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THE TWELVETH MONTH

Nehasse 24

(August 30)

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IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

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On this day died the head of the monks and father of all the world, Abuna Takla Haimanot. The birthplace of this saint was Zarare, in the country of Showa. His father's name was Saga Ze'ab, and his mother's name was Egzi'E Haraya. His father belonged to the family of priests who illumined Ethiopia with their Faith; his wife was barren, and they used to pray to God to give them a son. And whilst they were living thus, Satan made Matalome governor of Damot, and he laid waste the whole of the districts of Showa, up to the border of 'Amhara. And all the nobles, one after the other, gave him their women, and the beautiful women whom he found during his raid he made his concubines. And in those days he came to the city of Selalesh and killed all the Christians, and Saga Ze'ab fled in fear, and fell into a pool of water, which became like a tent. And Egzi'E Haraya the soldiers seized and carried off, and they brought her to Matalome. And when he saw her beauty he rejoiced exceedingly, and he adorned her with apparel of fine linen. Then he returned to his country, and his nobles gathered together in order to make ready for the feast of his marriage with her; and when Egzi'E Haraya heard this she made prayer to God that He would deliver her from this unclean union. And straightway Michael the archangel came and he took her up upon his wings, and brought her into the church at the time of the third hour, and as Saga Ze'ab was going out of the church he saw her standing dressed in ornamental apparel. And he said, "Who is this woman?" And when he asked her he knew that she was his wife; and she told him everything which had happened to her from the beginning to the end. One night Michael, the angel of God, appeared unto them, and told them that they should produce a son whose righteousness should be heard of in all the ends of the earth, and that the heavens and the earth would not be sufficient [to contain] one of his excellences. And after a few days this saint was conceived, on the twenty-fourth day of the month of Megabit, and he was born on the twenty-fourth day of the month of Tahsas; and there was joy in the house of his father and mother. On the day when they gave him Christian baptism they called him "Zara Yohannes." On the third day after he was born, he cried out, saying, "One is the Holy Father, One is the Holy Son, One is the Holy Spirit." And he grew in the Holy Spirit, and in wisdom, and he worked signs and wonders, thus: When anything which was used for food was wanting in his father's house, he would touch, with a smile, a little flour, and fill all the house therewith, and he did the same with olive oil, and honey, and fat, and wine; and he would fill the house so full that everyone who saw it, and heard of it, marveled. And when he was seven years old his father taught him the Psalms of David, and all the Books of the Church. And then he took him to the Bishop, Abba Cyril, who made him a deacon and prophesied concerning him, saying, "This boy shall become a chosen vessel of God," and having received the office of deacon [he departed] to his own country. When he was a young man, he used to traverse the desert hunting wild beasts, and [one day] at noon, our Lord appeared unto him, sitting upon the wings of Michael, and said unto him, "O My beloved, henceforward thou shalt not be a hunter of wild beasts, but thou shalt catch many souls in [thy] net. And thy name shall be 'Takla Haimanot,' for I have chosen thee from thy mother's womb, and I have sanctified thee like Jeremiah the prophet, and John the Baptist. And behold, I have given thee power to heal the sick, and to drive out unclean spirits in all the world"; and having said these words He disappeared, and the saint returned to his abode. And after a few days his father and his mother died, and he gave all his goods to the poor and needy, and he left all the house open, and took his staff and went forth by night, saying, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and destroy his soul?" And then he took the rank of priest, and began to preach the Faith in all the country of Showa; and he baptized seventy thousand people in his own country. And he destroyed all the shrines of idols, and cut down the trees thereof, so that the devils, who used to dwell in them, might take to flight. And after three years a voice cried unto him from heaven, saying, "O Takla Haimanot, rise up and go to the land of Damot, that thou mayest receive for me much

spoil." And as he was journeying along the road of 'Enarte'at, he met some men, who were magicians and diviners, and their king, and they were performing acts of divination. During the violent quarrel which he had with them, they beat him with a thick iron rod, until the bones showed through his skin, and he died; but God gave him strength to endure, and He raised him up sound and unharmed. And he remained thus for four mornings, and after he had prayed the earth swallowed up the magicians and their beasts. Passing on from that place he arrived at the country of Damot, and he destroyed the diviners. And when Motalame, the governor, heard of him, he commanded his soldiers to bring him to him, bound with strong fetters, and he said unto him, "Why dost thou destroy my country?" And having said this to him, he commanded the soldiers to kill him, and to cast him down a precipice several times. And God gave him strength to endure, and He raised him up unharmed. And having performed signs and wonders before the governor and destroyed the soothsayers, he made the governor to believe on Christ, for he raised up before him many dead persons. Now those who were baptized with him, on that day, were in number twelve thousand and ninety-nine souls. And when the wherewithal for the administration of the Holy Mysteries was lacking Michael brought down to him [some oil of] Meron from heaven, and he said unto him, "Consecrate the Tabernacle with this, and administer the Holy Mysteries to the people"; and he did as Michael told him. And our father continued to teach the king the Books of the Prophets and Apostles. And when he had lived in Damot for twelve years, a voice cried to him from heaven on Easter Day, and our Lord gave him the promise that He would give the kingdom of heaven unto all those who called upon his name and celebrated his commemoration, and that he would deliver them from all tribulation and sorrow. And the voice also said unto him, "Go thou to the country of 'Anhare, to Abba Betselote Mikael," and when he had arrived there he lived with him for ten years; and he served by day with his disciples, and during the night he made innumerable bowings to the ground. And he worked the flour mill, and drew water, and cut wood for the fire ceaselessly. And besides this, he wrought many miracles, raising the dead, and healing sick folk without number. And then God said unto him, "O My beloved Takla Haimanot, go thou to the place (or, shrine) of Stephen, the first to martyrs, which is called Hayk, and there thou shalt find a holy man whose name is Iyesus Moa, and he will give thee the order of monkhood." And he rose up and departed, and came to the sea-coast, and passed over the sea as if he were on dry land, without wetting his feet. When he came to the holy man, he welcomed him, and gave him the apparel of the monk, [that is to say,] the tunic and the head cloth only; and he dwelt there for ten years working signs and wonders, and each [night] he made seven thousand bowings. And then God said unto him, "O My beloved Takla Haimanot, go thou to the land of Tegre, and go up the mountain which is called Damo, and thou shalt find there a holy man whose name is 'Yohanni,' and take thou from him the cap and cloak, and dwell there until I tell thee." And he dwelt there fighting the fight, having received the cap and the cloak, for twelve years. And God appeared unto him and said unto him, "Get thee out of this mountain, and travel about through the deserts of Tegre and visit the monasteries and houses of the monks." And he went down from that high mountain, being exhausted by the toil thereof, and he traveled through the deserts of Tegre. And having finished this he went down to Jerusalem, Michael, the angel, guiding him, and when he came to the Red Sea he passed over it, according to his wont, without wetting his feet. Having crossed the sea he came to Jerusalem, and he went round and visited all the holy places. And he returned to the land of Tegre and talked and mixed with all the saints; and he went down to Jerusalem a second and a third time, and wished to dwell there. And the Holy Spirit said unto him, "Go back to the land of Muladek, for that is thy lot." And going back he visited Abba Yohanni of Debra Damo. Thence he went down and traveled on towards Bur, and he found Medhaninne 'Egzi'E, in a place the name of which is Gwonaguena, and that saint gave him the garb of the monkhood, and prophesied to him that he should become the father of all the monks of Tegre, and the son of Abba Samuel of Waldebba, and of all the teachers who were in Tegre. And when our father Takla Haimanot had gone out from Tegre, he went to the place of Hayk and gave to Iyesus Moa the cap and the cloak. Thence having gone out and passed through all the deserts, he came to the land of Showa, and he dwelt in the desert of Geda for many days. And then he departed to the land of Gerarya, and he made a cell among the rocks and he went out neither by day nor by night. And his

disciples were in number seventeen, and many came to him, both men and women, and they became monks and widows, and they lived in one house; but no man had knowledge of any woman, because Satan was fettered by prayer. And then he built in his cell a kind of wall to lean against, and he fixed therein sharp points, behind him, on his right hand, and on his left, so that they could pierce his body. And having stood in the cell too long, the thigh bone of one of his legs broke, and then he stood up on one foot for seven years. And our Lord Jesus Christ came unto him, with our Lady Mary, and with the prophets and apostles, and the righteous, and the martyrs, and Michael and Gabriel, and He said unto him, "O My beloved, thou dost resemble Me in My suffering, and I will make thee My equal in My kingdom. And behold, thy weakness in this world is ended, and it hath been accepted by Me. Come, that henceforth thou mayest inherit everlasting life"; and then He gave him the promise concerning those who should call upon his name, and celebrate his commemoration. And then the saint became slightly sick of the plague, and he died at a good old age, his days being ninety-nine years and eight months. And they wrapped him in cloths with reverence and praise, and buried him in his rock. Salutation to Takla Haimanot.

And on this day also died the holy father, the fighter and conqueror, the soldier and apostle of Christ, Thomas, Bishop of the city of Mar'as, the confessor. The tongues of men are incapable of describing the glory and righteousness of this saint. Beings of flesh are incapable of understanding his excellences and virtues. Originally this saint was an ascetic, and a fighter of the spiritual fight. He fasted and prayed frequently, and kept vigil by night and by day, and he gave alms in abundance to the poor and needy. And God chose him and made him Bishop of the city of Mar'as, and he protected his flock like the Apostles. And when Diocletian the wicked was reigning, one of his governors came to the city of Mar'as to torture the Christians. And he sent some wicked soldiers to this holy father, and they seized him and brought him to him, and they beat him, as they dragged him over the ground, and he arrived in the presence of the governor with his blood dropping on the ground. And the governor said unto him, "Deny Christ and worship the gods." And the saint answered and said unto him, "I will not worship filthy stones, I will worship only my Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. Cursed art thou, and thy filthy idols, and cursed are those who worship them." And the governor was wroth with Saint Thomas, and he tortured him very severely, and he beat him very cruelly, and he hung him up, and boiled pitch and poured it into his mouth and nostrils, and he tortured him for many days. Now the hearts of those deniers of Christ were like unto stones, and they did not want the saint to die quickly, so they prolonged his torture in order to frighten the multitude, and make them to deny Christ; but they were vanquished, and whilst they were weary of torturing him, he was strong in rebuking them. And they cast him into a dark place and forgot him, and he dwelt in that one place for twelve years. And each year the wicked men came to him, and tortured him, and cut off one of his limbs. And in this place they cut off his ears, and his nose, and his lips, and his hands, and his feet, and they pulled out his front teeth and his grinders, and his whole body was as black as ink. And they forgot him in that dark prison house until at length those members of his flock, who knew him, thought that he was dead, and they used to perform services of commemoration for him every year. And when they shut him up in prison, a certain believing woman saw him, and she used to come to him by night secretly, and throw in food to him through a little window. And he lived in this way until the righteous Emperor Constantine reigned, and revealed the True Faith of Christ. And he commanded his officers to release all the confessors who were shut up in prison throughout all his dominions. And that believing woman went into their houses and told the priests about Saint Thomas, and what had happened to him, and how they had shut him up in prison for two and twenty years, and she guided them to the place where he was. And they came to him, and took him out of the prison house, and they carried him on their heads, singing as they went, until they brought him into the church and set him on the throne before the sanctuary. And all the Christians came and received a blessing from him, and they kissed [the places of] his eyelids, which had been cut off. And when the Emperor Constantine assembled the General Council of the Three Hundred and Eighteen holy Bishops in the city of Nicea, this father was present with them; and the Emperor Constantine embraced them, and received a

blessing from them. And when one made known unto him the fight of this holy father, he drew nigh unto him, and bowed low before him, and he kissed all the places whereupon his limbs had been cut off, and he stroked his face and eyes. And after they had disputed with Arius, the apostate, and vanquished him, and had excommunicated him and cursed him, and driven him out, even as the Holy Spirit taught them, and they had proclaimed with their tongues the True Faith, and drawn up the Law and the Judicial Regulations and the Canons, this holy father Abba Thomas departed to the seat of his office. And he assembled the priests and all his flock, and he proclaimed to them the True Faith, and he explained unto them what they found difficult, and he made them to understand it, and he commanded them to keep it and to wax strong therein. And after this he lived a few days, and having pleased God he died in peace; and all the days of his office were forty years. And he departed to God bearing a crown of victory, and inherited everlasting life. Salutation to Thomas.

And on this day also nine (or, ninety) thousand martyrs of the company of Saint Thomas were crowned.

Glory be to God Who is glorified in His Saints. Amen.