

## HOW KING SOLOMON BEGAT KING MENELIK.

1. King Menelik's mother was a Tigrē girl named Etiyē-Azēb<sup>1)</sup>. And [in her days] the Tigrē people were worshipping a dragon, and the sacrifice which they brought [to him] was the following: each man among them gave in turn his first-born daughter and an *entalām*<sup>2)</sup> of mead and an *entalām*<sup>2)</sup> of milk to the dragon. 2. Now when the turn of Etiyē-Azēb's parents came, they tied her to a tree for the dragon. And to the place where she was tied to the tree came seven saints<sup>3)</sup> and seated themselves there in the shade. 3. And while they were sitting there in the shade, she began to weep, and one of her tears fell upon them. And when [this tear] had fallen upon them, they looked up and beheld her tied there, and they asked her saying: "What art thou? Art thou Mary<sup>4)</sup> or a human being?" 4. And she answered them: "I am a human being." They said to her: "And why art thou bound here?"

1) In English "Queen of the South", i. e., "Queen of Sheba".

2) This measure equals about 300 liters.

3) Var.: angels.

4) Var.: an angel.

"They have bound me in order that that dragon may devour me," said she. **5.** They asked her: "Is he on the other side of the hill or on this side?" "He is [the hill]" was her answer. **6.** And when they saw him, Abbā-Čaḥamā grasped his beard <sup>1)</sup>, and Abbā Garīmā said: "He has frightened me <sup>2)</sup>," and Abbā Menṭelīt said: "Let us seize him <sup>3)</sup>" and running he threw himself upon him and smote him. Thereupon all of them attacked him and struck him with the cross and killed him. **7.** And when they were killing him, blood trickled on her, and it dropped on her heel, and her heel became an ass's heel. **8.** After that they freed her and said unto her: "Go now to thy village." And when she came to her village, the people of her village not knowing that the dragon was dead, drove her away. Outside of the village she climbed a tree and stayed there over night. **9.** The next day she went [back] to them saying: "Come ye, and let me shew you that he is dead." So they followed her, and [the dragon] appeared lying dead before them. **10.** And when they saw him lying dead, they said: "Let us make her [our] chief! For if God had not given this to her, how could [the dragon] have met his death through her?", and they made her their chief. And after she had become chief, she made a girl like herself [her] minister.

**11.** Thereupon she heard that [the following] was reported: In Jerusalem there is a king named Solomon; whosoever goes to him, is cured of the disease which he has. **12.** "If thou shouldst go, as soon as thou shouldst enter his door, thy foot would become as it was before" was said to her. **13.** After she had heard this, she braided her hair so that she resembled a man; [and her minister did the same]. Then

1) Play on words; in Tigrē *šəḥēmū*.

2) *garramanī*.

3) *nəmanāṭalā*.

she and her minister girded themselves with saber[s] and went away. **14.** When she was approaching, King Solomon heard [of her]; it was said to him: "The King of Abyssinia is coming." "Bid him enter!" said he. And when she came, as soon as she entered the door, her foot became as it was before. **15.** And she entered to the king and grasped his hand, [greeting him]. The king ordered: "Bring bread, meat and mead!", and they sat down to eat. And while they were eating, the [women] out of modesty ate (little of the meal) and drank little (of the beverage). So the king suspected that they were women. **16.** When it grew evening, he gave order: "Make their beds for them!", and in one and the same room [with him] they made them, one opposite the other. **17.** And he took a skin with honey and hung it up in the room, and he put a bowl under it; also he made a hole in it (i. e., the skin), so that it would trickle. **18.** Now it was his custom, when he was sleeping, to keep his eyes half open, and when he was awake, to close them. **19.** At night, while they were resting, he fell asleep, and his eyes were half open. And the women said: "He does not sleep; he sees [us]. When will he sleep?" While they spoke thus, he awoke, and closed his eyes. "Now he has fallen asleep" they said and began to lick from the bowl. So he knew [certainly] that they were women. **20.** And he approached them both and slept with them. Each one of them said to him: "My deflowering has been accomplished <sup>1)</sup>." And he gave each one of them a staff of silver and a ring, saying unto them: "If it is a girl, let her take this staff of silver and come to me; and if it is a boy, let him take this ring and come to me." And the Queen of the South bought a mirror. And being [both] with child they returned to their country.

1) Literally: This means the purification from my flowers.

21. And both of them gave birth to a son. When the boys were grown, the Tigrē people said: "They are fatherless children." And they asked their mothers. And their mothers answered them: "Your father is King Solomon; he lives in Jerusalem." 22. And the son of the Queen of the South resembled his father perfectly, [even] in his colour he was like King Solomon. Now she said to him: "My son, thy father resembles thee. Take this mirror and go [to him]; for he is very shrewd: he will hide himself from thee. And if thou seest another man sitting on the throne, do not greet him!" 23. Then they went to Jerusalem. And when they arrived, King Solomon said: "If they are my sons, let them wait!" So he stayed away from them three years, without showing himself to them. 24. After these three years he said: "Let them come in"; but he had taken off his royal garment and dressed himself in rags; and on his throne he had seated one of his people, and he [himself] had gone into the stable. 25. And when they entered, the other boy grasped the hand of the man who was sitting on the throne, [to greet him]: but Menelik stood [still and] straight and looked at his face in the mirror and [saw that] the man's colour was not like his. Then he turned in all [directions], but did not find any one whose colour was like his. 26. After a while Solomon looked out from the stable: [at once Menelik] went to him and took his hand [to greet him]. Then said Solomon: "[Thou art] my true son; the other is my son too, but he is a fool <sup>1)</sup>", and he seated himself on his throne. 27. Now his father used to say: "If cattle enter into a[nother man's] field, let the proprietor of the field confiscate the cattle!" But he said: "Let the proprietor of

1) S.: *en dumsnut*.

the field take six measures of grain" and rebuked [his father] asking: "How can the cattle be confiscated?" 28. Thereupon the people of the town complained to the king, saying: "How could two chiefs rule over us? This thy son send away from us to his country!" "Let me at least take counsel, and when I have done so, I will let you know" replied the king. "Take counsel" said they. And he told this to his son, saying: "They have complained to me saying: send thy son away from us, and they continue [to do so]. What shall we do now?" 29. Then he answered him: "Speak thus to them: 'Is he not my first born son? Send ye your first born son[s] with him!'" So the king said to the people of the town: "Is he not my first born son? Send ye also your first born son[s] with him!" "It is well" they said, and each one of them sent his first born son with him."

30. And King Solomon said to his son: "Take the ark of Michael [with thee]!" But he took the ark of Mary; and the cover of Mary's ark he put on Michael's ark, and the one of Michael's ark he put on [the ark of] Mary. And taking his ark he went away. 31. After a few days a storm rose in Jerusalem, and Solomon said: "Look for Mary's ark!" And when they had looked, without taking off the cover, only having looked [at it], they said: "It is there." But he repeated: "Take the cover off and look!" And when they took the cover off and looked [at it], the ark of Michael appeared before them. And he sent a messenger to his son saying: "Send it back to me!"; but he refused. 32. Now when they came to Qayēḥ-Kōr, a deacon named Gabra Heywat, who was carrying the ark, died, and was buried there. And when they had buried him there, they intended to march onward; but the ark could not <sup>1)</sup> be lifted. Then

1) Literally: refused.

he (i. e., Menelik) said: "Dig him up and lay his body in a coffin;" and they dug him up and laid his body in a coffin.

**33.** But when they would have marched onward, [the ark] could not yet <sup>1)</sup> be lifted. And again he said: "Dig up", and they dug up and found his finger [sticking out of the coffin]. So they put it within the coffin.

**34.** Thereupon the ark was lifted, and they went on and entered Tigray. And after they had entered Tigray, they came to Axum. Now Satan was building a house in order to fight against God. But when they said: "Mary has come to thee", he destroyed it and left it. **35.** [There was] one big stone [which] he had raised in order to carry it, but when they said: "She has come to thee", he left it and went away. And with those stones with which he had been building, they built a church for Mary. But the big stone is standing [there] upright even today.

1) Literally: refused again.