I am a scribe of the great Pharaoh Amenmesse. I found my master washed up on the shore of the Reed Sea and recorded here are the fevered emanations from his bruised mouth. This is what he said:

 My name, Amenmesse, will now be erased from history.

 El Horeb, god of the wilderness, has torn the staff from my hands and lay to waste the cities of Egypt and the gods of Egypt.

 Amen-Ra, hear my confession. I let the Israelites go that they might perish in the desert and be removed from our sight.

 But then, encouraged by our priests and officials in order to put off a rebellion in our great Egyptian nation, I gave chase. I have survived the tempest of El Horeb, a cowardly god who hides, to record what has happened and pray that our people might see the cost of their betrayal of us and be inspired to return to worship of you, the great leader of all gods, Amen-Ra. For how can any god survive but by the worship of the faithful?

 Amen-Ra, hear my cry. Why did you not restore our son to us that we might rein forever over the valley of the Nile? Why did you not allow me to put down El Horeb? The people will now be sorrowful that they did not stand with us, Israel has escaped into the wilderness and Egypt shall surely starve and perish if you do not restore to us the labor of the Hebrews.

 When El Horeb first came to me, it was by a whisper in the garden as I walked among the lotus fruit trees. El Horeb’s whisper was so soft that I thought it was the breeze only or a shadow in my heart. But now I know it was El Horeb and there can be no doubt the first whisper, “I AM”, came from the direction of the mountain in the wilderness.

 At that time I stood fast and did not answer the whisper, determined that the voice of the great Amen-Ra would be the only voice I, Pharaoh and divine leader of the people of Egypt, would heed.[[1]](#footnote-1) Because by what authority other than that of you, Amen-Ra, did I, Amenmesse- your appointed progeny- rule? I confess El Horeb made me doubt my divinity and yours, Amen-Ra. And where are you now? The people of El Horeb make camp on the other side of the tempest and I am washed ashore, to my horror, alive. Why have I not been allowed to pass over to the next life in your glory?

 The whisper came for the second time in my ear at court through the voice of my elder sister, Amisi. She whispered that the great “I AM” had spoken to her. She asked permission to do its bidding and visit Miriam, a priestess or prophetess among the Hebrews. I remembered a Miriam that had dwelt in the palace before, many years ago. [[2]](#footnote-2) Women’s concerns are not a concern of a great Pharaoh so I bid Amisi to leave me be and do as she wished.

 When Amisi returned I was busy with my son, Runihura, my first born. As he was now seven years old, the appointed time, I was teaching him your ways, Amen-Ra. Amisi whispered to me that the Lord of all gods and all people held Israel as firstborn. I heard the “I AM” again. Was it just Amisi’s breath?

 Who was this Israel? I told her never mind, Runihura would be Pharaoh of Egypt and this Israel, with a father-god in the wilderness, was of no concern to gods with our great power.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 I taught Runihura the names of eighty gods he would command as the future Pharaoh. But my thoughts, as thick as the mid-day heat, had turned to the nature of divinity and this irritated me. I was obviously the chosen firstborn of Amen-Ra, or I would not be Pharaoh. And did I not command the magicians and the soldiers and the other officers of the court to do my will? Was this not enough to prove my divinity? The people of Egypt turned to me to meet their every need did they not? Were they not convinced?

 I had Amisi banished from my sight lest she remind me of these troubling concerns. She warned me she would go to the Hebrew priestess. Let her go, I thought. The concerns of women are not the concerns of the great Pharaoh. I had to raise my son to rule, to build cities, to satisfy the people’s voracious appetites for food and drink and ceremony. Not only did I have to command the people of Egypt, but the slaves also, who were growing in number at an alarming rate. Would those Hebrews who worshipped the whispering god overtake the people of Amen-Ra?

 Before she left, Amisi had laughed at this, she said it was promised. But how could a god of the wilderness promise anything? Only a great Pharaoh can make promises to the people.

 Amisi was pleased to obey the order of the Pharaoh, she said, and she left to go to the Hebrews. I could hear the jangle of gold at her ankles, my gold, glinting discs of Amen-Ra, as she strutted across the courtyards. When she turned at the east gate and looked back at me, her face had the silent glow of something I did not know, and it irritated me, Pharaoh, divine keeper of the Golden Reed, the staff of Amen-Ra.

 I did not hear of Amisi for forty days. When my officials informed me two men were here from the Hebrews, I thought to ask them about her.

 “Father-Ra, who are those ragged men?” Runihura asked as he laughed at their rough cracked feet and old weathered skin. Their unshaven hair flowed about their aged shoulders and they stank of livestock. My son held his nose to amuse me.

 “Let them come closer,” a whisper teased my mind, or was it my own thought? I decided to let them speak to tease Runihura back. I bid them come closer.

 Runihura laughed and was pleased.

 The elder of the two suddenly announced without permission: “Thus says Yahweh, God of Israel: ‘Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.’ ”[[4]](#footnote-4)

 A dreadful silence fell on the hall. A god with a word as a name? Impossible. Runihura laughed again, but I could not, my heart felt a sinking I now associated with the earlier whisper. It was time to end this intrusion, no matter how small, from this god who would not show himself but was a coward and sent lowly messengers.

 “Who is this Yahweh that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh, and I will not let Israel go!”[[5]](#footnote-5) I said as I signaled to Fenuk, First Official of my court, to be at the ready to expel them.

 The elder Hebrew again spoke without permission, “Yahweh has revealed himself to us; let us go a three days journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God, or he will fall upon us with pestilence or sword.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

 Fenuk, First Official of my Court, set a stern brow, and whispered to me, “It is a trick! Why do you let them mock you? These are Moses from Midian and Aaron his elder brother, they encourage the Hebrews to leave their work.”

 “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their work? Get to your labors!”[[7]](#footnote-7) I spoke from the fire in my belly, but felt a chill as cold as water-wind sweep through my being and settle in my heart. ‘I AM’ the chill whispered. [[8]](#footnote-8)

 “Why do you address the ragged men by names Father-Ra?” Runihura asked.

 Amen-Ra I swear, as my words had also astonished me, I searched my conscience for an explanation that would serve as an example for our son and I hastily shouted at the messengers, “Now they are more numerous than the people of the land and yet you want them to stop working!”[[9]](#footnote-9)

 As soon as Fenuk returned from escorting them away I commanded, “You shall no longer give the Hebrews straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’ Let heavier labor be laid on them; then they will labor at it and pay no attention to deceptive words.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

 Runihura whooped a cry of delight at this. I was delighted also. I was now convinced that this Yahweh must be a small insignificant god of the mountain Horeb perhaps, as it was three days journey into the wilderness.[[11]](#footnote-11)

 I then took Runihura to bathe with me to purify us from the stench of the Hebrews and to teach him the glory of Hapi, the god of the Nile. Amen-Ra, our son was strong and proud and sharp in his lessons. And the chill in my being had encouraged my will.[[12]](#footnote-12) I reassured Runihura that you, Amen-Ra, were far greater than any whispering god from the wilderness.

 The next day the Hebrew foremen complained. Of course I dismissed them. [[13]](#footnote-13) Fenuk followed them and returned to tell me that the order of making bricks without provision of straw had caused trouble for Aaron and Moses, who were informed of my disgust. [[14]](#footnote-14) Fenuk reported that as he walked among the tents our slaves, he heard them groan and cry out to the unknown god. [[15]](#footnote-15)

 Moses and Aaron came again to my hall.[[16]](#footnote-16) For an unknown reason I felt powerless to turn them away. Runihura was with me; I could feel his eyes searching for an explanation.

 “Perform a wonder!” I commanded Aaron and Moses.[[17]](#footnote-17) I winked to Runihura that it was for his amusement.

 Aaron dared throw down his staff, an old twisted branch.[[18]](#footnote-18) The hall was crowded with our magicians and officials and soldiers. The staff of Aaron became a snake that twisted and hissed at ankles. Runihura clapped his hands and shouted for more. The magicians, eager to please us of course performed the same trick.[[19]](#footnote-19) The snakes chased dogs and monkeys and boys around the hall.

 Then the hall went as silent and still as mist on the Nile.

 Aaron’s staff, swift like lightening, had followed the other snakes and swallowed them all. [[20]](#footnote-20)

 Did the hiss of the snake of the Hebrews say “I AM”? I felt my will turn as hard as stone. How dare my court be mocked![[21]](#footnote-21)

 I dismissed them all. I would not listen to these Hebrews and their god of no importance to me, the great Pharaoh and executer of the will of Amen-Ra and commander of countless servant-gods.

 The next morning as was our custom and to reinforce my authority over the gods, I took Runihura to the Nile to greet the god Hapi.

 But to our shock, Hapi was blocked from us by Moses and Aaron who menaced us with the twisted staff of Aaron.[[22]](#footnote-22) Runihura was afraid and clung to my back.

 “The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say, ‘Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness.’ But until now you have not listened. Thus says the Lord, ‘By this you shall know that I am the Lord.’ See, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall be turned to blood. The fish in the river shall die, the river itself shall stink, and the Egyptians shall be unable to drink water from the Nile.’ [[23]](#footnote-23)Aaron proclaimed.

 I felt Hapi retreat. Runihura began to scream and scream. I was deafened by his screams as Aaron took the staff from Moses and stretched it over the waters.[[24]](#footnote-24) Blood boiled in my heart and flowed in the Nile. The stench overcame Runihura. I carried his limp body to his bedchamber and bid water to wash him, but all was blood.

 After days of thirst, some older people remembered how to dig around the Nile for water to drink[[25]](#footnote-25) and I ordered our magicians to bring water dug from around the Nile. They showed Runihura how to do the trick of Moses, turning the water to blood. He clapped his hands and I vowed not to listen to the ragged Hebrew messengers Moses and Aaron ever again. [[26]](#footnote-26)

 I began to wonder what became of Amisi. Was she with the Hebrew priestess Miriam? What could she tell me of this lesser god? I sent Fenuk for her.

 But to my annoyance, before I could speak to her, Moses and Aaron returned.

 “Thus says the Lord: let my people go…” they began again. This time they threatened to command our great god of fertility, Heqt, to send frogs throughout the land. Aaron lifted the dreaded staff again and Heqt crept out of the rivers, canals, and pools. The gardens and chambers overflowed with frogs. Heqt produced more offspring than had ever been recorded before. [[27]](#footnote-27)

 “Father-Ra, why do they come to make war on us with Heqt?” asked Runihura, his voice weak with fear.

 Why had I not been able to prevent Aaron and Moses from our audience? How had they been able to command the frogs? Again I called the magicians, who called on Heqt to bring forth more of her offspring[[28]](#footnote-28) and thus relieved our fears. I was in command of her. But the Hebrews needed to be called out on their transgression of our authority over Heqt, so I called them. Moses and Aaron appeared before me once again so that I could test them by having them do my bidding, the bidding of the great Pharaoh of the land.

 “Pray to the Lord to take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.” [[29]](#footnote-29)I mocked them.

 “Kindly tell me when I am to pray for you and for your officials and for your people, that the frogs may be removed from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile,”[[30]](#footnote-30) answered Moses.

 “Tomorrow!” I answered.

 “As you say!” Moses retorted, “so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God, the frogs shall leave…”[[31]](#footnote-31)

 The frogs died as I had requested. And after that the people of Egypt grew discontent and murmured that the piles of frogs stank. I set my will against the Hebrews and would not listen to them. [[32]](#footnote-32)

 Fenuk reported that Amisi would not come home and that some of the Egyptian women had relented to pay the Hebrew women’s release bonds, as the women had begun to fear the Hebrews and the Hebrew god’s command of Heqt. But my will, the will of the son of Amen-Ra, was set. [[33]](#footnote-33)

 And then the curse of the gnats came upon the land. The gnats were on both humans and animals, even in their eyes and in their ears. And the Egyptian women screamed and cried out that it was not natural and that the gods were no longer listening to their worshipers and that I, the great Pharaoh, was no longer the leader of the gods of the land of Egypt. I called the magicians to produce gnats with their secret arts to prove that I was in command of the gods but they dared to fail.[[34]](#footnote-34)

 “This is the finger of God!” they declared.

 But I was not influenced by the Egyptian women like the magicians were, since my heart was set in stone and my will could not be influenced by such things. [[35]](#footnote-35)

 Fenuk reported that the women were calmed but making many offerings to lesser gods than I, Pharaoh. He reported that Hebrew women and children were everywhere wearing the Egyptian gold and silver and woven linen of release bonds in anticipation of the journey into the wilderness. And Amisi would still not come home.

 I ordered Fenuk to deny the magicians of contact with women. He was then to go back to the Hebrew camp to bring Amisi by the force of my will. Who were these women, even my sister to question and insult the power and greatness of Pharaoh? I felt strength in my heart of stone, the strength of all the gods ran in my loins.

 I arose the next day to visit Hapi with Fenuk to invoke blessings for building plans. I told Runihura I would join him later in his studies of engineering for the great buildings we were erecting in the city. We would tour and survey the Hebrew slave camps at Goshen and watch the engineers direct our great works.

 To my astonishment, again Moses stood in front of Hapi, and I felt Hapi retreat as a swirl in the Nile, leaving only a bit of froth on the surface of the water to mark the spot and challenge me to vanquish this intruder.

 Aaron spoke for Moses, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Let my people go…”[[36]](#footnote-36)

 I felt pressure rise in my chest and I vowed not to listen to what the Hebrew said for I was paralyzed in anger by this insolence.

 I covered my ears but the voice of Aaron came through to me as if it was the whisper of El Horeb, “…But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people live, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that the I, Yahweh, AM in this land. Thus I will make a distinction between my people and your people.” And then El Horeb mocked me with the divine decree, “… this sign shall appear tomorrow.”

 Fenuk said, “This Yahweh mocks you and threatens to take the Hebrew slaves! Who will build the cities? You must defeat this god of the Hebrews now, they must not escape into the…,” before he could finish, Fenuk’s mouth filled with flies.

 Flies covered every surface of the great gardens of Amen-Ra. Flies lay on the surface of the Nile copulating with Hapi’s consorts and leaving their seed which bred more flies.

 The chariot arrived with Runihura.

 “Father-Ra! Have the gods deserted us?” Runihura choked as he spoke and flies swarmed up his nose and in his eyes.

 I leapt onto the chariot, covered Runihura with my cloak and ordered the tortured horses be driven hard, to sweep off the flies. I ordered us to Goshen. All along the way the land was sweltering with heat and copulating flies.

 We arrived near Goshen but did not go into the settlement, the flies clung to the chariot of Amen-Ra and copulated on the flesh of our son. We stopped at a temple and I, the great Pharaoh, demanded Moses and Aaron be brought forth to explain themselves to Amen-Ra.[[37]](#footnote-37) But first I thought to trick them, as the flies must be removed.

 “Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” I said to them. [[38]](#footnote-38)

 “It would not be right to do so,” Moses gestured to indicate the temple, “For the sacrifices we offer to Yahweh are offensive to the Egyptians. If we offer in the sight of the Egyptians sacrifices that are offensive to them, will they not stone us? We must go three’ days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he commands us.”[[39]](#footnote-39)

 Would there be no peace until El Horeb was satisfied? Perhaps it would end this tiresome irritation if they were allowed to go, but I knew I had to assure that the cities of Amen-Ra would be finished for the glory of my rein and that of our son. And El Horeb must be made compliant with prayers for the leader of all the gods.

 So I decreed, “I will let you go to sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness provided you do not go very far away. Pray for me.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

 Moses answered, “As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his officials, and from his people; only do not let Pharaoh again deal falsely by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

 Before I could clear the fly larva from my mouth and command them to not lecture Pharaoh, the true god to whom they should pay homage, Moses and Aaron swiftly departed the temple

 “Father-Ra, why does the ragged man give orders to the pharaoh and god of Egypt? Is he a god also?” Runihura asked.

 “No-o-o!” my shout was dampened by the blanket of flies on the temple walls.

 I prayed to Amen-Ra. I felt the blood of the gods rush through my body and cease the weight of my heart, which would not yield to El Horeb.[[42]](#footnote-42) I would defeat this challenger.

 I rode at top speed back to the palace. As I passed through settlements, the flies were dying throughout the land. Some, but not many, people of Egypt lined the roads and cheered their Pharaoh. Some hung back and made signs to other gods. I ordered Fenuk to send out a decree to be read to the people that gave thanks to Amen-Ra and Pharaoh for removing the plagues that had come upon our land.

 A thought came in on the breeze that was filled with dead wings of flies. For after all, if I could not control such things, was I in fact a god? This thought clenched my stomach and I ordered a great meal to banish it from my head.

 Amisi was brought in during the meal. I bid her to tell me what she had learned of this El Horeb. She said she would tell me everything if I granted one request. I said yes and to my astonishment, Moses and Aaron were brought forth.[[43]](#footnote-43) Was there no end to tricks this El Horeb would use to humiliate Pharaoh? Did not El Horeb know the cost of his ultimate defeat against the true god of all the land? I vowed to utterly destroy El Horeb and his people Israel.[[44]](#footnote-44) How dare they use my very sister against me?

 While Amisi laughed, another plague was threatened if I did not let the people of El Horeb go. Again I was mocked with the divine decree of “…tomorrow!” from the mouth of Moses.

 A deadly pestilence came on livestock in the fields. Why did this Moses continue in such boldness, was he a god, perhaps the form of the god El Horeb? He promised to protect the livestock of the Israelites. When I sent Fenuk to inquire among the Hebrews about the Israelite livestock, he reported it was so, they had been spared. [[45]](#footnote-45)

 This news swept through me like a storm and I screamed out to Amen-Ra that I would put this god, be it El Horeb or Moses, under our staff, the Golden Reed.[[46]](#footnote-46)

 El Horeb must have heard my challenge because immediately the air became filled with dust. It blew across the land and caused festering boils on all humans and animals. [[47]](#footnote-47)I summoned my magicians and priests for purification, but the boils had come upon them also, rendering them unclean and unfit for the purification ceremonies.

 The magicians were not allowed into the palace but stood outside and shouted, “The Finger of God is upon us!”

 Runihura came running, “Father-Ra, can the finger of god scratch the pains on my back?”

 Fenuk came running, “The people are shouting that it is the Finger of God that has defeated Pharaoh and soon all Egypt will be destroyed! Let the Hebrews go! The Egyptians demand to give the Hebrews their release bonds. The wealth of Egypt is girded about the hips of Hebrew women! ”

 But I would not listen to any of them and sent them all away. A fog had settled in my brain, as if the boils on my body were now also on my thoughts, but my will was still strong. [[48]](#footnote-48)

 I went to the Nile alone to purify my flesh and my spirit. I asked Amen-Ra, to remove the scourge. As soon as I uttered these words, Moses appeared before the Nile once again. I wondered how long had Hapi been the whore of Moses? Amen-Ra why do you not take back your waters? Am I unworthy in your sight? Have I committed an offense by allowing this battle with El Horeb to continue so long? Why has this pest of the Hebrews not been squashed like a flea?

 I called out for Fenuk to come and remove Moses, but Fenuk was slow to arrive.

 Moses said from the banks of the Nile, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: ‘Let my people go, so that they may worship me. For this time I will send all my plagues upon you yourself, and upon your officials, and upon your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.’”[[49]](#footnote-49)

 And these words fell upon my heavy heart. Was not I, Pharaoh, the one who knew and controlled all the gods of the earth? Fenuk arrived to stand at my shoulder.

 Moses continued the word of the Lord, “‘…for by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.’ ”[[50]](#footnote-50),

 At this, officials and magicians who had concealed themselves in the rushes to spy on me let out a loud gasp. I ordered Fenuk to whip them. They hastened away, crawling backward on their knees. Was it in deference to me, Pharaoh, the great of the land or the new god, El Horeb? My stomach turned at the thought. I prayed to Amen-Ra to prevent me from fouling the earth.

 Moses continued, “But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth. You are still exalting yourself against my people, and will not let them go. Tomorrow at this time I will cause the heaviest hail to fall that has ever fallen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.’ ” [[51]](#footnote-51)

 Fenuk whispered to me, “What shall we do? We must warn the people!” I swatted him away. My forehead burned in anger from Moses’ use of the divine mandate of ‘tomorrow’. Was not I the one who set the time for all things according to Amen-Ra’s cycles?

 Moses continued, “‘Send therefore, and have your livestock and everything that you have in the open field brought to a secure place; every human or animal that is in the open field and is not brought under shelter will die when the hail comes down upon them.’ ”[[52]](#footnote-52)

 I told Fenuk to not bother with warnings, it was not likely that hail could befell the land this time of year, even El Horeb would not be able to cause such things that are the domain of Amen-Ra.

 But the spies cried out to the people; those who feared the word of El Horeb hurried their slaves and livestock off to a secure place. Those who did not regard the word of El Horeb left their slaves and livestock in the open field. [[53]](#footnote-53)

 And it was as El Horeb had promised. Thunder and hail and fire came down on the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt, there was hail with fire flashing continually in the midst of it, such heavy hail as had never fallen in all the land since Egypt became a nation. Everything, human, tree, plant and livestock were shattered. Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were, there was no hail. [[54]](#footnote-54)

 Fenuk reported that officials of mine had hidden their livestock and some had seen Moses stretch out his twisted staff to call forth the heavens. I, Pharaoh, pounded the Golden Reed on the stones of the palace and ordered these officials to be brought to me and whipped. They were made to give their livestock and slaves and harvest to those who had been loyal to Amen-Ra. El Horeb was stealing my people, my property!

 Amisi came to me. She implored that I let the Hebrew people go that all might return to the peaceful kingdom before the plagues of Yahweh. Surely it has been proven that all should worship Yahweh, she said, the women are becoming restless. I thought of the silver and gold and linens of Egypt that were held by mothers and daughters.

 I shouted at her over the sound of the storm: what are the women saying? She said some were praying to Yahweh, and some had begun to doubt me and wanted to make sacrifices to the old gods. They had given their gold and silver and fine linen to the Hebrew women to release them and encourage them to leave before the land was surely destroyed.

 Fenuk confirmed the stories, priestesses had begun to encourage the people of Egypt to call upon the gods to find the true Pharaoh; the one that Amen-Ra would next bless to carry the Golden Reed.

 How dare El Horeb threaten the inheritance of the throne by Runihura? Was I not a god? Had I not negotiated the end of the other plagues? Was I not still Pharaoh? Was not the Golden Reed in my hand now, this very moment? I would wield it against this false god!

 I put Runihura, who was brave in the face of the storm, under guard and discussed my plan with Fenuk. He agreed and advised to watch for the treachery of the slaves, they would surely flee and not come back, taking the release bonds with them, the gold that was now around the ankles and around the necks of their women and children. Something must be done before all the people of Egypt rebelled and the treasure of Egypt was gone.

 The unseasonal rain and hail and thunder and lightening made it difficult to breathe. The air was thick with oppression. I bid Moses and Aaron to come do my bidding and placate their god to leave me alone.

 I declared: “This time I have sinned; the LORD is right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the Lord! Enough of God’s thunder and hail. I will let you go; you need stay no longer.”[[55]](#footnote-55)

 Moses answered, “As soon as I have gone out of he city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord’s. But as for you and your officials, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God, Yahweh.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

 I became afraid that Yahweh, or El Horeb could not only whisper to my heart but could listen to my thoughts. I followed Moses to watch him and to catch a glimpse of El Horeb, or to catch Moses acting as a god. Moses stretched out his hands and the thunder and lightening and hail ceased to beat upon the earth[[57]](#footnote-57), my earth. But hadn’t this been due to my clever bidding? Was this not the act of myself only, the Pharaoh and only god with the power to rule all of Egypt?

 I banished my doubts and girded my will.[[58]](#footnote-58) I gathered my officials and told them to show no mercy to the Hebrew slaves, since now the rain was gone, they could return to labor for the kingdom of Egypt.

 Once the hail had gone from the minds of the people, I hoped that my kingdom would be restored to peace. I felt my heart turn to stone once more, as cold as the night shadows,[[59]](#footnote-59) and I vowed Israel, those Hebrews who followed the word of Yahweh, would not go! They would stay to labor and follow the word of their Pharaoh.

 Fenuk came to me and said: “They are saying among the Israelites that Yahweh has hardened your heart in order that Yahweh might put these signs inside you and that the Israelites might tell their children and grandchildren how Yahweh has made fools of the Egyptians and so that you may know that I AM the Lord.” [[60]](#footnote-60)

 I felt my heart explode. How dare they? I would smite them with the Golden Reed. The thought crept in that Yahweh somehow knew my heart. This caused my chest to tighten until my breath was forced and I was reminded once again of the whisper of ‘I AM’.

 When Moses and Aaron came to me once more, I allowed the audience that I might display my ultimate authority over them. The whisper “I AM” was continuous now, and my heart responded by refusing to move in my chest. [[61]](#footnote-61)

 I was ready to do battle with the god of the wilderness, if Yahweh would appear in real form, not the ragged messengers that came before me or whispers that disturbed my sleep.

 Amisi and Miriam stood with Moses and Aaron who said, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. For if you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They shall devour the last remnant left you after the hail, and they shall devour every tree of yours that grows in the field….something neither your parents nor your grandparents have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.’ ”[[62]](#footnote-62)

 Fear and murmuring filled the hall. Officials and supervisors fled to the street, to cry out warnings. I stood with the intent to strike down El Horeb in the form of Moses, with the intent to point the Golden Reed at Aaron, El Horeb’s priest, and with the intent to signal my officials to remove Amisi and the other women, who had fallen to their knees in prayer to El Horeb. But my breath was slow from the thickness of the air and they all stirred and stumbled out before I could speak. I was left with Fenuk in an empty hall. The echo of “I AM” rang in my ears.

 Fenuk said, “How long shall this fellow be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the Lord their God; do you not yet understand Egypt is ruined?”[[63]](#footnote-63)

 I walked the streets with Runihura and our guards. In the eyes of the people of Egypt, where there should have been praise and worship of Amen-Ra, I saw doubt. The fields and the grain stores were devastated. The livestock lay dead. The entire countryside stank with fear and loathing.

 Fenuk begged me to bring back Moses and Aaron. I consented but knew I had to guard against the treachery of this ever crafty god who was destroying the greatness of Egypt.

 “Go, worship the Lord your God! But which ones are to go?” I asked. [[64]](#footnote-64)

 “We will go with our young and our old; we will go with our sons and our daughters and with our flocks and herds, because we have the Lord’s festival to celebrate,” replied the Moses-god. [[65]](#footnote-65)

 I thought of the release bonds the women of Egypt in their fear and haste had paid to the Hebrew women, which now put gold and silver and fine linen on the ankles and wrists of the women and children.

 Runihura, playing chase with his guards, ran into the hall.

 “The Lord indeed will be with you, if ever I let your little ones go with you! Plainly, you have some evil purpose in mind. No never! Your men may go worship the Lord, for that is what you are asking.” I said. [[66]](#footnote-66)

 I waved the Golden Reed over the heads of Moses and Aaron and my soldiers escorted them roughly from the hall. Runihura stomped after them, playing the soldier too and waving a reed from the banks of the Nile.

 Moments later Runihura ran back in, hands over his head screaming silently from pain. I ran to him but as I reached the archway I was struck down by the whine of a thousand wings. The locust army of El Horeb had arrived. It tortured all of Egypt with the beating of its wings and the chewing of its jaws.

 The land of Egypt was black and stripped bare. As I watched, it felt as if El Horeb was chewing my very own flesh.

 Runihura cried and cried, “Father-Ra, make them go!”

 I hurried to summon the Moses-god and his priest Aaron. I would not accept defeat in the war with El Horeb and I was determined to only negotiate for obedience this one more time. I had forged my offer into a confession. The army of locusts was driven into the sea by El Horeb and wind gods under my command. Not a single locust was left[[67]](#footnote-67) because how could a god like Moses or El Horeb or the whispered Yahweh command the heart of the great Pharaoh of Amen-Ra? They had only to obey my commands.

 I called for Fenuk to bring Amisi before me. Runihura played at her feet with her royal bangles and necklaces. He held up the disc of Horus, Amen-Ra was pleased and sent a ray of light for Runihura to reflect in a dance off the columns and paving stones of the hall.

 Amisi told me that the people of Israel were celebrating the plagues that Yahweh had sent upon Egypt and that they were expecting to leave soon to worship in the wilderness three days away.

 I asked her if they planned to return to my service after the festival.

 Israel is the firstborn of Yahweh she said as she inquired if I would let them go or would I allow Yahweh to destroy Egypt? Why not let them worship, what would be the harm?

 Fenuk lost his temper and said couldn’t Pharaoh see that every resistance on Pharaoh’s part caused Yahweh to produce a greater plague and more murmuring among the people?

 I would not let this lesser god take my slaves and destroy my nation. Call your god of the wilderness and tell him come and change my heart if he can I told Amisi.

 The ray of Amen-Ra stopped dancing. Runihura shook Amisi’s gold disc but the ray of light could not be found. I felt a shadow enter my being, the ‘I AM’ whispered in my ear, ‘the sun is only a sun’.[[68]](#footnote-68) I felt my will expand against these foul words.

 Amisi took the bangle from Runihura and fixed it to her wrist, as she passed through the archway it flashed brightly one more time, blinding me. I yelled out for Fenuk, but he reported blindness also, and Runihura was also blind. All the people of the land were blind for three days and the air was too thick to breathe.[[69]](#footnote-69) Amen-Ra was surely angry.

 It was rumored that Israel had light[[70]](#footnote-70) where ever they went. They had not taken advantage of the time of our blindness to worship in the wilderness. I asked Amisi to summon Moses.

 “Go, worship the Lord, only your flocks and herds shall remain behind but your children may go with you.”[[71]](#footnote-71) I said as I stroked the head of Runihura.

 Fenuk whispered to me in horror, “You would have them sacrifice their firstborn children in the wilderness?”

 Yes, I thought, see if even that gives this El Horeb any more power over me, for there can be no power for a god in Egypt other than through my leadership.

 Moses eyes widened, as if he read my thoughts, and he replied, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings to sacrifice to the LORD our God. Our livestock also must go with us: not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must choose some of them for the worship of the LORD our God, and we will not know what to use to worship the LORD until we arrive there.” [[72]](#footnote-72)

 I could see it was a trick; they had no intention of returning. These Israelites had meant to humiliate and lay waste to Egypt, under the pretense of worship to a disobedient god. “I AM,” whispered the voice, and I shouted back in my head, “NO! I AM PHARAOH, THE SON OF AMEN-RA! I AM GOD.”[[73]](#footnote-73)

 “Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.” [[74]](#footnote-74)I shouted at Moses and pointed the Golden Reed straight into his eye.

 “Just as you say! I will never see your face again,” Moses replied.

 Amisi dragged the furious Moses from the hall.

 At the archway she called out, “Beware, my brother! The women of Egypt will demand a sacrifice to restore the order of the gods, and Yahweh will not allow Israel, the firstborn of the Lord our God, to be sacrificed!”

 Everyone in the hall inhaled at once. Moses stood still as stone. All waited for them to leave but Moses pulled his arm out of Amisi’s and pointed his twisted staff at Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD: Midnight I will go out through Egypt. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave, who is behind the hand mill, and all the firstborn or the livestock.

 “Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt such as has never been or will ever be again. But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites- not at people, not at animals- so that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

 “Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, ‘Leave us, you and all the people who follow you.’ After that I will leave.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

 All I could hear was a whisper in my head ‘I AM’ and I shouted back at the voice in my head: ‘I WILL NOT HEAR YOU. I WILL DO PHARAOH’S WILL ONLY!’[[76]](#footnote-76)

 I removed Runihura’s guard and placed him under the protection of the priestesses of the god Bastet, at their great temple.

 Renuk reported that the Hebrews had sharpened their knives and distributed lambs among households. A day of slaughter had been selected by Moses. Preparations were being made.

 Good, I thought, they will stay here to serve Egypt. What concern is it of mine if they slaughter a few of their lambs?

 Renuk reported that the Egyptian priestesses were also sharpening their knives to make a sacrifice to the gods.

 Good, I thought, they will reinforce my power and my will and that of Amen-Ra, so that when the Israelites sacrifice to their god our gods will also be strong and ready.

 Everyone made ready for the sacrifice. Households were made ready. Ceremonial altars were made ready.

 The Israelites were given the signal by Moses. They slaughtered their lambs. Their altars ran with blood. They took the blood and marked their doorposts. [[77]](#footnote-77)

 The Egyptian priestesses made ready, glad of the marks on the doorposts so that the Egyptian gods would not bless those houses and could find the enemy. They were to sacrifice at the dawn, at the first sign of Amen-Ra above the Nile. All Egypt slept well until midnight.

 At midnight the dogs began to howl, and the cattle began to low, and the babies began to cry. The cacophony made a mighty noise that disturbed the gods and resonated in my chest. I arose and sent for Fenuk to bring Runihura back to the palace.

 In terror I summoned the Moses-god and Aaron and told them, “Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites! Go; worship the LORD as you said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you said, and be gone. And bring a blessing on me too!”

 The cacophony reached a crescendo that only an angel of death could withstand. Then as swiftly as it had begun, it went silent voice by voice.

 When Amen-Ra rose over the Nile, Fenuk returned with Runihura.

His small form barely made a lump in the fine piece of white linen that covered his body. I could not breathe life back into his perfect lips. His chest would rise but his eyes remained closed. I screamed to the gods to give Runihura back his life, but they did not listen.

 “I AM the giver and taker of life,” whispered El Horeb.

 All strength left my loins. Grief increased the weight of the Golden Reed until it was too heavy for me to lift. The hall was left empty. I went to the Nile but Hapi was asleep and the waters did not purify or refresh. The whisper of the ‘I AM’ would not come to comfort me at my bidding. I shed common tears without restraint and felt my human flesh overtake my godly will. How could I be a god if I could not give and take life?

 Fenuk reported that not a household in Egypt was untouched by death. The firstborn of every living human and animal had been struck down by El Horeb. All the gods had left the land. All was silent but the crying of women.

 Six hundred thousand Israelites had fled at the bidding of Egypt, who had become afraid and was abandoned by her gods, and the release bonds of Egyptian gold and silver and linen adorned the Hebrew women and children.

 When Egypt awoke from her grief, many charged the palace and filled the hall, demanding the great Pharaoh recover their slaves or they would surely die.

 My people’s words encouraged me and I saw I *was* a giver of life and death!

 I told my people, “They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them.”

 Shouts of hope and conviction went up in the hall. A shadow once again passed over my being and whispered, ‘If El Horeb can take life and death, why not Pharaoh?’[[78]](#footnote-78)

 My people called out, “What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?”[[79]](#footnote-79)

 I made ready my chariots and armies and made chase with renewed strength.[[80]](#footnote-80)

 My army advanced until we could see the Israelites at the edge of the sea, they were trapped on the shore. [[81]](#footnote-81)

 They saw us and cried out to their Lord, Yahweh.[[82]](#footnote-82)

 I could see Amisi among them; she helped up the aged Miriam. They stood and stared at the mighty line of men and chariots I had brought to drive them back to Egypt.

 Chaos ensued among the Israelites as I led the chariots steadily forward. I could hear the people admonishing Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, the home I intended to never let them leave once I drove them back to Goshen.

 Moses yelled back at the people, “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

 All movement stopped but the hoofs of my horses, which pounded mightily on the earth.

 Moses lifted his twisted staff, pointed at the waters, and called forth a tempest.

 The waters divided and the Israelites went forward running on the bottom of the sea, which was now dry ground.

 When we reached the sea, at first my horses would not charge. They must have feared the gods of the tempest. There was a wall of water on the left and on the right. But a raging fury as hot as the tempest wind blew into my army[[84]](#footnote-84) and they beat the horses until their backs were slick with blood and sweat to get them to follow the dry path after the Israelites. [[85]](#footnote-85)

 Suddenly darkness fell, a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire swept the tempest wind into the path and the Israelites were obscured from us. [[86]](#footnote-86) The horses reared and my army was thrown into panic by the thundering whisper of the ‘I AM’. [[87]](#footnote-87)

 The waters heard the great ‘I AM’ and crashed down to defeat us. My entire army churned beneath the sea. Horses and men alike were twisted and drowned, trapped on the bottom by the ropes and weight of the chariots.

 I, Pharaoh, was swept off my chariot and the Golden Reed struck me and forced the air from my chest, but I grasped it tightly. I would need it in the next life to establish my rank. I was battered by the flow of violent currents. I screamed out to Hapi but was answered by the ‘I AM’. I screamed out to Amen-Ra to take me to the next life but the Golden Reed was torn from my hands and I was tossed up onto the shore.

 Egypt has been laid to waste by the god of the Israelites, my name will be erased.

 I, a scribe of the great Pharaoh Amenmesse, found my master washed up on the shore of the Reed Sea and recorded here are the fevered emanations from his bruised mouth.

 The great Pharaoh Amenmesse gave us these instructions:

 “Wrap this scroll around a heavy stone, seal it with bitumen and papyrus. Tie the stone to my chest at my heart and return me to the sea. The gods will show themselves to me and I will finally know if I am god or flesh, and meet Yahweh in the underworld.”

 I, a Hebrew scribe of the great Pharaoh Amenmesse, will do as I am bid. Yahweh has spoken and defeated the Pharaoh Amenmesse and all the gods of Egypt with great signs. We will fear Yahweh and tell these signs to our children and grandchildren.

 Miriam and the Pharaoh’s sister, Amisi, sings and dances on the shore with the women who brought gold and silver and fine linens out of Egypt. I pray that the Pharaoh Amenmesse can hear their tambourines as he sinks into the sea, and he will know that the hardening of his heart created great signs and wonders in order that Israel will become the light of the world.

 “Sing to the LORD, for he has

 triumphed gloriously;

 horse and rider he has thrown into

 the sea.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

1. Exodus, 3:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ex. 2:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ex. 4:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ex. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ex. 5:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ex. 5:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ex. 5:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ex. 7:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ex. 5:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ex. 5:6-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ex. 3:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ex. 7:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ex. 5:15-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ex. 5:20-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ex. 2:23 and Ex. 5:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ex. 7:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ex. 7:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ex. 7:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ex. 7:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ex. 7:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ex. 7:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ex. 7:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ex 7:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ex 7:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ex 7:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ex 7:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ex. 8:1-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ex. 8:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ex 8:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ex 8:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ex. 8:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ex. 8:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ex. 8:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ex. 8:16-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ex. 8:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ex 8:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ex. 8:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ex 8:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ex. 8:26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ex. 8:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ex 8:29 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ex. 8:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ex. 9:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ex 8:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ex. 9:2-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ex 9:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ex. 9:10-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ex 9:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ex. 9:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ex. 9:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ex.9:16-18 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ex. 9:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ex. 9:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ex. 9:23-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ex. 9:27-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ex. 9:29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ex. 9:33. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ex. 9:34 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ex. 9:35. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ex. 10:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ex. 10:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ex. 10:3-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ex. 10:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ex. 10:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ex. 10:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ex. 10:10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ex. 10:16-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ex. 10:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ex. 10:21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ex. 10:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ex. 10:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ex. 10:25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Ex. 10:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ex. 10:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ex. 11:4-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ex. 11:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Ex. 12 -13. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Ex. 14:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ex. 14:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ex. 14:6-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ex 14:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ex. 14:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Ex. 14:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Ex. 14:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Ex. 14:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Ex. 14:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Ex. 14:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Ex. 15:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)