

THE BIRTH OF MOSES

When Amram separated from his wife on account of the edict published against the male children of the Hebrews, and his example was followed by all the Israelites, his daughter Miriam said to him: "Father, thy decree is worse than Pharaoh's decree. The Egyptians aim to destroy only the male children, but thou includest the girls as well. Pharaoh deprives his victims of life in this world, but thou preventest children from being born, and thus thou deprivest them of the future life, too. He resolves destruction, but who knows whether the intention of the wicked can persist? Thou art a righteous man, and the enactments of the righteous are executed by God, hence thy decree will be upheld."

Amram recognized the justice of her plea, and he repaired to the Sanhedrin, and put the matter before this body. The members of the court spoke, and said: "It was thou that didst separate husbands and wives, and from thee should go forth the permission for re-marriage." Amram then made the proposition that each of the members of the Sanhedrin return to his wife, and wed her clandestinely, but his colleagues repudiated the plan, saying, "And who will make it known unto the whole of Israel?"

Accordingly, Amram stood publicly under the wedding canopy with his divorced wife Jochebed, while Aaron and Miriam danced about it, and the angels proclaimed, "Let the mother of children be joyfull!" His re-marriage was solemnized with great ceremony, to the end that the men that had followed his example in divorcing their wives might irritate him now in taking them again unto themselves. And so it happened.⁸⁷

Old as Jochebed was, she regained her youth. Her skin became soft, the wrinkles in her face disappeared, the warm tints of maiden beauty returned, and in a short time she became pregnant.⁸⁸

Amram was very uneasy about his wife's being with child; he knew not what to do. He turned to God in prayer, and entreated Him to have compassion upon those who had in no wise transgressed the laws of His worship, and afford them deliverance from the misery they endured, while He rendered abortive the hope of their enemies, who yearned for the destruction of their nation. God had mercy on him, and He stood by him in his sleep, and exhorted him not to despair of His future favors. He said further, that He did not forget their piety, and He would always reward them for it, as He had granted His favor in other days unto their forefathers. "Know, therefore," the Lord continued to speak, "that I shall provide for you all together what is for your good, and for thee in particular that which shall make thee celebrated; for the child out of dread of whose nativity the Egyptians have doomed the Israelite children to destruction, shall be this child of thine, and he shall remain concealed from those who watch to destroy him, and when he has been bred up, in a miraculous way, he shall deliver the Hebrew nation from the distress they are under by reason of the Egyptians. His memory shall be celebrated while the world lasts, and not only among the Hebrews, but among strangers also. And all this shall be the effect of My favor toward thee and thy posterity. Also his brother shall be such that he shall obtain My priesthood for himself, and for his posterity after him, unto the end of the world."

After he had been informed of these things by the vision, Amram awoke, and told all unto his wife Jochebed."

His daughter Miriam likewise had a prophetic dream, and she related it unto her parents, saying: "In this night I saw a man clothed in fine linen. 'Tell thy father and thy mother,' he said, 'that he who shall be born unto them, shall be cast into the waters, and through him the waters shall become dry, and wonders and miracles shall be performed through him, and he shall save My people Israel, and be their leader forever.'"⁴⁰

During her pregnancy, Jochebed observed that the child in her womb was destined for great things. All the time she suffered no pain, and also she suffered none in giving birth to her son, for pious women are not included in the curse pronounced upon Eve, decreeing sorrow in conception and in childbearing.⁴¹

At the moment of the child's appearance, the whole house was filled with radiance equal to the splendor of the sun and the moon.⁴² A still greater miracle followed. The infant was not yet a day old when he began to walk and speak with his parents, and as though he were an adult, he refused to drink milk from his mother's breast.⁴³

Jochebed gave birth to the child six months after conception. The Egyptian bailiffs, who kept strict watch over all pregnant women in order to be on the spot in time to carry off their new-born boys, had not expected her delivery for three months more. These three months the parents succeeded in keeping the babe concealed, though every Israelitish house was guarded by two Egyptian women, one stationed within and one without.⁴⁴ At the end of this time

they determined to expose the child, for Amram was afraid that both he and his son would be devoted to death if the secret leaked out, and he thought it better to entrust the child's fate to Divine Providence. He was convinced that God would protect the boy, and fulfil His word in truth.⁴⁵

MOSES RESCUED FROM THE WATER

Jochebed accordingly took an ark fashioned of bulrushes, daubed it with pitch on the outside, and lined it with clay within. The reason she used bulrushes was because they float on the surface of the water, and she put pitch only on the outside, to protect the child as much as possible against the annoyance of a disagreeable odor. Over the child as it lay in the ark she spread a tiny canopy, to shade the babe, with the words, "Perhaps I shall not live to see him under the marriage canopy." And then she abandoned the ark on the shores of the Red Sea. Yet it was not left ungarded. Her daughter Miriam stayed near by, to discover whether a prophecy she had uttered would be fulfilled. Before the child's birth, his sister had foretold that her mother would bring forth a son that should redeem Israel. When he was born, and the house was filled with brilliant light, Amram kissed her on her head, but when he was forced into the expedient of exposing the child, he beat her on her head, saying, "My daughter, what hath become of thy prophecy?" Therefore Miriam stayed, and strolled along the shore, to observe what would be the fate of the babe, and what would come of her prophecy concerning him.⁴⁶

The day the child was exposed was the twenty-first of the month of Nisan, the same on which the children of Israel

later, under the leadership of Moses, sang the song of praise and gratitude to God for the redemption from the waters of the sea. The angels appeared before God, and spoke: "O Lord of the world, shall he that is appointed to sing a song of praise unto Thee on this day of Nisan, to thank Thee for rescuing him and his people from the sea, shall he find his death in the sea to-day?" The Lord replied: "Ye know well that I see all things. The contriving of man can do naught to change what hath been resolved in My counsel. Those do not attain their end who use cunning and malice to secure their own safety, and endeavor to bring ruin upon their fellow-men. But he who trusts Me in his peril will be conveyed from profoundest distress to unlooked-for happiness. Thus My omnipotence will reveal itself in the fortunes of this babe."⁴⁷

At the time of the child's abandonment, God sent scorching heat to plague the Egyptians, and they all suffered with leprosy and smarting boils. Thermutis, the daughter of Pharaoh, sought relief from the burning pain in a bath in the waters of the Nile.⁴⁸ But physical discomfort was not her only reason for leaving her father's palace. She was determined to cleanse herself as well of the impurity of the idol worship that prevailed there.

When she saw the little ark floating among the flags on the surface of the water, she supposed it to contain one of the little children exposed at her father's order, and she commanded her handmaids to fetch it. But they protested, saying, "O our mistress, it happens sometimes that a decree issued by a king is unheeded, yet it is observed at least by his children and the members of his household, and dost

thou desire to transgress thy father's edict?" Forthwith the angel Gabriel appeared, seized all the maids except one, whom he permitted the princess to retain for her service, and buried them in the bowels of the earth.

Pharaoh's daughter now proceeded to do her own will. She stretched forth her arm, and although the ark was swimming at a distance of sixty ells, she succeeded in grasping it, because her arm was lengthened miraculously. No sooner had she touched it than the leprosy afflicting her departed from her. Her sudden restoration led her to examine the contents of the ark,⁴⁹ and when she opened it, her amazement was great. She beheld an exquisitely beautiful boy, for God had fashioned the Hebrew babe's body with peculiar care,⁵⁰ and beside it she perceived the Shekinah. Noticing that the boy bore the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, she knew that he was one of the Hebrew children, and mindful of her father's decree concerning the male children of the Israelites, she was about to abandon the babe to his fate. At that moment the angel Gabriel came and gave the child a vigorous blow, and he began to cry aloud, with a voice like a young man's. His vehement weeping and the weeping of Aaron, who was lying beside him, touched the princess, and in her pity she resolved to save him. She ordered an Egyptian woman to be brought, to nurse the child, but the little one refused to take milk from her breast, as he refused to take it from one after the other of the Egyptian women fetched thither. Thus it had been ordained by God, that none of them might boast later on, and say, "I suckled him that holds converse now with the Shekinah." Nor was the mouth destined to speak with God to draw nourishment from the unclean body of an Egyptian woman.

Now Miriam stepped into the presence of Thermutis, as though she had been standing there by chance to look at the child,⁸⁴ and she spoke to the princess, saying, "It is vain for thee, O queen, to call for nurses that are in no wise of kin to the child, but if thou wilt order a woman of the Hebrews to be brought, he may accept her breast, seeing that she is of his own nation." Thermutis therefore bade Miriam fetch a Hebrew woman, and with winged steps, speeding like a vigorous youth, she hastened and brought back her own mother, the child's mother, for she knew that none present was acquainted with her. The babe, unresisting, took his mother's breast, and clutched it tightly.⁸⁵ The princess committed the child to Jochebed's care, saying these words, which contained an unconscious divination: "Here is what is thine."⁸⁶ Nurse the boy henceforth, and I will give thee two silver pieces as thy wages."⁸⁷

The return of her son, safe and sound, after she had exposed him, was Jochebed's reward from God for her services as one of the midwives that had bidden defiance to Pharaoh's command and saved the Hebrew children alive.⁸⁸

By exposing their son to danger, Amram and Jochebed had effected the withdrawal of Pharaoh's command enjoining the extermination of the Hebrew men children. The day Moses was set adrift in the little ark, the astrologers had come to Pharaoh and told him the glad tidings, that the danger threatening the Egyptians on account of one boy, whose doom lay in the water, had now been averted. Thereupon Pharaoh cried a halt to the drowning of the boys of his empire. The astrologers had seen something, but they knew not what, and they announced a message, the import of

which they did not comprehend. Water was, indeed, the doom of Moses, but that did not mean that he would perish in the waters of the Nile. It had reference to the waters of Meribah, the waters of strife, and how they would cause his death in the desert, before he had completed his task of leading the people into the promised land. Pharaoh, misled by the obscure vision of his astrologers, thought that the future redeemer of Israel was to lose his life by drowning, and to make sure that the boy whose appearance was foretold by the astrologers might not escape his fate, he had ordered all boys, even the children of the Egyptians, born during a period of nine months to be cast into the water.

On account of the merits of Moses, the six hundred thousand men children of the Hebrews begotten in the same night with him, and thrown into the water on the same day, were rescued miraculously together with him, and it was therefore not an idle boast, if he said later, "The people that went forth out of the water on account of my merits are six hundred thousand men."⁸⁹

THE INFANCY OF MOSES

For two years the child rescued by Pharaoh's daughter stayed with his parents and kindred. They gave him various names. His father called him Heber, because it was for this child's sake that he had been "reunited" with his wife. His mother's name for him was Jekuthiel, "because," she said, "I set my hope upon God, and He gave him back to me." To his sister Miriam he was Jered, because she had "descended" to the stream to ascertain his fate. His brother Aaron called him Abi Zanoah, because his father,

who had "cast off" his mother, had taken her back for the sake of the child to be born. His grandfather Kohath knew him as Abi Gedor, because the Heavenly Father had "built up" the breach in Israel, when He rescued him, and thus restrained the Egyptians from throwing the Hebrew men children into the water. His nurse called him Abi Soco, because he had been kept concealed in a "tent" for three months, escaping the pursuit of the Egyptians. And Israel called him Shemaiah ben Nethanel, because in his day God would "hear" the sighs of the people, and deliver them from their oppressors, and through him would He "give" them His own law.⁸⁷

His kindred and all Israel knew that the child was destined for great things, for he was barely four months old when he began to prophesy, saying, "In days to come I shall receive the Torah from the flaming torch."⁸⁸

When Jochebed took the child to the palace at the end of two years, Pharaoh's daughter called him Moses, because she had "drawn" him out of the water, and because he would "draw" the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt in a day to come.⁸⁹ And this was the only name whereby God called the son of Amram, the name conferred upon him by Pharaoh's daughter. He said to the princess: "Moses was not thy child, yet thou didst treat him as such. For this I will call thee My daughter, though thou art not My daughter," and therefore the princess, the daughter of Pharaoh, bears the name Bithiah, "the daughter of God." She married Caleb later on, and he was a suitable husband for her. As she stood up against her father's wicked counsels, so Caleb stood up against the counsel of his fellow-

messengers sent to spy out the land of Canaan.⁹⁰ For rescuing Moses and for her other pious deeds, she was permitted to enter Paradise alive.⁹¹

That Moses might receive the treatment at court usually accorded to a prince, Bithiah pretended that she was with child for some time before she had him fetched away from his parents' house.⁹² His royal foster-mother caressed and kissed him constantly, and on account of his extraordinary beauty she would not permit him ever to quit the palace. Whoever set eyes on him, could not leave off from looking at him, wherefore Bithiah feared to allow him out of her sight.⁹³

Moses' understanding was far beyond his years; his instructors observed that he disclosed keener comprehension than is usual at his age. All his actions in his infancy promised greater ones after he should come to man's estate, and when he was but three years old, God granted him remarkable size. As for his beauty, it was so attractive that frequently those meeting him as he was carried along on the road were obliged to turn and stare at him. They would leave what they were about, and stand still a great while, looking after him, for the loveliness of the child was so wondrous that it held the gaze of the spectator. The daughter of Pharaoh, perceiving Moses to be an extraordinary lad, adopted him as her son, for she had no child of her own. She informed her father of her intention concerning him, in these words: "I have brought up a child, who is divine in form and of an excellent mind, and as I received him through the bounty of the river in a wonderful way, I have thought it proper to adopt him as my son and as the

heir of thy kingdom." And when she had spoken thus, she put the infant between her father's hands, and he took him and hugged him close to his breast."

Moses Rescued by GABRIEL

When Moses was in his third year, Pharaoh was dining one day, with the queen Alfaranit at his right hand, his daughter Bithiah with the infant Moses upon her lap at his left, and Balaam the son of Beor together with his two sons and all the princes of the realm sitting at table in the king's presence. It happened that the infant took the crown from off the king's head, and placed it on his own. When the king and the princes saw this, they were terrified, and each one in turn expressed his astonishment. The king said unto the princes, "What speak you, and what say you, O ye princes, on this matter, and what is to be done to this Hebrew boy on account of this act?"

Balaam spoke, saying: "Remember now, O my lord and king, the dream which thou didst dream many days ago, and how thy servant interpreted it unto thee. Now this is a child of the Hebrews in whom is the spirit of God. Let not my lord the king imagine in his heart that being a child he did the thing without knowledge. For he is a Hebrew boy, and wisdom and understanding are with him, although he is yet a child, and with wisdom has he done this, and chosen unto himself the kingdom of Egypt. For this is the manner of all the Hebrews, to deceive kings and their magnates, to do all things cunningly in order to make the kings of the earth and their men to stumble.

"Surely thou knowest that Abraham their father acted

thus, who made the armies of Nimrod king of Babel and of Abimelech king of Gerar to stumble, and he possessed himself of the land of the children of Heth and the whole realm of Canaan. Their father Abraham went down into Egypt, and said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister, in order to make Egypt and its king to stumble.

"His son Isaac did likewise when he went to Gerar, and he dwelt there, and his strength prevailed over the army of Abimelech, and he intended to make the kingdom of the Philistines to stumble, by saying that Rebekah his wife was his sister.

"Jacob also dealt treacherously with his brother, and took his birthright and his blessing from him. Then he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, his mother's brother, and he obtained his daughters from him cunningly, and also his cattle and all his belongings, and he fled away and returned to the land of Canaan, to his father.

"His sons sold their brother Joseph, and he went down into Egypt and became a slave, and he was put into prison for twelve years, until the former Pharaoh delivered him from the prison, and magnified him above all the princes of Egypt on account of his interpreting the king's dreams. When God caused a famine to descend upon the whole world, Joseph sent for his father, and he brought him down into Egypt his father, his brethren, and all his father's household, and he supplied them with food without pay or reward, while he acquired Egypt, and made slaves of all its inhabitants.

"Now, therefore, my lord king, behold, this child has risen up in their stead in Egypt, to do according to their

deeds and make sport of every man, be he king, prince, or judge. If it please the king, let us now spill his blood upon the ground, lest he grow up and snatch the government from thine hand, and the hope of Egypt be cut off after he reigns. Let us, moreover, call for all the judges and the wise men of Egypt, that we may know whether the judgment of death be due to this child, as I have said, and then we will slay him."

Pharaoh sent and called for all the wise men of Egypt, and they came, and the angel Gabriel was disguised as one of them. When they were asked their opinion in the matter, Gabriel spoke up, and said: "If it please the king, let him place an onyx stone before the child, and a coal of fire, and if he stretches out his hand and grasps the onyx stone, then shall we know that the child hath done with wisdom all that he hath done, and we will slay him. But if he stretches out his hand and grasps the coal of fire, then shall we know that it was not with consciousness that he did the thing, and he shall live."

The counsel seemed good in the eyes of the king, and when they had placed the stone and the coal before the child, Moses stretched forth his hand toward the onyx stone and attempted to seize it, but the angel Gabriel guided his hand away from it and placed it upon the live coal, and the coal burnt the child's hand, and he lifted it up and touched it to his mouth, and burnt part of his lips and part of his tongue, and for all his life he became slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

Seeing this, the king and the princes knew that Moses had not acted with knowledge in taking the crown from off the

king's head, and they refrained from slaying him.⁶⁸ God Himself, who protected Moses, turned the king's mind to grace, and his foster-mother snatched him away, and she had him educated with great care, so that the Hebrews depended upon him, and cherished the hope that great things would be done by him. But the Egyptians were suspicious of what would follow from such an education as his.⁶⁹

At great cost teachers were invited to come to Egypt from neighboring lands, to educate the child Moses. Some came of their own accord, to instruct him in the sciences and the liberal arts. By reason of his admirable endowments of mind, he soon excelled his teachers in knowledge. His learning seemed a process of mere recollecting, and when there was a difference of opinion among scholars, he selected the correct one instinctively, for his mind refused to store up anything that was false.⁷⁰

But he deserves more praise for his unusual strength of will than for his natural capacity, for he succeeded in transforming an originally evil disposition into a noble, exalted character, a change that was farther aided by his resolution, as he himself acknowledged later. After the wonderful exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, a king of Arabia sent an artist to Moses, to paint his portrait, that he might always have the likeness of the divine man before him. The painter returned with his handiwork, and the king assembled his wise men, those in particular who were conversant with the science of physiognomy. He displayed the portrait before them, and invited their judgment upon it. The unanimous opinion was that it represented a man covetous, haughty, sensual, in short, disfigured by all possible ugly

traits. The king was indignant that they should pretend to be masters in physiognomy, seeing that they declared the picture of Moses, the holy, divine man, to be the picture of a villain. They defended themselves by accusing the painter in turn of not having produced a true portrait of Moses, else they would not have fallen into the erroneous judgment they had expressed. But the artist insisted that his work resembled the original closely.

Unable to decide who was right, the Arabian king went to see Moses, and he could not but admit that the portrait painted for him was a masterpiece. Moses as he beheld him in the flesh was the Moses upon the canvas. There could be no doubt but that the highly extolled knowledge of his physiognomy experts was empty twaddle. He told Moses what had happened, and what he thought of it. He replied: "Thy artist and thy experts alike are masters, each in his line. If my fine qualities were a product of nature, I were no better than a log of wood, which remains forever as nature produced it at the first. Unshamed I make the confession to thee that by nature I possessed all the reprehensible traits thy wise men read in my picture and ascribed to me, perhaps to a greater degree even than they think. But I mastered my evil impulses with my strong will, and the character I acquired through severe discipline has become the opposite of the disposition with which I was born. Through this change, wrought in me by my own efforts, I have earned honor and commendation upon earth as well as in heaven."⁸⁸

THE YOUTH OF MOSES

One day—it was after he was grown up, and had passed beyond the years of childhood—Moses went to the land of Goshen, in which lived the children of Israel. There he saw the burdens under which his people were groaning, and he inquired why the heavy service had been put upon them. The Israelites told him all that had befallen, told him of the cruel edict Pharaoh had issued shortly before his birth, and told him of the wicked counsels given by Balaam against themselves as well as against his person when he was but a little boy and had set Pharaoh's crown upon his head. The wrath of Moses was kindled against the spiteful adviser, and he tried to think out means of rendering him harmless. But Balaam, getting wind of his ill-feeling, fled from Egypt with his two sons, and betook himself to the court of Kikanos king of Ethiopia.⁸⁹

The sight of his enslaved people touched Moses unto tears, and he spoke, saying: "Woe unto me for your anguish! Rather would I die than see you suffer so grievously." He did not disdain to help his unfortunate brethren at their heavy tasks as much as lay in his power. He dismissed all thought of his high station at court, shouldered a share of the burdens put upon the Israelites, and toiled in their place. The result was that he not only gave relief to the heavily-laden workmen, but he also gained the favor of Pharaoh, who believed that Moses was taking part in the labor in order to promote the execution of the royal order. And God said unto Moses: "Thou didst relinquish all thy other occupations, and didst join thyself unto the children of Israel, whom thou dost treat as brethren; therefore will I,

too, put aside now all heavenly and earthly affairs, and hold converse with thee."¹⁰

Moses continued to do all he could to alleviate the suffering of his brethren to the best of his ability. He addressed encouraging words to them, saying: "My dear brethren, bear your lot with fortitude! Do not lose courage, and let not your spirit grow weary with the weariness of your body. Better times will come, when tribulation shall be changed into joy. Clouds are followed by sunshine, storms by calm, all things in the world tend toward their opposites, and nothing is more inconstant than the fortunes of man."¹¹

The royal favor, which the king accorded him in ever-increasing measure, he made use of to lighten the burden laid upon the children of Israel. One day he came into the presence of Pharaoh, and said: "O my lord, I have a request to make of thee, and my hope is that thou wilt not deny it." "Speak," replied the king. "It is an admitted fact," said Moses, "that if a slave is not afforded rest at least one day in the week, he will die of overexertion. Thy Hebrew slaves will surely perish, unless thou accordest them a day of cessation from work." Pharaoh fulfilled the petition preferred by Moses, and the king's edict was published in the whole of Egypt and in Goshen, as follows: "To the sons of Israel! Thus saith the king: Do your work and perform your service for six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; on it ye shall do no labor. Thus shall ye do unto all times, according to the command of the king and the command of Moses the son of Bithiah." And the day appointed by Moses as the day of rest was Saturday, later given by God to the Israelites as the Sabbath day.¹²

While Moses abode in Goshen, an incident of great importance occurred. To superintend the service of the children of Israel, an officer from among them was set over every ten, and ten such officers were under the surveillance of an Egyptian taskmaster. One of these Hebrew officers, Dathan by name, had a wife, Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan, who was of extraordinary beauty, but inclined to be very loquacious. Whenever the Egyptian taskmaster set over her husband came to their house on business connected with his office, she would approach him pleasantly and enter into conversation with him. The beautiful Israelitish woman enkindled a mad passion in his breast, and he sought and found a cunning way of satisfying his lustful desire. One day he appeared at break of dawn at the house of Dathan, roused him from his sleep, and ordered him to hurry his detachment of men to their work. The husband scarcely out of sight, he executed the villainy he had planned, and dishonored the woman, and the fruit of this illicit relation was the blasphemer of the Name whom Moses ordered to execution on the march through the desert.

At the moment when the Egyptian slipped out of Shelomith's chamber, Dathan returned home. Vexed that his crime had come to the knowledge of the injured husband, the taskmaster goaded him on to work with excessive vigor, and dealt him blow after blow with the intention to kill him.¹³ Young Moses happened to visit the place at which the much-abused and tortured Hebrew was at work. Dathan hastened toward him, and complained of all the wrong and suffering the Egyptian had inflicted upon him.¹⁴ Full of wrath, Moses, whom the holy spirit had acquainted with the

injury done the Hebrew officer by the Egyptian taskmaster, cried out to the latter, saying: "Not enough that thou hast dishonored this man's wife, thou aimest to kill him, too?" And turning to God, he spoke further: "What will become of Thy promise to Abraham, that his posterity shall be as numerous as the stars, if his children are given over to death? And what will become of the revelation on Sinai, if the children of Israel are exterminated?"

Moses wanted to see if someone would step forward, and, impelled by zeal for the cause of God and for God's law, would declare himself ready to avenge the outrage. He waited in vain. Then he determined to act himself. Naturally enough he hesitated to take the life of a human being. He did not know whether the evil-doer might not be brought to repentance, and then lead a life of pious endeavor. He also considered, that there would perhaps be some among the descendants to spring from the Egyptian for whose sake their wicked ancestor might rightfully lay claim to clemency. The holy spirit allayed all his doubts. He was made to see that not the slightest hope existed that good would come either from the malefactor himself or from any of his offspring. Then Moses was willing to requite him for his evil deeds. Nevertheless he first consulted the angels, to hear what they had to say, and they agreed that the Egyptian deserved death, and Moses acted according to their opinion.

Neither physical strength nor a weapon was needed to carry out his purpose. He merely pronounced the Name of God, and the Egyptian was a corpse. To the bystanders, the Israelites, Moses said: "The Lord compared you unto the

sand of the sea-shore, and as the sand moves noiselessly from place to place, so I pray you to keep the knowledge of what hath happened a secret within yourselves. Let nothing be heard concerning it."

The wish expressed by Moses was not honored. The slaying of the Egyptian remained no secret, and those who betrayed it were Israelites, Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Pallu, of the tribe of Reuben, notorious for their effrontery and contentiousness. The day after the thing with the Egyptians happened, the two brothers began of malice aforethought to scuffle with each other, only in order to draw Moses into the quarrel and create an occasion for his betrayal. The plan succeeded admirably. Seeing Dathan raise his hand against Abiram, to deal him a blow, Moses exclaimed, "O thou art a villain, to lift up thy hand against an Israelite, even if he is no better than thou." Dathan replied: "Young man, who hath made thee to be a judge over us, thou that hast not yet attained to years of maturity? We know very well that thou art the son of Jochebed, though people call thee the son of the princess Bithiah, and if thou shouldst attempt to play the part of our master and judge, we will publish abroad the thing thou didst unto the Egyptian. Or, peradventure, thou harborst the intention to slay us as thou didst slay him, by pronouncing the Name of God?"

Not satisfied with these taunts, the noble pair of brothers betook themselves to Pharaoh, and spoke before him, "Moses dishonoreth thy royal mantle and thy crown," to which Pharaoh returned, saying, "Much good may it do him!" But they pursued the subject. "He helps thine

enemies, Pharaoh," they continued, whereupon he replied, as before, "Much good may it do him!" Still they went on, "He is not the son of thy daughter." These last words did not fail of making an impression upon Pharaoh. "A royal command was issued for the arrest of Moses, and he was condemned to death by the sword.

The angels came to God, and said, "Moses, the familiar of Thine house, is held under restraint," and God replied, "I will espouse his cause." "But," the angels urged, "his verdict of death has been pronounced—yes, they are leading him to execution," and again God made reply, as before, "I will espouse his cause."

Moses mounted the scaffold, and a sword, sharp beyond compare, was set upon his neck ten times, but it always slipped away, because his neck was as hard as ivory. And a still greater miracle came to pass. God sent down the angel Michael, in the guise of a hangman, and the human hangman charged by Pharaoh with the execution was changed into the form of Moses. This spurious Moses the angel killed with the very sword with which the executioner had purposed to slay the intended victim. Meantime Moses took to flight. Pharaoh ordered his pursuit, but it was in vain. The king's troops were partly stricken with blindness, partly with dumbness. The dumb could give no information about the abiding-place of Moses, and the blind, though they knew where it was, could not get to it."

THE FLIGHT

An angel of God took Moses to a spot removed forty days' journey from Egypt, so far off that all fear was banished from his mind. "Indeed, his anxiety had never been for his own person, but only on account of the future of Israel. The subjugation of his people had always been an unsolved enigma to him. Why should Israel, he would ask himself, suffer more than all the other nations? But when his personal straits initiated him in the talebearing and backbiting that prevailed among the Israelites, then he asked himself, Does this people deserve to be redeemed?" The religious conditions among the children of Israel were of such kind at that time as not to permit them to hope for Divine assistance. They refused to give ear to Aaron and the five sons of Zerah, who worked among them as prophets, and admonished them unto the fear of God. It was on account of their impiety that the heavy hand of Pharaoh rested upon them more and more oppressively, until God had mercy upon them, and sent Moses to deliver them from the slavery of Egypt."

When he succeeded in effecting his escape from the hands of the hangman, Moses had no idea that a royal throne awaited him. It was nevertheless so. A war broke out at this time between Ethiopia and the nations of the East that had been subject to it until then. Kikanos, the king, advanced against the enemy with a great army. He left Balaam and Balaam's two sons, Jannes and Jambres, behind, to keep guard over his capital and take charge of the people remaining at home. The absence of the king gave Balaam the opportunity of winning his subjects over to his side, and