



***EGYPT
And
The History of our
Salvation***

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

1998

*The Second Thousand Year Jubilee
For
The Escape of the Holy Family to Egypt*

EGYPT
And
***The History of our
Salvation***

“From Egypt I called My Son”
(Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15)

1998

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

The Second Thousand Year Jubilee for the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ rocks the emotions and feelings of each and every true believer. The advent of the Lord Jesus to our world has opened the gates of heavens among us, earthly people, or ascended humans to encounter with the heavenly hosts their heavenly life.

All Christians around the world celebrate this spiritual joyous feast, but for us, the Copts, we celebrate a double feast. With the starting of the third thousand Year of the advent of Jesus Christ, we also remember the starting of the third thousand year of the entry of the Baby Jesus accompanied by His mother, St. Mary and St. Joseph to the land of Egypt.

Our Church is proud of this rare occasion, as not a single land around the world, outside Israel, has enjoyed the visiting of the Lord Jesus and the holy family.

This is the reason, which urges me to write about **“Egypt in the History of Our Salvation.”** Wishing that the Lord Jesus Christ may enter and find a refuge in the heart of each, and every believer, preventing the evil one (Herod) from destroying Jesus who is transfigured in our inner souls.

***O LORD, CONVERT MY INNER EGYPT
FROM
A COUNTRY OF SLAVERY TO GOD'S TEMPLE***

On the annual feast of “*The Escape of the Holy Family to Egypt*” I often feel that all the Holy Bible gates are opened for me. I enter to hear the heavenly invitation addressed to me personally, to reach the depth of the Holy Bible, and to discover God’s everlasting blessing which works in Egypt, working in my depth, being my inner Egypt.

Among all the nations, outside Israel, we do not find a single country the word of God is concerned about like ‘Egypt.’ The Holy Bible has pointed directly to Egypt in both, the Old and New Testaments more than 550 times.

We can divide the history of Egypt as shown in the Holy Bible to four stages similar to the four stages we passed through as a nation enjoying salvation, or as children of God.

- a. Man in the Garden of Eden, his heart became a spiritual fruitful paradise.
- b. Man after falling under the natural law, in need of a Savior to free him from sin.
- c. Man under Moses’ Law, exposing sin and showing the need of a Savior leading to Jesus Christ.
- d. Man in the era of blessing when he accepts the crucified Jesus Christ and becomes a house for Him, carrying Him inside and living persecuted through Him all his life.

Egypt has passed through these four stages:

The first Stage: Egypt during the era of the Patriarchs and it resembles the life of the first parents in Garden of Eden where they found all their fullness. That is how the first Patriarchs, such as Abraham, Jacob and his sons went to Egypt asking for food when a famine appeared in the areas where they were living (Gen. 13:1; 42:1-3; 46:7; 47:27; Ps. 105:23; Acts 7:15). Jacob’s sons and grandsons felt that they have enjoyed Egypt’s wealth, when they started there as a nation, where the first leader of Israel was born.

The Second Stage: Egypt during the time of Moses before receiving Moses’ Law. This stage represents man who lost his freedom

in the Garden of Eden and became a slave to sin. Egypt was a symbol to our slavery to sin and to Satan and his soldiers. Fleeing from Egypt through Moses was a shadow of our new exodus under the leadership of Jesus Christ. Exodus was the nerve of the Old Testament, that is why the Lord often introduces Himself to His people as the Lord who freed His people from Egypt's slavery.

The Third Stage: Egypt during the Prophets' Era. This represents man under the Law, when he was called to leave with Moses and to receive the Promised Land. It was more appropriate for him to keep the heavenly promise, to enjoy freedom and comfort, but he broke the Law and dealt falsely with the covenant and deviated from the trust of God, his heavenly Father to rely on Egypt 'the human arm.'

Egypt during this time represents two serious sins revealed by the Law without treating the weakness. These two sins are: Loving the world with its earthly desires, and the sin of relying on human arm not on God's wonderful salvation.

The Fourth Stage: Egypt the Resort for Baby Christ. Egypt was a symbol to God's Garden, then became a symbol to Satan's slavery and falling under the captivity of sin. The Pharaohs were proud of their authority and their power in pride and haughtiness. Its gates were opened to enjoy receiving the baby Christ. God had previously revealed to His people, that the incarnated Son of God, Jesus Christ, comes to Egypt (Isa. 19) as a child with His mother, Virgin Mary and Joseph. They flee to Egypt after the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, and commanded him to take the Baby and His mother and depart to the land of Egypt, as king Herod is asking for the new born Hebrew males to be put to death (Matthew 2:3). This stage points to the believer who after becoming a slave to sin, receives the person Jesus Christ his Savior, making a holy temple from his inner man.

Our Christ entered Egypt, escaping from Herod, but He "the Crucified Jesus" who pours the sign of the cross upon His people in Egypt, His church stays enjoying in sharing His sufferings, and in sharing His crucifixion through ages, carrying with the cross the joy of resurrection and its glory.

I hope we can discover our inner Egypt, asking God to accept it as His resort, and converting it to a New Jerusalem.

1

EGYPT IN THE ERA OF THE PATRIARCHS

EGYPT AS THE LORD'S GARDEN

When Lot wanted to choose a fruitful land, he lifted his eyes “and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it is well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, *like the land of Egypt*” (Genesis 13:10). Egypt was well known for its wealth and its fruitful crops.

“Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land” (Genesis 12:10). And Jacob then sent his sons to buy wheat from there, “because the famine was severe in all lands” (Genesis 41:57). That is why Egypt was named God’s Garden, and the first man before his fall in the Garden of Eden is characterized as a fruitful garden.

Our parents Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, which was called the Garden of the Lord, where all the nature was in their service, enjoying the fruits of the garden, and bearing internal spiritual fruit rejoicing the Lords’ heart together with the heavenly hearts. That is how God always longed that humanity would have everlasting fulfillment, exceedingly fruitful, to become the Lord’s fruitful garden. God talks with the sacred hearts saying: “**A garden enclosed** is My sister, My spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, Fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, With all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes.” And the souls answers back: “Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat its pleasant fruits” (Song of Solomon 4:12-16).

Man views internally of “the Lord’s Garden” where the Lord eats its pleasant fruits and smells its beautiful incense, and invites the heavenly hosts to enjoy His garden saying: “I have come to My garden, My sister, My spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with My spice. I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk. Eat O friends! Drink; yes drink deeply, O beloved ones!” (Song of Solomon 5:1).

THE WAREHOUSES OF THE LORD IN EGYPT

Joseph entered Egypt as a slave, and as a slave he blessed the house of Potiphar. He was thrown in jail unjustly, but he served the prisoners, the outlaws and the despised. Finally, he entered the palace of the Pharaoh of Egypt and built warehouses to feed the Egyptians and the foreigners during the years of the famine, saving them all from certain death.

Don't you think that this was a prophecy of Jesus' work in His Church in Egypt. As He became a slave for our sake, He transformed our lives to love so we can share with Him the spirit of humbleness, love and service. He entered our church as Joseph to assemble inside it, warehouses of love and true spirituality among all generations, so every believer may find in it what suffices him and does not die from starvation.

LEAVE EGYPT!

If Egypt during the Patriarchs' time represents man before sin, living like in the garden of the Lord, carrying inside him a fruitful joyous garden. At the same time it represents the Lord's timely blessings which if man got attached to without their Giver, the garden loses its nature. All the blessings are God's free gifts, we thank God who granted them to us, viewing and enjoying Him as the Giver of these blessings and not the blessings themselves.

God was worried getting His children to get attached to His blessings, so He asked them to leave or not to appeal it. During Isaac's time a famine prevailed, the Lord appeared to him saying, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you..." (Genesis 26: 2,3).

✠ *You've granted Egypt its great Nile,
Transferring it to Your fruitful garden.
May You grant me Your holy river!
Ever-flowing with Your waters inside me,
And my inner deserts, be converted into Your fruitful garden!*

✠ *Depart my Beloved to Your garden,
Find inside me the fruit of Your Holy Spirit.
Eat and drink,
All what is inside me is Your creation!*

Guard it with Your fiery love so the enemy can never destroy it!

EGYPT AND EXODUS

EGYPT AND PHARAOH'S HARSHNESS

We have previously mentioned that Egypt in the first stage symbolizes the man living in the Garden of Eden and his heart as a fruitful garden. The following stage, when Pharaoh started to burden God's people, it resembled the aggressive man who is a slave to Satan and his soldiers.

The story of the fallen Jewish people under slavery, their labor in mud and brick making, and their burden under Pharaoh's abusive hands, their escape from Egypt with the Lord's strong hand and outstretched arm is not an accidental act among thousands of acts revealed in the Holy Bible. It is a main issue mentioned in the book of Exodus and referred to in many books in the Holy Bible. **Deliverance** from Egypt was not only the main concern of Moses but was mentioned in the historical Books, Psalms, and Book of the Prophets. In the liturgies of the Jewish feasts, it is often repeated in the praises offered at the Temple. The story of exodus is a shadow to the true story Jesus fulfilled on the cross, when he freed us from slavery to Satan and brought us to the bosom of His Father, in the heavenly Canaan.

DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT AND ENJOYING THE JOYOUS FREEDOM

As the people have fallen under the burden of slavery and suffered from Pharaoh representing falling under Satan's slavery; God sent His prophet Moses to free them. The invitation was for freedom from Satan's abuse and entering the joyous stage with God, converting their lives into endless feasts for the Lord. Moses said to Pharaoh: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: *'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast for me in the wilderness'*" (Exodus 5:1).

That is the covenant the Lord wanted to establish with His people: the covenant of freedom, through it His people enjoy the blessed, joyous life, and without it they fall under Satan's curse. The word that came from the Lord to Jeremiah, saying: "*Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant, which I commanded*

your fathers the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace” (Jeremiah 11:4). **Origen** says:

[This curse does not fall on us, but it rather falls on those who ignored the words of the covenant the Lord has commanded the fathers, *“the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace.”*]

We also, the Lord brought us out of the land of Egypt,¹ and out of the iron furnace, especially if we understood what is written in the Revelation, that the place where the Lord was crucified, is spiritually referred to as Sodom and Egypt. It is obvious that if you understood what the country means spiritually called Egypt, which you have been residing in before, then you have exited the land of Egypt. It is then also said to you: *“Listen to my voice and do with it as I command you”*.²]

THE DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT AND ENJOYING A PRACTICAL COMFORT COVENANT

It is quite a difference working in slavery under Satan’s (Pharaoh) hands which does not know any mercy, and going out to work according to the heavenly covenant the comfort Giver. The deliverance from Egypt carried a new meaning to comfort, which revolves around working in the circle of the Lord through His spirit and for His account.

The aim of this covenant is to free them from the furnace of Egypt, from fire to bring them to the dew of His comfort. He freed them from the aggressiveness of their laborers, not to live in flabbiness without work, but to receive the blessing of labor. In an alternative meaning, they left the furnace of their slavery to accept to work for God according to His will, not as a burden they hate to be committed to, but as a blessing from God. He says, *“Do according to all that I command you”* (Jer. 11: 4,5.), replacing the bitter slavery lab with the joyous work for the Lord’s sake.

“Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying ‘Obey My voice’” (Jer. 11: 4,5). The iron furnace is a furnace where its heat exceedingly rises to melt the iron, which is not the case for many metals. Though you can melt copper in 800 F, iron does not melt until it reaches 1535 F. He resembles their deliverance from Egypt to who is delivered

¹ We know that “Egypt” represents to Origen “this world” or “the dark life in this world.”

² In Jer. Hom. 9:2.

from fire, from the iron furnace, not to insult them for freeing them from fire. However, after their delivery He asks them to enter with Him in a covenant. The Lord did not use their misery to order and forbid, but to enter with them in a friendly discussion in a fatherly covenant full of love. In this covenant He presents Himself belonging to His children: **“so shall you be My people, and I will be your God”** (Jer. 11:4).

✠ Since Egypt is an iron furnace (Jer 11:4; Deut. 4:20) it resembles all earthly ways.

It is for all who escape from the evil of human life without burning with its sin or without filling his heart with fire like a furnace, to offer thanks not less than who gets tested with fire like dew¹.

Origen²

When the people of Israel were delivered from Egypt, the Lord gave His people an oath through which they enjoyed relief, through leaving their labor for Pharaoh’s account and working for God’s kingdom on earth. Through our deliverance by the cross, God offered us a new covenant recorded by His heavenly blood and carved on His pure body, to enjoy a greater relief, entitling us to enter heavens hosts and sharing with the heavenly their works and praises.

✠ The Lord said clearly (through His prophets) that Moses laws (the rituals) are over, and that a new law offered by Jesus Christ abides. **“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord”** (Jer 31: 31,32). He promised a new covenant, and as the wise St. Paul says: “In that He says, ‘A new covenant’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13). If the old becomes obsolete, the new takes over and this has been achieved not through one of the saintly prophets, but more through the Lord of those prophets.³

St. Cyril of Alexandria

¹ *The Song of the Three Young men.*

² *On Prayer, 3:14.*

³ *In Luc. Serm. 133.*

✠ *My sin expelled me out of Eden's Garden.
In my hunger, I flee to Egypt to get satisfied and relieved.
Pharaoh humiliated me with his fierceness and harshness.
Satan the murderer destroyed me.
Who can ever free me from his slavery?!*

✠ *Free me from the captivity of sin,
So I may enter with you in a fatherly heavenly covenant.
I find my comfort in You O Savior of the world.*

3

EGYPT AND THE PROPHET'S ERA

In the beginning of Moses' leadership to his people and freeing them from Pharaoh's slavery, the people had not received the Law yet; everyone was abiding to the natural law. This law revealed human's stubbornness and resistance to any truthful, spiritual leadership. Upon receiving Moses Law and settling down in the land of Canaan, and ruled by kings like other nations, they forgot their covenant with the Lord. They rejected all heavenly wisdom, to live only according to human thinking regardless of any truthful spiritual leadership.

During this long period, the Lord sent a chain of prophets revealing the serious danger of His people's attachment to Egypt, being a symbol of two serious sins: the love of the world, and depending on human arm to be saved from their resisting enemy, Assyria and then Babylon.

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND DEPENDING ON HUMAN STRENGTH

Egypt during Moses time resembles the aggressiveness of sin and its dominating on human's life leading to humiliation and dragging man to the mud to work in brick instead of lifting him up to heaven with a joyous heart for eternal glory. On the other hand, the people would have entered to the Promised Land and the power of Assyria was reflected as a great city followed by Babylon. The world was ruled by these two great powers: Assyria or Babylon from the northeast of Israel, and Egypt from the southwest of Israel. These two powers were fighting on ruling the world during that period. Israel and Judah were in the midst. If any army of the two powers moved towards another country, it had to pass through Israel and Judah and destroyed them. They were like a "*sandwich*" the two fought to eat. According to the human logic, it was for Israel to enter in an alliance with one of these powers to be securing from the other power, thus the kings were hesitant once to make a covenant with Assyria or Babylon against Egypt, and vice versa with Egypt against the others.

During the Prophet Jeremiah's time, Judah was ruled by its kings and politicians and all leaders, even the religious ones preferred to agree

with Egypt against Babylon. The voice of the Lord on Jeremiah that **the victory is not with alliance with Egypt and relying on human power, but with repentance and returning to God, the victory-Giver.** Jeremiah was convicted of national treason and secretly alliance with the enemy, Babylon, and putting down the spirit of the army and people.

In the starting of Jeremiah's prophetic work (626 BC) Assyria was in the northern valley of the Euphrates, domineering the world for 300 years, its capital was Nineveh. No one could have ever imagined that it could be destroyed by any nation. Egypt was around 1000 years before the rising of Assyria as a worldly power controlling the power authority in the world, but it had started to collide. In the second year's ministry of Jeremiah (625 BC), Nabopolassar established the neo-Babylonian kingdom (in the south valley of the Euphrates). Babylon was a small helpless country, no one ever expected that it was on its way to gaining the world's domination from Assyria, where its sun sets without return after the falling of Nineveh in the year 626 BC, and its victory over the Pharaoh of Egypt.

After the death of Ashurbanipal, Assyria became weak. It was unable to prevent Josiah of moving towards his independence and freeing from the Assyrian dominance. The people of Smyrna and Scythians cut some parts from the Assyrian kingdom and the Medes, in the west of Iran became a threat to Assyria, that led at the end to its collapse.

When Nineveh, the capital of Assyria collapsed in 612 BC, the kingdom of Assyria came to an end. Thus making Jeremiah look as if he was mistaken in his explanation of Judah's political situation, and everybody considered that there is no further threaten for Judah after the collapsing of Assyria, making pessimistic view of Jeremiah as no longer right.

In the year 609 BC. Necho, the Pharaoh of Egypt, gathered his army and headed to take over the Euphrates. He invaded Gaza and Askelon together with some other Palestinian cities. His aim was to assist the Assyrians, who desperately tried to stand to the Babylonians in Haran. Josiah tried to stop him in Megiddo, thinking that the Lord would support him in doing this, relying on the optimism of the false prophets promises, but he was murdered. Upon the killing of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz (means Jehovah takes) or Shallum (Jer 22:11) became king, and he was evil. Necho the Pharaoh uncrowned him after 3 months

and exiled him in Riblah, then took him to Egypt and appointed his brother Jehoiakim (means God rises) his successor instead of him.

In the year 605 BC, the fourth year of his ruling, Nebuchadnezzar overcame Necho the Pharaoh of Egypt in the battle of Carchemish (Jer 46:1,2). Jehoiakim had to convert his loyalty from Egypt to Babylon, but a good part from the people preferred to be with Egypt against Babylon, even Jehoiakim himself favored this, in spite of Jeremiah's warning to him.

When Gedaliah was killed, Jeremiah advised the people not to flee to Egypt, but in vain, they not only left by themselves to Egypt, but also forced him with his close friend the scribe Baruch to accompany them in their trip (41:1–43:7). There he spoke his last prophesy in Tahpanhes in Egypt (43:8–44:30). There is a tradition states that he was stoned in Egypt because of his scolding to his people.¹

The rulers and the people were in constant struggle and bitterness between alliance with the Pharaoh of Egypt or with Babylon. The majority of them could not stand Babylon and expected its invasion any time, which pushed them to throw themselves in the arms of the Pharaoh of Egypt, even though their experience with the Pharaohs has not been a good one. We can see this struggle with what happened among the five kings whom Jeremiah attended during his prophecies:

- i) Josiah the king (626 BC - 609 BC): the Egyptians killed him in 609 BC in the battle of Megiddo.
- ii) Jehoahaz (609 BC): Pharaoh made him succeed his father then overthrew him after three months (2 Chr.36:2).
- iii) Jehoiakim (609 BC - 597 BC): Pharaoh made him succeed his brother and he stayed loyal to him for 4 years. However, Nebuchadnezzar overcame the Pharaoh, he yielded to Babylon, his death was a mystery.
- iv) Jehoiakim (597 BC) was crowned king for 3 months, then Nebuchadnezzar took him as a captive.
- v) Zedekiah (597 BC – 587 BC), Nebuchadnezzar crowned him king instead of his nephew. He was confused between his loyalty to his master in Babylon and trying to satisfy his people who were attracted to the Pharaoh of Egypt to protect them from Babylon. They saw Jehoiachin, the captive, as their legal king. Zedekiah,

¹ Peak's Comm. On the Bible, London 1920, p. 475.

befriended the Pharaoh of Egypt so the king of Babylon imprisoned him after putting out his eyes, he also took over Jerusalem and Judah (39:1-7).

This is a brief view which reveals how the Jews were in the middle of a millstone, and instead of relying on God with repentance to enjoy salvation, they depended on this or that.

“Then he (Jeremiah), called Johanan the son of Kareah, all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, and said to them,

‘...Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; do not be afraid of him,’ says the Lord, ‘for I am with you to save you and deliver you from his hand...’

But if you say, ‘*We will not dwell in this land, disobeying the voice of the Lord your God, saying ‘No but we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor be hungry for bread, and there we will dwell’... so will My fury be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. And you shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more.*

The Lord has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, ‘*Do not go to Egypt!*’ *Know certainly that I have admonished you this day*” (Jer 42:8-19).

Egypt became the symbol of relying on man’s power, that is the reason the Lord orders us not to go to it ignoring seeking the Lord Himself. “Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God, when He led you in the way? And now why take the road to Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or why take the road to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River?” (Jer 2:17-18). By the waters of Sihor he meant the Nile waters, as it came in Isaiah: “The harvest of the River, is her revenue; And she is a marketplace for the nations” (Isaiah 23:3). Saint Jerome¹ sees the word of “Sihor” meaning “the river full of mud” and may be the Nile River was called like this because of the mud it carries during the flood time.

¹ Ep. 108:14.

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND FROM THE WORLDLY LOVE

In the Old Testament, Egypt signified the love of the world. It was known by its river, which added richness and fertility to the valley, as well as Babylon with its arrogance, became a symbol for all arrogance and adultery. From the symbolic side, Jeremiah came warning the believers from seeking the Pharaoh of Egypt, i.e. the world in its destructive love, or the king of Babylon, i.e. the arrogance that destroys the spirit. But only seek the Lord who frees the soul and the body together, from the slavery of the world's love and arrogance!

If Egypt resembled the love of the world because of its plentiful wealth, and Babylon the arrogance due to its authority and temporary pride; the believer's heart is often drawn from seeking the Lord's work, to fulfill his earthly desires, or because of the arrogant spirit which evolves inside him. In both cases he denies and prevents himself from getting filled with righteousness.

In the Paschal letter in 335, **Pope Athanasius** addressed two teams celebrating the feast. The first team the ancient people wanted their spirit watered from the Nile in Egypt or the Euphrates in Assyria instead of getting watered from God's living sources so they ended in more thirst. On the other hand, he saw the other team full of the Crucified and Risen Christ. He said: [You know that sin has its special food, food of its death, that is why it invites who love desire without being selective saying, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Proverbs 9:17). Whoever touches it does not realize that who are connected with the worldly desires are destroyed with sin.]

"Why do you gad about so much to change your way?

Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt, as you were ashamed of Assyria.

Indeed you will go forth from him with your hands on your head;

For the Lord has rejected your trusted allies,

And you will not prosper by them" (Jeremiah 2: 36,37).

It altered its trust towards Assyria, and Egypt took its place in protecting it. But it was as if in funeral and her supporter was dead. It places its hands on its head to mourn whom she relied on, all its human plans were destroyed. The placing of the hands on the head points to

slavery, when slaves are lead to their slavery land with their hands on their heads.

As I have said, from the symbolic side Egypt resembles the life of luxury and the love of the world, because of its wealth, Babylon represents rebellion and arrogance (boasting) against the Lord and His people. Jeremiah's prophecies started with the nations in Egypt to present the life of luxury that spoils people and ended with Babylon which represented the resentful soul and its arrogance. He started with Egypt and ended with Babylon, as oftenly the person concentrates on the beginning and the ending and gives them his priority and his concentration in studies and research. He started with Egypt as it accepted the strong ratification but came back and accepted the Lord's redeeming works, you hear the holy promise: "***Blessed My people Egypt***" (Isaiah 19:25). It represented the Gentiles' Church which God came to riding on a swift cloud (Isaiah. 19:1). Babylon represents a kingdom against the Lord Jesus, we hear in the book of Revelation the scream: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a cage for every unclean and hated bird" (Rev. 18:2).

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND ABOMINATIONS

In Egypt where this nation and this people grew, the idols of Egypt were surviving in their hearts. The Lord has revealed the secret of their slavery in Egypt. It was not the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, but the deviation of the people's hearts: "***Then I said to them, 'Each of you, throw away your abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God'***" (Ezekiel 20:7,8). In the same time the Lord was preparing for them the land which flows with milk and honey "*the glory of lands*" (Ezekiel 20:6). They refused to throw the abominations, which were before their eyes, and not to defile the idols. He did not condemn them, but delivered them from the land of Egypt with strength for the sake of His mighty name (Ez. 20:9), so He may be glorified in them among the Gentiles. This is how God looks after His creation. He prepared for our salvation and freedom from sin and delivering us into His bosom, the garden of righteousness, which flows with milk and honey, even when the human being is born, and the microbe of rebelling flows in his blood. Rebelling is a natural phenomena inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve, that is why we need a complete renewal of our nature.

He prolonged their time in the wilderness for forty years, so that they may forget the idols of Egypt, which they carried in their hearts. He led them to a new land, where they adopted worshipping the idols of these lands, offering sacrifices and worships on the highs as the residents of these areas. Instead of being the holy people of the Lord, glorifying Him among the Gentiles, they followed their abominations.

† *May You free my soul from seeking human power.*

You are my defense, my power and my victory.

In You I abide,

With You I rule and get crowned!

† *May You free my inner soul from the worldly love and desires,*

You are my heart's desire!

You are my soul's pleasure!

You are her heavenly food!

You are my righteousness!

You are my praise and eternal joy!

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES ON EGYPT

THE COLLAPSE OF HUMAN SUPPORT AND ITS SANCTIFICATION

In the time of the prophets, Egypt resembles relying on human power and human wisdom instead of relying on God, and requesting the heavenly wisdom in every deed. That is the reason all the prophecies came announcing the collapse of the human arm which we seek, not to stay destroyed but to sanctify it. This is how the prophets predicted the destruction of Egypt, so that the people may return and confess the works of the Lord with Egypt while it is cured from its spiritual diseases and gets stronger with the arm of the Lord and sanctified for His sake. Following is a brief review of these prophecies:

Jeremiah's courage is shown when he was forced to go to a strange land (Egypt) together with Baruch, and had no one to stand beside him except Baruch. In spite of this situation he prophesied without fear against Pharaoh and the Jews who fled to Egypt. He foretold them the falling of Egypt under the Babylonian kingdom.

In spite of the Jews' rebellion and departure to Egypt, the Lord did not prevent them from the prophecies. Jeremiah prophesied while in Egypt that the Lord always fetches His people wherever they were. **St. John Chrysostom**¹ sees the Lord allowed that Jeremiah be taken with the people to Egypt. For His people have resisted the voice of the Lord with great insistence, but He does not leave them in their stubbornness. Jeremiah was carrying the voice of the Lord against their will to keep them from the complete destruction.

FIRST: EGYPT'S FALL

“Go up to Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt; In vain you will use many medicines; you shall not be cured. The nations have heard of your shame, And your cry has filled the land; for the mighty man has stumbled against the mighty; they both have fallen together” (Jeremiah 46:11,12).

¹ In Rom. Hom. 14.

When the Pharaoh's army lost, the prophet did not see heroes in the army anymore. He saw it as a girl, or a weak wounded girl, with serious wounds that cannot be cured. The ancient Egypt was well known for its excellence and achievements in the field of medicine, especially the herbal medicine. Now a day, intensive research is performed around this type of medicine, but the prophet sees that all the drugs of Egypt and its medical experience has failed in offering the cure for its wounded army. They were in shame and their land was full of their cries when a hero stumbles following another and they all fall together.

Where is the cure? In Gilead, where you find the balm! She has to climb there to get cured! She is in need of the Holy Spirit who holds the hand of the Gentile girl to rise her from the filth and corruption of this world, to the Church of Jesus Christ, the righteous Gilead, where she finds Christ, the spiritual Balm, the cure donator.

It is an invitation directed to the Gentiles which Egypt represents, to leave its various drugs, and surrender to Christ's Church, there it can be unified with the Savior who heals the soul's wounds and cures it¹.

THE RISE OF BABYLON ON EGYPT'S ACCOUNT

“As I live,’ says the King. Whose name is the Lord of hosts, ‘Surely as Tabor is among the mountains.

And as Carmel by the sea, so he shall come” (Jer. 46:18).

Pharaoh thought that he would destroy Babylon, and draw down its kingdom to the Hell. The defeat of Egypt made Babylon the only great kingdom in the world, its name became famous like Tabor among the mountains of Canaan and Carmel by the sea. The Lord, the King of Sabaoth, confirmed with an oath which was truly fulfilled and not a threat.

It seems that Jeremiah the Prophet saw in Nebuchadnezzar who conquered Egypt with strength, a high mountain that rises over the valley. It is like Tabor which rises 1800 feet as a sole mountain in the valley of Jezreel in the north of Israel, or like the Carmel by the sea whose its peak is around 1700 feet and its northern coast slopes sharply towards the Mediterranean Sea².

¹ See Jeremiah explanation 8:22.

² Thompson: Jeremiah, p. 692.

SECOND: EGYPT BECAME A HELPLESS GIRL WITHOUT DEFENSELESS

“O you daughter dwelling in Egypt, prepare yourself to go into captivity, for Noph shall be waste and be desolate, without inhabitant” (Jeremiah 46:19).

The strike was final this time, as it destroyed all Egypt, especially the great cities. He pictures Egypt as a captive girl who cannot defend herself or escape from those who captured her. This was about its great army and its boasting Pharaoh, for the land became Noph, which is one of the great cities which became a dump, burned with fire, without a single person living in it.

THIRD: EGYPT BECAME AS A PRETTY HEIFER GOOD ONLY FOR SLAUGHTER

“Egypt is like a pretty heifer, but destruction comes, it comes” (Jeremiah 46:20).

Why does he picture Egypt as a very pretty heifer? Pharaoh thought that with his army, which one of its main gods was the calve *Apis*, he was capable to free the people of Judah who thought that God, the Lord of Sabaoth, could not free his people. Pharaoh did not realize that he altered Egypt to a heifer bearing a very pretty picture, and this is due to its recognition in the whole world, and the strength of its army, capability of its horses and carriages and all the army tools. But it was a fat defenseless heifer that could not perform any kind of work, it was not good for anything except being slaughtered. The people from the north (Babylon) would come to slaughter it. He transformed *Apis*, the calve, and its worshipers to an extremely pretty heifer to be eaten and be consumed and never has a life!

FOURTH: IT CONVERTED ITS MERCENARIES TO FAT BULLS

“Also her mercenaries are in her midst like fat bulls, For they also are turned back, they have fled away together. They did not stand, For the day of their calamity had come upon them, the time of their punishment” (Jeremiah 46:21).

The heathen Egypt did not become alone as a bull like its worshiped *Apis*, but its mercenaries as the paid forces which had fallen in its midst and shared its worship for the bull, also turned into fat bulls.

They came to defend it with its army, so it became fat offering for slaughter.

FIFTH: ITS MARCH BECAME AS A SERPENT

“Her noise shall go like a serpent, for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, like those who chop wood” (Jeremiah 46:22).

Jeremiah has used the serpent coming out of the forest to be hit with axes. The serpent had a high rank among other Egyptian gods. It's unable to defend, not only its worshipers, but even itself.

The marshals and the knights moved and the noise was strong and fearful. The prophet saw it like a serpent coming out of the forest with a weak noise which can barely be heard, falling under the axes not only an ax of a single woodchopper, but several wood choppers axes! He mocked Egypt with its great army and all its capabilities not exceeding the noise of the defenseless serpent motion facing several axes.

SIXTH: IT BECAME AS A TREE UNDER MANY AXES

“They shall cut down her forest,” says the Lord. “Though it cannot be searched, Because they are innumerable, And more numerous than grasshoppers” (Jeremiah 46:23).

It cannot defend itself or even condemn those who invaded her. The countless axes fall on her and she became chopped into various small parts, not fit except to be thrown in fire. If the tree can scream in front of its ax choppers, then Pharaoh can raise his voice against Nebuchadnezzar.

SEVENTH: IT BECAME LIKE A GIRL SOLD TO ITS ENEMIES

“She shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north” (Jeremiah 46:24).

“The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel says: ‘Behold, I will bring punishment on Amon of No, and Pharaoh and Egypt, with their gods and their kings – Pharaoh and those who trust in him. And I will deliver them into the hands of those who seek their lives, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of his servants” (Jeremiah 46:25, 26).

‡ *When I see You in all human hand, I see you and glorify you.
I do not seek human hand, but its Creator.*

† *May every human hand I seek falls down
I see him wounded and cannot be cured except by You,
And no medicine suffice, except Your blood.*

† *May my human refuge be like a captioned girl,
If I accompany her, I become weak and humiliated.*

† *May she become as a fat bull, unable to work,
Only fit to be slaughtered. If I stick with her, I get destroyed.*

† *May I flee from seeking any human hand,
Like who flees from the serpent coming out of the forest,
Or else my head will be chopped with its head, by the
woodchoppers.*

† *Grant me not to rely on human hand,
It is like a tree falling with many axes.*

† *May You be my resort, My Healer, my soul Medicine,
My Strength, and my Deliverer from all humiliation.
My Support with whom I do Your work with strength so as not to be
destroyed.*

*I possess You instead of the serpent, O You who killed the serpent
with Your Cross.*

*I enjoy You, O who was crucified on the tree of the Cross.
So no enemy can approach me!*

† † †

THE PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL ON EGYPT

Jeremiah started by warning the Jews from relying on human hand (Egypt). He referred to it once, as the captioned girl, another as the bull to be slaughtered, as the serpent coming out of the forest that gets killed by the woodchoppers, and as the tree destroyed by axes. Now Ezekiel is warning the people in captivity in Babylon from seeking the worship of the Egyptian idols.

FIRST: THE TWO GREAT EAGLES (EZ. 17)

God compares Egypt and Babylon to two great eagles, which He sent to His people in order to straighten them. He represented Himself as eagles that carried them with love and tender to the divine bosom, saying: *“I bore you eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself”* (Exod. 19:4).

SECOND: PHARAOH THE HUGE MONSTER

The Pharaoh king of Egypt and his statesmen rely on the River Nile which made the land fertile, that is why Ezekiel referred to Pharaoh as a great monster, who lies in the midst of his rivers (Ez 29:3) due to the fact that the Nile River was famous for its crocodiles. The Pharaoh of Egypt thought he was the creator of the Nile River for his own use, sat in it as his throne, to defend the nations surrounding him and his allies. The Lord called Pharaoh “the great monster,” maybe because the Egyptians used to worship crocodiles so they became like them, and He called their king “the great crocodile.” Whoever worships the stones he becomes stone, and whoever worships the vain gods he becomes vain, and whoever worships the righteous Lord he becomes “righteous” and participates in the heavenly nature.

What does the Lord do with this proud beast, who thinks that he has created the river for himself?! He says: *“But I will put hooks in your jaws, and cause the fish of your rivers to stick to your scales; I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, and all the fish in your rivers will stick to your scales. I will leave you in the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers; you shall fall on the open field; you shall not be picked up or gathered. I have given you as food to the beasts of the field and to the birds of heavens”* (Ez 29: 4,5).

Pharaoh thought with the pride of his heart, that all what he possess from power and wealth, are from his own hand creation. That is why the Lord deprived him from these blessings, and threw him out of His rivers, to die like the fish out of the water. He thought that everything was created only to serve him, that is why he is thrown in the wilderness, no one to ask about him or bury him, he became a prey to the wilderness beasts and food to the birds! Due to the fact that he collected many who sought his protection or fought with him, they became like the fish stuck to its scales. Whether they were nations or leaders, vehicles or armies, they received his same destiny. That is how boasting deprives him from wealth, pride, even his life, and humiliates even who are stuck to him seeking his support. It was said that this Pharaoh has gone to fight the people of Cyrene who threw out his friend Aricius, the king of Libya, and brought him back to his throne. But the Egyptians rebelled against him during his absence, so he never returned to his kingdom neither did his leaders, and was thrown in the wilderness with them.

We can observe that the discipline of Pharaoh and the fish stuck to his scales was to leave them to die in the wilderness and be eaten by the beasts and the birds of heavens. This represents the worst death despised by the Egyptians, who used to care about the body and have built mazes to preserve it till the soul returns back to its own body again.

This is the effect of pride in the life of Satan who belonged to the highest host in the heavens. He lost by his pride the heavens and had fallen into Hades, he replaced the divine friendship with a fight against God, and replaced the heavenly glory by the permanent humiliation. He was destroyed and destroyed with him lots of his angels and also humans! Due to the same, our first parents have fallen from the Paradise and were deprived from being in a permanent presence with God, and they inherited their descendants all the troubles and sufferings! We were deprived from the river of life, and were thrown into the wilderness of this life to die spiritually, and become a targeted prey for all the wilderness beasts (the demon of injustice and violence) and the birds of heaven (the demon of pride).

In Ezekiel 32 he says, “***You are like a young lion among the nations, and you are like a monster in the seas***” (Ez. 32:2). He believed that he was a lion who protected the nations from Babylon, and did not recognize that he was only a monster locked in its river, who could not

leave the land of Egypt to save Jerusalem or any other nation from the hand of Babylon. He thought that he was capable of being the rescuer, making the king of Judah angry. When Jerusalem was surrounded, he could not save it, he became like who disturbs the water with his feet, he never kept his peace or left others to have peace and that is “*the monster in the seas.*”

In Ezekiel 29 the great monster used to brag about himself saying: “*My River is my own; I have made it for myself*” (Ez 29:3). This boastful spirit did not destroy the monster alone but destroyed the fish who were stuck to his scales. “*Bursting forth in your rivers, troubling the waters with your feet, and fouling their rivers*” (Ez 32:2). That is why his condemnation was great and sour, bringing death to others. The Lord has spread His net over the monster and his company (nations) who imitate him and are attached to his scales (Ez 32:3; 29:4).

DISCIPLINE FOR THE HUGE MONSTER (EZ. 32)

a. Repeating the discipline mentioned in chapter 29, that God would bring him out of the midst of his river, the subject of his pride and boasting, and would throw him in the wilderness to die together with the fish stuck to his scale, becoming prey to the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the wilderness.

b. If this monster is proud of his river and the fertility it brings to the land, God substituted its flow by the flow of the monster’s blood, even the mountains and the riverbeds will be full of it. Pride transfers the water into blood, so the boastful blood flows with a smell of death which everyone despises.

c. When its blood flows, this monster becomes rotten, thrown on the mountains and the valleys after he thought of himself as the support to the nations, he became a heavy burden which everyone wanted to get rid of. I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations which you have not known (Ezekiel 32:9).

d. His condemnation does not stop at his own destruction together with the nations attached to him, nor to the transformation of the rivers water into blood, nor becoming a burden which all mountains and valleys try to get rid of, but the effect of his arrogance reaches the sun and the moon and all other planets. It is said, “*When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars*

dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land, Says the Lord God” (Ez. 32:7,8).

This is a bitter picture to the end as revealed by the Lord Himself (Mathew 24:29), and to the signs of the Antichrist (Revelation 8:12). As if the judgement of the proud person is very great; it’s a shadow of the Antichrist era.

What is this heaven, which its lights cannot be blocked except by loosing all heavenly thoughts and being unable to taste the eternal life?! What are these stars, which darken the spiritual inner energy and the body senses?! Instead of being a mystery of inner lighting through the work of the Holy Spirit, it becomes a source of the soul’s darkness and destruction. Covering the sun with clouds, when the soul cannot see her Christ - the Light of righteousness- enlightening her; and the moon does not shine more when the biblical life with its worships and its preaching does not have an effect on her. As for the land full of darkness, it is the human body, instead of becoming a holy temple for the Lord, it becomes a place for darkness.

Briefly, Pride destroys man completely, loosing his Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Church, the shiny moon, destroying his inner energy and ruining his heart and body, and darkens all his thoughts. The heavens and earth become dark in his sight, the sun and the moon as if they do not exist; and the stars fall inside him.

e. Facing this complete destruction to the soul and body, together the thoughts and heart, a scary and horrifying feeling is spread among many nations and their kings. As said: *“Yes, I will make many peoples astonished at you, and their kings shall be horribly afraid of you when I brandish My sword before them; and they shall tremble every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of your fall” (Ez. 32:10).* Destruction of the proud scares the sinner’s heart, as they feel their judgement is near.

THIRD: THE PHARAOH IS A STAFF OF REED TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

The Pharaoh is compared to a staff of reed to the house of Israel (Ez 29:6). He is like a cane but out of reed, if man relies on it, it breaks. The relying man would suffer from shoulder damage and he

weakens. Instead of the reed supporting him, it destroys his abilities as Isaiah said: “For the Egyptians (Egypt) shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore, I have called her Rahab-Hem-Shaebeth” (Isaiah 3:7). The Pharaoh of Egypt encouraged Zedekiah to rebel against Babylon and to betray the promise and to break his oath. Consequently, the king perished Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah were destroyed and Pharaoh was defeated.

FOURTH: PHARAOH AS A REPRESENTATIVE TO SATAN, HIS DAY IS A DAY OF CLOUDS

When the Lord asked Ezekiel to prophesize against Pharaoh, it wasn't only for Pharaoh and Egypt to wail but to the entire paganism world; as Pharaoh was its representative at that time, as said “Wail, woe to the day”(Ez. 30:2). He called Pharaoh's day “*the day of the Lord,*” as it is disciplinary from the Lord to all nations. Therefore, it is said: “*I made the nations shake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to hell together with those who descend into the Pit*” (Ez. 31:16). “*They shall tremble every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of your fall*” (Ez. 32:10). His fall is known in the whole world and all nations shiver to it.

Also note, that Pharaoh represents ‘Satan,’ as he is an instigator to disobeying the prophecies. He thinks himself able to support others. As **Origen** says: “In my opinion, some of the nations and kings that we read about in the Holy Book are definitely referring to the evil angels or opposing monarchs like Pharaoh of Egypt or Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and Assyria.”

If Pharaoh, as a symbol of Satan, thinks himself a refuge monarch for other nations, accordingly, God announces his moral defeat and destruction by fear; He made his day “*a day of clouds*” (Ez. 30:2).

Overcastting clouds is a symbol of heavenly glory covering the holy mountain, or the holy tent, or the temple as an announcement for the entrance of man in the unseen secrets. As for Satan or Pharaoh, clouds are a state of darkness through which he wouldn't know how to react. If he thinks himself a leader, in darkness, he, his followers and all those who are refuging under his wings would stumble. Therefore, it is said: “*On that day messengers shall go forth from Me in ships to make the careless Cush (Ethiopians) afraid, and great anguish shall*

come upon them, as on the day of Egypt; for indeed it is coming!" (Ez. 30:9). The nearest country to him is Cush, which might mean Nubia and also some parts of Asia. In all cases fear has filled pharaoh's heart and the closest empire sheltered under his shadow, so how about the other far nations? Their fear is the Lord Himself "*On that day messengers shall go forth from Me in ships to make the careless Cush (Ethiopians) afraid*" as it has left the Lord and resorted to Pharaoh.

Because of pride and arrogance, fear and terror came over pharaoh and over all the countries surrounding him and taking refuge in him. Instead of his wealth "*My river is my own; I have made it for myself*" (Ez. 29:3,9) the rivers became dry (Ez. 30:12) Instead of his kingship, his land was handed over to the wicked strangers (Ez. 30:12). Instead of peace and tranquillity, God sets a fire and pharaoh's kingdom loses its hope as it loses its youths in wars and its women to captivity. He thought himself divine however, his idols and devotions are destroyed (Ez. 30:13).

Satan's kingdom has to terminate his dread, and is deceiving fear will be eliminated and all his abilities shall be destroyed. He, with all those who followed him and took refuge in him, shall be thrown in eternal fire.

FIFTH: DESTROYING PHARAOH'S ARMY

When he mentioned to the destruction coming over his fortified cities, he talked about his arm, how it was broken and could not be healed (Ez 30:2-23). He is unable to hold a sword, neither to defend himself nor those seeking refuge in him. At the same time, God strengthens the arms of the king of Babylon and puts His sword in his hands to discipline Pharaoh, so that his arms shall fall down and his people shall scatter (Ez 30:24-26). This is a picture of Satan's work that is defying to the divine work as it fails completely, although at first it appears victorious.

SIXTH: PHARAOH THE FALLEN CEDAR

By the high, proud cedar reaching the clouds (Ez 31:3), he refers to the life of perfection and holiness that the Lord has granted to man. By them, man enters to the heavenly mysteries and views the unseen divine glories. The many branches refer to the strength of love so that the heart is wide enough for everyone. Therefore, they both

“holiness and love” are the gifts of the Holy Spirit who working within us through the holy water of baptism. He says: “Therefore its height was exalted above all the trees of the field; its boughs were multiplied, and its branches became long because of the abundance of water” (Ez 31:5). Through the water of baptism, we grow as a new branch in the real bush and through the divine spirit we grow consistently straightforward highly and through the many branches we grow widely. That is why **Fr. Isaac the Syrian** says: “ If goodness has been made to you, whether in secret or in public, be assured that baptism and faith are the mediator to this goodness, through them you have been summoned to good deeds in Jesus Christ¹.” As **St. Jacob El-Serougy** says in a discourse (Maymer) about baptism: “baptism writes your name in the heaven, in the city of the first-born that you may become a son to the Father in heaven.” Likewise, a real believer joins between spiritual beauty, elevation and loftiness, strength and love ... till he surpasses all the other trees and they even envy him.

The book of Ezekiel concentrates upon the sin of pride as a way to downfall saying: “Because you have increased in height, and it set its top among the thick boughs, and its heart was lifted up in its height, therefore I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations, and he shall surely deal with it; I have driven it out for its wickedness” (Ez 31:10,11). As if God would like to see his high stature reaching up to the clouds. However, if his heart is full with pride, he will fall from his altitude and his peak will come down from the clouds. Many, like Virgin Mary, have reached a high spiritual altitude and entered into God’s unveiled mysteries, yet have kept their humble hearts. Virgin Mary has sung a praise saying: “He brought the proud down from their seats, and raised the humble”. That is why the fathers have warned us from pride and vainglory or from vanity, and they have encouraged us to be humble. **St. John Climacus** says: “Humbleness is the heavenly ladder that could raise the soul from the pit of sin to heaven.” If pride has turned angels to demons (Isaiah 14:12 etc. 3:6), then humbleness undoubtedly could make demons (fallen souls) into angels, so be encouraged if you who have fallen².”



¹ *A.J. Wensinch: mystical Treatises, St. Isaac the Syrian, p. 7.*

² *Ladder 25:68,63.*

- † *Open my eyes of my heart,
so I may recognize Your love,
and enjoy the greatness of your care!*
- † *The human arm strengthens me like an eagle wishing to carry me,
But it comes back to attack me,
But You O Heavenly Eagle,
Carry me with Love towards You,
To destroy the eagles of the world,
I possess You O unique Eagle in His love and strength.*
- † *The human arm boasts like a monster in a river,
Fish get stuck to its scales,
But he dies in the wilderness together with all who are stuck to him.
He becomes a rotten corpse with unbearable smell,
But You are greater than any power,
I stick to You and unify with Your nature,
And become one with You.*
- † *Why do I rely on the worldly cane?
It is a breakable stick throwing me to the ground.
Let me rely on Your cross, the wood of life!
Carrying me to Your Heavens,
Rising me to Your eternity!*
- † *The world would love to cover me with a cloud,
Transferring my life into darkness,
Depriving me from the Sun of Righteousness.*

† † †

4

EGYPT THE REFUGE FOR JESUS

Sin corrupts man's heart and destroys it transforming him into a despised slave, an enemy to goodness and also sharing in its violence and severity. Also, instead of relying on God, man relies on human strength as when Israel wanted to make an alliance with Pharaoh to save them from Babylon and Judah. When Jesus Christ fills the heart, He changes idolatrous Egypt, from a slave to Satan into a free Egypt enjoying God's affiliation. That is how the inner person tangles with the Only-begotten Son of God, by His Holy Spirit becoming a son of grace.

Matthew the Evangelist says: *“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.’ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt”* (Matthew 2:13-14).

The escape of the Baby Jesus Christ to Egypt with His mother the Virgin Mary wasn't a minor matter in the events of salvation. However, Isaiah saw it more than seven centuries before it happened, he even recorded it in his 19th chapter.

Isaiah started his prophecy about Egypt with joy saying: *“Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.”* (Isaiah 19:1) The church praises in the feast of *“the Escape of the Holy Family to Egypt,”* saying: “Rejoice and exalt Egypt with your sons and all your cities as the Lover of mankind has come to you, the everlasting One.” **St. Cyril the Great** views the light, fast cloud (LXX) as the Virgin Mary when God's Spirit has sanctified her becoming lightly and highly carrying God of Glory Jesus escaping from Herod to Egypt (Mat 2:13-14). As He entered, the idols were shaken, idolatrous worship stirred and the Egyptians' hearts softened so as to accept His dwelling within them.

St. Augustine thinks that the soul which is united with Jesus Christ through loving faith, carries Him spiritually within her as if it

becomes like Virgin Mary who carried Him spiritually as well as physically!

Our Master could have escaped to a city of Judah or Galilee but he wanted to bless and to live in the land of Egypt, the head of the Gentile world. The divine inspiration was concerned with this special visit through which Egypt became a center of living faith. As Joseph stored wheat in Egypt to support the world during the seven years of famine, Jesus Christ granted enough blessings in Egypt enough and the whole world.

Egypt was full of idolatrous worship resembled idols like the bull Apis, cats, alligators and frogs. Nevertheless, the Egyptians received the God of Glory and He made a shrine in their hearts. Egypt, after being the largest idol worshipper, became in a short period of time, the largest center for Christian and spiritual faith as well as evangelic life. The Egyptian Church glittered through the school of Alexandria, the teaching of theology and explaining the Holy Gospel to the early Christian world, as well as being the head defender of the straight faith on universal level.

The Christian monasticism with all its various shapes started in Egypt to draw the heart of the Church to the wilderness, to have the inner angel-like life at the same time as the empirical gates were opened up to the clergymen. Yet this jeopardized the Church because of the combination of the spiritual work with temporary, political powers. St. John Chrysostom says: "Come see Egypt's deserts, it is better than any heaven! Hundreds of angels in human shapes, nations of martyrs, groups living in celibacy... Satan's power is destroyed and the glory of Jesus is shining! Egypt the mother of poets, wise men and magicians... has protected herself by the cross! The sky with its planets is incomparable to the beauty of Egypt's deserts full of the hermits' cells."

The Egyptian Church carries her Groom's cross throughout the generations and sacrificed many martyrs and confessors. Whole cities have martyred and many have raced to gain the crowns of martyrdom with joy.

Again **St. John Chrysostom** talks about that blessed visit saying: "Since both Egypt and Babylon were the most countries full of evil, God announced his will to fix those two areas to His own account;

to ameliorate them. At the same time, the rest of the world would copy them asking for His blessings; therefore, He sent the Wisemen to one and went Himself, with His mother to the other.” He also says: “Palestine was waiting for Him, Egypt received Him and saved Him from deceit!”

The divine promise of the day of Pentecost has come true as the Egyptians heard the apostles talking in their language (Acts 2:10) and St. Mark the Evangelist and Apostle came preaching the Gospel.

THE DISCIPLINE OF EGYPT

The escape of the Holy Family to Egypt and building an altar there, does not mean covering her evil deeds, on the contrary He uncovered her weakness and spiritual wounds to purify her from any weakness (the kingdom of evil) and to build a new one (the kingdom of God). The Lord’s arrival means the destruction of the idols and the removal of filth for the purpose of blessing His people.

First: Beginning of civil wars *“I will set Egyptians against Egyptians. Everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom. The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst”* (Isaiah 19:2-3). This is a normal fruit for leaving God, the Granter of inner peace, love and harmony

Second: Losing real wisdom, as the Egyptians were known for their brightness. The Holy Book states that Moses was educated with Egyptian wisdom (Acts 7:20). However, leaving the Lord has deprived them from everything, neither their wisdom nor their education, nor their civilization helped them, so they relied on idols to advise them. *“I will destroy their counsel, and they will consult the idols and the charmers, the mediums and the sorcerers”* (Isaiah 19:3)

Third: Suffering cruel rulers (Isaiah 19:4) tending to prevail and dominate rather than to serve the people and to build the country. When the people’s hearts harshens by being far from God the Giver of gentleness and goodness. He allows cruel superiority to dominate over them so that it would be done to them what they did to others. When our inner heart harshens towards others, we should expect the same happening to us so that we come under severe rulers. That even occurs in our everyday life, for example, whoever is severe towards his parents, his body, we find, is severe towards his soul. What we plant for others we harvest in our personal life.

Fourth: Suffering dryness: *“The waters will fail from the sea, and the river will be wasted and dried up. The rivers will turn foul, and the brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up; the reeds and rushes will wither. The papyrus reeds by the River, by the mouth of the River, and everything sown by the River, will wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishermen also will mourn; all those will lament who cast hooks into the River, and they will languish who spread nets on the waters. Moreover those who work in fine flax and those who weave fine fabric will be ashamed; and its foundation will be broken. All who make wages will be troubled of soul”* (Isaiah 19:5-10).

Fifth: Losing wise men and advisers, man not only suffers from touched deprivation but also from the absence of wise supporters through his ordeals. That is why it was said: *“Surely the princess of Zoan are fools; Pharaoh’s wise counselors give foolish counsel. How do you say to Pharaoh, ‘I am the son of the wise your wise men? Let them tell you now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt,’ the son of ancient kings?”* *Where are they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt”* (Isaiah 19:11-12).

Sixth: Losing consciousness and becoming drunk: *“The Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; and they have caused Egypt to err in all her work, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit”* (Isaiah 19:14). Sin is intoxicating, causing man to lose his consciousness, as well as his purpose in life. When man drinks its cup, God allows the spirit of loss to overrule him, causing him to stagger with no aim or target. He would then have no serious work, whether great or small, either to build himself or to build others, palm or thorn; this then would be the worst man could reach, he would lose his self to live like a dead man leading a tasteless life.

Seventh: Confusion with fear: *“In that day Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord of hosts which He waves over it”* (Isaiah 19:16). Pharaoh, who thought himself, in arrogance and pride, a savior of Israel and Judah from the hands of Assyria, he and his men were frightened, becoming like women before the Lord of hosts and before Judah (Isaiah 19:17). As if God encourages Judah not to be frightened

from Pharaoh's threats and not to enter in alliance with him like Israel and Aram, because Pharaoh himself is scared, not only from Assyria, but also from Judah.

BUILDING GODS ALTAR

After the Lord has unveiled Egypt's wounds and how sin has caused her loss of inner unity and real wisdom; to suffer from a cruel ruler and cruel nature (dryness), economical confusion (agriculture and industry); deficiency in human leadership as well as entering in a phase of unconsciousness and intoxication combined with fear and confusion even before Judah, the small kingdom; the Lord interferes to heal her wounds and to save her, giving her such blessings as:

a - **A new language:** "In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by believer's senses, when people come to the belief in Jesus Christ, they surrender their five senses in His hands to sanctify them, to talk in a spiritual language rather than the bodily language. Therefore, they are told as to Peter: "Your speech shows it" (Matthew 26:73; Mark 14:70).

The believer's heart rises to heavenly Canaan, not only during Eucharist and during all church liturgies, but also during his personal prayers and also through his daily activities whether eating, drinking or even sleeping. That is how God's Holy Spirit works within our lives carrying us to the heavens trying it in our depths making our language of love and inner joy. We take part with the heavenly in the liturgies and their lasting joy so that we would not be a people of "*unfamiliar speech*" (Ez. 3:5).

b - "**To swear by the Lord of Hosts**"(Isaiah 19:18). Swearing is proof of trust and faith in which you are swearing by. So instead of swearing by the idols, the Gentiles, initialized by Egypt, accepted faith in the Lord of hosts and the Egyptians hold on to His name considering it their strength.

c -**Calling one of the cities "City of Destruction"** meaning 'Heliopolis' which was the center of the worship of the sun, it has changed from the worship of the actual sun to praising the Sun of Righteousness who rises over those in darkness. In the Septuagint appears as "the righteous city" as it carries the righteousness of Jesus.

d - **Building the Lord's altar:** "*In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the*

Lord at its border” (Isaiah 19:19). It means the altar of the New Testament, as the altar of the Old Testament was in Jerusalem and no sacrifices to the Lord could be held anywhere else. The Holy Family crossed over to upper Egypt and hid there for almost six months where there exists the Virgin Mary’s monastery known by ‘Meharaq’ considered to be in the middle of Egypt. A church has been built there and the sacrifice of Eucharist takes place there, enjoying the sacrifice of the cross itself.

As for the pillar within the borders, it is St. Mark the Apostle who came to Alexandria (on Egypt’s borders) to preach the Gospel and to build the altar of the New Testament; so that the Egyptians may enjoy salvation from the oppressors and the Lord would be their Defender, their Mediator and their Savior (Is 19:20).

e - **Spiritual Knowledge:** *“Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day”* (Isaiah 19:21). The Egyptians were concerned with the spiritual knowledge that is why the School of Alexandria was established; to spread the knowledge of the Lord, not only through our mind but also through a life of prayers and piety and by experiencing life with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Knowledge was mixed with prayers, as the prophet says: *“and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it”* (Isaiah 19:21). Perhaps the best thing written about mixing knowledge with prayer, in addition to evangelic behavior in the everyday life was by St. Clement of Alexandria. This was his golden rule in all his writings, he says: [These are the signs that distinguish knowledge: first to contemplate, then to carry out commandments and last to teach the righteous. When you find these features in a person he’d be considered as perfect Gnostic, and if one loses one of these features his gnostic is weakened]

f - **Inner Healing:** *“And the Lord will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the Lord and He will be entreated by them and heal them”* (Isaiah 19:22). The Lord allows her being stricken, i.e. disciplined from her weakness so that she would discover herself and to see her need of the Savior. She would then come to Him as her only Physician able to heal her soul’s injuries and to redeem her peace. Our Christ came as a Physician and Healer at the same time:

✠ Blessed is He ‘the Physician’ who came and amputated without pain. He healed our injuries without a bitter medication, as He sent His Son as a Medication to heal the sinners.

St. Ephraam the Syrian

The Lord came to Egypt and stroke the idols so that the Egyptians would see only Him as their Healer.

g - At the same time, worldly struggle was between Assyria and Egypt, the other countries including Israel were victims of that struggle. The arrival of the Lord of Glory Jesus bought peace to everyone and they all felt that the land is for the Lord and His Christ not a center of struggle and they all combined to pray. In a beautiful way of describing that peace the prophet declares: ***“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt, My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance’”*** (Isaiah 19:23-25).

What does He refer to by saying ‘***On that day***’ which was repeated almost five times in the verses (18-25), except the end of days when Jesus Christ came to establish those blessings. He came as ‘the Way’ where the countries meet to enjoy spiritual unity and ample blessings. What does He mean by combining Egypt, Assyria and Israel in enjoying divine blessings and lasting heritage? It is a symbolic picture of the universal Church that united enemies together with the spirit of love and unity. Israel was at that time in confusion whether to unite with Egypt or with Assyria, the two biggest opposite countries then. However, the arrival of Jesus Christ solved that confusion, as they all became members in one Church enjoying the divine work, that is why they were called: Egyptians blessed, Assyria His work of His hands, and Israel His inheritance.

EGYPT AND ITS UNIQUE CHURCH

It is seldom that we are blamed during our theological dialogues with various churches, especially in the Middle East, by being strict and conservative, mainly in some beliefs like “the Salvation of Non-Believers.”

In a ceremony during one of the conferences of The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), in the morning H. G. Anba Bishoy said to one of the leaders (whom he established a strong friendship with): “What did you do tonight when you stayed up after midnight?” With a loving smile he answered him saying, “I would like to tell you your Grace, that among us we say that the hope in Church is the Coptic Church.”

In another conference while we were all eating in a Friday, H. G. Bishop Bishoy and my weakness were representing the Coptic Church, another leader said jokingly, “All the members do not fast with the exception of Anba Bishoy and Fr. Tadros. Is no one entering into heaven except both of them?” One of the Syrian bishops commented saying, “Truly we thank the Lord for the Coptic Church insistence on keeping their fasting, we in Syria eased with our people, then the priests in fasting gradually, gradually until it is almost not existing. We would like to go back to what we used to be, but it is too late now. We would like that the Coptic Church sticks to its strictness and its insistence to what it has received through generations.”

These two witnesses are from two of the high rank leaders of the Middle East churches, one an Orthodox and the other non-Orthodox.

If we look to the circumstances of the Church of Alexandria (Egypt), Mrs. Butcher says that if there are seven wonders in the world, the existence of the Church in Egypt is one of the wonders in this world! The secret of all this, is the divine promise “***Blessed My people Egypt***” (Is 19:25), and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to it.

To Egypt and not a single nation, Joseph came to build warehouses and fulfill the needs of the Egyptians and others during the famine. And only to it, the Lord Jesus Christ escaped to build with His presence a holy alter and make from it a unique church which Isaiah the prophet has prophesied about (Isaiah 19).

WHAT WAS THE CHURCH IN EGYPT SPECIAL FOR?

1. **A refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ:** The Baby Jesus has escaped to it with His mother and St. Joseph, riding on a light fast cloud (Isaiah 19:1), destroying its idols, and made of it a blessed people. It is the only one which had this divine promise, “*Blessed My people Egypt*” (Isaiah 19:25). The Church of Alexandria is still proud of her Christ, hiding Him inside her, and she hides in Him.

2. **An Apostolic Church:** Established by St. Mark the Apostle, and she has preserved the evangelical and apostolic thought, rejecting every criticism to the holy Bible, sanctifying the word of the Lord which is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

3. **A Knowledge-Loving Church:** The first Christian school in the world was the School of Alexandria. It embraces knowledge, study and research. It does not resist science and philosophy, but sanctifies all knowledge to the account of the heavenly Kingdom. Several great Christian philosophers have risen in it, like St. Pantaenus, St. Clement of Alexandria and Athenagoras, the deans of the School of Alexandria.

4. **An Evangelic and Biblical Church:** She led the whole world in the explanation of the word of God. In the second century, Origen was considered the prince of the Bible’s explanation. He has affected everybody, even those who resisted and fought him.

The Holy Bible for our Church, is a living life, there is no separation between studying and the daily biblical experience.

In all her dialogues with the heretics, the church relies on the Holy Bible, as it presents the final precise decision to each dogma.

5. **A Courageous Church:** She offered whole cities to martyrdom, while praising the Lord joyfully like the city of Esna and Ikhmim. She was and still exporting to the Paradise endless numbers of martyrs since her beginning and until these days. Her balance of martyrs is increasing representing a source of strength and support in her struggling.

6. **An Ascetic Church:** She is the leader of the Christian world in the monastic movements with all its different kinds, like the hermitage system by St. Anthony, the cenobite (communal) system by

St. Pachomius, and the group system by St. Makarius the Great and St. Amoun.

In her asceticism, she does not despise the human body, but sees in it a special sanctity, believing that it shares with the soul its eternal glory. That is why the leaders of monasticism in spite of their ascetic level they achieved, request the believers to be moderate in their monastic life, each according to his level, and his aim is to unify with God in His Only-Begotten Son with the Holy Spirit.

7. **An Eternal Church:** She sees the gates of heaven widely open, carrying her children's heart to heavens experiencing the pledge of eternity in their prayers and fasting and all their worships while they are still on earth.

8. **A Preaching Church:** Lasted for many long centuries deprived from meeting the external world, but the spirit of preaching is inside her, nothing can destroy it. Now, it headed to preach in Africa, hoping that she witnesses her Christ in every single location. With the true spirit of humbleness with a fiery biblical jealousy, and a true motherly feeling towards every person in the world.

9. **A Church of Saints:** She is rich with her saints through all generations, and stays in communion with the saints as live members, sharing with the strugglers their love and prays for them, sharing with them the spirit of true unity. They enjoy communion with the heavenly hosts, as friends meeting them and sharing with them their praise and their divine life.

10. **A Church appreciating Human Soul:** She respects the infants and children and does not underestimate their lives and beliefs. They have the right to join the church through baptism, the holy confirmation, and sharing communion. She does not despise those little ones, but is proud of them and their fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of all.

11. **A Mother Church:** One of her main strength that she practices the true motherhood through her unity with God, the Father of mankind. One of the marks of this motherhood, that the priest enjoys fatherhood, not to work as an employee but he is a father, nothing will deprive him, no sickness nor aging can stop him from being a father to his people until the last breath in his life. He heads towards heavens with

a wide heart full of love. As St. John Chrysostom says: “You priest are the father of the whole world!”

12. **A Church with Straight Faith:** Solid in her faith in the Holy Trinity, who does not concentrate once on the works of the Lord Jesus Christ and another on the works of the Holy Spirit. It is a Trinitarian who stresses continuously and in a practical manner on the love of the Father, opening His bosom to every single person who can find a spot in. And on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior, Heavenly Friend and the Head who grants us sharing His glory. She also concentrates on the Fiery Holy Spirit, inflaming the heart with the fire of divine love, granting the human being a renewal of his nature to become an icon to Christ. Preparing himself as a bride for her Heavenly Groom, receiving her dowry while she is still on earth.

13. **A Rejoicing Church among her Sufferings:** She always celebrates every day a feast or more. Major Lord’s Feasts related with the salvation incidents the Lord has offered, or feasts of martyrs, saints or heavenly hosts. In all this she desires that the true believer may practice his daily life like a continuous endless feast, seeing in Jesus Christ the secret of his rejoice which the whole world can never take from him.

