spitting-cobra, go find straw.”

The chosen people did not maintain an acceptable production level of bricks and were punished. The elders complained to Menephtha: “Why do you treat your servants so badly, Pharaoh? Your foremen whip us now.”

“You’re lazy and want pity,” replied Pharaoh. “Instead of working, you want to make sacrifices to your god.”

The spokesmen for the Hebrews went to see Moses and Aaron. It’s not clear whether Moses had to make bricks but Aaron did. They said to the Levite brothers:

“You have made Pharaoh dislike us. With your stories, you have put the whip in the hands of our Egyptian overlords.”

“Cowards!” thought Moses but said nothing. “The people seldom rise above their nature.” Of course, Moses did not have to crush castor beans to extract oil so that Egyptian noblemen were protected from the sun... and neither did he have to endure the gnawing whip.

Moses reflected for a while. “What I’ve told my brethren has reached their ears but not their wits,” he said to his brother. Then he went to find I-Am.

“Lord I-Am: why do you make these people suffer? Why have you sent me? Now that I’ve delivered Your message, Pharaoh mistreats this nation like never before. Do something to alleviate their pain.”

## The New Mission

“Soon, I’ll show Pharaoh,” I-Am promised Moses. “You can be sure that Menephtha will let you out of Egypt.”

“What a joy, Lord!”

“I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob under the alias, *El-Sadai*. None of them knew my true name... until you, Moses. I had promised the others the land of Canaan, where they lived as foreigners. Having heard their laments now, I have remembered my covenant with Abraham. I shall rescue the Israelites with horrible punishments to Egypt. I’ll make you my people and I’ll be your God.”

“That’s wonderful, Lord. But the Israelites complain so much that I . . .”

“Don’t let them think that they’re your equals, Moses.”

“They doubt, Lord...”

“Go to see Pharaoh again. Again, tell him to let the Israelites leave Egypt.”

“I’ll do it.”

“Pharaoh will hear but he won’t listen because he’s powerful.”

“If he won’t listen, why talk to him?”

“Just go! Take Aaron with you.”

Life in the palace had changed much since Moses lived there. The banquets animated by dwarfs, wrestlers, tale-tellers and dancers had been suspended indefinitely; no more chants and handclaps were being heard. Noblemen, government workers, scribes, artisans, tradesmen, laborers and farmers had been drafted to make war. Young men were no longer learning civil occupations.

The production of jewelry, furniture, ceramic and wooden cabinets had been halted. The Phoenician seafarers were not taking lumber from Lebanon and Syria into Egypt. The houses of noblemen were not provided with ivory carvings or chariots inlaid with metals anymore. Even sarcophaguses to bury the dead were in short supply. And every ounce of copper was destined to the war effort.

Egyptians had been very tolerant of others in the past. In bad times, they had become nationalistic and xenophobic; many sought refuge in their temples and detested those who had different gods.

Moses ordered Aaron to throw his rod at the feet of the king. When Pharaoh saw the staff turn into a snake, he called a couple of palace charmers to do the same—at that time, when so many things were thought to be the work of gods, the professions of magician, priest and physician were one. So, the palace priests also made snakes from canes. But the snake that had come out of Aaron's staff was hungry and devoured one of the others.

“You're a simpleton, Moses,” said Pharaoh. “How can you come to me with such a common deception? Amuse me with something new and original.”

“What an unbeliever!” Moses exclaimed in his thoughts.

But the palace's medicine-mixing, bone-repairing, wound-healing, spirit-repulsing priests were very skilled at magic too. Impressing Menephtha was not going to be easy.

## Moses' Prodigies

Like in the Egyptian tale, *Complaints of a Persuasive Farmer*, Moses and Aaron began their talks with Menephtha. The ancient Egyptian story dealt with nine protests lodged to the palace's minister by a farmer who had been robbed by a member of the court. After the nine appeals, the minister ruled that the thief made restitution to the eloquent farmer. The Levite brothers would also fashion nine arguments for a skeptic king.

"Should we tell Pharaoh that Atum-Ra did not create himself?" Aaron asked.

"Don't waste your breath. Menephtha will believe that Atum-Ra created a rebellious and ungrateful humanity until he dies."

"How will we make Pharaoh believe in I-Am's superiority?"

"We'll talk to him about great plagues and other horrors."

### *The First Plague: Blood*

Moses waited one day for "the creator of appropriateness" to come out of the river. Menephtha was usually in a good mood after a bath.

"Bad things will come from the river," Moses announced to Pharaoh. "I'll pierce the river's water with my staff and it'll turn into blood. That blood will have a foul smell, fish will die in it and no Egyptian will be able to drink from the river."

"Has your brother dumped ocher mud upriver?"

"No ocher, Pharaoh, blood!"

"Will the whole river turn red?"

"Yes."

“It’s the time of the year for that to happen.”

Moses ordered Aaron to stab the water with his rod. The books of faith claim that the water in the river, in all the canals, and in every pond and water deposit turned into blood; they say that even the water stored in containers became blood.

Menephtha called his priest-magicians. They did the same as Aaron and the river turned even redder. For a period of seven days, the Egyptians had to dig holes and wells to find drinking water.

*The Second Plague: Frogs*

Moses returned to Menephtha’s palace and said, “You’re mortal and shall die like your slaves or anyone else.”

“That’s true. If you can prevent that, I’ll give you whatever you want.”

“I can’t do that, Great Pharaoh. But if you don’t let my people go, scores of frogs will come to Egypt; they’ll jump out of the river into this palace and every house of the Egyptians. You’ll see frogs on your bed, in your food and in your water.”

“Every time the river turns red with clay from Abyssinia, the frogs come out. I expect to see a lot of them now that the water looks muddled.”

“This time they’ll be everywhere.”

“Yes they will. Happily, however, frogs don’t eat crops, like mice do.”

“They’re coming, Pharaoh!”

“If you can make the frogs stay in the river, I’ll say that you’re a great magician, Moses.”

The frogs came out of the river to die. They were found in houses, stables and crop fields. The Egyptians collected them in

great numbers. The Hebrews said that I-Am had not sent frogs where they lived.

*The Third plague: Gnats and Mosquitoes*

Moses went to Menephtha again and said: “Great Pharaoh: may your greatness be not in greed! Let my people leave or a plague of gnats and mosquitoes will be unleashed on Egypt. They’ll fly into your palace, your bed and into the dwellings of the Egyptians.”

“Whenever frogs die in large numbers, bugs come,” remarked Menephtha. “I expect gnats, mosquitoes, flies and the sort.”

“Don’t twist the meaning of justice, Mighty One! Don’t be like the butcher who profits from death.”

Then Aaron stretched his arm and beat the ground with the famous rod. Clouds of bugs came from everywhere and started to sting people and animals alike. Pharaoh’s priests tried to do the same but, according to the Hebrew story, they were not able to create any more insects than Aaron.

*The Fourth plague: Flies*

Immediately, Moses sent words of caution to Pharaoh when he was leaving Harsaphes temple: “Now, Egypt will be covered by flies if you don’t set the *Apiru* free.

“This country is already teeming with insects for lack of frogs to eat them,” replied Menephtha. “The flies are coming to feed on the dead frogs.”

“In the homes of the Hebrews, there’ll be no flies tomorrow.”

“Who’s going to check your story, Moses?”

“I-Am wills it that way.”

“Look, Moses, we have many gods in Egypt and one more won’t matter. I am going to allow you to go worship in the desert for three days.”

“No, it cannot be like that, Menephtha!”

“Why? What’s the matter now?”

“The Egyptians will throw stones at us.”

“My subjects are tolerant, like their gods. We live in harmony with all men, even with those who have wicked gods like yours.”

“We must be at least three journeys from here.”

“I’ll let you go as long as you don’t stray too far. Workers and mercenaries are needed more than ever in Egypt. To build the great pyramid of Gizeh, many thousands of laborers and artisans were needed. We still have to set millions of stone blocks weighing as much as forty men each.”

“Thank you. I’ll ask I-Am to take the insects someplace else.”

“Do whatever suits your fancy.”

After consulting with his advisors, Pharaoh did not let the Israelites walk away from their jobs.

#### *The Fifth Plague: Pestilence*

Moses warned Pharaoh of a great pestilence that was about to strike the donkeys, the horses, and the sheep of the Egyptians if the Hebrew people were not let out of bondage.

“I won’t do that, even if madmen pray to donkeys!” retorted Pharaoh.

“Then I-Am will be angry at your people.”

“Is this pestilence going to strike only my animals?”

“Yes. I-Am would never harm the livestock of the Israelites.”

“You truly think that I’m a fool, Moses.”

“This will happen tomorrow.”

“Very large numbers of dead frogs and flies are rotting in the ponds. I expect many animals to get sick after drinking the bad water.”

“Oh, no, this will be the work of I-Am!”

“My priests say that you’re a foolish man, Moses. Neminakt thinks that you’re dangerous.”

“I speak only the truth, Pharaoh.”

“You don’t know what the truth is, Moses.”

The Sacred History Books of Jews, Christians and Moslems say that, on the next day, all the livestock of the Egyptians died. However, it must’ve resurrected quickly because life continued as usual in Egypt and everyone went on talking about his animals.

The Israelites were still unable to leave Egypt.

#### *The Sixth Plague: Boils*

Moses and Aaron grabbed a handful of ashes from an oven and scattered them in the wind when Menephtha was watching. “You’re wise Pharaoh,” said Aaron. “You should be the model for all men. Remember that he who safeguards good diminishes evil and that he who cheats men also defrauds justice. Why won’t you believe us?”

“I’m not stupid.”

“These ashes will become minute pieces of dust, Menephtha,” added Moses.

“Ashes are tiny dust, Moses,” replied Nemtinakt, Pharaoh’s principal adviser and magician.

“These ashes will fall on Egypt and produce sores and tumors in men and beasts alike.”

“When is this to happen?” asked Nemtinakt.

“It will happen now.”

“But it’s occurring now,” noted the priest. “The mosquitoes stung people, animals and dead frogs alike. What you’re saying is nothing more than the wishful thinking of a resentful man.”

“No!” cried out Moses. “I-Am speaks to and through me.”

“You’re mad,” remarked Nemtinakt.

The Sacred Books say that all the Egyptians had sores on their bodies after the conversation between Moses and Nemtinakt. Still, Pharaoh couldn’t be persuaded to let the Hebrews go.

#### *The Seventh Plague: Hail*

“You steer the world,” Aaron saluted Pharaoh. “You’re the impartial judge. You’re like the god Thoth.”

“Aaron is way out of line,” thought Moses. “Menephtha is immune to praises. I’ll show that vain vermin of the dung.”

Then Moses stepped forward and declaimed: “My mouth is like a dam that breaks open and spews forth water. I-Am says that he could’ve killed you with the livestock’s pestilence.”

“Don’t be silly, Moses,” replied Pharaoh. “No wonder my sister wouldn’t sleep with you. Had the animals of the Egyptians perished, I would’ve simply taken yours. I have to feed my soldiers and their families as well as all other workers.”

“Tomorrow, among powerful thunderbolts, hail will fall on all of Egypt. Anyone who is in the open will perish.”

“It has been unusually hot for this time of the year,” said Menephtha. I imagine that you will now tell me that where the *Hibiru* are the weather is nice and cool.”

“Yes.”

Sacred History tells us that, when Moses wielded his famous staff, the weather turned naughty. Men and beasts—many of which had resurrected after the pestilence—died and trees lost their leaves and branches. The flax and rye crops were lost. Only the wheat and barley fields weren’t damaged because they were late popping out of the ground that year.

The story calls for Pharaoh’s apology to Moses to make the hailstorm stop. Once again, Menephtha promised to let the Hebrews go. So, Moses pointed his staff towards the sky and calmed the weather.

Yet, after the storm, Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go.

#### *The Eighth Plague: Locusts*

Unrelentingly, the Book of Exodus continues with the boring yarn of the plagues of Egypt. I-Am does not let Menephtha agree to let the Hebrews leave and various troubles befall Egypt.

“Let all men remember you for your generosity,” Aaron said to Pharaoh. “Speak and make great and lasting justice.”

“I-Am says to let His people go and to fear Him,” Moses interrupted. “If you don’t comply, tomorrow all the land will be invaded by tree-eating locusts.

“After severe weather, the locusts always come to forage for food among the crops,” mentioned Menephtha.

“Why do you put up with this madman, Lord?” the priests asked Pharaoh.

“To see how gullible you are,” Menephtha reacted.

“The *Hibiru* have been in Egypt for hundreds of years and nobody likes them,” interposed Aaron, wisely.

“True,” confirmed Menephtha. “Go make holocausts to your god in the desert. Let I-Am be with you and not with us.”

“We must take all our livestock,” Moses tried to negotiate.

“Obviously you want to flee,” said Pharaoh, coming to his senses. “Get out of my sight.”

Moses pointed his famous staff to Egypt. According to the Hebrew tale, a wind from the East began to blow. By morning, a whistling airstream had pushed myriads of locusts over the land. Soon, nothing green remained in all of Egypt.

Once again, as the Book of Exodus claims, Menephtha called Moses and apologized. When Moses prayed to I-Am, the wind began to blow from the West and threw all the locusts into the Red Sea.

Again, Pharaoh changed his mind after the plague and kept the Hebrews in Egypt. We must assume that all the vegetation grew quickly after the locust plague because people of many nations continued to live in Egypt.

#### *The Ninth Plague: Darkness*

Moses raised his celebrated staff to the sky and a great gloom befell Egypt. “Why does I-Am make us do all this if He’s almighty?” thought Aaron as Moses yelled for darkness to the top of his lungs. “Can’t He simply have His way?”

Three biblical dark days followed. The Egyptians couldn’t see each other but the Hebrews did.

“Why don’t we just skip out now that they can’t see us?” Aaron asked.

“Because I-Am wants it this way,” retorted Moses. “Don’t ask any more stupid questions.”

Menephtha called Moses and gave him permission to go to the desert. He was willing to let the *Hibiru* take their children along.

“And our livestock?” asked Moses.

“Leave your sheep and cows behind.”

“We need them to sacrifice to I-Am,” said Moses.

“Take a few of them.”

“We wouldn’t even leave the hoofs of our cows in Egypt.”

“Go away, traitor,” ordered Pharaoh.

“You have not listened to I-Am, Pharaoh.”

“Don’t ever come here again, Moses,” warned Menephtha. “Next time I see you, I’ll send you to live with the Lord of Silence.”

“I might as well have spoken to Anubis,” acknowledged Moses. “Nothing good has come from my talks with Pharaoh.”

“Death sentences boost our country’s prestige,” advised Neminakt for the sake of conversation as Moses and Aaron were leaving Pharaoh’s presence.

“The sea hasn’t dried up, no star has fallen from heaven and the sun hasn’t melted,” commented Menephtha. “Our greatest concerns are Hittite iron and foreigners squatting in Palestine.”

“Moses wants to give his god credit for the solar eclipse that we predicted,” noted Neminakt.

“The Levite talks nonsense,” concluded Pharaoh.

After the nine plagues of Egypt, the drama intensifies. In the name of God, the time for revenge by the servant comes. For the love of I-Am, many innocent children will be killed. The books of faith—which are inspired on shepherding—connote that guiltless

offspring develop into blameworthy adults and must be annihilated for the sake of a better world to come.

As Jethro's sheepmaster, Moses had learnt much about shepherding. Very soon, he'd put on a sheepskin mantle to lead his people into the badlands, carrying little more than a bag, a sling and a crook.

For a while, the people revered Moses. To create a State, he needed many followers and a few believers. Moses had left hidden in Mount Sinai the sheepskin on which he had written the laws that'd govern his people. But since the mind of a nation always precedes its laws, he needed first a powerful doctrine to promote faith and the acceptance of his directives.

Mary, Moses' older sister, adored Thoth, inventor of speech and hieroglyphics and teacher of the arts. She disliked the dog-headed baboon image of the god, but always carried with her his other representation, the Ibis. She wrote news, poems and stories on papyri and clay tablets. Mary's skills preserved the story of Moses and his laws.

### **Announcement of the Tenth Plague**

“One more plague I shall bring on Pharaoh and on all the Egyptians,” I-Am indicated to Moses. “After the Great Terror, Menephtha will let you go in the twinkling of an eye.”

“It’s time, Lord. Making *tobe* around the dungy homes of scrap beetles is grimy and exhausting.”

“Directly after the plague, let every Israelite ask his Egyptian neighbor for wares of gold and silver.”

“Just like that?”

“Yes. Demand gold, silver, agate, jasper, garnet, amethyst, turquoise and the sort.”

“I-Am is the light and the justice of the world. May the destitute praise You for all time.”

“Insist with violence and you shall receive.”

“Make the blood and the treasure of the Egyptians lawful to us, Lord.”

“Israel shall rejoice with vengeance and profit.”

“Thank you, Lord.”

“You’re now the Prince of the Faithful, Moses.”

Moses announced to the Israelites that I-Am was about to descend on Egypt to kill children: “Every firstling, whether it’s Pharaoh’s, his slave’s or his goat’s will die. Only the children of Israel will not be harmed.”

“Is that right?” the people asked in disbelief.

“They drowned our children in the river before and now God shall sacrifice theirs to us.”

“Will you tell Menephtha?” they asked Moses. “That mad dog will kill you if you return to his palace.”

“Pharaoh’s servants shall come to tell me that the hens of Egypt cackle in the fear of our God.”

“Menephtha is vain and hardhearted,” Aaron warned Moses apart from the others.

“But I-Am is cruel!” snapped Moses. “Our people shall acclaim Him after this.”

“These good people are dull but your promise is quite extravagant,” Aaron said subtly to his brother’s ear. “If this does not come to pass, they’ll never believe you again.”

“Your tongue is eloquent, Aaron, but you have no faith.”

“Faith is difficult for the thinking man.”

“The people shall not be disappointed because they always accept words for deeds.”

“Yes, Moses; but as far as I can see, the transmutation of the people comes always after a good show.”

“A show you say?”

“That’s what they like best.”

“We’re not showmen but the people of the evil star.”

“And of a malicious disposition, Pharaoh believes,” said Aaron, looking worried.

“Do you doubt that I’m the master of my reason?”

“No, Moses. God has befriended you. Shall I instruct our artists to design the evil star?”

“Yes. We need symbols. With them, one day we’ll dominate the whole earth and take possession of all its riches.”

“Don’t be so candid or they’ll think that you’re mad,” Aaron yelled within his mind.

“I speak in accordance to the decrees of God,” Moses assured Aaron.

“Tell me, brother: after what we’ve been through together, don’t you feel some affection for the Israelites?”

“I don’t pity or love them, for such feelings are strictly God’s. I care about my mission—their destiny. These people have no sense of community: every single one of them would sacrifice all the others for his own advantage.”

“That’s true.”

“If an Israelite were the image of God, I should feel sorry for Him.”

“Did you see God, brother?”

“Nobody sees God. But I can tell you that His wife is not a she-ass. I will not tolerate the adoration of idols, Aaron.”

“That’s understood, Moses.”

#### *The Passover and the Unleavened Bread*

I-Am ordered Moses to make the Egyptian month of *Abib* the first in the Israelite year. He said that, on the tenth day of the month, each household was to acquire a yearling male lamb or a kid; on the fourteenth day, everyone was to slaughter his animal and paint with its blood the entrance to his dwelling. The meat, the head, the hoofs and the entrails of the sheep were to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and sour herbs cooked on the same fire. The meal was to be consumed very quickly. At dinner, each person’s upper body had to be tightened up; additionally, everyone had to wear shoes and be holding a crook. Should any part of the lamb be left, it had to be burned. On that very night, the fourteenth of *Abib*, God would strike Egypt’s children; however, He would abstain from entering with a revengeful heart into the houses showing bloodstained doorframes.

For seven days, the Israelites were to eat only unleavened bread. In fact, yeast was taken out of each family's dwelling. With God's fire burning in his heart, his mind and his innards, Moses annihilated any Israelite who ate regular bread that week. Furthermore, from the fourteenth to the twenty-first day of *Abib*, they also ate unleavened bread.

The Israelites were to do no work on the first and seventh day of *Abib*—this would put them at odds with Pharaoh's ten-day week. And, for all times to come, they had to commemorate the occasion as "our freedom from bondage."

Accordingly, Moses said to the Israelites: "Let each family slaughter a sheep and drain its blood into a pail. The blood is to be applied with straw or leaves onto the doorframe of your house. And don't snoop. Be sure to stay in your homes until morning. If you do this, I-Am will pass by your door without rancor and the lives of your firstlings will be spared."

The people bent their knees and heads to adore I-Am. Since Moses was thought to be speaking holy words, they took off their shoes too. Then they did as Moses and Aaron had commanded, repeating the holy message to each other.

"That's how it must be," declared Moses. "When people are allowed to voice their own opinions, they create confusion and anarchy for all."

"God is Great," Aaron let the word slip among the people.

#### *Execution of the Firstborn*

The Book of God wants the holocaust of the Egyptian children to have occurred with the help of I-Am in night and haze. During times of famine and need, infanticide was common in many primitive societies. This time, however, Menephtha's heir, his servant's eldest

boy and the firstling of every domestic animal would've been slaughtered—their throats slashed. Practically every household would have had a death to mourn.

The Jewish story of the Exodus tells us that the Egyptian king's wisdom finally flourished in shock and awe. Perhaps, in time of war and famine, an inordinate number of children were dying. But had Meneptha thought that the Hebrew slaves had something to do with the death of Egyptian children, he'd have buried alive in the desert the seed of Israel.

According to the books of faith, that very night Meneptha called Moses and Aaron and said to them: "Take your people out of Egypt immediately! Take all your livestock. And bless me too." Strange words for Pharaoh to say but that's how miracles work.

"You're the tongue of the people," Aaron said to his brother.

"Let the people obey only one man and have only one God," decreed Moses, crudely.

"Let them be united with a conscience that supports foolhardiness and opposes contention," proposed Aaron. "No good Israelite shall ever heed his own thoughts—should he have them."

"You shall be the high priest of our creed and the custodian of the rite, Aaron. Our horde needs an aristocracy too. They'll yearn for a knower of the Law who'll ride their backs and live from their sweat, like Pharaoh used to do."

"May God bless you, Moses, our great teacher of hope."

According to Nubian tales of sorcery, had the Hebrews stayed in Egypt, the nationals would die. Before leaving, the Israelites asked their Egyptian neighbors for wares of gold and silver as Moses

had ordered; moreover, they exacted from all the other ethnic groups the swaddling clothes of their dead sons. Swiftly, the peoples of Egypt were dispossessed of collars and bracelets as well as wooden chests and ivory boxes.

### **Consecration of the Firstborn**

In a few generations, the Israelites had grown their numbers from a family of seventy to a tribe of many thousands of inbred folks—perhaps eating pigs in Goshen. In two years after their departure from Egypt, their population increased to hundreds of thousands in the desert.

God told Moses that all the male firstborn of Israel, be persons or animals, had to be consecrated to Him. Servants purchased by the Israelites had to be circumcised before the celebration of Passover. No guest or hired hand could seat in the commemoration dinner. Additionally, He prescribed that the Passover lamb could have no broken bones.

A tax was part of the Passover treat. Instead of being sacrificed, the firstlings of men, sheep and asses would be rescued by paying into Aaron's treasury. Every infant had to be saved from the silence of death by means of a gold payment. The necks of all the male firstborn not rescued had to be broken because that was the norm established by I-Am in Egypt.

Instead of trekking directly to Canaan, Moses took the chosen people around the Red Sea and the north tip of what's now the Gulf of Suez because he did not trust the Philistines or the Sea People. He told the sore-feet group that they'd have to go into the desert. According to the Sacred History writers, I-Am

always showed Moses the way with pillars of clouds during the day and rows of torches at night.

Since Joseph was reputed to be the forefather of some of the Israelites, Moses carried his bones into the desert. Joseph had said, “God shall visit you and you’ll carry my bones away from Egypt.”

Regardless of Joseph’s influence, as far as Moses was concerned, dreams are not the harbingers of any news, good or bad, because God only speaks to those who are fully awake.

### **The Red Sea Opens**

“Camp by the seaside,” I-Am commanded Moses.

“Some enemy can find us in here, Lord.”

“That’s the plan. I’ll make Menephtha trail you.”

“Don’t do that, please!”

“A glorious moment it will be.”

“I don’t understand.”

“For the glory of the Israelite nation, Pharaoh will be crushed and humiliated.”

“Yes, Lord. Let Your revengeful justice fall on him.”

“Pharaoh is angry because of your departure.”

“Didn’t he know?”

“He wants your labor.”

“We hate construction work.”

Pharaoh gathered six hundred war chariots and followed the Israelites’ footprints to the northwestern neck of water of the Red Sea. On the seashore, not far from the salty water’s northernmost tip, the Egyptians discovered Moses’ camp.

“Why did you bring us here to be butchered?” the people asked Moses.

“Believe in I-Am and his servant, Moses,” Aaron said resolutely because a panic at that moment would bring perdition.

“What have we accomplished leaving Egypt?” they kept asking Moses. “We wanted to live in peace serving Pharaoh. Reconsidering, it’s better to work than to die. We have suspected that taking the gold and the clothes of others would cause problems.”

“Do not fret!” commanded Moses. “Be calmed and watch I-Am fight for you this day. Expect a great victory.”

“Under the circumstances, that sounds very strange.”

Pharaoh’s chariots were approaching from the horizon, in front of a huge dust cloud. In the distance, Moses saw the reverberations of their copper blades. He imagined the soldiers invoking the eye of the sun in anticipation to the assault and was fearful.

“How are You going to get us out of this predicament, I-Am?” Moses asked, irreverently.

“Tell the people to run towards the opposite shoreline.”

“The tide is low, but the other side is thousands of paces away.”

“Be on your way. You can make it to the eastern shore before the Egyptians do. When they try to follow you, the wheels of their chariots will sink in the sand and tangle in the reeds.”

“What if they circle around the tip of the sea?”

“Don’t be silly. I could’ve erased your footmarks from the sand if I had not willed this to be. Just do as you’re told for the sake of prophecy, Moses.”

Moses raised his famous staff and ordered his people into the water. The land-bound Hebrews protested, “We can’t swim.” Then a strong east wind parted the waters, leaving a dry pathway on the sea floor.

God’s angels and cloud pillars stood between the two nations. The clouds were pitch black on the side of the Egyptians and luminous on that of the Israelites.

Moses went ahead of his people into the dry corridor, against the prevailing wind. Walls of water erected by God protected him on both sides. The people had to follow quickly behind their leader, for Pharaoh’s men were closing in. When the Israelites reached the eastern shore, the Egyptians also took to the dry passageway in the sea.

Two hours after sundown, the tide began to change and the wooden wheels of the Egyptian chariots sunk in the sand and tangled in the reeds. Moses pointed his rod to the sea again and the water walls collapsed, enveloping violently all the Egyptians.

When they were safely on the other side, watching the bodies of dead Egyptians wash ashore, the Israelites believed in I-Am and feared his servant, Moses. Aaron explained to his congregation that the death of those naughty Egyptians, who tolerated false gods, was just and desirable.

Pharaoh suffered a humiliating death at the hands of God. In order to continue his reign in Egypt, Menephtha had to resurrect later.

## Mary's Song and the Sour Fountain

Mary (or Miriam) became a composer of psalms and chants. The subject of her first composition, *Az Yashir Moshe*, was the action in the Red (or Reed) Sea; it described especially the mass of water held up by God's wind. The Israelites would not acquire writing for another eight hundred years, but Mary knew Egyptian pictorial script. Although Mary was old, playing a cymbal she led the women of Israel in a dancing procession around the camp, singing:

*Sing to God and to His glory.  
He drowned horse and rider in the sea.  
I'll glorify the God of my father:  
His breath cleft walls in the water.  
Pharaoh's chariots were buried in the deep.  
Now, the sea is our enemies' roof.  
Like rocks, his noblemen sank.  
Mighty God's anger killed them all.  
Nations tremble on hearing of our God.  
We're His chosen people forever.  
Amen!*

Moses ordered his people to go to the Southwest, into the deserted mountains, far from Egyptian-controlled lands and both seas. They walked for three days, finding no water. Finally, they came upon an oasis of fouled water—which they named *Mara* because of the stench. They began to scream at the Prince of Faith:

“What will we drink?”

“Moses saved us from Pharaoh to let us perish of thirst in the desert.”

“He’s lied to us.”

“If the Philistines do not hack us to death, hunger, exhaustion and homelessness will destroy us.”

“If we drink this bitter water, we’ll be poisoned.”

Moses invoked I-Am because he was at a loss for words. After their meeting, he grabbed a piece of wood that God had given him and threw it in the water of the oasis. The water turned pristine, sweet, clean and healthy.

In Mara, the people had doubted Moses once again. Still, I-Am spoke to them through their leader—God does not like to talk directly to the common person. When everyone’s thirst was placated, Moses said:

“Listen to the voice of God. Do as He commands or he’ll smite you with the sword and send plagues to you. You must abide by I-Am’s wishes, not by what you think or feel. Don’t talk to God about justice among equals because His tribunal is the only Law.”

The Israelites crossed old temples in which forgotten gods had been buried and villages that had lain in the dust since the last great famine. In a place called Elihm, they found an oasis with twelve springs and seventy date palms heavy with berries. Blessing Moses and God, they camped by the springs and enjoyed the dates and the water.

“Deep inside, they’re still not satisfied,” Aaron said to Moses.

“Most of them are evil men and must be governed by terror.”

“They know passions, beliefs, customs, traditions and sentiments, Moses. Thinking ahead can be very dangerous for a people whose power of reasoning is superficial at best. Personal initiative can be very dangerous for them.”

“Let the Israelites express their opinions to each other for a while and be bewildered. Then, when they become confused by discord, I’ll tell them what to think.”

“They’re prone to believe you because you speak dogma, Moses.”

“But in case they don’t, the Levites shall police their thoughts. Freedom is now the right to do only what the Law allows.”

“Amen. Not one of them can use freedom in moderation.”

“Apostates shall die, Aaron.”

“To produce submission, we need merciless death sentences.”

“Let those who disobey my instructions perish.”

“Yes. We shall build a nation.”

“Watch them assail fruit trees with sticks and stones, Aaron.”

“Oh, they’re not totally hopeless. The king of Egypt should’ve shown more consideration to them.”

“Pharaoh was neither frank nor honest.”

“Yes, Menephtha did not have those vices.”

“Remember, Aaron: God doesn’t advocate pity!”

“He’s God. We belong to Him. No one can avoid what He decrees.”

“But do they deserve pity, brother? A dreamland of many sins soothes their swooning heads and helps them sleep.”

“I’ve considered that too.”

“Aaron, my brother: don’t fear your thoughts. When these men are idle, venery and sloth overwhelms them.”

“They’ll make good shepherds then.”

“Sheep they are. Watch them: after swilling the good water, they’ll do wrong with my words.”

“You’re brilliant, Moses.”

“God told me once that His favors are not obtained by toil.”

Without writing, the Hebrews had no History. After Moses and Mary, however, they began to collect stories from many sources about an ancestry they did not know. With time, Abraham, Noah, Israel and paradise became part of an oral tradition. From paradise came the idea of the disobedient snake—a good tools for governance. Since hell wasn’t adopted for another thousand years, too many people had to be put to the sword too often.

Mary’s muse encouraged the Israelites to push ahead through the desert during hard times. A man called Antonio Machado put into words Mary’s representations of the journeys to come:

*Caminante, son tus huellas  
el camino, y nada más;  
caminante, no hay camino,  
se hace camino al andar.  
Al andar se hace camino,  
y al volver la vista atrás  
se ve la senda que nunca  
se ha de volver a pisar.  
Caminante, no hay camino,  
sino estelas en la mar.*

Aaron was the inventor of many Israelite virtues. Moses, however, was his own forbearer. Moses was great because he did not yearn to reign but to create.

### **A Hail of Quails and a Downpour of Manna**

When all the dates were eaten, the Israelites left Elihm. Only six weeks after departing from Egypt, they arrived to the Sinai desert. By then, most of them began to criticize Moses and Aaron quietly.

“It would’ve been better to die in Egypt.”

“Beings slaves, we had meat some times and bread every day.”

“They’ve brought us here to die of hunger.”

“Carrion birds, hyenas and insects will clean our bones.”

“I-Am has promised bread from heaven,” Moses reacted when he learned about the insurrection.

“Don’t humor us now, Moses.”

“And, on the sixth day, you’ll have a double ration.”

“We’d like that very much.”

“This very afternoon, God will give us fowl—better to the taste than the Egyptian sacred cats that you trapped and ate with stealth. Tomorrow, you’ll have bread to eat.”

“Who will deny a god that feeds him?”

“God has heard your mumbling and still admitted you to his mercy,” put in Aaron.

“We were just talking. Everyone here knows that Moses tells the truth when he spits in front of his great toe.”

“When you vilify us, you decry God,” affirmed Aaron.

“Too often, your ears are deafened to our words because your

hearts are blinded by incredulity. And by so doing, you're rejecting the good graces of God."

That afternoon, thousands of quails descended on the campground and were eaten by the Israelites. On the next dawn, they discovered a layer, similar to dew, around the campsite; as the sun rose, a grain-like stratum, similar to frost, remained on the surface of the desert.

"*Mahu?*" they asked.

"This is the bread of God," Moses assured them.

"Is it unleavened bread?" they asked.

"It is rich bread and tastes like honey pie. Let each one gather as much as he and those in his family can eat."

"What if we grab a little extra?"

"You'll have nothing more for tomorrow."

"And if we take a little less?"

"Then you'll have a little less."

"Just take what you need," simplified Aaron.

"Let sheep, chickens and cows rain down from heaven too!" the people cried out.

"Don't press your luck," admonished Aaron.

"And also let the trees exude good-smelling resins to make our women smell better."

"Just take gracefully what God has given you," Aaron counseled them.

Contrary to Aaron's indications, some tried to keep the *manu* or manna but it spoiled and grew maggots and grubs. For years, the chosen people gathered the manna every morning; after sunup, whatever was left on the desert melted away. On the sixth day of the week, they gathered twice as much of the manna.

Saturday was to be a day of rest consecrated to I-Am. On that seventh day, no food fell from heaven; however, the manna gathered on the previous day kept well and wasn't devoured by maggots and grubs.

Some stubborn Israelites wanted to complete their chores on Saturday. "How dare you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?" Moses chided them, beating a few. Then, Aaron exhorted them to embrace the faith.

According to writings composed several centuries later, the Israelites ate manna for forty years (about ten years of our time). The books of faith say nothing of any more quails or other animals falling from the sky or wandering into their camps.

### **Surviving Thirst and War**

The Israelite clan arrived to a desert location called Rephidim. The place was dry as a bone.

"Give us water to drink, Moses!" they demanded with indicting cries.

"You offend me," replied Moses, angrily.

"Don't be so touchy: we're thirsty."

"Why do you tempt I-Am?"

"Why have you taken us out of Egypt?"

"You hated to work," said scornfully Aaron.

"In Egypt, we had water. You're taking us to a land that can never be reached: Canaan doesn't exist. We'll die in the desert with our children and our livestock."

The chosen people were very unruly that day. Some even said that Pharaoh had been good to them. Moses went up the

mountain to confer with I-Am.

“What will I do now, God?”

“Bear with them.”

“They’re prepared to stone us.”

“Go ahead of the tribe accompanied by a few elders. With your famous staff, strike the stone called, *The Rock of Horeb*.”

Following God’s instructions, Moses went to Horeb with a few elders of the Israelites. When he knocked the side of the stone with his rod, it spewed water at the feet of the men.

The people drank from the rock. They renamed the place *Masah-Meribah* because the Israelites had complained to God there.

A Palestinian chieftain called Amaleck was planning an attack on the Israelites in Raphadim. Moses thought best to handle the danger from the top of a nearby hill. Before leaving camp in the company of Aaron and Jur—and possibly Mary—he ordered Joshua to lead the men against Amaleck.

“Where will you be?” Joshua asked him.

“I will be at the top of the hill with God’s rod in my hand.”

“I understand and obey.”

“You’re the captain of our army, Joshua.”

“I hate all the unbelievers, Moses.”

“That’s what I thought.”

Sitting on a rock, Moses watched the skirmishes. When his arms were raised, Israel triumphed but when they dropped, Amaleck prevailed. So, whenever Moses tired, Aaron and Jur held his arms high.

Joshua led the men effectively, especially the rock throwers. The combat was fought with sticks, stones and copper

knives. By sundown, the Israelite men had won decisively their first battle. Amaleck had to withdraw and the trading caravans spread the news of his defeat all over Canaan.

Moses built an altar where his men had been victorious and called the place, *I-Am Nesi* because he had raised his arms against Amaleck there.

### **Jethro's Plan**

Sipporah had returned to her father during the time of the plagues in Egypt. When Jethro learned of Moses' success, he returned Sipporah and her two sons, Ghersom and Eliecer, to his son-in-law.

Sipporah's high bosom still looked like two fresh pomegranates and her nipples like two sweet grapes. Every evening, she washed with an ewer full of flower-scented water the most intimate folds of her white skin; before Moses returned to their tent, she encircled her eyelids with long lashes, like the Egyptian women she had seen.

But Moses had his mind occupied with reflections about God's work. With time, the woman he had once desired more than anything else in the world had departed from his mind. Too many years had passed since Sipporah's beauty had drawn the reason from Moses. At first, he had almost drowned in a sea of love but, while searching the heavens from Mount Sinai, Moses was never again distracted by the love for his wife. Sipporah would tell Moses, "May God never deprive your followers of your presence," but she'd say within her, "My husband's heart is no longer entangled by love for me."

The books of faith say no more of Sipporah or her children. She probably spent the rest of her life as she had started, herding goats with her head sprinkled by dust. Perhaps, the still desirable Sipporah befriended young shepherds.

Moses referred to Jethro the many miracles worked by I-Am. His father-in-law was curious.

“I-Am is the greatest god of all,” Moses said to the priest.

“How is He?”

“His essence is might and His form is a voice.”

“I shall offer a holocaust to I-Am then,” promised Jethro.

During those days, Moses was busy administering justice. Being in indigent circumstances, men stole from their brethren and women prostituted themselves. In addition, boredom made licentiousness a pastime.

Since Moses had not received the important precepts from God yet, he judged in accordance to natural or commonsensical law. When criminal elements within his people consulted together to kill him, Moses judged in secret so the others would not know the magnitude and frequency of the conspiracies.

“Do they come to you for everything?” Jethro asked Moses.

“Yes. Some don’t ascribe sufficient might and glory to I-Am. Others want to cast statues of Egyptian and Syrian gods.”

“They have little faith then.”

“It’s not uncommon here for a man to swear for a strange god. Most of them go hunting and shepherding on Saturday instead of praying to God.”

“Most definitely, they’re not believers.”

“I force those who abuse their parents to change their conduct.”

“I sure hope so.”

“Some times, I must pass death sentences on those who kill their neighbors.”

“They’re not a well-behaved tribe.”

“That is true. Some make use of their neighbor’s wives as if they were their own. Others steal from anybody. Most will bear false witness in order to obtain some advantage. And every single one of them covets the other man’s assets.”

“They’ll destroy themselves.”

“That’s exactly what I’m trying to prevent.”

“You need to fashion them an enemy soon.”

“That’s what I’ve been considering, Jethro.”

“You shouldn’t have to waste your time with the indignities that they bring.”

“True. Often, they just overwhelm me with talk and dissipate my understanding.”

“You must stop that.”

“If I don’t sway their evil with slaughter, Israel will disappear.”

“Don’t sit in judgment alone, Moses.”

“When I do, I have to make rulings based on what the interested parties tell me.”

“In all probability, you have given credence to lies.”

“I’m afraid so, Jethro. Yet, they must never believe that reason has forsaken me.”

“Your procedure is flawed, Moses. Why have a man whipped, why crop his ears when you don’t know if he deserves the punishment? That can affect your credibility.”

“You’re right about that, Jethro. Fortunately, almost every Israelite deserves to be flogged. The lights of reason profoundly disturb them.”

“School them in the precepts and the laws. Show them the right way. Offer examples of good deeds.”

“You’re very wise, Jethro.”

“Pick those who truly fear God and make them judges of the rest. Amongst God-fearing men, some times you’ll find honest and incorruptible fellows who’ll dispense reprisals against hideous actions. Let them allot rewards and punishments to the riffraff and alight the burden that you now bare.”

“That would be so helpful, Jethro.”

“As long as you don’t pick for chiefs and judges madmen, men of weak sense, baddies or thinkers, you’ll be effectively shielded from the troubles of the unreasonable rabble. Then, as supreme judge, you’ll hear only the important cases... like unfaithfulness to your god and conspiracies.”

Having listened to his father-in-law carefully, Moses realized that being too close to the transgressions of the people would shorten his life. He also needed time to think about a concise Decalogue of Law appropriate for everyone—something they could remember while counting their fingers.

As Jethro had suggested, Moses named judges from within his family of priests. After Moses had structured the judicial branch of his government, Jethro returned to Midian—and probably died soon because he was very old.

Jethro did not live to see the Israelites kill the Medianites and steal their god, Yahweh.

## **And God was in Sinai**

Three months after leaving Egypt, when nobody admired Moses' ability to conjure up plagues anymore, the Israelites arrived to the Sinai desert. The Prince of the Faith ordered the people to camp at the foot of the mountain where I-Am had appeared to him for the very first time.

"I-Am has brought you to His presence," Moses assured everyone. "If you obey His commands, you'll build a kingdom of priests, a holy people."

"We'll obey I-Am's commandments," Aaron screeched, thinking of his own station in life.

"I-Am shall come to me in a dense cloud. Everyone shall hear me talk to Him."

"Yes!" Aaron exclaimed, jubilant.

"In three days, I-Am shall descend on the mountain and the people shall see Him," promised Moses, spitting close to his right-foot's big toe.

"Blessed be I-Am!" the people acclaimed.

"Wash your clothes."

"We don't have water."

"Abstain from women."

"Only from women?"

"Let no one climb or even touch the mountain. Whoever does that, be man or animal, shall be spiked and stoned."

The third day's dawn unwrapped among resplendencies of lightning and roars of thunder born to big blasts in the sky. Black clouds enveloped Mount Sinai's summit. Suddenly, a loud trumpet was heard in the gloom and everyone stood fearfully at the foot of the mountain.

I-Am's cloud of fire descended on Mount Sinai. The mountain trembled like an erupting volcano and a great deal of smoke ascended towards the sky. The loud sound of the angel's trumpet fazed everyone.

Moses went up the mountain. The thunderous voice of God ordered Aaron to follow his brother and told everyone else to remain in the valley—or die.

## The Decalogue

God's Apostle looked down from his mountain. Crowding the valley at the foot of Mount Sinai was a fearful throng, laden with sins. When Moses took a good look at the sad tribe of Israel moving about their shanty tents, a great emptiness penetrated his eyes. Moistening the ground with spittle, he said to Aaron:

"Those faithless souls can no longer comprehend my visions."

"While in Egypt, swaging barley beer, they thought to understand you better," returned Aaron. "Now they're weary of ambling and miss their drink. But they're your subjects..."

"They've known about the killing of the offspring. Without price, they were given wares and clothing. They have seen God stir and still the winds and the sea, kill their enemies, purify their water and drop food from the clouds to them. Still, their beliefs are weak and I must flog them often. Why are they more addicted to the lash than to their faith?"

"That's their nature, Moses. When man sleeps badly, his faith enfeebles. I've told them a thousand times that God is most great but they still want to slumber."

"They will be heedless no more when the voice of God strikes their ears and their flesh quakes."

"Don't forget that they seem to like the name of that god of Midian, Yahweh."

"My soul is jadish now," Moses grumbled, turning his tired gaze towards God's blaze.

"The Lord of all creatures sent you to lead the Israelites out of bondage. Now, you seem to have grown tired of their company. What's come over you, Moses?"

Had a nightingale warbled or a dove cooed at that moment, Moses would not have pronounced these terrible words:

“Would that I had never known them!”

Riding on a gentle gale, a cloud of flaming mist rose and spread over the top of the mountain. The Lord of the First and the Last of Mankind began to speak from His fiery cloud. Everyone in the valley below was benumbed by the deafening enunciation:

*I. I shall be your only God because I took you from the house of bondage.*

*II. You shall make no image of what's in heaven, on earth or under soil and water. You shall not genuflect—much less serve—any such representation, for I'm a jealous god. I punish the trespasses of the parents on their children to the third and the fourth generations; however, I'm merciful for one thousand generations to those who keep my commandments.*

*III. You shall not swear by Me or take My name in vain—or I shall punish you.*

*IV. You shall observe the Sabbath. On the seventh day, you, your children, your servants and your guests shall do no work, even if you're not tired, because I rested on the seventh day after Creation.*

*V. Honor your father and your mother if you want to live a long life—your children could abandon you too.*

*VI. You shall not kill—those of your nation.*

*VII. You shall not commit adultery—within your own people.*

*VIII. You shall not steal—from those of your own clan.*

*IX. You shall not bear false witness—against other Israelites.*

*X. You shall not want the house, the wife, the servant, the ox, the ass or any other of your neighbor's possessions—if he's one of you.*

The Israelites had scarcely heard God's message when they began to shout to Moses, pleading for I-Am to stop talking directly to them. "Please, Moses, ask God to say no more or, like Aaron said, we'll die. Don't let the earth cleave asunder and swallow your people."

"Only God can count you amongst the chosen," reinforced Aaron. "Only the Lord of Mankind can extend over you the veil of His protection."

"Yes, we believe: let us live!"

Mary wrote everything on a papyrus scroll. How was Moses to remember every word spoken by God if she hadn't?

Lauding I-Am with their minds and their voices, the people clamored: "We believe in God even if we don't know anything! We'll keep His commandments and think of nothing else. We won't craft gods of gold and silver again. On the Sabbath, we shall offer our own livestock, not those animals that we've stolen. We will no longer rape the wives and the servants of our brethren for reasons of love, jealousy or lust. We will refrain from untruths when demanding justice before our judges. We will erect uncut stone altars and cover our nudity when we offer sacrifices on them."

Aaron did not believe that the promises made on that memorable day would be kept.

The Jewish sects of many nations would incorporate Mary's writ, *The Ten Commandments*, into their religion. For lack of ethnographic data, when the world became literate, a thousand years later, readers of all nations assumed to be related to the family of Israel. Later, when the well read learned the truth of the origins of nations, they denied it.

## Some Laws

Since Moses had been versed in Hammurabi's code and the forty-two natural laws of Egypt, he widened the Constitution of the Decalogue with ease. Whatever Moses decreed is certain to have been diluted in later interpretations and translations. Then again, when the story of the Exodus was written, several hundred years later, the legislation attributed to Moses must've been useful.

After promulgating the Decalogue, Moses did not have to restrain the people with so much violence as before. He gave the Israelites easy-to-follow laws for nation building too:

» Having employed a Hebrew servant for a period of six years, you'll free him together with his wife and children. If you provided him with the woman, then you may keep her. If your slave does not wish emancipation—some men are like that—you can take him to the front door of your house and pierce his ear, thus marking him as yours forever.

» Even if your servant woman is unfaithful, you may not sale her to strangers. If you no longer want her as a concubine, you'll treat her like a child. If you replace her with another concubine, you will not deny her nourishment and clothing or a place to sleep. If you don't make her comfortable and she wants to leave, she can do so without paying you ransom.

» If you kill your servant, you will be punished. However, if he survives the beating for a day or two, you will not be penalized. Furthermore, should you poke your servant's eye or knock out his teeth during a severe beating, you'll free him or her as compensation.

» Whoever kills with premeditation and stealth another Israelite will be sentenced to die. If someone kills by God's happenstance, he won't be at fault. If he wounds another, he'll be held harmless provided that his victim can stand and walk with a cane; nevertheless, the offended party will be compensated for all

the time that he or she is crippled or laid up and for whatever is spent curing his or her injuries.

» If you injure your father or mother, you will be punished by death. If you curse or backbite your parents you will also die.

» If you beat a pregnant woman, making her abort but causing her no other bodily harm, you will be fined as per what her husband and the judges decide. If you inflicted injury or death on the woman, you will repay a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot a burn for a burn, a gash for a gash and a slap for a slap.

» If an ox kills a man or a woman, it will be stoned and its flesh will not be eaten but its owner will be exonerated. Nonetheless, if the animal had behaved aggressively beforehand and, knowingly, its proprietor did not take precautions, both of them will be stoned to death. If the owner is fined, he'll pay to preserve his life whatever the judges decide. If the ox gores a child, the same provisos will apply. If the ox gores a slave, its owner will pay thirty silver coins (after the advent of money) to the slave's owner and the animal will be stoned.

» Should someone dig a pit and a draft animal fall in it, the pit's digger will pay compensation to the owner of the animal—when money becomes fashionable—and keep its remains. If someone's ox gores to death another man's animal, both will be sold and the two proprietors will share the proceeds equally. However, if it was known at the time that the goring ox was aggressive, its owner will exchange the live ox for the dead one.

» Theft is punishable by death. If anyone steals an ox or a goat, whether he kills the animal or sells it, he will make a restitution of five oxen per ox and four goats per goat.»

These laws could not be fully implemented for hundreds of years because money reparations weren't possible during Moses' time. Perhaps payments were made handing over servants, animals, grain, Syrian apples, quince or peaches.

## More Laws

Moses knew that laws alone do not rule men. Yet, he must've thought that having too many edicts was better than not having enough. Since he was dealing with simple-minded freed slaves, he gave them laws that could be implemented mindlessly. Conversely, the Levites—the conscience of the people—would be allowed to use common sense.

A period of confusion had followed the departure from Egypt. The *Apiru* were in no condition to think about phenomena, truth or reason. Terror worked best within the nation. Most Israelites wanted a god that'd treat them with benignity. Hints of an all-knowing and all-seeing god made many men and women behave like ladies and gentlemen.

The Israelites passed a great deal of their time discussing the properties of stones. They thought that some stones, when ground and taken by mouth, could cause women to abort or to conceive and people to be happy; stones could cure infertility, false pregnancies, lust or impotence; additionally, some stones were said to pull Hittite iron, to gather gold dust, to move when milk fell on them or to absorb blood from a wound; and still others, when pulverized and applied to diverse parts of the body, were supposed to be effective in curing sores, causing or preventing sleep and dreams and numbing pain. The stones believed to be bad for no reason were hurled at wild animals and potential enemies.

To rule effectively, Moses let the most common untruths pass as certainties. Often, the inconsequential became the people's wisdom. As the first among priests, Aaron's collaboration was

essential to good government. For fear of God, Aaron forbade the people to entertain embarrassing or complicated questions.

Moses prohibited the reawakening of the dead gods of Egypt—which were really potential principles. Under the guidance of Aaron and Mary, a class of learned professors of the Law surged from the Levite family.

Moses explained to the Israelites that, while all men are alike in origin, for some reason, not all of them behave well. This is what he said about certain civil disputes:

» When a thief is discovered and killed during the night, no crime is committed. After dawn, the thief's life will be spared but he'll have to return double the product of the theft; if he can't, he'll be sold as a slave.

» If your livestock damage the other man's garden—the Israelites were nomads at the time—you will pay restitution to him. If you start a fire that extends to the other man's property, you'll pay too. If a man entrusts his goods or money to another for safekeeping and they are stolen, the custodian of the deposit will swear before God that he has not taken his neighbor's property.

» In case of contested ownership, both parties will stand before I-Am. God will decide and both factions will accept His judgment.

» If a herd animal is torn apart by a wild one or dies of a poisonous sting, its carcass will be examined but not eaten.

» If a draft animal dies or is injured while on loan it will be repaid in full unless its owner is present at the time of the accident. If the animal had been rented out, then the rental amount will be paid.

» If a man seduces a young girl and copulates with her, he'll pay a dowry and take her as a wife. If the girl's father refuses to give her in marriage, the seducer will pay the dowry anyway.

» Witches, those who practice bestiality, and those who sacrifice to foreign gods will be killed.

» Do not abuse the widow or the orphan or God shall kill you by the sword and your wife will become a widow and your children will be orphans.

» If you loan money (after money is invented) to a poor neighbor, you will not charge him interest.

» Do not blaspheme against God or curse the leaders of your people. Do not delay sacrificing to God. Circumcise your male children on the eighth day after their birth. Offer to God all the firstborn of your cows and sheep. »

### **Moses' Recommendations**

At first, the Israelites did not have very many flocks to keep. When the men were idle, they discussed magic—something Moses feared could lead to speculation. Trying to prevent potential problems, Moses gave his people good advice based on Hammurabi's code.

*Moses spoke of integrity:*

» Do not spread false rumors. Do not support an unjust cause bearing false witness. Don't imitate those who ravage justice.

» Majorities can be inept and dangerous.

» In litigations, do not favor the powerful or deny the poor his rights. If you support fraud, God will not absolve you.

» Do not accept gifts because they corrupt uprightness.

*Moses addressed compassion.*

Up to then, the Israelites practiced the very reasonable, "Don't bless those who curse you."

» If you find an ox belonging to your archenemy, take it to him. If the ass of a man who loathes you has fallen, help him lift it up.»

*Moses spoke of land use.*

The Israelites were a nomadic people at the time.

» You will rest on the seventh day. On the seventh year, you will abandon your wheat fields, your grape and olive trees to the poor and to the creatures of the wild.»

*Loyalty to God was paramount in Moses' program:*

» You will not invoke the name of another god. If you swear by any god other than I-Am, you'll die—should others hear you. You will celebrate God on the anniversary of the exodus from Egypt and at the beginning and the end of the harvest so you can make contributions to Aaron's family.»

*Moses laid down rules for offerings:*

» When you sacrifice an animal, do not offer its blood with leavened bread; also, do not keep its lard overnight. Under no circumstances should you cook a kid in its mother's milk.»

*Moses spoke of God's promise of punishment:*

“I shall send an exterminator to you. If you obey Moses, My angel shall take you to the colonies of the Amorites, Jethians, Pherecites, Canaanites, Jevians, and Jebusites and help you cleanse the land of them.”

“Who are those people, Moses?” the Israelites asked in wonderment.

“Bad people,” Aaron jumped in. “Do not serve their gods. On the contrary, tear their temples down.”

“Amen!” returned the faithful.

“You will serve I-Am only. He will bless your bread and your water and keep sickness away. No woman of our tribe will

abort or be barren. You'll be taken to a land where apricot, plum, cherry, fig and golden lime trees blossom, where the fruit of the vine will redden your cheeks."

"God bless and save Aaron!"

"God's angel will be the enemy of your rivals and the tormentor of your oppressors. Even if they plead for their lives on their knees they'll be killed."

Moses raised his famous staff and conveyed to the people God's promises:

» I shall terrorize your enemies. Progressively, I'll push out of their land many nations so you can possess their territories. All the land from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines (Mediterranean) and from the desert to the Euphrates River will be yours. You will pass judgment on many nations and expel them from their homes. Make no alliance with them or serve their gods.»

### **God's Covenant with Moses**

I-Am ordered Moses to climb Mount Sinai once again. Moses took with him Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of the Israelites. I-Am extended his hand towards the chosen few. When the elders saw I-Am's fire, they did not die; on the contrary, they ate and drank.

I-Am called Moses, the only literate man among them, and told him to mark His words. Moses inscribed them on a papyrus scroll. That document became the Book of the Alliance.

Moses was ordered to build a sacrificial altar at the foot of the mountain; it was to be sustained by twelve pillars, one for

each tribe of Israel. Then, Moses would order the Israelites to sacrifice calves on the altar. One half of all the blood was to be poured on the altar. The rest was to be collected in vessels and sprinkled over the heads of the people as Moses read to them the Papyrus of the Alliance that he had just written.

Later, Moses took Joshua with him to see God again. Some foresighted elders worried:

“Who’s going to maintain order in the camp meanwhile?” one of them asked Moses.

“Aaron and Jur will be in charge,” their leader commanded.

I-Am’s cloud covered Mount Sinai for six days. On the seventh day, God called Moses from the middle of His cloud. Moses entered God’s misty abode and remained inside for forty days and forty nights.

During all the time that Moses was with God, a very pleasant odor of perfumed incense diffused from the burning cloud atop Mount Sinai.

### **The Golden Calf**

When I-Am had concluded His interlocution with Moses, He gave him the two stone tables with His commandments. The stones had been hewn and edged by the finger of God in the onomatopoeic and pictorial language of Paradise.

“Now descend, Moses, because your people no longer believe in you. They also doubt Me. The Israelites are casting other gods.”

“I can’t believe this!”

“I don’t lie. I’m going to smite all of you.”

“No, I-Am! Calm down. Remember Your promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

“Go down now.”

“When I’m not with them, any silly feeling can grow to be sacred in their eyes, Lord. My people are strange: they consider respect for the saintly a deficiency to reason well. Passion is all they know, God. I feel a great contempt for their passion.”

“Go fix the problem, Moses.”

During the forty days that Moses had been speaking to God, the impatient Israelites had asked Aaron to cast a new god for them in the form of a calf—they liked the tender flesh of this animal. Aaron must have thought unwise to be confrontational because he gave his permission to fashion a gold casting of the god. The people immediately offered holocausts to the golden calf, ate and drank. The women washed their bodies with lavender and myrtle water, sighed many times holding their bosom and joined in orgies before the new god. Everyone was hoping for a better life.

Moses descended from the mountain with two very thin stone tables written on both sides—had the tables been thick, he couldn’t have carried them. When he heard his people sing and saw them dance, he became agitated. He realized that, left alone, the Israelites had strayed from the faith.

In the darkness of the night, the chosen people lay immersed in a drunken sleep. Wrathfully, Moses threw down and broke God’s stone script at the foot of Mount Sinai.

“How did they convince you to cast the false god, Aaron?”

“You know the people’s lustful penchant, Moses!” Aaron said, tearing up his dress.

“I can see that.”

“When they asked me, they looked frighteningly dangerous too.”

“When they drink and think, they become unsympathetic to God, Aaron.”

“You’ve created God, but those incarnates of error and stupidity distort your teachings.”

“Those who are not with me are against God!” shouted Moses at the camp’s entrance, spitting once more in front of his right foot’s great toe.

The men of the house of Levy were called to arms. Joshua, their captain, said to Moses, “I hear and obey.”

“Grab your swords and go from one end of the camp to the other,” ordered Moses. “I want each one of you to kill his brother, his friend and his relative so they’ll laugh no more.”

“We hear and obey,” repeated the men.

Many men, women and children died that night. Moses promoted the Levites who smote and slew at his command: “Today you’ve been consecrated priests of God and grandees of Israel because you’ve attacked your children and your siblings. God blesses you.”

Moses directed Aaron’s artists to fracture, dismember, pulverize and melt the Golden Calf’s casting. After the metal was liquefied, he ordered it forced as drink down the throats of the revelers who had not been stabbed to death. Not one drunk was spared the final swig. They died rather slowly, with molten metal and blood dripping from inside their gut.

“What a horrible damnation it is to be a slave of I-Am!”  
the dying protested. “Is this freedom?”

“Fill their mouths with molten metal so they won’t talk,”  
Moses instructed the Levites.

“No one’s to be acquitted,” said Aaron.

“The spilling of blood teaches the love of God,” alleged  
Joshua.

“Hang some of them high from the cliffs so the others can  
see them well” directed Moses.

Next day, Moses returned to God and asked Him to spare  
the lives of the rest of the Israelites. “If You do not forgive them,  
they’ll disperse and I’ll have no one to follow me to the Promised  
Land. All these laws would’ve been written in vain.”

I-Am forgave the quasi-innocent folks who, in error, had  
not forcefully hindered the idolatrous sinners of their nation.  
Contritely, they confessed their fault and apologized to Aaron and  
Moses. In return, God promised to assign an angel to guide them  
through the desert.

“The Israelites don’t bear their burden very well,” said Moses.  
“Much too often, I see them reposing in the shade, dreaming of  
gushing beer springs. And they complain so much...”

“Joshua’s sword has great sway over their buzzing.”

“They don’t understand why I’ve freed them.”

“If they did, you’d have no following,” Aaron said to his  
thoughts.

## The New Stone Tablets

God had blessed the terrible vengeance taken against the two-timing infidels. With two blank stone tablets, similar to those he had broken in anger, Moses went up Mount Sinai once again to ask God to redraw the symbols of the Law. And once again, I-Am inscribed the ten principles of Moses' Law on stone tablets.

"You shall not adore the casting of another deity, for I'm a jealous god," God said to Moses.

"Never!"

"You shall begin the celebration of the Sabbath immediately."

"Yes."

"Once you dispossess other nations and acquire land, you'll collect the tithe and the harvest for My temple.

"Certainly."

"Three times a year, the Israelites will bring their firstborn males to God."

"Of course."

"On those occasions, they'll take to the temple the first and the best from their fields."

"No doubt about that."

Without food or drink, Moses remained near God for forty more days and nights—this became a must for future prophets. Since written Hebrew would not see the light for another millennium, I-Am inscribed on the tablets the ten signs of his covenant in hieroglyphics with his heavenly chisel (the finger of God). He also repeated some of His previous recommendations to Moses.

“Make sure that no leavened bread is offered with blood during your sacrifices to Me.”

“Only unleavened bread, Lord.”

“Do not leave the Passover Lamb exposed till the next morning because it can spoil.”

“That’s so true.”

“Do not cook the kid in its mother’s milk.”

“That’ll be forbidden again.”

“Destroy the temples and the statues of the Canaanites, Amorites, Jethians, Pherezeans, Joveans and Jebuseans.”

“They’ll be smashed,” Moses replied, devotedly. “We’ll raid their land, destroy their parapets, cut down their fig trees and grapevines, burn down their homes, kill their men and make their widows and children work for us.”

“Don’t let your people take wives among them.”

“I’ll proscribe it.”

“Eradicate the men from those nations. Dead enemies won’t covet your possessions. That way, you can come up to Mount Sinai to visit with Me three times a year without worries.”

“Thank you, oh benevolent God!”

“With these tablets, I ratify the covenant made with you, Moses.”

“We’re your people and You’re our God.”

After forty days, Moses descended draped in God’s mist, carrying the Tablets of the Law close to his heart. The face of the Prince of the Faith was glowing with grandeur. The Israelites trembled at the god-like sighting of their leader. Moses ordered that every command of I-Am be followed. Then, he covered his face with a veil.

Mary was skilled in the art of pictorial writing (*Medu-Netru*). She could conceive expressions that made the people bend their heads and take off their shoes.

Moses trusted his sister because she had seen the veil of shadows separating life from the afterworld—once, she was thought to have died. From her well of wisdom, Moses had gathered that God has many faces in the eyes of man. Among all the Israelites, only Mary knew that Moses had changed Atum-Ra's name to I-Am.

"Mary, compose a song for me," Moses said to his sister in the language of Egypt, which both of them always preferred to use.

"What kind?"

"Write a poem or a rhyme that can be sung."

"What should it say?"

"Moses climbed the mountain, hoping to be above the stars, but every heavenly light kept rising ever higher."

Immediately, Mary began to scribe eyes, scepters, serpents, falcons, jackals and the sort on a papyrus sheet. Moses remained pensive for a while and appended:

"Write that Moses couldn't pet God."

"Can I write that my brother is browbeaten because he can't grasp the uncreated or define the unknowable?"

"Yes. How did you know that?"

"We learned in Egypt that we're travelers in Eternity."

"I've not forgotten, Mary."

"You're not the man who broke his own egg but you're a diamond in the mud."

"Do you believe that my authority has a divine origin?"

"Yes, I do."

“You’re a priestess of the arts, Mary.”

“Art is higher than the cult, Moses.”

“Aaron’s children will be the priestly aristocracy of Israel because they’re rationally sterile and cackle like hens.”

“They’re the perfect choice for high office, Moses. They won’t conceive new laws or let others write new tablets.”

“For now, a great many of the rabble, those who would do wrong with my words, have perished.”

“Still, without a god, no great man can lead a mob.”

“Oh, yes, Mary. Deep inside, they want to adore the ass.”

“But they shall call the ass I-Am, not Atum-Ra.”

“That’s the plan.”

“I’ll compose psalms of anxiety and awe to help the people heed your commands.”

“Yes, don’t let them listen to their own thoughts.”

“My poems will be their own opinions and a torment too. No one will dare to forswear your concoctions.”

“Do it before someone breaks the new tablets, Mary.”

“We’ll leave a legacy behind us, brother. Your mouth will remain open after you’re dead. I’ll write the laws that must be followed.”

“At the entrance of an Egyptian temple, I saw this inscription: *Oh you, both great and small, who will be on earth, read this. Can you do that for me?*”

“Yes, we’ll fashion something similar.”

“If I could build temples with sculptured pillars, like Ramses II, I’d have my story inscribed on stone for all to see.”

“You won’t be forgotten, Moses.”

“I want to resurrect like Osiris, the king of the afterlife.”

“Realistically speaking, no god will do that for you.”

“Men must not live just once to vanish forever.”

“But they do, brother.”

### Departure from Sinai

Again, God promised to help the *Apiru* dispossess and ethnically cleanse the other peoples of Palestine. A vast territory was to yield much milk and honey once the shepherds and the farmers of the other nations were ejected. The Canaanites, Amorites, Jethians, Pherezeans, Joveans and Jebuseans were to be killed, enslaved or evicted by the will of God—for they had not been chosen. Some of them may have been used as human blood offerings to I-Am.

In no uncertain terms, Aaron had told everyone that God’s punishments would be passed on to a thousand generations. Since then, all the Jewish sects have believed that there’s no escape from God’s wrath. When committing atrocities, the most civilized nations of the world have invoked *Der Zorn Gottes*.

A man called Alfred de Vigny, who had also advanced the formula, « *Si j’écris leur histoire, ils descendront de moi* » wrote about Moses’ departure:

*Le soleil prolongeait sur la cime des tentes  
Ces obliques rayons, ces flammes éclatantes,  
Ces larges traces d’or qu’il laisse dans les airs,  
Lorsqu’en un lit de sable il se couche aux déserts.  
La pourpre et l’or semblaient revêtir la campagne.  
Du stérile Nébo gravissant la montagne,  
Moïse, homme de Dieu, s’arrête, et, sans orgueil,  
Sur le vaste horizon promène un long coup d’œil.*

God finally ordered the nation of Israel to depart. The people followed behind Moses and the angel of God, marching over deserts that had been glaciers long before. Often, they rested and complained about the miseries of nomadic life on the rocky terraces dotted with the iron scrap that the Hittites mined.

I-Am spoke often to Moses inside the Tent of the Reunion—the Tabernacle had not been inaugurated yet. Joshua, the son of Nun, always remained in the tent, guarding Moses' life. During their interviews with God, clouds descended from the sky and covered the Tent of the Reunion. But neither Joshua nor Moses ever saw the face of God—or they would've died.

“We must quickly procure victories over innocuous neighbors so the people will feel favored by God,” said Moses to Joshua. “The annihilation of some small nation is a must now.”

“We shall chase the ghosts from the bodies of those who have not been chosen by I-Am,” replied the faithful Joshua.

### **The Sanctuary**

Moses publicized that he'd put to death anybody who adored a god other than I-Am or who failed to observe the Sabbath. “The self-created with two eyes, the sun and the moon, is a false god and Meau, the cat, does not bear the light of Atum-Ra,” he established. Even the doubters accepted to have their conscience violated rather than to go before their time with a mouthful of gold to a very obscure end.

In Egypt, the Israelites had heard of the netherworld, the place where their leader would send them for disobedience. In the netherworld, they'd be judged by the forty-two principles and, most likely, be returned to an even more horrible existence. Aaron, the Educator of Humankind, had told them that, on judgment day, the scales of justice would find much evil in their hearts and brand them as lost souls. Very few of them expected to advance after death to the place where peace envelops the soul.

Most Israelites obeyed Moses in order to live right.

Moses asked, again, for the necessary offerings to build the Sanctuary. All the gold that had not been ingested during the episode of the Golden Calf was collected by armed Levites. Opportunely, when the goldsmiths needed material, they recovered much of it from the stomachs and the esophagi of corpses. For a while, gullet and abdomen burning became the norm for gold acquisition.

The Sanctuary was built according to God's specifications. For its construction, several artists and skilled workers trained in Egypt were employed from the people at hand. The full weight of an ox in gold, two in silver and two more in bronze were used for the erection of the Tabernacle.

Carrying the Tabernacle's parts over the soft desert sand must've been challenging.

"Oh, Mary, our trip is sluggish," Moses mentioned to his sister.

"Our lives are languid now, Moses."

"I see no path left behind."

"There is none."

"I also fear a Great Nothing ahead."

"That may very well be true."

“When I was young, venery had me fooled and I had a good opinion of life.”

“My love for poetry fooled me too, Moses.”

“My desires have waned into serenity.”

“Long ago, when I reveled in burning fornication in the taverns of Egypt, I was happy too. Sweet winds came to my nostrils and beautiful winds to my face. My poems were in great demand and my delight wanted eternity. Now, life is waning. I, too, would like a drink from the spring of life.”

“After all this time, I still wonder how heaven swallows the sun every night and delivers it at dawn.”

“That’s a dusky principle, Moses.”

“Last night, I saw the nine-point star within a circle in the sky. The four natural laws, Water, Air, Earth and Heaven shimmered in various colors and the other five great principles, Osiris, Horus, Set, Isis and Nephthys twinkled like diamonds.”

“You only hold the crook of authority over the Israelites. The circle with no beginning, no middle and no end is unknowable to you.”

“The Egyptian priests claimed to understand the circle.”

“They were great pretenders too. I saw their naked flaccid bodies and I listened to their drunken nonsense. When the priests said, ‘May the sun always encircle your soul,’ they were just babbling words.”

## Consecration of the Sanctuary

On the first day of the first month of the second year after the departure from Egypt, the Tabernacle or Tent of the Reunion was dedicated. The Arc of the Covenant, enclosing the second set of Tablets of the Law, was placed inside the Tent and covered with a veil.

By then, the Arc had been equipped with carrying rings and bars and a propitiatory for the rite had been placed on it. The table and the chandelier with its lamps were also kept inside the Tent. Incense was usually burning on the altar. Curtains were hung at the entrance of the Tabernacle, behind the altar of the holocausts and the lavatory.

After Aaron and his sons had taken a bath in the bronze lavatory requested by God, Moses invested them with the priestly garb. Not to die, the family would always wash their hands and feet and make ablutions before entering the Tent of the Reunion. Everyone in Aaron's family vowed to use underwear and to adhere to sanitary practices.

The Books of Moses do not indicate if the bronze lavatory was also used as a portable water reservoir during the long journeys. It could've doubled nicely as a transportable watering urn for animals at risk.

Moses, the prophet of the principle that had created itself, anointed with oil Aaron and his sons for the priesthood. Once the Levites were consecrated, the Israelites assumed the obligation to supply Aaron's family with two sheep, a bag of dough, two cups of olive oil and two wine sheepskins per day—including Saturdays. Every Israelite already had to pay an annual release fee of half a gold coin—from future mints—to the canony so

God would keep plagues away. As soon as they confiscated land in Canaan, the Tabernacle would receive wine from vineyards that required no pruning by priests and meat from herds that did not need tending.

The clothes for Aaron and his children were made of fine linen. They continued to use the Egyptian jeweled pectoral but removed the scarab at the center. Every priest wore a headband with a golden plate fastened by a purple string that read in Egyptian, “Consecrated to I-Am.” No Israelite, except Moses and Mary, could read the inscription but they believed what they had been told that it said.

Immediately after the consecration of the Sanctuary, the first hecatomb took place. It was a splendid feast of blood. The newly consecrated priests slit the throats of calves, sheep and goats reluctant to participate in the blood sacrifice. In the hullabaloo of light and sound, everyone savored the meat that wasn’t charred by the fire and ate unleavened bread.

“I’ve seen God, the light that creates its own authority,” declared Moses, the master of justice and truth. And every Israelite responded, “I believe.”

A white puff, referred to as *the cloud* by later Jewish storytellers, covered the Tabernacle. From that moment on, whenever the cloud rose, the Israelites disassembled the complicated Tent and, heavily laden, began one of many short journeys to the Promised Land. The chosen people spent several years crossing the desert on account of the cumbersome load. They had to carry all the contents of the Tabernacle, including the uncut stones of the altar and both cherubs.

Whenever the cloud covered the Tent of the Reunion, the Israelites remained wherever they were. Most often, God's cloud lingered over the Tent. During the night, the cloud blazed like fire for all Israel to see.

### **Moses' Nightmare**

One day at noontide, Moses decided to take a nap in the Tabernacle, at the foot of the Arc of the Covenant. Often, he breathed the incense mixed with aromatic herbs that Aaron's sons left burning near the altar. He had forbidden Aaron's children to drink wine before entering the Tabernacle lest they should die.

During those days, Moses had been thinking hard about the future of the soul. He had been considering notions offered by the people of the two lands of Egypt such as a life-giving soul that resides in the marrow of the bones.

Moses stripped and took a long pleasure bath in the lavatory before entering the Tent of the Reunion. Having made the prescribed ablutions, he put over his wet body an Egyptian see-through linen garment and went behind the curtains. He lay by the Arc of the Covenant, musing. Soon, he fell into an uneasy sleep. And his head began to swoon in a haze of piety that disembogued in a horrendous dream. That day, he did not feel the presence and the lull of God's angels. Instead, he foresaw his own death. Furthermore, the wind blowing on the Tent mumbled to his ear that no god could give him eternal life.

Moses, the uncircumcised leader of the Israelites, transcended consciousness on his descent to the netherworld. The

entrance doors had been flung open. Sipporah, his wife, was walking quietly behind him. Both of them were wearing white garments, like the dead.

“The summons of death has come to us,” Sipporah said, coldly.

“I’m very unprepared,” pleaded Moses in the gloom.

“The future arrives whether you’re prepared or not,” clarified his wife from the shadows.

The Prince of the Faith thought that a long time had passed since he considered that Sipporah’s robe concealed great beauty. “Perhaps I’ve wasted my life looking for souls carved on stone while her love was still good to me,” he confessed to his heart.

Moses began to see the things that had been hidden in the spiritual realm. From the unguarded doors leading to the netherworld, he entered a great hall of heavy walls inscribed with writings. Among the hieroglyphic messages were two large paintings: the right eye of Atum-Ra and a scarab. In many Egyptian temples, Moses had seen the eye representing Hathor, the goddess of joy and beauty; also, the head-shaven priests had explained to him the significance of the beetle that rolls dung balls much like Atum-Ra moves the sun across the sky.

When Moses saw Nephthys, the goddess of funerals, waiting to welcome him, he knew that he was dead. Next to Nephthys stood her sister, Isis, the goddess of fertility, and also her husband, Osiris, the principle of resurrection and the head of the tribunal. “Oh blessed Atum-Ra, the principles of Egypt were the real truth!” Moses cried out in his mind. Then he read a message incised on the stone: “The wickedness of the soul is ignorance, oh you renegade!”

“The destroyer of the great and the small has slain me with a flash of blinding lightning,” Moses said to Nephthys. “I’m here to take the path of Sokar, the sacred crocodile, to immortality.”

“May Moses not be turned back,” Nephthys replied. “May the scale grant him justice on this day of his trial.”

“I’m here to be united with Osiris,” Moses said, turning to his judge.

“If your knowledge comes from adherence to the truth, you shall never reincarnate,” replied Osiris.

“Osiris, you wore once the red and white crown of Egypt: you can understand me,” said Moses.

“Grant Moses the power of reason,” Isis asked her husband, but Osiris was silent.

Moses moved towards the large open chamber of the tribunal, where the jury had assembled and sat waiting. Along the way, he passed several paintings refulgent as jewels: the sun’s disk over the head of a falcon; a baboon; an ibis representing Thoth, the inventor of speech; the mummy representing Ptah, the principle of arts and crafts; and even Seth, the red-headed principle of sterility and evil. Then he stood in front of the four judges representing the four natural laws: Earth, Wind, Water and Sky. All forty-two natural laws and principles composing Osiris’ tribunal were quietly looking at him.

Each one of the forty-two principles seating in judgment asked Moses a question. Moses’ answers were short, swift and to the point. “Perhaps they are even correct,” his pride articulated.

1. Have you sinned?  
 No. I'm an organizer, not a tyrant bursting with misguided justice.

2. Have you robbed?  
 I procured what my peopled needed.

3. Have you stolen?  
 Only in the name of Atum-Ra, I've taken what once belonged to  
 others.

4. Have you acted with violence?  
 Atum-Ra decreed that my soldiers and police should punish the  
 wayward.

5. Have you killed humans?  
 Once I killed a man for a good reason.

6. Have you taken offerings?  
 I never bothered directly with sacrifices and the sort.

7. Have you caused destruction?  
 I have smashed the ungodly for the betterment of mankind.

8. Have you plundered temples?  
 As a soldier of mankind, I've looted the abodes of false gods.

9. Have you committed falsehood?  
 I've followed the ways of the truth.

10. Have you plundered grain?  
 Only from those marked by Atum-Ra to disappear.

11. Have you ever cursed?  
 I've cursed solely in the name of Atum-Ra.

12. Have you transgressed?  
 A prophet does not do that.

13. Have you slaughtered the divine cattle of the temple?  
 I've only slaughtered goats to eat.

14. Have you done evil?  
*I've never caused awe among the natural laws.*

15. Have you plundered cultivated land?  
 Only to nourish Atum-Ra's chosen people.

16. Have you acted in lust?  
 Not knowingly...

17. Have you cursed anyone?  
 Cursing in the name of Atum-Ra is no sin.

18. Have you been angry without just cause?  
Only fools become angry for no reason.

19. Have you ever slept with the wife of any man?  
That's hard to say because any whore can claim to be honorable  
and unattached.

20. Have you polluted yourself?  
Never did I overeat or become intoxicated.

21. Have you acted with terror towards another?  
Terrorizing others in the name of Atum-Ra was my duty.

22. Have you plundered?  
Others do that for me in the name of Atum-Ra.

23. Have you acted with anger?  
When Atum-Ra's honor is soiled, I react angrily.

24. Have you turned a deaf ear to words of righteousness and  
truth?  
*By the womb of my mother, my chamber of growth, I swear that I  
did not.*

25. Have you stirred up strife?  
On the contrary, I've always tried to calm dissension.

26. Have you caused anyone to weep?  
For Atum-Ra's honor, I've made women wail their husband's  
deaths.

27. Have you fornicated?  
Whenever a woman lay bare in the wind, praying for a child, I  
mounted her.

28. Have you eaten your heart?  
I've never acted against my feelings.

29. Have you cursed anyone?  
When Atum-Ra curses, I echo his words.

30. Have you exaggerated?  
Not me.

31. Have you judged anyone hastily?  
No. I've considered the evidence presented to me very carefully.

32. Have you cut the hair and the skin of divine animals?  
I have never eaten a sacred cat or crocodile.

33. Have you raised your voice in speech?  
Atum-Ra has done that through me.
34. Have you committed the sin of wrongdoing?  
*Bast, the cat-headed goddess of pleasure, was never affronted by my lifestyle.*
35. Have you cursed royalty?  
In the service of Atum-Ra, I've put ugly curses on royalty.
36. Have you spoiled running water?  
I always excrete urine, sputter and empty my bowels on dry ground.
37. Have you acted with arrogance?  
Not once in my life.
38. Have you cursed divinity?  
No, for I've lived a long life.
39. Have you acted with false pride?  
My pride is Atum-Ra's, which is very real.
40. Have you acted scornfully?  
Only fools do that.
41. Have you increased your wealth with the means of others?  
My wealth came from the rays of prosperity emanating from Atum-Ra. I never repaid labor with words.
42. Have you scorned the principle of your city?  
I left Thebes during a time of discord but its principle remained in my heart.

Anubis, the jackal-headed god of embalming weighed Moses' conscience, represented by his heart, against the feather symbolizing the sword of truth. Moses' heart was put on one side of the scale and the feather on the other. Thoth, the scribe of the principles and the inventor of hieroglyphics, was poised to record the result of the weighing.

"Moses' heart is lighter than the feather of truth," revealed Anubis.

“He’s damnable and so it has been written,” announced Thoth, the chief aide to Osiris.

“May my soul be free,” pleaded Moses.

“No other can redeem your sins,” declared Osiris.

“The phoenix of reincarnation will return you through the horizon to a lesser form of existence,” affirmed Horus, the falcon-headed god of the sky

“This time, intercede for Moses before Atum-Ra,” Isis said to her husband once again.

“What should we request on his behalf?” asked Osiris.

“That Moses be granted the power to reason, which Seth (Satan) stole from him when his basket was adrift among the reeds of the Nile.”

“Yes,” added Thoth. “He was blind and deaf. This is going to be his fifth existence. Should Moses not amend his state of mind this time, he’ll be a lost soul.”

“We’ll ask in the hope that Atum-Ra, who Moses has been blaming as the will of his will, returns to him what Seth took.”

“May you be led aright during this life,” said Anubis, throwing Moses’ heart to Amemit the very image of fear. The hippopotamus hind-legged, leopard fore-legged, crocodile-headed, tailless ogre devoured Moses’ heart. When Amemit was eating his heart, Moses felt a sharp pain in the chest. The last thing he heard in the netherworld was a growl of satisfaction uttered by the monster.

But Moses awoke in the Tent of the Reunion. For a while, he lay on his back staring blindly, unaware of his life as a warrior for the defense of the faith. In the twilight of his nightmare, he thought of

God as a mirage in the desert—something that thirsting men imagine to be water.

### **The Cult**

Although He had the whole universe—and perhaps more—to inhabit, I-Am wanted a portable sanctuary to ride on the back of the Israelites. On Mount Sinai, He had given Moses instructions to build the Tabernacle with the hellhole.

To undertake the construction of the Tabernacle, the Israelites provided Aaron with the wealth taken from the Egyptians. At first, the Levites confiscated gold, silver and bronze; the second collection impounded precious stones, purple and red dyes as well as fine linen; the third time, they seized and stockpiled candles, scented oils and incense. Finally, Israelite men were sent to collect acacia timbers in wooded areas and goats' pelts from the flocks of neighboring nations. According to Moses that was the way of the Providence.

Moses had ordered the construction of an acacia arc inlaid and outlaid with gold and also provided with golden rings to facilitate its transport. God's testimony to Moses would be kept inside the arc. Concurrently, Moses had called for the making of several ancillary cult devices and ornaments, such as two gold cherubs.

In boring detail, the authors of the Books of Moses have described God's design for a seven-arm golden candlestick holder, a table, etc. Although money would not be discovered for a long

time to come, the cost of the accessories was said to be a gold talent.

Pharaoh had no friends or loyal subjects left when his kingdom was been swept by anarchy. Even his gods seemed to have turned against him. The bones of the Earth god were trembling underground and cataclysms were being felt everywhere. Concomitantly, new immigrants with strange-sounding names such as Philistines, Chacalaches, Danaens and Ouachaches were reaching the Nile's Delta through Palestine.

This was the time when, on the barren lands of the Sinai, the *Apiru* were given precise instructions for the construction of God's tent. God favored acacia columns covered with gold and resting on bases of bronze, flax curtains and goat-hair tapestries.

"You represent the true God, Moses," Aaron had cried out when he learned about the cult. "It's time to give meaning to our lives through a great creation."

"Our people still think of God when asses bray, brother."

"No more yah-yoo, yah-yoo!" ejaculated Aaron, praising I-Am on his knees.

"They crave for idols."

"But God has given you visions and ideas."

"You begin to have faith, Aaron."

"The rest of the gods are chaos, a great emptiness and an unfaith."

"When I climbed Mount Sinai, as a young man, I wasn't looking for God. I just wanted to be away from gadflies and mosquitoes."

"On the valley of the Nile, you found those who'll kneel before your conception, Moses. Now, like a goatherd, the people

come to your altar. They will take your creation across the desert, into Canaan.”

The design of the altar for the holocausts, as explained by later Jewish masters, is overbearing. It’s best to abbreviate their tedious explanations.

The altar was to match the length, width and height of a cow and its materials, other than the uncut stones for the grill, were to be acacia timber and bronze. The atrium would be surrounded with columns and flax curtains. Aaron’s children would light up the chandelier in the evenings.

To complete the cult, Moses had also ordered the erection of an incense-burning stall. Together with the incense, resins and several types of aromatic shrubs and herbs would burn in the stall constantly—much like in the Zoroastrian temples. Some times, the priests hallucinated when they inhaled the smoke of certain herbs.

Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron’s sons, took their censers and offered a profane fire to the Lord. Since God had not commanded them to do so, they died devoured by the Lord’s fire.

For Aaron and his children, I-Am designed a short sleeveless dress called an *ephod* as well as a chest covering, a mantle and a tunic decorated with squares. A belt would secure the atypical ephod. The chest piece would have twelve precious stones named after the tribes of Israel. God also ordered the priests to wear linen underpants so they wouldn’t die in His presence. Dressed in their ephod, they were to dream up rituals and sacrifices.

For good governance, the Israelites were to speak through their priests. The clerics were men of good reputation, able to carry on the priestly functions. The careful control of the people’s

information and diversion would be their main mission. They also had to remind the Israelites at all times to love their coreligionists and to hate their neighbors. Lastly, they were to preach commonsensical views such as the respect for one's parents.

At the beginning, whenever the Levites had to render a decision between two opposing parties, they tried to satisfy both. However, with time, it became impossible to save the weak from the strong or the poor from the rich because the powerful could cause trouble for the religious institution and the wealthy could retain or even withdraw their economic support.

It did not take long for the Levites to take control of the minds of the Israelites. In a few months, they renamed their god Yahweh and adopted some of the Midianites' worshipping practices. By then, Moses had withdrawn from the cult and enjoyed a secular existence. The Prince of the Faithful had opted for a life of seclusion and meditation. After retirement, he told Mary that the distasteful and stupid preachments of Aaron's sons were necessary to bring cohesion to the tribes.

Joshua had organized the men to plunder the property of the weaker tribes that they encountered. As God's Messenger, Moses gave Joshua full control of the army of the faithful. The priests proclaimed that Yahweh supported the raids made by the Israelites.

By law, pillaging was the only activity allowed on Saturdays.

## Death of Mary

Overwhelmed by doubts, Moses had grown old. When grizzly-haired, he avoided people's discords, ignored priestly lectures and totally disregarded his family. Although blood is fond of its like, Moses found most relatives overbearing and refused to talk to them. He only spent time with his sister, who was extremely old.

The mere sight of his people exasperated Moses. With the help of his celebrated staff, he climbed mountains to be alone with his own reflections. Thirsting for power, Aaron's sons rumored that he had gone mad.

Moses overcame his dreams. Resolutely, he progressed beyond his heyday. The description of a man called Kahlil Gibran, *A prophet is the dawn of his own day*, would have fitted Moses well until that time. Never again did Moses descend the mountain wrapped in the mist of God. He must've felt invited to live in the silence of his souls.

Gibran explains Moses' feelings when, minded to confess, he visited Mary just before her passing: *Let the voice within your voice speak to the ear of her ear.*

"When I was young, I went to Gizeh," Moses said to his sister. "Once I saw the sphinx, I laughed: it isn't a god but a piece of stone sitting in the middle of a pond to frighten the Nubians."

"I figured that some deception was needed to stop the Nubians from eating Egypt's grain," returned Mary.

"When Joshua made fair spoil of Jethro's nation, we appropriated the name of the Midianite god because Yahweh

already had a fine tradition and many followers. Now, others begin to fear the so-called god of Israel.”

“But had you not found God, Moses?”

“I only thought so, Mary. I’m bound to doubts.”

“What about God’s apparitions to you?”

“You’re clear headed, Mary. Don’t die with a beclouded understanding on my account. I-Am was born to my blind passion in the sparse air of the mountain and Yahweh is another false god.”

“But what about that burning cloud atop Mount Sinai, and the deep voice that I heard, and those stone tables that you have placed inside the Arc?”

“Aaron brought various fumes, noisemakers and chisels from Egypt: he’s the material god of Israel.”

An accepting smile came to Mary’s lips. Moses thought that she was satisfied. Then she looked at her brother for the very last time.

“I’m glad you’ve told me, Moses.”

“I thought so.”

“I tried so hard to believe your nonsense...”

“I know, sister.”

“The time for my descent to the netherworld is here, Moses. Let the forty-two principles judge me as a sane person, not as a fool.”

“Amen.”

Mary died at eventide—which fit well her personality. Her corpse was placed in a mountain crevice and barricaded with rocks. Moses wished that flowers would blossom near her grave and that the voice of the wind would sing to her memory.

After the obsequies, Moses climbed to the top of the mountain, feeling deprived of the one person who had believed in

him—not in his whims. Those who sought to speak to him found the tongue of the Lord of the Mountain tied with the grief of a great loss.

### **Death of Moses**

The Prince of the Faith never returned from the mountain. He lived his last hours in deep silence and solitude, still ignoring what no other knew.

Even Pharaoh, the builder of great pyramids, had no certainties about an afterworld—should there be any. Moses had noted that, at the end of her life, Mary had hoped to be taken to the Mansion of Eternity in the upper world of Atum-Ra because such had been her upbringing.

Down below, fire spouted from cooking pits as men and women went about their daily lives. Donkeys went about the camp and birds flew over them. Some Israelites thought that Moses had climbed the mountain to talk to God.

With an empty smile, Moses watched the warders around the Tabernacle. “Their lives are their true religion,” he said to his thoughts. “Now, even Aaron will not entertain the thought that God has no partner, prophet or chosen people. Aaron wants his fabrication to turn into truth.”

Moses remembered Anax, his orphan comrade in Pharaoh’s palace. As children, they had never talked about God. Even later, the young man who wanted to be a seafarer wasn’t interested in gods, principles or unproductive knowledge. When Anax had asked the wise men of Egypt why the night sky is dotted with stars and how the heavens let loose lightning and roar thunder,

the priests lectured him about the essence of Atum-Ra. The boy wasn't interested.

Moses wondered if Anax had ever given birth to some dream or if his body had already fed entangled tree roots or swift sea creatures.

From his mountaintop, Moses looked at the surrounding badlands. He was too old to move the troupe ahead to the greener pastures of Canaan. Yet, his voice had taken wing in the minds of others, leaving a constantly mutating memory behind.

“What have I done in my born days?” Moses asked.

“You've created a new man, capable of sustaining your own legend,” an unfamiliar inner voice replied.

“Was it worth it?”

“No,” breathed out coldly the voice within... and laughed.

So, Moses felt silly and wanted to die.

Much later, a man called Shakespeare put words to Moses' thoughts:

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor actor  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

The heavens were reasonably serene when the wings of death scattered Moses' days.

No one attempted to find Moses because it was reported that only God could find His prophet. Most Israelites believed that,

when Moses talked to the flaming brambles, his thoughts soared to God's cloud and the wind whispered sacred words to his ear.

The priests proclaimed that God had taken Moses' shadow to His house. The nation was beleaguered by doubts and tribulation. Aaron's dumbfounding preachments could not truly beat brainless the Israelites.

Some heretics proposed that Moses had melted in the sun, that the wind had blown away the dust of his bones. Most of the others simply said, "A great silence enfolds him and his breath rides with the wind." Joshua and his men became very active. "Why grant them an understanding that causes so much pain and confusion?" asked very rhetorically their new leader, Aaron.

After a few months of waiting, everyone was convinced that Moses would not come down from the mountain. So, the Israelites followed Aaron and Joshua into the land of Canaan.