

Imre Madách

Moses

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# M O S E S

dramatic poem in two parts

Dramatized to stage by

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## **Dramatis personae**

**JEHOVAH**

**MOSES**

**AARON**

**HUR**

**KHALEB**

**JOSHUA**

**ABIRAM**

**DATHAN**

**GERSON, son to Moses**

**PEOPLE**

**PHARAOH**

**CHIEF PRIEST**

**CHIEF COUNCILLOR**

**BAILIFF**

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**

**HERALD**

**CATCHPOLLS**

**JETHRO, Midianitan High Priest**

**JOKHEBED, nurse to Moses, mother to Aaron**

**MARIA, sister to Aaron, bride to Hur**

**CIPPORA, daughter to Jethro, wife to Moses**

**AMRA, Moabitan maid**

**KOZBI, servant to Maria**

**servants**

# **Part One**

## Scenery one

*(Throne-room in Pharaoh's palace. Pharaoh sits on his throne, behind him servants with feather-made fans. Around him highrank attendants.)*

### FIRST SCENE

*(Pharaoh, Chief Priest, Chief Councillor, Moses, Jokhebed)*

#### CHIEF PRIEST

*(escorting Moses in front of the throne)*

Great Pharaoh! The youth is standing here,  
You put him once under the care of us.  
We had to open all the gates of sanctum  
Of knowledge for his strongly eager eyes,  
5 So from the crystal vault of the heaven  
To horrors of the seafloor be nothing there  
That could be unknown for his exalted mind.  
Now, take him back, he's steel'd from head to foot by  
All science found in library of our own,  
10 He'll be the pride of your council and throne.

#### JOKHEBED

*(in the background for herself)*

Now look at this heroic, grand figure,  
This beaming face! – How lucky's the woman  
Who has the right to say: he is my own son. –

#### PHARAOH

It's sure, my thanks of your works will be worthy,  
15 It will be grand, you admit: I was right.

#### CHIEF PRIEST

Oh, don't measure your thanks to work of mine,  
The precious stone was ready in your hands,  
I had the task it only to facet.

#### PHARAOH

Oh, youngling! Let be intact of this laud.  
20 If you above the rest stand head and shoulders,  
If you fulfill'd the works of two commoners:  
You did not perform unusual things.

#### MOSES

Great Pharaoh, the urge concerns only  
The slothful beast and stubborn attendant,  
25 Who's grumbling when he feels his heavy chains  
And wants for chance to burst his bonds at once.  
But you, and only you created me,  
Who came into this world like a blossom  
That fell below from tree and by a storm  
30 Was carried off into a bare desert.  
I did not feel the kisses of mother, –

#### JOKHEBED

*(in herself)*

Oh, poor my boy! and poor is his mother! –

#### MOSES

It is yourself, great Pharaoh, in me  
Who feels and thinks and lives! – This is your beam  
35 That cannot be disloyal to its sun.

#### PHARAOH

Get up, my son, you will be at my site,  
I dress you up with garment of my board  
And you'll adorn this board by splendid mind. –

The first affair you have to solve is hard,  
40 A lot of expert statesmen tried to solve  
But no one found a medicine for this illness.  
This is a bleeding wound of might of mine  
And while we could not restore it to health,  
We made nothing of it but got a good laugh.  
45 But all in vain: when trying strong to conceal  
The wound, in time it will be suppurat'd;  
It will incite distress among my folks,  
And it's my feel: my arms, that my neighbours  
Of mine have fear'd for long, will lose their strength.

#### **MOSES**

50 I see and understand: this gangrenous  
And old fester is folk of Israel, yes,  
Who tends its flock in Gozen's area.

#### **PHARAOH**

This is the truth. – This folk that doggedly  
Is cleaving always to the wont and god  
55 And to the language of its forefathers,  
Detests and hates the ideas of us.  
Neither the sane warning nor conformity  
Deters this folk. A whip or fetters will  
Not bear it down. The blessings of our culture  
60 Are rolling of its back, its heart is intact;  
And does not tend to form a mixture with us,  
To form a grand, almighty strong unit.

#### **MOSES**

An awkward course of action and false rule  
Resulted in the aggravated case.  
65 A good decree may make the bed things good.

#### **JOKHEBED**

*(in herself)*

God bless you, wise and graceful, lovely boy.

#### **CHIEF COUNCILLOR**

Great Pharaoh! It's more than thirty years  
That I've bestowed time upon this case.  
What loyalty and human force can do,  
70 I did the best I thought, but in this I fail'd  
And now this youngling who preserv'd the dust  
Of schools on his sandals, this youngling now  
Reproves and lays the blame on me for all crimes.  
Beseech you, please, and tell him that I know  
75 Also the world of brilliant hypotheses  
That are arranged in order in our school-books.  
Experience is but master of ours  
That shows the world of truth instead of fancies.  
And though let be his spoken words pure silver,  
80 In this counsel it is advis'd to him  
That silence is or may be golden at least.

#### **MOSES**

I spoke to order not by obtrusiveness.  
But once I have to speak I will not respect  
Either a rank, or fame, or age but two  
85 Maxims: the Pharaoh – and justice itself. –  
Now, let me see your acts through thirty years!  
When Israel became so great that you  
Have fear'd it and could not obtain its favour  
Why did you sit in background and why you  
90 Were hid behind women and why you trusted  
Midwives with throttling of infants-in-arms? –  
If you'd remain, oh yes, to hold this rule,  
No one would exist causing woes and pains.  
You took for granted from the old women that

95 Jewish women don't need the help at all,  
They are better and stronger than others.  
You have to answer for this old offence,  
The hate has grown in sons of Israel,  
The fruit of crime of yours is lost for us.

**JOKHEBED**

*(in herself)*

100 It's good inception – but how will he come off?

**MOSES**

You start'd to drown a lot of innocents  
But interrupted this because mothers wail'd.  
Are those more dangerous whom you made drown'd  
Than those remained alive in order to

105 Revenge the death of all the sinless children?  
You held to ransom all their tiny patches,  
Your dirty bailiffs plunder through the land now,  
The leeches have become fat and what do  
You find in veins of public weal from this blood?

110 We have the scandal but we have no success: –  
This folk did not become a beggar yet,  
If you impel this folk to built a wall,  
You train them only how to use weapons,  
Its soul will not sink into subjugation.

115 The hidden thirst for wild revenge gets strong.  
You were not weak enough to win it over  
And were not hard enough to kill it off.

**JOKHEBED**

*(in herself)*

It's true, you're right and speak it bravely out:  
It will survive – they should retreat, I'm sure.

**MOSES**

120 The great ones of this folk are waiting out,  
Oh Pharaoh, to gain a hearing by you  
And you allow'd to come before your throne. –  
But why? Whether we do not know their woe?  
We do not understand: what is the truth  
125 For them, it is a great mistake for us?  
And yet, we have to comfort them with good words  
To hold out hopes of them, giving nil, yes? –  
Oh, no! my lord! – it goes ill with your bright throne.  
Away with them. Send out them by hard command.  
130 Do not them prick – beat them to death by sword.  
Remember, the virility is power  
That will dismay and attracts reputation.

**JOKHEBED**

*(in herself)*

How nicely and profoundly he is hissing,  
Just like a serpent – yes, just like a serpent! –

**CHIEF COUNCILLOR**

135 If this advice likes our great Pharaoh,  
Let take you up my place. I did not doff  
My fairness when I put on this pressing guise.  
You have, perchance, more force to wear this dress.  
It's true, the stately tree will break though I  
140 Fell'd only it with peaceful tolerance,  
But gods will know upon whom it will fell.

**PHARAOH**

The advice of this youngling hits my fancy.  
Let enter Israel and speak to them,  
And do in harmony with your advice.  
*(an attendant exit)*

**CHIEF COUNCILLOR**

145 How do you judge this situation, old friend?  
I fear, the youth you train'd will be your lord soon.

**CHIEF PRIEST**

Oh, yes. I am afraid also that this ghost  
I raise'd, will be completely deaf to my words; –  
It's sure, he will be grand and will be mighty.

**CHIEF COUNCILLOR**

150 I pray in soul that neither Pharaoh,  
Nor we should stand where he's looking for room  
152 Because, don't be in doubt, he overruns you.

**SECOND SCENE**

*(the same, enter Aaron, Hur and several Jewish principals and present themselves before the throne)*

**MOSES**

Why do you come to disturb once again now  
The peace of throne with useless, fruitless complaints –  
155 And give no time to deal with grand affairs?

**AARON**

Who are you, how you dare to speak so hard?  
We do not know you. Oh, great Pharaoh!  
Were we not born as your attendant, too?  
Do not we live? Don't we offer to you?  
160 Maybe our working arms are less strong than  
The arms of your other servants? And why  
We are destined for no right to make complaints?

**MOSES**

It is allow'd to Aaron or to Hur  
To moan alone – never to Israel.  
165 We do not know what's it?

**AARON**

Well, now I tell you.  
This is a folk that is always robbed,  
Disdain'd and flogg'd to blood by all sordid  
Servants but free of retributive acts.  
It's suffering and works as foreordain'd  
170 And complains only when is forced to do.

**MOSES**

But it conspires in strictest confidence;  
And prays for enemies to spring abroad,  
To join their banner, well against our force.

**AARON**

Who told you this? Are you a god at all  
175 To guess our secret intentions in heart?  
We live – that's crime? We have no right to it?

**MOSES**

Oh yes, you have, but not to be reserv'd!  
Contempt is not our own, it comes from your side.  
You are scornful of us with pride of beggars  
180 Although we rule; you laugh at altars of ours  
And set at naught the law of our empire.

**AARON**

We are not scornful of anybody but  
It is our pride to be chosen people  
Of Lord and accomplish his aims on this globe.



**MOSES**

185 A tiny folk – and fulfil of the god’s aims?!  
You see, your god is rather infirm god, yes,  
He is unable to unbind your chains.  
Leave off! – Let you melt into the grand nation  
Of Pharaoh and you’ll be also grand.  
190 But if you’ll be deaf to our fraternal words,  
The Pharaoh is almighty enough  
To liquidate your obstinate and dull race  
If it would stand in his glorious way.

**AARON**

It’s false a dream, for it you burn in vain. –  
195 Oh Pharaoh! While standing here before you,  
Outside the servants plunder and alarm; –  
But Israel instead of damning it  
Invokes its Lord with unbelieving hope and  
Awaits the life or death from your judgement.  
200 Oh, do not want our open, merciful heart  
To withdraw into itself with loss of hope.

**PHARAOH**

This back-answer offends me hardly, yes.  
Let go you Israel with peace, take my word,  
204 Or you’ll have heavy days.

**THIRD SCENE**

*(Pharaoh and attendants exeunt. Moses, Jokhebed, Aaron, Hur and the Jewish delegates)*

**AARON**

205 Our Lord is stronger!  
Let come what may! Enough! Let come what may!

17

What we cannot perform, let close our Lord!  
*(starts)*

**JOKHEBED**

*(steps in front of him)*  
Aaron, my son, hold on!

**AARON**

Leave me alone!

**JOKHEBED**

I do not let you go, don’t leave, my son!  
A baleful ire is gleaming in your wild eyes, –  
210 And this other, as falling into dreams,  
I see, he’s up to do magnificent acts.  
Oh, Moses, let you hear your nursemaid’s words.

**MOSES**

What do you want, my nurse? –

**JOKHEBED**

Look, he is Aaron,  
About him I have told you wonderful tales.  
215 You suck’d my breast in company with him  
And pampered you both when our deceas’d  
Princess put you in charge of mine before.  
Are you not true brothers through my mother’s milk,  
Through my endearment and maternal care,  
220 So you are spiteful towards each other now?

**MOSES**

These are but fancies, dear woman, our ways  
From each other are far away rather than  
Accord should be between us.

18

**AARON**

That's the truth.

Is it not disgusting enough, you have nurs'd  
225 The butcher of our folk; – and now your son  
Is forc'd to take him into heart?

**JOKHEBED**

Look at me!

If I could bind you to brothers by no means:  
Let take a look around your fatherland,  
And look for men who are so strong as you are? –  
230 It's two gigantic palms that when unite  
Will shoulder well the sky but when you close with,  
You each other will nastily destroy then; –  
If not for me but merely for this fact  
Shake hands of yours as it befits brothers. –

**AARON**

235 Mother, no! He's enemy of my folk.  
*(he and his mates exeunt)*

#### FOURTH SCENE

*(Moses, Jokhebed)*

**MOSES**

I am sorry woman, your son's rebel.

**JOKHEBED**

How lofty both they are! – As giant dark cliffs  
Eye each other in whirling, springing tempest.  
I'm worn away like tiny drop between them  
240 And wail! – Oh, Aaron already left me. –

And Moses! – Only his body is here.  
Where is his soul gadding about? –

**MOSES**

*(in himself)*

That's true,

The most promising and superb way open'd  
To me, to rule – but why only to the throne?  
245 I dare not lose my head! –

**JOKHEBED**

*(takes Moses by the hand)*

Moses! Look here!

**MOSES**

Oh, good woman, what do you want? –

**JOKHEBED**

Not long

Before the royal court allow'd your merit,  
The nurse, Jewish woman gave you a glance,  
Yes, only from afar and privily  
250 But take for granted that her heart never  
Has beaten so violently in her life.

**MOSES**

I know, old Jokhebed, I'm full of thanks.  
You have been always good to me and kindly.

**JOKHEBED**

You see. – My arms protected you, restless  
255 And hectic boy from corporal complaints.  
And now I have the task to save your soul.

**MOSES**

What is the use of this?

**JOKHEBED**

I do not know.

A blessing or a curse, as Lord foreordain'd.

As long as I have nurs'd you as a child,

260 I nurs'd a secret together with you.

I have become resign'd to set you free from

My arms to make you sure of brilliant calling,

And your sever brother, the secret of

My heart, will go with me down into tomb.

265 But some minutes ago I eyewitnessed

From far the great honour you gain'd for yourself:

I cried and laugh'd – but why? you have to know,

I must reveal the secret of my heart.

**MOSES**

It is deterrent till it's secret. – Tell me! –

**JOKHEBED**

270 Moses, you are also a Jew.

**MOSES**

Silence!

This word's deterrent even as a joke. –

Oh, my dear Jokhebed, you tell it 'cause

She was a Jewess, yes, who brought up me.

Don't tell again: in my glorious way

275 The wraith of it would overshadow my fame;

Many envy the man who starts to rise, –

Take care, the walls have ears and spy upon you.

**JOKHEBED**

It is not easy word, Moses, I disclosed.

**MOSES**

You are wilful. – I understand the whole thing;

280 This is a didge again, trick of your folk: –

You are corrupt'd by them without a doubt

In order to reduce to naught whom they fear.

**JOKHEBED**

Who would corrupt the heart of a mother?

And it's the heart of your mother that tells:

285 Moses, my son, it's me who has denied all

The sweetness of a parent's happiness

And would not disclose her secret when you

Would bring a curse or blame upon her head.

But Lord, the Lord of folk of mine is strong

290 And won't allow to let without a word

That you with fratricidal arms will charge

Your forefathers' all-high, almighty Lord.

**MOSES**

Heigh, guards! No man living may enter here!

Oh Jokhebed! Mother, if you don't lie

295 If I may say thanks for my life to you,

Don't wish the truth to be a curse of mine,

Reveal never this heinous, secret case. –

Oh, plight your word and swear, you will it keep.

You see, I am in favour with the court now,

300 My path of life has start'd to rise recently:

Who's born to be a star to all these dull crowds,

Let fall me down into the mob of slaves?

**JOKHEBED**

Alas! My son prefers the glare of bright throne

To all the bitter tears of his brothers!

305 It's all the same: I had to tell: you are Jew.

And now, let do you as you like – my son! –

Either I saved you like your true mother,

Or bow my grey and old head into grave

Under the weight of frightful, ghastly curse,

310 So I gave birth to the monstrosity  
That waxed high to crush the folk of our Lord.

**MOSES**

If then, this folk could bear this good tenor  
That's worth to act, to live and worth to work  
And would promise that it's spirit that lives  
315 Within my heart, will shake it out of sleep:  
But in its soul the craven slavery  
Is impress'd as deep as it's possible.  
With it you may perish but not survive.

**JOKHEBED**

How do you know your folk, oh tell me, that you  
320 So rashly pass a harsh judgement on it?!  
When did you lose yourself in it, when did  
You hear the hidden, holy beat of its heart?  
When did you listen to the words that are  
Whisper'd by friends into the friendly ears?  
325 You lost your sight by light of stately halls  
And was irksome to you a supplicant,  
You hold as spite the holy insistence  
On past and its martyrdom is to you  
A madness only 'cause you're free of faith. –  
330 But once you have to go among their huts.  
You will be touch'd by their superb spirit,  
A golden glaze will cover everything:  
What you did only guess, it will be clear.  
You came of Levi's seed, they are the first  
335 Servants to Jehovah, the priests of law:  
You will be star there!

**MOSES**

Well, I go, mother!

And as you told, I find there everything so,  
My force and hope will be at your disposal! –  
(*in himself*)

I feel my soul is now exchanged: as though Lord  
340 Would raise my heart to him and would burn in me –  
(*to Jokhebed again*)  
But who confirms that you are not a traitor?

**JOKHEBED**

Who else would confirm you? This heart, my son!  
Did you not feel always maternal care?  
Do not believe that this is sold for cash. –  
345 In those climacteric and fearful days  
When murdering prevailed in the valley  
Of Nile and Jewish infants were mark'd for death  
And all the ruddy-cheeked new-born lads  
Were torn away brutally from mother's breast,  
350 When seeking for the spring of life with their lips,  
They sucked merely death from dirty billows.

**MOSES**

Mother, don't torment, speak about but me.

**JOKHEBED**

I gave then birth to you for joy and sorrow.  
I kept you secret nearly through ten weeks,  
355 But despot's hound has cruel and sharp eyes,  
I could not shelter you in my breast more,  
I have prepar'd a tiny mat-made basket  
And put you in this basket in the reeds,  
Where princess used sometimes to bath alone there, –  
360 I watch'd for you, to save you from malfaction  
And when they found you and look'd for a nurse,  
They found there me – so when I could not kiss  
As his mother, now could kiss him as his nurse.

**MOSES***(being softened, embraces her)*

Alas, mother! Enough! Enough! Don't say more.

365 My blood is up in all my veins and perhaps

We have some time. – Maybe my folk deserves

Nothing else but to be relentlessly drown'd.

Ahead to Gozen! Well, good-bye, good-bye –

And I repeat: your secret is the death.

*(exit)***JOKHEBED***(falling down to knees)*

370 Oh Jehovah, the Lord of Israel!

371 Give him the grace of you, let open his eyes! –

**Scenery two***(In the land of Gozen. Small village, square with trees in front of Aaron's house)***FIRST SCENE***(Maria with Kozbi and some maid servants)***MARIA**

Oh, when returns again my father, Aaron!

Why do they go always to Pharaoh, why?

They have to know: their instance useless is.

375 They only leave us in a twofold terror:

For ourselves and for doubtful fate of ours.

**KOZBI**

Let's take no care of men's confused affairs.

Their soul does not hit light upon housework,

This artless, fine delight of our women

380 That occupies their mind through day and night,

Will not excite their eager and gallant heart.

**MARIA**

It's true. This is why thereafter they look for

Enigmatical thoughts we don't understand,

This is why they are feeling after their sword

385 If we embrace them and pamper their poor heart.

We cannot change this, it's a pity, yes.

Now let you, Kozbi, go up to the hill-top

And look for Aaron whether he comes. – Go!

**KOZBI**

But you have set there sentinels even three.

**MARIA**

390 Maybe they are asleep; be quick and go!  
*(exit Kozbi, Maria to the other maids)*  
 We lay a table under the palm-trees,  
 This cooling ground will do the wanderers good. –  
 Here, by my side will sit my fiancé,  
 He's Hur, the placid and the lovely boy. –  
 395 Put here the cheese – and take more from the fruit, more –  
 Be quick, you lazy dogs and bring me milk! –  
 If they don't find here everything finish'd,  
 They even think we did not wait them kindly.  
 And Joshua? where is my true servant?  
 400 I would be sad if not he would be first now  
 The good tidings who brings. –

**SECOND SCENE**

*(The same without Kozbi; Joshua, later people)*

**JOSHUA**

*(in hurry)*

Milady! Bad news!

**MARIA**

What do you tell, oh Joshua: what bad news?  
 You frighten, don't you? so then I'll be happy.  
 Guests are coming?

**JOSHUA**

They come, Maria, yes,  
 405 This was but not our wish.

**MARIA**

Get out! Get out!

If you were man my Hur would punish you,  
 If you were child my hands would tear your hair!  
 You're none of them – you will get off for this once,  
 But have much better news – are they coming? Say!

**JOSHUA**

410 Conceal yourself in a recess of your house,  
 'Cause bailiff of the Pharaoh 's coming.

**MARIA**

Alas! What do you say! – Nobody 's at home.  
 Let you show, Joshua, how fast you can run,  
 Get in the way of them at once. – Be quick!  
*(they run in fear)*

**PEOPLE**

415 Robbers now plunder at the end of village!  
 Come, run with us Maria, run with us.

**MARIA**

Alas! I dare not run away with you.  
 I took the oath: I will never desert  
 The house that hides altar and sacraments  
 420 Of my unhappy folk. – Oh, woe is me!

**PEOPLE**

Alas! They come! Let's run away! Let's run!  
*(they disperse)*

### THIRD SCENE

*(Maria, bailiff, catchpolls, later Moses, Aaron, Hur, Joshua)*

#### MARIA

Oh, maids! Oh, maids! Why do you leave alone me?  
The Lord 's with us! – All of them run away! –  
Let be my shelter you, ancenstral home.  
*(she enters the house; bailiff comes with catchpolls)*

#### BAILIFF

425 I see no one! – It is a beastly folk here.  
But there a slim figure has disappear'd,  
I want to see. – Sometimes we leave the best  
Behind in haste that is common in plunder. –  
Heigh boys! Let urge on all the oxen and  
430 Camels burden'd with treasures and takings;  
So long as I disclose and solve this secret.  
*(catchpolls exeunt)*  
The door is clos'd. – No one reacts to knocks. –  
If good words don't, power does open this door.  
*(he breaks open the door and enters; after a while Aaron and  
his mates come with Moses who is dressed as a wanderer)*

#### AARON

Come, wanderer! This is our tiny thorp,  
435 And is the home of my unhappy folk.  
You find a rest and here what our poverty  
Is able to provide with goodwill and  
With love, it is at your disposal now.  
Who else could better understand the need  
440 Than that who also feels its mighty force.

#### MOSES

It is the truth you told me all about.

The torment of your folk has terrified me,  
So suffering of mine becomes to me nil.

#### AARON

This is my home, – the sanctum of the Jews.  
445 They forgather in strictest confidence  
In this recess and to protect the Lord and  
The faith of their departed forefathers. –  
Look, in the shade of palms the careful sister  
Of mine is waiting us with well-laid table.  
450 It's strange to me, yes, why her anxious love  
Did not forc'd her to us? – The world is still here.  
Not one comes from my folk to mind my words  
As usual, to share with me our grief.

#### HUR

They wait'd for you on wonted road, by all means...

#### JOSHUA

*(coming in hurry)*  
455 Milord! Milord! Did you find Maria?

#### AARON

Did I find her? Why do you ask me? Why?

#### JOSHUA

The bailiff 's here to take his ransom now!  
*(the door springs open, Maria runs out with tangled hair, the  
bailiff follows her)*

#### MARIA

Serpent! Serpent! – Oh, why my Lord desert'd me!

#### BAILIFF

Why do you shriek, you tiny mourning-dove,

460 No one is here. – Or here they are? I see!  
So much better. Hey! In the Pharaoh's name:  
Bring back this maid to me immediately;  
From this time on she'll be my servant maid.

**MARIA**

Oh, Aaron! Hur! Why do you gaze at me? –  
465 Maybe your eyes search after Maria? –  
It's late – it's late – you'll find her here no longer.

**BAILIFF**

No one does move? – You'll pay for this, on my word!

**MARIA**

Don't kiss me, Hur – but plunge sword into my heart,  
So no slur will be cast on your honour  
470 Though your betrothed could not screen!

**BAILIFF**

Enough!  
Come Maria. – This is my order now!

**MOSES**

Don't touch her, man!

**BAILIFF**

Begone!

**AARON**

Be merciful!  
Milord! Don't tear away this maid from us!

**MOSES**

Begone, Aaron! You don't regret to implore  
475 When our rebelling hearts now thirst for blood? –

*(to the bailiff)*

Compose yourself or else you die directly!

**BAILIFF**

Revolter! Now, come on! Put him at your sword,  
Although he 's your brother – in Pharaoh's name.

**MOSES**

In name of Lord! Let you perish at once.  
*(he daggers the bailiff)*

**AARON**

480 Alack! What have you done, you new-comer?! Now  
You put to death us but you don't save this maid.

**MOSES**

You only consider the fact that is  
Result of act produc'd by passing time  
When in your soul you should revolt and thunder.  
485 This is why Israel will make no progress.  
It's damned folk that has no poetry!  
It's soul will always be repress'd by foresight.  
It's ardour only that provides superbness. –  
Now let you come to know me – I'm Moses,  
490 I'm Jew like you, – your blood-brother and your friend.  
Oh, yes, Aaron – your blood-brother. Embrace me!  
Today I found this secret out and came here  
With my own eyes to see and with my own  
Incited heart to understand your fate;  
495 And if I judge it that my folk deserved:  
I will either, well live or die with it. –  
My fate was born under unlucky star:  
I found a sister and I found the shame.  
I found brother but only for to see that  
500 This folk 's unworthy of the state of being.



**HUR**

You found brother who is ready to write  
A new indent in history-book of ours! –

**JOSHUA**

You found a youth who gives his blood to this script.

**AARON**

Alas, my Lord! What follows from this madness?

**MARIA**

505 Why do you make delay to give me straw-wreath?  
Put on my head and murder me instantly.

**HUR**

Maria! Set your heart at rest!

**MARIA**

Oh, no!  
One day a maid liv'd here and call'd Maria, –  
And Hur lov'd her, – but it vanish'd – it's over.

**HUR**

510 He loves you and will sanctify you, maid,  
With steaming blood – as sacrifice to our Lord.  
Come Maria, come! I will be your priest.

**MOSES**

Don't touch her, Hur! You see, she is insane.  
The soul of Lord now sanctified her heart.  
515 He will then speak from her ardent tongue and  
She will then rouse from dreams our Israel.  
And now remove this rotten beast at once  
And free of trace dig it into the ground.

*(Joshua and Hur carry out the bailiff's corpse; Abiram and  
Khaleb are coming with Jews)*

**FOURTH SCENE**

*(Aaron, Moses, Maria, Khaleb, Abiram, Jews)*

**ABIRAM**

*(disputing with Khaleb)*

But save your breath! Else why should I suffer  
520 If chance so foreordain'd: lucky to be.

**KHALEB**

So I should pay the ransom for your head?  
Why would the bailiff hold to ransom me?  
What have I done against his wish or will?

**ABIRAM**

Let pass sentence the judge.

**KHALEB**

Let him pass sentence.

**AARON**

525 What is this hard dispute my friends, what is?

**KHALEB**

Listen to me. When all the marauders fell  
On us, they found at fountain trough our oxen  
And then a part of neat they separated  
And lifted these with them at once completely,  
530 Other part of the herd remain'd intact.  
By chance of wonder all the beasts of him  
Remain'd with us in full but all my beasts  
Got lost even my slightest last-born kid.  
I begged him to help and give a few beasts,  
535 He roughly laugh'd me at and brush'd me off then.

**ABIRAM**

I was perhaps the thief who stole the beasts?  
Who 's he so I am forc'd to pay him ransom?

**KHALEB**

They hold to ransom maybe Israel?  
Bailiff was set against me only, was he?

**ABIRAM**

540 He'll get nothing, now tell him Aaron, tell him.

**KHALEB**

Let be you fair and judge: give me award.

**MOSES**

Abiram, don't permit Aaron to judge, yes:  
And give him of your own accord, you can.  
You are the rich and are the friend of good luck, –  
545 Khaleb is poor, he will perish without aid.

**ABIRAM**

Well, tell me first who sent to us, you stranger,  
Who did command to be steward in my home?

**MOSES**

I gave you this advice as only your friend.

**ABIRAM**

Then pay for your advice to you alone.  
550 Let Aaron judge according to the law.

**MOSES**

Well said, it's true: according to the law. –  
Or do you know a law that's something else:  
That Israel must be a whole unit,

To have one joy, one grief? Did temptation  
555 Yet not disturb our ranks? Or do you forget:  
We only will be strong when live in concord?  
Who do not understand with heart and mind  
The grand, majestic truth of splendid times,  
They will perish 'cause are unworthy of life. –  
560 The loss is ours, and what remains as rest  
We – as return – give out in right proportion.

**ABIRAM**

Well well! You are ready to say the sentence,  
Of course you have to find who votes for it, yes.  
You rather have to take a care of yourself  
565 To think about the fate of bailiff here.

**AARON**

You wretched wight! What did you dare to say!

**ABIRAM**

We saw from hill-top when this rotten dog,  
This loiterer...

**AARON**

You saw, you saw nothing there!  
Your eyes were blinded. Now, you are incited.  
570 Go home, go home.

**ABIRAM**

I saw.

**AARON**

I say, you lie.

**MOSES**

Leave it alone! He 's right, I kill'd the bailiff;  
It's me, Moses, the former favourite. Yes,

'Cause I was horrified at crime and fault  
Committed on a fine and grandiose folk:  
575 I kill'd the bailiff. – And I take it on.  
Cowardly slave, now let you go, denounce me.  
I'm neither envious of you nor fear you. –  
Get out! Get out!  
(*Abiram, Khaleb and their mates exeunt*)

## FIFTH SCENE

(*the former without Abiram and Khaleb*)

### MOSES

Well, Aaron, we've no time  
To hesitate. I am disappointed!  
580 This folk is not adult enough, and suffer'd  
But shortly so to earn a better fortune. –  
They will now hunt for me, I have to run. –  
Alone.

### JOSHUA

Oh, no! Moses, I go with you.  
And look how strongly I can bend my bow,  
585 I am adult.

### MOSES

Now let you wait a while.  
What would your Mammy say if she would know?

### JOSHUA

Why do women, mother govern the youth,  
Who pay attention only to the fact  
That children are unwounded in the nest.

### MOSES

590 I guess we'll meet again, I guess, I know.  
(*to Aaron*)  
I have to start. Brother, Lord be with you!  
When, after firm torments, the time will come,  
When Israel bears readiness to act  
And wants a man: then come and call me home.

### AARON

595 And where I find you, if I live to see it?

### MOSES

You are faint-hearted! – You will live to see it. –  
In life of folk the eagerness to act grows  
Like shade moves forward in the evening twilight. –  
In Midian I will wait for the time. –  
600 Where is Maria, holy victim, where?  
Guard her 'cause Jehovah speaks through her mouth.  
Show her the folk when she is kind and gay,  
Show her the folk when she mislays her mind:  
So her demented eyes will be snake-bite  
605 To dastards who resign themselves to ill fate.  
606 Give hands Hur, Aaron – let me shake your hands.

## Scenery three

*(In Midian. At the foot of Mount Horeb a spring-well. Moses tends a flock.)*

### FIRST SCENE

*(Moses, Cippora, later the voice of Jehovah)*

#### MOSES

One day has gone again into the past,  
I made a step again towards my grave  
And did I win even an inch towards  
610 My goal that will me animate – or raise –?  
Our life 's eternal wait and when we close it  
Resignation does not but boredom does  
Unfasten our ragged wayfarer 's sandal. –  
I 'm craving for my fatherland in farness,  
615 I wait a greeting with a heavy heart  
As long as they forgot my name for ever.  
And I am like a faithful, open sweetheart  
Who keeps awake for his beloved through nights  
Whilst she in arms of lucky emulant  
620 Revels in kiss forgetting everything.  
But why to make complaints and why to dream?  
Do I not have a herd of fattened beasts?  
Do I not have a smiling, loving wife,  
In her bosom with chubby son of mine? –  
625 What should a man wish more? – And how many  
Fellows with envy say: he 's fortunate man! –  
Oh yes, it 's true – but might of mental power,  
This horn of night that knocks up us from all dreams,  
Does not allow to rest. I burn by flame:

630 For me a curse, others would take as blessing,  
If someone could behold its gleaming bright light.  
If lucky star would hang above my crib  
This flame would flare perhaps for millions,  
Perhaps on throne in light and adoration;  
635 But so – it burns alone in great desert –  
Who knows my face? – I live and milk the beasts,  
Above the grave of herdsman no one guesses  
That there a lone heavenly fire was out.  
*(Cippora comes)*  
My darling, my dear wife, my Cippora!  
640 What do you bring, what kind of spice to my life?

#### CIPPORA

*(bringing the dinner)*

What can I bring to this site, just to this site,  
It 's full of happy memories and visions  
Of our commencing and long-lasting grand love.

#### MOSES

The kiss and smile.

#### CIPPORA

For you a frugal dinner.

#### MOSES

645 How is my tiny Gerson?

#### CIPPORA

He asks for you.  
He 's just like his father – but more handsome.

#### MOSES

He 's just like his mother, but loves me more.

**CIPPORA**

Don't say else I will be offend'd with you.  
 Who gave her heart suddenly but with flame  
 650 Immediately to sad and mournful outcast?  
 And since that time and always: tell me now  
 Who does preserve her chastity to you?

**MOSES**

Woman who did not know more handsome than me.

**CIPPORA**

You evil, stop. I think you do remember:  
 655 I came with sisters to this well for water, –  
 When all the herdsmen of the bare desert  
 Began to pursue us with nasty damning.  
 We were going to think we were lost when  
 A fearless man, a proud exile appear'd  
 660 As envoy of the Lord and fought for us:  
 His arms protect – his eyes us fascinate.  
 My sisters wonder'd – I fell in love with him.

**MOSES**

I escort'd you in your paternal home,  
 Your old father, Jethro, the blessed man,  
 665 Who'd be servant to Lord in honesty  
 If he would not be that as our Lord's high priest,  
 He gave me rich award against my act:  
 He gave a home but me, the homeless outlaw,  
 And gave but me thyself instead of hell  
 670 That burnt with gleaming flames in my bosom.

**CIPPORA**

Oh, Moses! whilst remembering to old times  
 I just forgot to tell the important news.  
 Some strange men room'd one of these days at our house,  
 And ask'd for you, Moses, but I don't know, why. –

**MOSES**

675 What kind of men?

**CIPPORA**

They are grudging of words and  
 Sometimes they steal a glance at each other,  
 You fear because their secret you do not guess  
 And would fear more to pry into this mystic. –  
 It is beyond a doubt, they came from far,  
 680 Their vesture 's worn and when I pour'd the cold  
 Water onto their legs, I clearly saw  
 The crust sticed in the desert to their sole.

**MOSES**

If they would be! – My Lord, if they would be!  
 Who else would be, – who would be after me, who? –  
 685 And if my foes were on my trail and found me  
 And sent a murderer, a bravo here?  
 Tell Cippora, do you take them of this kind?

**CIPPORA**

No, Moses, but in spite of this I fear,  
 They bring just mourning here into my glad world.

**MOSES**

690 They are! The Lord conducted them to come here.

**CIPPORA**

About whom do you speak?

**MOSES**

About whom? They are  
 For whom I have been waiting for hundred years,  
 My craving went forward to meet them into  
 The bare desert – so far in vain, in vain.

**CIPPORA**

695 What do you say, Moses!? And just to me –

**MOSES**

Compose yourself, my darling, don't fear, don't fear.  
You see, the man 's created not for love but  
Sometimes his heart incites a sentiment,  
A more exalted thought.

**CIPPORA**

A sentiment?

**MOSES**

700 This hunts the man from rose to dense wilderness. –  
You have to understand – and now be quick  
And guide to me these men, this company.

**CIPPORA**

My heart misgives me – but I have to do.  
*(exit)*

**MOSES**

Tormenting doubtfulness – let you reveal'd be!  
705 Let be it joy or grief, all one – but soon.  
My heart! Who understands your mystery?  
You waited keenly for this meeting for years,  
By some minutes before the final goal  
You suffer pains of the infinity. –  
710 The wit that lives within my mind to flash for  
Others, begins to fly and goes to war  
For my beloved folk and to burn for it.  
If they would be, and would bring me good news,  
Would I rejoice in it at all from my heart,  
715 As plant deriving from other realms and  
Became injur'd to new environment here,

Would I be not injur'd, again disrooted?

*(a bush begins to burn)*

Alas! What's that! – a bush bursts into flames,  
The fire is flaming – bush remains intact.

720 My soul now shudders from the mystic horror,  
Down with the sandals! – It's a holy place here.  
*(it is thundering, Moses falls down on his knees)*  
Jehovah! You, the Lord of Abraham,  
If you – you are who is dressed in flames,  
Let perceive your command by mind, my Lord.

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

725 Moses, stand up and follow your brother.  
Her liberator waits now Israel.  
Break up her chains and guide her in new homeland,  
And I promise – if it deserv'd – it'll be free.

**MOSES**

And how can I perform this mission, how?  
730 My arms fall down and who believes my poor words  
When I will cry and shout that you have sent me?  
Almighty Lord, the Lord of Israel,  
Select a stronger tool, – and leave at peace,  
Let tend my flock, let give glory to you and  
735 Together with my loving wife to enjoy  
From farness all the progress of my folk. –

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

Your arms and words will be then strong and mighty  
When truth and me will be always with you;  
You'll overcome intrigue and violence  
740 When you will have your faith, your trust and firmness.  
It is the intellect that can't be conquer'd:  
In front of it other things fall to dust.  
Get up! – Who is chosen by Lord to mission

745 He himself can live for himself no more and  
His life will be the heart-beat of his folk.  
(*the flame disappears*)

**MOSES**

My Lord, let be as you has foreordain'd.  
I go, I go where your command guides me.  
I tear away the links but all that bind  
To home and that debilitate my own will.  
750 Let me not embrac'd by womanly arms,  
Let me not enjoy more the smile of child, –  
I have no wife, no child, I have no home. –  
It's only you who lives, the Lord of fights  
And you, my folk, till freedom you don't gain.

**SECOND SCENE**

(*Moses, enter Aaron, Hur, Joshua*)

**MOSES**

755 I greet you, my brother, – I greet you friend!  
And you whom I once left as tiny kid,  
See you again as man with great pleasure!

**AARON**

We kept you waiting, Moses, for a long time.

**MOSES**

760 The forbearance of folk is grand, I know; –  
But finally you came – it is a great joy.  
How is my good mother, is she alive?

**AARON**

Oh yes, she lives because she could not die yet  
And waits for you as rescuer of ours.

**MOSES**

And Maria?

**HUR**

Her ailing, forceless frame  
765 Is still the nest of powerful spirit that  
Possessed her.

**MOSES**

And you? Why did you come?

**AARON**

To ask that bring your hopeless wretch'd folk out  
From Egypt into independent homeland.

**MOSES**

We do commence the great venture, don't we?  
770 But me, who am pursued by Pharaoh, how  
Can join your company?

**AARON**

Be easy, please,  
Your persecutor, Pharaoh is dead.

**MOSES**

Whether the folk 's ready to self-denial  
For its own freedom and for Abraham's Lord? –  
775 And does a man renounce the empty boon of  
The throne, renounce the wealth with manly senses? –  
The love of one's country is rather cheap  
That – from the great words – will applause but strongly  
With palms that roughen'd from the slavery. –

**AARON**

780 The folk, the entire folk 's ready to all,  
Some selfish, weak-heart'd persons may occur, yes,  
Like drying twigs on noblest and intact trees.

**MOSES**

What shall we do? The Pharaoh won't dismiss  
A sea of slaves – to seek for new fatherland. –

**JOSHUA**

785 Moses, we'll grasp then spade and hoe against them,  
And will grasp every means of slavery  
To win, to gain with them our liberty.

**MOSES**

Your soul is lofty but your advice is wrong.  
My folk has lost its strength in lasting thraldom,  
790 It needs much time to make it worthy of  
The freedom but through painful and strong torments.  
A bolder step would frighten off many  
Of them who would but slowly start with us,  
And though they fear, they will be forc'd to join us  
795 And through thousands of woes they will be harden'd. –  
We shall resort to tricks. We'll ask three days  
In order to adore our Lord in the waste.  
When we'll be there, we get away with ease.

**JOSHUA**

Will this be not a shame?

**MOSES**

By no means, no.  
800 They force to do it and the shame falls on them.  
But come my friends. Let's start without delay  
Across the sand desert as fast as we can. –

**AARON**

How's that? You could now fall away from here?  
To leave this home that gave shelter to you,  
805 The homeless man?

**MOSES**

I leave, my friends, these all!  
The wife, the child, the blessed old father.  
I have to fly from here, from true delight's lap,  
Like murderer who feels that fray awaits  
Him in his way and feels the crime behind him,  
810 Who knows it well: his act is unfair but won't  
To see the outcome, his destroyed gladness. –  
*(enter Jethro, Cippora and Gerson)*

**THIRD SCENE**

*(the former, Jethro, Cippora, Gerson)*

**CIPPORA**

Moses! You are but here with your visitants?  
You are of hard-set face and you're distract'd. –  
You turned pale, oh tell me what is wrong?

**MOSES**

815 There is nothing, Cippora.

**CIPPORA**

That is worse.  
Your cheek is cheerless 'cause you look at me.  
I caus'd you grief 'cause I did something wrong.



**MOSES**

You are the sun that brightens up my face –  
I talk'd about some older things with my guests.  
820 The life, my darling, is not always jolly.

**CIPPORA**

It was a joy, yes, till they did not come.  
Now tell me, is it your odd habitude  
That guests bereave the lady of the house  
Of heart and of the goodwill of her husband?

**AARON**

825 Protect heaven us all from such an error.

**CIPPORA**

Then go away and leave us now to ourselves.  
I had the guess formerly that in his heart  
There are other things, too, not only my love.  
It was a daydream then, a dream, not more.  
830 And now, you are but here, it has become truth.  
Oh Moses, come! Return to your Cippora!

**MOSES**

My heart is yours, although my cruel fate  
Is pressing: – parting is a painful fight. –  
God bless you, dear, – it must happen by all means.

**CIPPORA**

835 Oh, could you leave the smell of grove of ours,  
The bluish sky, your loving wife, your child,  
So in the farness under greyish sky  
To pass away your life on stricken fields?  
Your trees, your family will then perish –  
840 What do you gain?

**HUR**

The evergreen laurel.

**CIPPORA**

It's cold, hard prize and fits into the graves.

**JOSHUA**

The thankfulness of folk.

**CIPPORA**

It is unthankful,  
The slavery is its own.

**MOSES**

Maybe you're right.  
Your heavy words vanish my fascinations. –

**AARON**

845 You've forgotten but one – your consciousness.

**MOSES**

The consciousness!

**CIPPORA**

Alas! Don't mind these words!  
Don't look at them, these stony-hearted fellows.  
Away with you, away with you for ever! –

**AARON**

850 All right, we leave. We are deceiv'd 'cause Moses  
'S believ'd by folk to be a fearless man.

**CIPPORA**

He prov'd, he is, he prov'd it more than once!

**AARON**

I am sorry, condone the sea of grief  
 We brought on you unthinkingly, my lady.  
 We did not think, your husband feels a hate for  
 855 The guest who calls to mind some former things  
 That he should give his name and good mother.

**MOSES**

Mother!

**AARON**

She waits in vain.

**JETHRO**

*(stepping forward)*

In vain she does not.  
 The chosen of the fate is also human  
 And when he pays a tax for his own weakness,  
 860 It is better to do in this desert,  
 And when he steps forward as head of folk,  
 He will be free of every useless scum. –  
 My son! Awake. –

**MOSES**

Cippora, let me go!  
 My fate calls me, – my fate calls me, – I run!  
 865 You cannot longer halt its running wheel.  
*(to Jethro)*  
 Let take a care of my dear wife, of my son!

**JETHRO**

My son, be quick, – now I know everything.  
 868 My blessing be with you, – I'm sure to see you.

**Scenery four**

*(Public square. In the middle the Pharaoh's palace with balcony.  
 Jews in crowd.)*

**FIRST SCENE**

*(Hur, Khaleb, Abiram, Dathan, Joshua, Jokhebed, the chief  
 constable, people)*

**KHALEB**

Oh Pharaoh! open your ears to us  
 870 From pauperdom your folk implores to you!

**PEOPLE**

We do implore to you!

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**

Shut up! Shut up!  
 Up there the well-inform'd are doing their part. –  
 There's no reason to shout yourselves but hoarse!

**JOSHUA**

The victim also shouts when grasp'd by game,  
 875 The killer though would do away with him, yes,  
 Without a word.

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**

Well well, you fearless boy,  
 I see, your restless race does not perish.  
 Till then the fellows like myself are so  
 Important. All of us can live thus somehow.

**KHALEB**  
880 Open, great Lord, the heart of Pharaoh!

**PEOPLE**  
Oh, stand in side of ours, almighty great Lord!

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**  
What is this brawl? Get out, you dirty mob!

**JOKHEBED**  
Don't hunt away from Pharaoh's presence  
The man who came to ask – because he may  
885 Return and then you cannot hunt away him.

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**  
Silence, shut up! you harridan, you beldam!  
You will not upset me – now wait a bit –  
I lead you then a dance that this selected  
But dirty lot will laugh then in your face.

**PEOPLE**  
890 Respond, oh Pharaoh!

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**  
What is this pertness!

**PEOPLE**  
We wait'd enough!

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**  
It's still better. Hold on!  
I'll give you this reply when I'll return soon.

**HUR**  
They are inside for more than half a day,  
Moses and Aaron, in the hall of throne.

**ABIRAM**  
895 And what will come of it? I've always said:  
Who was creat'd to kneel, he should not be wild.

**JOSHUA**  
We surely could not bear the odium  
That they don't permit us to pray to our Lord.

**ABIRAM**  
900 It's true, it's true, in turn our Lord demands  
Unceasingly the sacrifice from us,  
But bread we get from our powers that be.

**JOSHUA**  
Weak-hearted man!

**ABIRAM**  
Weak-hearted? Let me be.  
I'm conversant in it. – You'll also change  
When you get hold of a few things for yourself.

**JOKHEBED**  
905 Let us now pray, let us now pray but from heart  
That Lord of us could clearly show to you:  
In spite of sea of nastiness and illness  
He's stronger than the gods of yours can be.

**PEOPLE**  
Let us now pray.

**JOKHEBED**  
My Lord, oh give the three days  
910 We long for it to you from heart and from soul,  
Allow your folk to pray in peace in this waste!

**KHALEB**

I hear the swarming, I think they will come.

**HUR**

They come, their face but does not show result.

**SECOND SCENE**

*(The former, Aaron, Moses, later Herald)*

*(Moses and Aaron come from the palace. Murmur, swarming)*

**JOSHUA**

Let's hear what they tell, maybe it's better.

**AARON**

915 We've no success again.

**PEOPLE**

Oh, Good Heavens!

**ABIRAM**

It's all over again!

**MOSES**

Faint-hearted man!

Nothing is over. – Do you know who sent me?!

Almighty Lord of my oppressed folk! –

Who did harden the heart of Pharaoh

920 That all requests, motives, heavenly words

Fall down without a trace like from a wild cliff?

He did again, almighty Lord of ours, yes. –

Disaster 's on disaster, the folk complaints

In fright and falls to ruin in number and wealth.

925 And all of them perceive the hand of Lord,

It's Pharaoh who does resist. – Maybe

We were not clear enough before the Lord?

He should us throw like ore into the hot fire

In order to remove the worthless slag.

930 Or else the cup is yet not full of all crimes

Of Pharaoh, so naked truth should say that

The ore should be committed to the flames.

**DATHAN**

Alas, Heaven would grant...

**MOSES**

It will be granted.

Is it not written that the Lord will turn

935 The head of those whom He marked for death.

**ABIRAM**

The master 's master even free of mind

And we who're full of mind, we will perish.

**JOSHUA**

Why do we wait, – the time will fly away –

And I have said: our arms have to decide.

**HERALD**

*(from the balcony)*

940 In name of Pharaoh, the rule you must hear:

Because the work imposed on Israel now

Amounts to quite nothing for all the slaves,

So folk of Israel offers but three days

To spend in laziness in waste for its God:

945 Its work will be redoubled since today,

And 'cause the rate it pays is small enough

To hoard treasures on its altars for years:  
From this day forth the rate will be doubled.  
(*exit*)

**PEOPLE**

Alas! Oh, woe is us – we shall perish!

**ABIRAM**

950 Well well, how do you taste at first a bit of  
The tartish fruit of immature advice now?

**MOSES**

It's tartish – but our heart 's in peace because  
We tried to do what our honour demanded.

**DATHAN**

Honour? Then tell what does this empty word mean?  
955 Is there a Jew at all with his honour?

**ABIRAM**

Now, do you see, where your prophet has led us?  
Did I not always say that we, the slavish  
And poorish folk, we dare not irritate  
The wild, ferocious anger of the mighty?

**DATHAN**

960 They bereave us of uttermost farthings  
We have deserv'd with bitter, bloody sweat.  
Now, already we can renounce the flesh-pots  
And if it suits us – we can now adore  
Our Lord as starving, ragged, ugly beggars.

**ABIRAM**

965 Why do we now pocket this miscreant?  
Or was not he who for the Pharaoh once

With ill advice has sought the life of our folk?  
Who known why he 's coming, who knows? Possibly  
To do away with us?! Come on! Knock down him!

**PEOPLE**

970 Pelt him with stones!

**ABIRAM**

And then prostrating ourselves  
We have to ask the Pharaoh for pardon.

**MOSES**

You see: I am ready to die, I am here! –  
Pelt me with stones, with stones – but mark my words,  
Because Jehovah will be hit by this stone. –  
975 If you prefer the flesh-pots and you choose  
The glitter of the throne that throws a beam  
Of light on slaves as alms on woeful crowd:  
Then choose the manger of the beast that will  
Assure for you to fatten free of care.  
980 But if you favour only bloody fray,  
The freedom in poverty and renouncement  
For Lord of your ancerstors – unify!  
Listen to me who has the mission of Lord.  
Don't hesitate but act! Instead of you I  
985 Will cogitate: the power is in you!  
If I will say that now you have to starve,  
Starvation has to be the first in your mind;  
If I will say: the fate of beggars is fame,  
Then every man should want to be a beggar; –  
990 The day of our redemption is not far-off.  
The mighty will be rubbish, not the folk.  
(*Hur leads forward Maria*)

**MARIA**

Receive, Moses, the half of wreath of mine,  
Your nation sends it as your true reward.

**HUR**

The Lord will judge your acts through this woman,  
995 And judg's who lay a charge against our Moses.

**MOSES**

My folk! This illustrat's your slavery.

**CHIEF CONSTABLE**

*(comes with catchpolls)*

Get out rotters from Pharaoh's palace!  
Do not disturb his peaceful rest and calmness!

**PEOPLE**

999 Let lead us, Moses! Lead! We go with you!

## Scenery five

*(Room in the house of Moses. Moses and Aaron lead Jokhebed into the room. Maria, Hur, Joshua, Khaleb and some Jews follow them.)*

### FIRST SCENE

*(Jokhebed, Moses, Aaron, Maria, Hur, Joshua, Khaleb, Jews)*

**JOKHEBED**

1000 My son! How long I have to be awake  
Till I resign myself to last repose?  
Because I do not want to lie in ground  
Of slavery afar from you in exile.

**MOSES**

You must not wait for long – but patient be.

**MARIA**

1005 You will repose not here. – But there, in dry sand  
Of bare desert the wailing wind, the cold wind  
Will make a bed for us – my dear mother!

**MOSES**

This night Assasiel will come, he is  
The horror angel, who flies over us and  
1010 Will burke the first-begotten babes at once.  
This great disaster frightens Pharaoh  
And he'll release the folk of Israel  
That in desert it could appease its Lord,  
The ire of whom afflicts his realm hardly.  
1015 Listen to me, my friends, listen to me:

Let you disperse but slowly in the crowd,  
And let you knock at doors of every house,  
So all the families, the beasts and carts  
And things let be ready to leave this country.

**KHALEB**

1020 It will be so.

**MOSES**

Listen to me at short:

Each head of family a lamb should slaughter  
And all thresholds of houses where in Jew lives  
Then should be painted with the blood of lamb.  
This will be sign that will identify them.

1025 The lamb itself will be the dinner of  
The faithful families – but eat it on foot, –  
With staff of wayfarers in hands and no one  
May lie in bed, the sick may only sit down:  
So when the knock is heard at door of him  
1030 And horns will sound, he should instantly fare forth. –  
My friends, let's go, the time is pressing us.

**KHALEB**

I do my best.

**MOSES**

Just one word more! – Who has  
Egyptian neighbours or such acquaintances,  
Borrow some gold and silver pots and pans  
1035 For our ceremony.

**JOKHEBED**

How's that, my son?  
Maybe you will return?

**MOSES**

Oh, no! Never!

We only take it back, they robbed from us.  
I learnt from them: gold is the symbol of  
The power. Now: an eye for an eye and  
1040 A tooth for tooth. The power is the brute force!  
We shall thus gain our victory by fine tricks.  
*(Khaleb and others exeunt)*

## SECOND SCENE

*(Jokhebed, Maria, Aaron, Moses, Hur)*

**AARON**

Moses! Your plan's attractive but frightens.  
It seems you burden our weak shoulders by the  
Protecting arms that fit rather a giant  
1045 And which do not protect but rather weight down.

**MOSES**

You'll get inur'd to it. Man has a broad back  
When he has proper confidence in himself.  
It's freedom only that incites the grand acts; –  
You still have on the bonds of slavery.

**AARON**

1050 And if a traitor spied upon our plan  
And will reveal to Pharaoh our secret:  
What will become of us? – Prison and death  
Will lie ahead of us who'd be in action.

**MOSES**

The man alone the traitor has to fear  
1055 Who treacherously weav's a plot and so  
62

He'll put his plan – that only know a few –  
In action just against his folk in secret.  
But in the case of ours this is not so:  
The secret lives in air and in the street;  
1060 The folk 's the mate of ours and Lord protects us! –  
And tell me: whom betrays the damn'd who spies here?  
Maybe someone or someone else perish,  
But he who got the power from Lord himself  
And it's his destiny to save his folk,  
1065 He won't perish, he is guarded by our Lord.  
It's me who can't perish, our folk will be free. –  
It's fall of day: I have to go again  
To Pharaoh, once more but for the last time. –  
As I ordain'd, now wait for me in silence. –  
1070 Mother! Give me a kiss, bring it me good luck.

**JOKHEBED**

My blessing be with you Moses! Be strong! –

**MOSES**

Maria, kiss me too, and I'll be strong.

**MARIA**

I kiss you though it's not honey but poison.

**HUR**

I wish you could return to us with good news!

**MOSES**

1075 No one can bring bad tidings who has gone  
With want of entreaty, but for the last time.  
*(exit)*

**THIRD SCENE**

*(Jokhebed, Maria, Aaron, Hur, servants, later people, Moses)*

**AARON**

Let us now pray! – fatal moment 's coming.  
*(still prayer)*

**JOKHEBED**

He 's surely there.

**MARIA**

I seem to hear his voice, yes:  
His words are quite modest but accurate.  
1080 His cheeks begin to glow – his eyes are flush'd –  
His speech is rising like enormous flow –  
It gets into a rage – it's stirring up. –  
But Pharaoh –, though hesitates – is stubborn. –  
Alas! my head! my head! – I am exhausted.

**AARON**

1085 Is everything prepar'd as he ordain'd?  
Are all the doorsteps painted by the blood?

**HUR**

And now the servants bring the dinner here.  
*(servants bring in the dinner, they all surround it, only  
Jokhebed sits)*

**JOKHEBED**

What's that?

**AARON**

Maybe a knock?



**JOSHUA**

It is the wind.

**JOKHEBED**

1090 He ought to be already here. – If he'd  
Be long absent, I take the lead to shame him.  
Aaron, my son, help me and let's set off.

**AARON**

Mother, do not grow faint and add your patience  
To years of your unbroken and long wait.

**JOKHEBED**

Nevertheless, this was a knock again.

**AARON**

1095 Oh, no! not yet! – we have to wait, mother!

**MARIA**

*(suddenly going into ecstasy)*  
It is finish'd! – thanks be to Lord, we start!  
I see: he is coming with beaming face!  
*(knocking is heard from everywhere, this is followed by uproar)*

**PEOPLE**

*(outside)*  
Let's go! – Where are you, Moses? Where?

**MOSES**

*(enters being escorted by people)*

**PEOPLE**

*(horn sounds)*

Let's go!

**JOKHEBED**

Let sound, let sound, you horn! Wake up others,  
1100 For me you mean that I can sleep in peace. –  
Aaron, – Moses – let you come near to me.  
Now, give your hands, what your mother before death  
Will unify, nothing should pull apart.  
In time let bring my corpse from this prison  
1105 Into the great desert.  
*(she dies)*

**MARIA**

I take a torch  
And flourish it with joy. Let roll the drums,  
Resound the song of victory aloud far!

**MOSES**

Now lift her up who fell asleep in our Lord.  
And leave the maid – let her be led by her soul –  
1110 Come on! – I am escorted by a corpse  
1111 And fool. – Who'd have the face to get in my way?!  
*(Curtain)*

## **PART TWO**

## Scenery one

*(In the desert, at the foothill of Mt.Sinai, outside the Jewish camp)*

### FIRST SCENE

*(Aaron, Abiram, Dathan, Joshua and many of the Jews)*

#### ABIRAM

Don't talk to us with empty words, now Aaron  
You ask'd to wait but only forty days:  
The days are gone and Moses is not here.  
1115 Either he fell away from us and fled  
Or he was torn to pieces by the beasts.

#### AARON

How dare you even think this insolence?  
Or don't you fear that he'll appear at once?  
I say: he will return within a while.

#### DATHAN

1120 He won't return!

#### AARON

And I repeat: he will!  
Who led his folk away from Pharaoh  
Across the sea without getting but wet:  
Who made the water gush forth from the rock wall:  
And who implor'd for manna in the bare waste,  
1125 He won't vanish from sight so treacherously.

#### DATHAN

I have my eyes, I have my ears in vain?  
I'm neither blind nor deaf as you can see:  
But he is lost to view. –

#### AARON

Did he not say:  
He'd bring to us the written law, the true law  
1130 Of the almighty Lord of Abraham?  
But those who go over to other god,  
Worship idols until he will return,  
Will suffer an excruciating death.  
And all you took the oath to Jehovah,  
1135 To Moses that you keep your word.

#### DATHAN

That's true.  
Or they became untrue to us at all?  
They withdrew their protection from our head.  
We leave them now.

#### ABIRAM

Moses made you to be  
High priest of ours, – now show us here a god  
1140 Who will us save from death in this desert.  
The folk collected already its hoard:  
The gold, silver we brought with us from Egypt.  
Now, Aaron make a golden calf of this hoard:  
The god of Egypt who will bring back us.

#### AARON

1145 Oh, no! I'd sooner die as to do it!  
Why do you annoy me without a break?  
I'm like a hunted game, I have my peace  
Not for a moment in the camp of ours.

**PEOPLE**

We do implore you!

**ABIRAM**

Do you hear the folk?

**AARON**

1150 I hear nothing.

**ABIRAM**

And if we force to do it?

**AARON**

Who would impel the high priest himself, who?

**ABIRAM**

Where is the Lord of high priest, where is he? –  
If does not live, why we do have high priest? –  
You see: the folk revolts against your will,  
1155 But once it will revolt in unity,  
Will be the high priest strong enough to worst it?!

**AARON**

Alas, Moses! Why did you burden me?  
My shoulders are so weak, I feel: I sink.

**ABIRAM**

1160 If you don't help, – we take care of ourselves;  
And if your scatter'd folk will be perish'd  
By misfortune and grief – what do you say,  
The unjust steward of the flock? –

**AARON**

My Lord!  
What I've to do?

**ABIRAM**

Let hear his holy words  
From lips of folk.

**AARON**

And if we were at fault, you  
1165 Will accept responsibility for me?

**ABIRAM**

The folk accounts for it to itself only.

**AARON**

The prowess do you have to speak if Moses  
Will be then here and looks into your eyes? –

**PEOPLE**

This is our word.

**AARON**

So be it – let it be.

**PEOPLE**

1170 We thank you, Aaron! Victory! Let's go.  
(*exeunt except Joshua*)

**SECOND SCENE**

(*Joshua, later Moses*)

**JOSHUA**

Degenerated race! you're old but raw  
And bungled in the wisdom, too, – you think  
That, 'cause you come to terms with every fox,

1175 You are the true shepherd? – Away with you!  
Let do your work with conceit and with pride,  
Without but me. I'm not partner to it:  
The sinful deal should not burden my own soul,  
My sun will rise when Moses will return.

**MOSES**

*(bringing the two stone tablets)*

1180 I keep at last my hands on the alliance  
Contract'd between the folk and Jehovah,  
He wrote it with his own hands on this board.  
The law is in my hands that will be shield  
Above my folk till it will keep its faith; –  
And – thanks to Lord who chose me for the task –  
1185 This benediction will fly on the head of  
His folk but through my strong and shielding hands. –

**JOSHUA**

*(enters in front of him)*

You interdicted us to come, but I'm here.

**MOSES**

You may have great reason: – it is not your wont  
To slight my words. Now, tell me what's your woe.  
1190 Your burning cheeks reflect an ireful rage,  
The tears in eyes of yours reflect your grief.

**JOSHUA**

I do not know that out of grief and rage  
Which of the two came off to overcome.  
*(shouts of joy, sound of trumpets are heard from the camp)*

**MOSES**

1195 Now talk me round, my son, about your guess.  
I was afraid: the folk sustain'd a loss.

But thanks to Lord I hear the shouts of joy  
As greeting from the camp and I it please.  
It was yourself who was by them insult'd.

**JOSHUA**

Moses! The Lord was offended but not me.

**MOSES**

1200 Don't play the jokes, my son, don't play the jokes, please!  
Just now he put his holy laws in my hands,  
Who would be insolent to wrong the Lord  
Of Abraham?

**JOSHUA**

Who would be? Oh, a mad folk  
That ratted and adores an other god now.

**MOSES**

1205 You madly rave!

**JOSHUA**

Let see it with your eyes!  
*(Jews bring the golden calf in ceremonial procession with banners and music; before it Aaron in full high priest dress; Maria and other women are dancing while beating a drum; Moses looks at them with amazement for a while then steps in front of them.)*

**THIRD SCENE**

*(The former, Aaron, Maria, Hur, the crowd)*

**MOSES**

Stop there! You crazy folk! Don't step but hold! –

*(the ceremonial procession stops, music dies down)*

Who carved this idol? – Who was so bold,  
So insolent to rise against our grand Lord? –  
Did you become now deaf so you've no answer?

1210 I wish my words would thunder like a storm,  
As Lord will thunder when will ask for his grace  
That he in vain has wasted on your false heart. –  
Why do you need a law, – away with it –  
Let you perish with it, you idolater!

*(he strikes with the stone tablets on the golden calf, all of them break up; the folk slinks away, only Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Hur and Maria remain)*

**AARON**

1215 Forgive me Moses, I was forc'd by our folk.

**HUR**

Forgive me, I don't know what kind of gaze,  
What kind of ill spirit invaded our camp.

**MARIA**

And spread, – and spread. Who can resist the power  
That 's seething in the folk. I'm sure that I can't,  
1220 My crazy word is heart-beat of the poor folk...  
It sweeps away: delight 's so fair and passing.

**MOSES**

They slank away like beaten dogs can snake.  
Who was the boldest at the back of mine,  
He will be first who will now wash his hands –  
1225 Well, Aaron! tell me now: did earn this folk  
That you denied the Lord for it? now, tell! –

**AARON**

I have nothing against this charge but Lord's grace.

**MOSES**

Tell, Joshua! – within this mass of crowd  
Did no one keep his faith?

**JOSHUA**

One of the ten  
1230 Did it, of Levitical tribe, of our tribe.  
Oh, what a shame when you can see the fine wine  
To be dispersed in rotting swamp.

**MOSES**

It is false.  
A few fresh grains are in bushel of chaff;  
Let us select the better part of it. –  
1235 Put on your sword now Joshua and take with  
You all the Levitical men and go  
Across the camp and kill everybody  
Who were untrue: the children and women.  
Don't ask: how much? but take that how is it!  
*(exit Joshua, later exeunt Maria and Hur)*

## FOURTH SCENE

**AARON**

1240 Let weigh you, Moses, what you want to do.  
Although the law supports you in your will,  
Believe it me, prudence gives better advice.  
*(a horn sounds)*

**MOSES**

Prudence suggested worship of false gods, too.

**AARON**

1245 And Moses, if the folk resign'd to death  
Will not suffer the murdering?! You know,  
One faces ten and with the blank despair!

**MOSES**

And tell: disgrace, compunction and the shame  
That will enfeeble muscles of their arms,  
Are like destroying angel not with me? –  
*(wailing, clamour)*

**AARON**

1250 Infernal cries!

**MOSES**

Let kill them! Kill, don't fear! –  
If it gives pain to you then stop your ears,  
'Cause it's a traitor and will go with your  
Infamous foe.

**AARON**

Moses! Be merciful!

**MOSES**

1255 It's painful to the snake when 's trodden on.  
But tread it on! Let it then cry and hiss.  
*(Khaleb and Hur come in hurry)*

**KHALEB**

I ask you just to order back in its sheath  
The bloody sword of the revenge!

**MOSES**

So! Then quell  
The raging, roaring storm if you can do it  
That storm does not destroy your corn.

**AARON**

1260 You merely have to say one word.  
You can!

**MOSES**

It will  
Abate of itself when its power fails.

**HUR**

Moses! Enough!

**MOSES**

Are there no traitors more?  
*(enter Abiram, Dathan with Jews)*

**ABIRAM**

Moses, be merciful!

**DATHAN**

We ask you by God!

**MOSES**

1265 Do not disgrace his name! – Up, Joshua!  
Maybe your power fails? I ask you also  
By God – don't get exhausted in his service.

**DATHAN**

You're more unyielding than He is, the Lord!

**MOSES**

From which you speak?! The Lord whom you forsook  
Or He for whom you spare to shed the blood?

**ABIRAM**

1270 Moses, don't think that cravenness guides me; –

To die today or soon: it's all the same.  
But if the Lord of Abraham got us  
To hands of yours so that you gain a home  
For us: what will He say because you squander  
1275 Our blood and nobody survives?

**MOSES**

You think

Your Lord gets homeland for a rotten folk, yes?  
And we who write the history of world  
By gushing blood of folk, we have the same goal?  
The aim is more superb: to give a home  
1280 To the resplendent church of the Almighty;  
The folk is only tool and I'm performer.  
(wailing, enters Maria in a hurry)

**FIFTH SCENE**

*(the former, Maria)*

**MARIA**

Alas! Moses, they don't allow to reach  
The feast; they fling aside me like a fool, yes –  
As I'd become unworthy of a righteous  
1285 Stab with the sword!

**MOSES**

Don't get me temper up!

**MARIA**

That is not bad! You gain respect for your  
Sister this way. Because I did the same  
As all others have done. I cried and was glad

Together with the folk: and now when grim,  
1290 Ferocious murderers assault our still tents,  
They turn'd me out like scabby, rotter dog.  
Is it in order, Moses? – Woe to me!

**MOSES**

You're raging, maid!

**MARIA**

Your folk was raging, too.

Take up this dirk: – and please, stab through my heart, –  
1295 And kill then Aaron, too – he's your blood-brother  
And don't leave us to be alive – to our shame. –

**MOSES**

Go, Khaleb, go! and Hur, you also go; –  
And tell now Joshua to sheathe the sword. –

**KHALEB**

I thank you, Moses.

**HUR**

This due to you, maid.

**MOSES**

To Lord of Abraham should express their thanks  
1300 Who did survive.

**MARIA**

Who did survive – but why?

Do you understand, Abiram, 'cause I don't.  
You see: unhappy men are happy 'cause  
They do not fear the death. But happy men are  
1305 Unhappy 'cause they fear without a break.



**HUR**

Our thanks, Moses! –

**MOSES**

How long you chatter still here?

*(Hur, Khaleb exeunt)*

Well, Aaron and Maria, like others

They would deserve the death. I banish them

From camp of ours till our almighty Lord

1310 Will have enough of their punishment and

I shall not say: it was enough, you may come.

*(Aaron and Maria exeunt)*

Now, let you go, you all, and leave me here.

I need the loneliness, to be alone.

*(exeunt all)*

## SIXTH SCENE

*(Moses alone)*

The folk receiv'd pardon and law is here

1315 And lies in dust but broken up in pieces.

The Lord will not rewrite it, so I pick up

Its holy pieces – I saw it in full. –

Because without the law our folk decays.

*(Moses picks up the fragments of the stone tablets and sits down)*

## SEVENTH SCENE

*(Moses, Joshua, Abiram, Khaleb, Hur, people)*

**JOSHUA**

*(with several others come in a hurry)*

Moses! Bad news! – our sentinels are running

1320 To us and out of breath report in fear that

The Moabitan army marched up

And rush'd at us.

**MOSES**

And what then? They will be here.

**ABIRAM**

But they don't want to be the guests of ours.

Their eyes will watch for prey and will shed our blood,

1325 And will enslave our children and women.

**MOSES**

Prevent now them from doing it, you're brave.

**KHALEB**

We do prevent, Moses, but command us!

This is why we came here.

**MOSES**

I will not do.

I won't dispute with Jehovah at all.

1330 He found insufficient the dirty shed blood

And turned loose on you this godless mob:

Let them complete the work to which my hands

Yes, prov'd to be too weak.

**ABIRAM**

Or maybe stronger

1335 Than should have been. You lopp'd away the branches  
But free from care and tell in mockery to  
The trunk: you have to bloom, why do you not? –

**MOSES**

And what's the warning of this empty speaking?  
Just by the time you end, our camp will burn.

**ABIRAM**

You have to help if brought ill luck to us.

**MOSES**

1340 I am not Lord myself, it is beyond  
My might to say: what's done can't be undone,  
And I'll answer for it but not to you.  
And yet, I know: who was perish'd by myself,  
If was alive, the Lord would him perish now  
1345 By sword of enemy.

**KHALEB**

Come, command us.

**PEOPLE**

Lead us!

**MOSES**

I have already said, I won't.  
Let's see how great is your power without me,  
And free of blessing how strong is your sword.  
Because you say that I'm one element  
1350 In common crowd like anybody else.

**PEOPLE**

The enemy is at the gates!

**MOSES**

Get up! Get up! –

**KHALEB**

Who will us lead?

**ABIRAM**

Is there no man among us?

**PEOPLE**

Give us a head! –

**ABIRAM**

The Lord won't send a leader.

**JOSHUA**

1355 No one is worthy of the lead? Then I'll be  
The leader in his holy name!

**PEOPLE**

Arise!

*(exeunt all; remain Moses, Khaleb, Abiram and Dathan)*

## **EIGHTH SCENE**

*(Moses, Khaleb, Abiram, Dathan, later Hur)*

**MOSES**

Khaleb! Let hurry on the hill-top, – tell  
What do you see? – What happens with the folk? –  
The Lord's clemency does support its fight,  
Or let it be in shame as it deserv'd!  
*(din of battle)*

**KHALEB**

1360 They close with already. – And like two storms  
 Are rushing towards each other and clash with,  
 The valley is cover'd by dark and lightning  
 'S flashing by fits and starts and in the welter  
 Our eyes don't see which of the two grew stronger,  
 1365 The roar of them is merely uniform,  
 The grubbed ground reflects the violence  
 Of fray, how hard they murder each other.

**MOSES**

What do you see in dust-cloud?

**KHALEB**

Joshua,  
 He gets ahead like tiger flush'd with rage.  
 1370 He faces now the leader and they clash with.  
 Their steels are sparking and he 's out of sight.

**MOSES**

Now strike him, son!

**KHALEB**

But from the mountain top  
 An army rushes down like raging storm.  
 He is enclosed. Our banner stops – and sways –  
 1375 Our folk retreats – our ranks are broken up.  
 It is all up with us!  
*(the din of battle comes closer)*

**DATHAN**

Oh, Moses! Help!

**MOSES**

*(raises his arms and turns towards the battle)*  
 Oh, Jehovah! We pray to you, our God!

Combat with us! – Don't let perish your poor folk!

**KHALEB**

Our Lord answer'd your prayer! Thanks to Him! –  
 1380 The broken ranks swang round and do resist.  
 Our banner flies again – the foe retreats now.

**DATHAN**

Praise be to you, Moses. You gave a proof  
 Of your justice.

**ABIRAM**

Maybe he fairly well found  
 The proper time! – You are a silly man!

**DATHAN**

1385 Don't be profane, my friend!

**ABIRAM**

And you don't rave!  
 Why does he suffer martyrdom so long? –  
 Let him lower his arms but free of fear,  
 The fighters will perform the rest of it then.

**MOSES**

*(lowers his arms)*  
 Let them perform – let us see now, you fool.

**HUR**

*(rushes in, bleeding and with worn face)*  
 1390 Oh, Moses, help! Our success is in vain,  
 Incited only the Moabitans' rage; –  
 A hidden troop attack'd us from the rear,  
 This troop assaults the outworks of our camp now. –  
 The children cry – and all women are wailing,

1395 A wave of fire is sweeping o'er the whole camp  
Destroying everything with raging temper.

**DATHAN**

Moses, forgive once more and do not leave  
Alone your folk because of crazy fools.

**MOSES**

*(to Hur)*

Run back and say: I pray to Lord, implore him,  
1400 And he helps those who strong are in their faith!

**HUR**

Your words provide again the hope to our heart.  
*(he runs away)*

**MOSES**

Oh, yes! You're grand, the Lord of Abraham!  
Our slightness does not discourage your will  
To bring about your magnificent plan.

**KHALEB**

1405 You're right, Moses! I'm shaken and I see that  
We are supported by our Lord again.  
The wind work'd round and now the enemy is  
Surrounded by the serpent's tongue of flames.  
The mortal crowd roars and would run away, –  
1410 There's no escaping it, they burn alive. –  
Our troops grow stronger and triumphal song is  
Then heard from there, the enemy resists now  
But here and there.

**MOSES**

Praise be to you, my Lord!  
Who gave me power in my weaken'd arms and

1415 Who bless'd our fight, protect my tormented folk  
In future, too, because my power is  
That of a man alone. I am dead beat.  
*(lowers his arms)*

**KHALEB**

What's that?! Moabitans are all dragons?  
So that we cut their heads in ones and then  
1420 Instead of one they grow but ten again?

**ABIRAM**

You spent your strength, Moses! Come, Dathan, come  
And help to raise his weaken'd arms again.  
Now, lean on us. That's right. You have to raise  
Alone your soul to Lord, we care for your frame. –  
*(they lift the arms of Moses)*

**MOSES**

1425 My Lord, you gain'd the victory two times.  
The foe inclin'd itself before your might,  
Your almighty spirit the faithless doubters  
Impels to have their faith in you again.  
*(clamour of victory)*

**KHALEB**

We gain'd the victory! Moabitans  
1430 Are running and our fighters harry them.  
It was the final blaze of their effort  
That frighten'd me a few minutes ago.  
*(Joshua comes with Hur, with fighters; they escort prisoners  
of  
war, among others Amra, and bring booty)*

## NINTH SCENE

*(the former, Joshua, Amra, fighters, prisoners of war)*

**MOSES**

Welcome, my son, – come, come into my arms!

**JOSHUA**

We took abundant and rich booty, Moses.

**DATHAN**

1435 My friends, a great wonder you witness'd here.  
We thank, Moses, the victory from our heart.

**MOSES**

The glory is due to Jehovah only,  
He has remitted all the sins of folk. –  
And now, get up my friends, and follow me, yes. –  
1440 But throw into desert this golden false god:  
The sordid gold should not pollute us more.  
But those who have some valuable things  
In addition to raiment and to food,  
A necklet or a clasp, should bring it here,  
1445 And we shall pitch Jehovah's tabernacle,  
It should be gorgeous, worthy of his saint'd name.

## Scenery two

*(Tent of Moses at the frontier of Canaan in the desert; inside the tent)*

## FIRST SCENE

*(Joshua, Amra)*

**JOSHUA**

My bonny maid, now are you still grim, mournful?

**AMRA**

Why should I laugh – maybe to you, you cad?

**JOSHUA**

1450 Rather to me than to the foolish fighter  
Who was your former master till he liv'd.

**AMRA**

A curse of god of mine upon your head!

**JOSHUA**

You always have the sulks, is it correct  
To be with me and talk with sparkling eyes, yes?  
Your tender lips now ought to give a kiss  
1455 Rather than being pouted or compressed. –  
It is a shame that Lord bereaved you of  
The tricks, a fair woman what has to know  
To be decent.

**AMRA**

Oh, no! Do not believe!  
I know but everything – if it is worth!

**JOSHUA**  
1460 And yet, you do not want to love, to love me!  
Why do your lips revolt against yourself  
And why our lips can't meet now in a long kiss?

**AMRA**  
It's not the pupil but her master 's clumsy.

**JOSHUA**  
1465 Let you be master, tell what I must do  
To court your favour now.

**AMRA**  
Let me at last sleep!

**JOSHUA**  
That's what you are.

**AMRA**  
Are you unlike to me? Tell!  
I've heard but often this "good afternoon",  
And I should always say an other "welcome"?

**JOSHUA**  
1470 Tut-tut, be sarcastic, I would deserve that  
Finally you would be pleasant to me:  
Because I'm always at your beck and call.

**AMRA**  
What do you wish from me but even more?  
You say: your bliss 's to look me in the face,  
Your beatitude 's to hear my voice again.  
1475 You look at me and hear my voice the day long!

**JOSHUA**  
I see your temper and I hear your growling. –

It is a fair and splendid gift to me who  
'S prepar'd to do but everything for you.

**AMRA**  
1480 For what you are ready? To kill my dear?  
To fight against the ancient god of my folk?

**JOSHUA**  
My god was stronger; let you leave your old god.

**AMRA**  
I won't it do. He merely tested me.  
Now, turn to his faith and the blood I'll forget.

**JOSHUA**  
Don't say a word! Moses should not perceive it!  
*(exit Amra; enters Moses)*

## SECOND SCENE

*(Moses, Joshua)*

**MOSES**  
1485 Hey, Joshua.

**JOSHUA**  
If you please.

**MOSES**  
What's the time?

**JOSHUA**  
It's dawning.

**MOSES**

I wish our day would but dawn!  
 How long is every night that's darkling prior  
 To day of act! I am finally here,  
 At holy confines of the Lord's Promis'd Land.  
 1490 A bold step more and I will hit the target. –  
 My dreams came true, my arms became now strong,  
 And everything for which I won laurels  
 Is incarnated. – I created new  
 Homeland, eternal altar to my grand Lord! –  
 1495 And almost all was done with wretched tools, with  
 A tiny, flimsy and discordant, weak group. –  
 Oh, when some time a gleeman will recite  
 The staggering long history of ours:  
 Descendants will be lost in wonder then  
 1500 Although they only hear and take delight  
 In acts that is poetry for them all:  
 I witness'd it alive, – and follow'd it up. –  
 But why my spies are in delay so long?  
 Do you have news about them, Joshua?

**JOSHUA**

1505 I know nothing.

**MOSES**

I'd like to speak with Aaron,  
 But he is sleeping still, I know his wont.  
 I have to wait. – But tell me Joshua,  
 Who is the maid with whom you had a talk?

**JOSHUA**

She's Amra, she's my share from all the takings.

**MOSES**

1510 Be careful, son! – You risk'd your life for her and  
 She took you captive with some winks of her eyes. –

Do you love her, yes? – See, you do not tell! –  
 Would you do everything for her? – Reply!

**JOSHUA**

I do not know.

**MOSES**

But all the same.

**JOSHUA**

Maybe.

**MOSES**

1515 My son, my son! – Woman 's a witching bloom.  
 Its smell is sweet but with the same fragrance  
 It will instill its poison in our heart.

**JOSHUA**

Who wants to live but free of bloom?

**MOSES**

And tell, who  
 Would be so foolish as to lead the foe in  
 1520 His tent? – and even in his heart? – Look here:  
 It's not the brute force that will worsen you  
 But it's the love itself.

**JOSHUA**

It's awful, Moses,  
 How nasty folk we shall become if no one  
 Will be allow'd to love but free from heart.

**MOSES**

1525 Let love, my son, who cannot act otherwise.  
 But keep in mind: our fight will be quite long,

And life of man himself is short enough.  
 When I will fall and Aaron will fall, too,  
 You will succeed us but without delay, yes;  
 1530 I feel, – I know. – And just a silly pawn, –  
 A passing shooting star should get in your way?!  
 Who was but once slapp'd slightly by the fate,  
 He must not love. The star is also cold  
 That guides the sailors. – So, let be you hard!  
 1535 The triumphal song is heard only from far! –  
 Maybe we hear it never in our life  
 But hear the dying gasp and buzz of war. –  
 It's all the same. Our children hear then this song. –  
 But what is this uncommon clash or din  
 1540 That clatters loudly all along our whole camp  
 Like hollow thunder runs among the clouds? –  
 In such a time the folk is slumbering. –  
 Go, Joshua, attend to it. – But wait – stay.  
*(Aaron, Khaleb and Hur come)*

### THIRD SCENE

*(the former, Aaron, Khaleb, Hur)*

#### MOSES

My spies arriv'd. – Now, Khaleb, tell me good news! –  
 1545 And Hur, what did you bring? – and Aaron, you  
 Avoke: – what is that hunt'd away your dream?

#### AARON

The care and anxiety! Bad news again!

#### MOSES

Did Canaan become a barren land?  
 The folk will have no chance to enjoy its fruits?

**KHALEB**  
 1550 But nay! – it 's land of milk and honey there,  
 The bunch of grape 's prodigious, marvellous,  
 Olives are ponderous, so bend the twigs.

#### MOSES

Well well! – Maybe dragons stand over it?

#### HUR

Oh, neither! But the men are giants there,  
 1555 In their ferocious soul prowess prevails,  
 Their brawn is steel and they are swift like wild horse.

#### MOSES

It's not a joy the pettywatery  
 To beat.

#### HUR

This folk is unconquerable.  
 The best of ours are dwarf'd by warriors  
 1560 Of them. – We die if you command to fight.

#### MOSES

And you forget the Lord of Abraham,  
 Who fights with us? – However, it may be,  
 The folk, our folk should not it know.  
 A whisper'd word, a particle from your lips,  
 1565 A woeful sigh or enigmatic smile,  
 A blinking may be telltale sign from you. –  
 Disaster, hidden by the times to come,  
 Will numb your arms before the fight begins,  
 Although in case of woe your hands will take  
 1570 Courage repeatedly from woe itself.

#### AARON

It is belated! – every one it knows. –



And this is why the folk is murmuring  
And wants to see you, else it will revolt.

**MOSES**

Let come the folk. – The sea obey'd my words!  
1575 I'll see whether the folk of Lord is wilder.  
*(he sits down; a group of Jews hustles to the entrance)*

**FOURTH SCENE**

*(the former, Abiram, Dathan, Cippora, Gerson, people)*

**PEOPLE**

We will have none of it! – Why we did so far? –  
Let lay him low. – He should be lapidated. –  
Then go ahead! – Why just I have to go?  
Don't press me, heigh; others but not me come first.

**ABIRAM**

*(enters, Dathan and people follow him)*  
1580 Well, I go first. Moses! – I greet you here. –

**MOSES**

What do you want?

**ABIRAM**

And if I want nothing,  
There 's no admittance to Moses for me?  
*(he wants to sit down)*

**MOSES**

Who will be bold enough to seat himself  
In the presence of judge of the nation? –  
1585 Get up! Get up!

**ABIRAM**

I was inclined to think,  
We can also sit down where you're sitting.  
I thought, between ourselves we have no servants  
And master.

**PEOPLE**

He's the judge. Do what he orders.

**ABIRAM**

We shan't be in bed terms with each other.  
*(meanwhile Jethro, Cippora and Gerson enter with hesitation  
and stay in the background)*

**MOSES**

1590 Tell me, what is the aim of your visit.

**ABIRAM**

We came to you, Moses, because we want  
To know: what do you want to do just now  
When spies told everything.

**MOSES**

I want to act  
As Lord will foreordain.

**ABIRAM**

Tell this to children!  
1595 The age is o'er when haughty persons could  
Govern the folk as dull and dullard brute beast:  
We grew into adults, use our own head:  
We want to know that why we bleed to death; –  
We shall be tool in hands of yours no more.

**MOSES**

1600 But each of us is tool in hands of Lord!  
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**DATHAN**

You do not give a share us in your plans;  
 You contemn our advice, mock at our counsel,  
 And insist on to follow blindly what you  
 Excogitat'd.

**MOSES**

1605 In such gruelling moments  
 The verbal sparring 's not the best solution.

**ABIRAM**

When formerly you escort'd us from Egypt,  
 You prompted us and promis'd us freedom,  
 And then we left the tranquillity and  
 Welfare but only for this attractive word:  
 1610 We left the flesh-pots, left our land, our house,  
 Receiv'd but in exchange the distress of wild  
 Desert and instead of promis'd liberty  
 We have to suffer wounds of a new bondage.

**PEOPLE**

He 's right, Moses! He 's right!

**MOSES**

1615 Your happiness  
 Was complete and did not miss anything else?

**DATHAN**

What did we miss? Nothing. We paid as faithful  
 Subjects the tax that was imposed on us then.  
 Who proved to be placid, he was protect'd,  
 And malcontents murmur'd against the power.

**MOSES**

1620 It's fine! It's fine! How could a folk be free  
 That bears on its powerless back the blue

Imprints and blood-red strips and has forgotten  
 The lash and whip, the kicks and slaps in face. –  
 Why should such an infamous folk be free  
 1625 That sinks from day to day in its grand disgrace,  
 And like a rotten harlot shakes herself,  
 And blush'd for shame for one thing yesterday,  
 Today she takes it as familiar  
 And kisses from her heart what she detest'd.

**DATHAN**

1630 But here you stand as demigod above us,  
 You pester and kill us – we don't know why.

**MOSES**

I do not try to justify my acts; –  
 I would become degraded when I'd excuse  
 Myself.

**ABIRAM**

1635 And do you stand above us so high  
 That words of ours will swoon till reach your chair?

**MOSES**

My acts will speak for me and give you answer.  
 Does not the lustrous tabernacle stand  
 Above the Ark of Covenant among us?  
 And don't we stand at gates of the Promis'd Land?

**ABIRAM**

1640 It is correct, I wish'd to speak about this.  
 You have to see that suffering of ours and  
 Efforts we made so far are all in vain, –  
 We can't triumph o'er them.

**PEOPLE**

It's true! It's true!

**ABIRAM**

1645 Now, let you bring us back – and we forget all.  
The folk is generous.

**PEOPLE**

He 's right! Bring back!

**MOSES**

Alas! The folk is generous!

**PEOPLE**

We don't fight  
For useless goals in vain.

**MOSES**

This is well done!  
The brave and chosen folk of Abraham's Lord!

**ABIRAM**

1650 Get down to facts! We've had enough of turgid  
But empty words. Be short! What's your reply?

**PEOPLE**

What's your reply?

**MOSES**

Alas, my folk! Alas!  
If I would bend these age-worn knees before you  
And I would be the mediator of Lord...

**PEOPLE**

You'd waste your breath.

**MOSES**

But please!

**PEOPLE**

In vain you implore!

**MOSES**

1655 And did you ponder it?

**PEOPLE**

We soundly did.

**MOSES**

If you do not give in, I have to do. –  
Forgive me, please, forgive me, I implore  
When I'm dumbfounded by this grave affair.  
The dreams of soul are deeply rooted, so  
1660 It's painful me to rid myself of these thoughts  
And for this end now grant me time to bid  
A farewell to my dear deceas'd ideas.  
For morning I'll finish and wait you.

**PEOPLE**

Well,  
We also know what is proper. Let's go.  
1665 Good-bye till morning.  
*(Aaron, Hur, Abiram, Dathan and people exeunt)*

**FIFTH SCENE**

*(Moses, Jethro, Cippora, Gerson, Joshua)*

**MOSES**

I do not believe!  
It was but ponderous.

*(to Cippora)*

Come darling, come! –  
Father, my son!

**CIPPORA**

Oh, Moses, I was frighthen'd  
That you do want to recognize me no more. –  
It is now said that you are quite cold-hearted.

**MOSES**

1670 The leader is cold-hearted, not man himself.  
It's not so much that's needed to have joy  
In heart.

*(he embraces Cippora)*

I keep the beatitude in my arms.

**CIPPORA**

Who would believe a short moment ago  
That you receive with open heart. –

**MOSES**

My dear,  
1675 You see, our fate is formidably freakish!  
Collects the pains, and all delight in ones  
And pours on our confus'd heart all these by turns.

**CIPPORA**

How happy are we here!

**MOSES**

Women, release me!  
You woke me up from ecstasy of my dreams.  
1680 Hey, Joshua!

**JOSHUA**

I'm yours!

**MOSES**

If in the morning  
The rising sun, the golden eye of Lord  
Will find a traitor here but only one,  
He will destroy our camp, do you understand?  
Abiram, Dathan, their accesories  
1685 Are dead. – Oh, no! They are but worse than be dead!  
No one of descendants will see their tombs,  
No one of scions will mention their name more:  
Let earth swallow them up completely forthwith –  
The crowd that looks for chance to make revolt  
1690 While takes cover behind the blustering mob,  
It should recoil in fear when they are absent.  
Go, Joshua, – Levites are not traitors yet. –  
Oh, Cippora, why do you pale and quake?

**CIPPORA**

Moses, I am afraid of you!

**MOSES**

You're fool.

**JETHRO**

1695 You are much too sever, my son.

**MOSES**

But why?

**JETHRO**

I think you would have more success by fair words.  
Why don't you ask, why don't you hear them, tell me?  
Believe it me that people do not care  
If someone will not follow their advice,  
1700 They merely want to tell that weighs on their mind.

**MOSES**

But when I feel: among the members of  
 The crowd it's me who knows best what to do. –  
 Jethro, Jethro! You know, I want at no time  
 To be a leader of the folk; the order  
 1705 Of Lord has foreordain'd. And now, tell me:  
 Whether I permit to disturb my plans  
 By plotters and by cads? – Who wants to lead  
 A folk, he must be master of the flock  
 Of fuming ghosts; and if he falls asleep or  
 1710 He yields to them, he will be kill'd or cast off.

**JETHRO**

That's true but much though small offended prides will  
 Create a hitch if you wont treat tenderly. –  
 You forc'd the folk to stand while you were sitting:  
 The ire arose in hearts of all the aged.  
 1715 Besides, this is not ancestral custom.

**MOSES**

Alas! Don't mention ancestral customs  
 Or ancient law, when all my steps are new!  
 I do not grow the flower of the past 'cause  
 I must create the new but from nothing.

**JETHRO**

1720 I grant as fact. But this kind of waywardness  
 Endows your steps with such a false colour  
 That thyself and the case are now the same  
 And nobody has a concern in it.

**MOSES**

I wish the case was in another manner!  
 1725 But when I give it up – the case is lost.  
 Who did appeal to it? – You also heard.

**JETHRO**

If it is so, you make efforts in vain.  
 A folk against its will you can't make blessed.  
 You have done everything, you're free of reproach,  
 1730 Now, give it up and come to us and have peace.

**CIPPORA**

Moses! It will be so! I guess'd for ages!  
 Call back now Joshua and come with us.

**MOSES**

Oh, Cippora!

**CIPPORA**

Moses! Don't hesitate!

**JETHRO**

Conclude thyself! Is your rebelling folk  
 1735 Now worthy of liberty?!

**MOSES**

No!

**JETHRO**

It's well said.

**CIPPORA**

Did I deserved to fade away for your sake?

**MOSES**

You are ruthless! You came as kindly doves  
 And now like vulture rend and wound my heart!  
 Whether I should declare that I have lived  
 1740 As fool day-dreamer?! And now I should commence  
 A new existence with my broken heart?  
 Alas!  
 (*while he meditates, Maria comes slowly in reverie*)

## SIXTH SCENE

*(the former, Maria, later the voice of Jehovah, Aaron, Joshua)*

### MARIA

How nice 's this golden-hair'd woman? –  
And who 's this ladkin? – Oh, he smiles, he smiles, –  
Oh, sonny, let you smile! – some time you'll love, –  
1745 You'll have betrothed, – but she'll be abducted. –  
You may then cry.

### CIPPORA

Moses! Who is this wench?  
This human wreck?

### MOSES

She is the prophetess.

### MARIA

She is, and is possess'd by Lord like soul is  
Possess'd by pain and vile ordeal that used  
1750 To expel from the heart te mundane fire. –  
But tell me, who you are, you childish maid?  
Where did you hide from world and from the sunshine,  
That you have lived so far and did not see  
The sacred features of the suffering? –  
1755 And was your husband not hunted away  
From home into the bare desert in farness?  
And your brothers were not enslav'd before,  
Whilst all your old relics were carried off?  
You're happy now. And you now have to quake!! –  
1760 Because your suffering will be redoubled.

### CIPPORA

This frightful, horrid speech will make my blood freeze.

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### JETHRO

Now clear the way for her! – how strange a phantom!  
*(Maria crosses the scene and exit)*

### MOSES

In this minute she's messenger of my Lord! –  
Just look at that! Just look! –

### JETHRO

What's there, my son?  
*(in the tent's corner a fog-bank is rising)*

### MOSES

1765 Do you not see the fog-bank there, do you?

### AARON

We see nothing.

### MOSES

Oh, you are blind! you're blind!

### VOICE OF JEHOVAH

Moses! Take care!

### MOSES

Do you not hear the words?  
My Lord! I'm yours!  
*(prostrates himself)*

### JETHRO

Moses, you hallucinate.

### VOICE OF JEHOVAH

This folk became now unworthy of me.  
1770 I kill forever out it from the surface.

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**MOSES**

My Lord! I pray you not to kill it out!  
 I learnt to live and die within this poor folk.  
 It is deprav'd, it's true. Smite down, don't save it.  
 Send blow on blow upon its head, I'll suffer  
 1775 With it. But please, allow this folk to live more!

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

I came to hate this ill, dastardly race.

**MOSES**

My Lord! If you demand one offering,  
 Take only me as blood-fine for my folk!

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

1780 The slavery's poison imbib'd it so deep  
 That all degenerated rascals will  
 Beget a freak.

**MOSES**

Who's brought up by desert,  
 Will have a heart that fits to liberty.  
 It's true, the generation that's living  
 Is unworthy of your regard. Perish it. –  
 1785 I'll be the knife that cuts the rotten parts  
 But let the new, intact folk be alive!  
 From here, the frontier tomorrow I will  
 Return and will peregrinate with it  
 Until I don't entomb the last of them there,  
 1790 Who once has seen the great wonders of Egypt  
 And by new generation is replac'd.

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

Let it be so as you promis'd. But know:  
 The bare desert will be also your tomb.

Just Joshua may enter the Promis'd Land.  
*(the fog-bank disappears)*

**MOSES**

1795 Oh, thanks to you for your mercy, my Lord! –  
 My folk, if you would know that I redeem'd  
 Your fate by blood of mine! – Aaron!  
*(enters Aaron)*

**AARON**

I'm, here.

**MOSES**

Register those adults but all of them  
 Who start'd with us from Egypt to this way.  
 1800 When day begins to break, let sound the horns,  
 We start.

**AARON**

It will be done as you order'd.  
*(exit, enters Joshua)*

**JOSHUA**

Milord!

**MOSES**

Did you perform the order of mine!

**JOSHUA**

Rebels were deeply swallow'd by the ground.

**MOSES**

1805 Jethro! Father! and you, my dear Cippora!  
 You saw what has happen'd to me in these days.  
 You know, I have become executive tool

In fateful hand of Lord. Living and dead. –  
Living to Him, – and dead for you, for myself:  
In this desert I have to be entombed, –  
1810 Why should I entomb also you, my dear?  
Maybe, the kiss I take now from your lips,  
Is stealing, – but it is the last, its all one. –  
I have creat'd an age, maybe this age  
Would be asham'd of being made by man.  
1815 If I'd finish'd I had commenc'd I should have  
Become a demigod. – And now you see,  
I have to die. Let it be so, – be so; –  
The Lord bless you! – and take care of my son.

**CIPPORA**  
Oh, Moses!

**MOSES**  
Hush! Such tender speech is like  
1820 A sweet arrow which breaks through the cuirass  
That is banged by stroke of fate in vain.

**JETHRO**  
Come, daughter! – Moses, be blessed by my god!

**MOSES**  
My son! My wife!

**CIPPORA**  
Alas!

**JETHRO**  
Come on! Let's be quick!  
(*exeunt Jethro, Cippora and Gerson; a horn sounds*)

**MOSES**  
The sun is up! – How fast 's running the time! –

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## SEVENTH SCENE

(*Joshua, Amra*)

**JOSHUA**  
1825 Hey, Amra!  
(*Amra enters the tent*)

**AMRA**  
What's your order?

**JOSHUA**  
(*looking always elsewhere*)  
Go, you are free.

**AMRA**  
I'm free! I'm free! – I know it rather well:  
You did not put me, like a dog, on chain.

**JOSHUA**  
That's true; you may return to brethren of yours.

**AMRA**  
But Joshua, you only joke.

**JOSHUA**  
Oh, nay!

**AMRA**  
1830 What can I do at home, at brethren of mine?  
I got unused to them.

**JOSHUA**  
Get used to them.

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## Scenery three

### AMRA

All right, I go; but what should I do now  
With these old odds and ends you hung on me,  
These armlets, earrings and bijouterie?

### JOSHUA

1835 Retain but all – and go. My Lord will bless you.

### AMRA

Why do you turn from me? Look here, in my face!  
And look into my eyes, – and say, repeat, say  
That yet, you have to go!

### JOSHUA

Go, Amra, go!  
If I would be so weak to ask you that  
1840 Remain but here, then go!

### AMRA

Oh, Joshua!  
Do not believe that I intend to leave,  
But even if I'd brag!

### JOSHUA

Alas! It's in vain!  
Your pack-camel stands out of doors, you see.  
My Amra! Say good-bye! – I escort you.  
(*he guides her*)

### AMRA

1845 You hunt away, you had enough of me!  
You are a false seducer – nasty, – vile!  
Be damned by the god of folk of mine! –  
And take the jewels! – All! – And be accurs'd:  
Do not believe, you paid with them for me!  
(*she runs away*)

(*In the Jewish camp, at the foothill of Mt. Abiram, at the river Jordan.  
In the middle stands the Ark of the Covenant, its tabernacle is open.  
In the bold cliff of the mountain a tree with wide-spreading branches  
is seen*)

## FIRST SCENE

(*Moses, Aaron, Maria, Joshua in front of the tabernacle; farther  
back aldermen stand in a half-circle; behind them people*)

### MOSES

1850 We stand anew in wanderings of ours  
As forty years ago – at holy threshold;  
In front of us you see the Canaan.

### AARON

But than our frame and soul were full of great  
Activity – and now we want to have peace.

### MOSES

1855 So that the strong scions of our renew'd  
Folk should complete the work we have begun once. –  
Now did you read aloud the complete census?

### AARON

I've read aloud and no one gave me answer. –  
The generation that lived at that time  
1860 Was entomb'd in the waste. It's only you,  
Maria, me and Joshua who live yet  
As attestants of our buried and old world,  
Which is remembrance only to this folk.

**MOSES**

Oh, don't register Joshua, he'll march  
 1865 Into the Promis'd Land. He 's missing from the  
 Horrendous, awful list of evanescence.  
 Brother, my friend, we've got our names on it. – So  
 Let's be ready – Maria, do the same.

**MARIA**

Do you not see that I'm ready for ages?  
 1870 The ghost, the mighty ghost that lived in my heart  
 And age-worn frame so far, has left my soul.  
 I am a corpse, remain'd an empty frame  
 That moves, respire but does not feel the world more: –  
 It only waits the saving word: it's o'er,  
 1875 You can now take a rest. – My Hur is o'er there  
 To make the way for me.

**MOSES**

It is correct.  
 You suffer'd well enough to have the right  
 To light and weightless ground above your grave. –  
 Now, Aaron put your pall, insignia  
 1880 Into the holy tabernacle. I  
 Exempt you from the charge of high priest. Your son,  
 Eleazar will stand there in your place:  
 His priests were educated by the new law.

**AARON**

*(takes off his insignia of high priest)*  
 That's all. I give now back but free of dirt,  
 1885 To Lord and to the folk; – if I blunder'd  
 My end and aim was clear. My soul is clean,  
 I bore the blame in crucial days. I wish now  
 To Lord that late descendants should then know  
 It's light alone.

**MARIA**

Come, Aaron! come – let's go.

**MOSES**

1890 Don't say good-bye. I will be after you soon.

**AARON**

Let's go! – We are awaited by the free death!

**MOSES**

For yourselves you find there two sarcophagi.

**MARIA**

And where is yours? – the third coffin of stone? –  
 It's fair: brothers to have a side-by-side rest.

**MOSES**

1895 My heart will go with you to grave. But my soul  
 Is servant to the Lord – and waits from Him its  
 Exemption, yes – but only after you

**AARON**

Forbearance wish to you!  
*(exit with Maria)*

**SECOND SCENE**

*(the former, without Aaron and Maria)*

**MOSES**

I wish repose you!  
 Alas! It is a pain to be the last  
 1900 Witness of bygone world we once possessed.

You have to live as ghost among grandchildren  
Who do not understand the words we say  
On past of ours, and hardly know recently  
The name of things we lov'd in olden times –  
1905 Hey, Joshua, my son, take up my sword!

**JOSHUA**

Oh, why you make this, Moses, are you not  
Unwound'd and strong enough, praise be to God?  
You will command our folk even a long while.

**MOSES**

1910 Oh, don't believe. The power in my arms, in  
My blood, is far beyond my might, it's true.  
It was given by Lord to make the law. –  
Up, Israel, and greet now Joshua.  
He takes my place.

**PEOPLE**

Oh, Joshua, be blessed!

**MOSES**

1915 Let be in joy, – because he is the man  
Who 's chosen by the Lord of Abraham  
To guide you into Canaan at last and  
To end the period of our long torments. –  
My fate was harder 'cause the Lord decid'd  
To burden me by care of folk of slaves.  
1920 I had to guide this folk through hundred dangers,  
Through fire and sea of blood, through pain and death,  
The sins, disgrace of servitude to wash out.  
I was reward'd by merely damn and grumbling:  
And yet, I give my deepest thanks to my Lord  
1925 For His clemency: me to live till these days.  
Now, Joshua will be your leader.

**PEOPLE**

Hurrah!

**MOSES**

The tabernacle stands in front of us  
In which our law and Lord have found a rest.  
We thank this law to the generation  
1930 That went down into tomb through frightful torments  
And got this law from mercy of the Lord; if  
This folk would left the law or would it took as  
Object of huckstering or would cut down  
Even a line for sake of untrue gods:  
1935 I would require the curse of curs's on its head.

**PEOPLE**

Let it be so.

**MOSES**

Let hear, Almighty Lord!  
And you, my folk, when you'll be full of bliss,  
And will enjoy the wealth in the Promis'd Land:  
Do not believe: the holy, sacred thought,  
1940 The *land* will only weld together you  
As family and nation later on; –  
In future those prevail above the thousands  
Who live although in wealth but keep the law in  
Their heart with unswerving grand confidence though  
1945 They do not have even a foot of ground. –  
Because it's not the glebe you trample on  
But holy law makes you to be a folk! –  
Now, Joshua, let mind what I will say.  
When I'll be dead, you enter the Promis'd Land:  
1950 You must destroy there everything you find:  
The churches and the graves, the statues and  
The scripts of all heathens you have defeat'd there.

1955 We are a pitty folk. The embitter'd foe  
Is like the sea. The loyalty and faith can  
Preserve the folk of Israel in this world.

**JOSHUA**

You entrust grand affairs to me – now tell  
That how can I as commoner replace you,  
So, how to take the place of human giant?

**MOSES**

1960 These men, the principals of folk will support  
With sober counsels and the young and strong folk  
That grown in bare desert will help with brute force.  
I ask'd the Lord to pour the blessings down  
With the morality that lived within  
My soul upon your head. Secure with faith.  
1965 Let be you bless'd – and stay on my desert'd place.

**JOSHUA**

You saw what I can do.

**MOSES**

I saw, my son,  
And respected your force. – My folk, a word more!  
When I will die, my frame will mix with ground,  
Do not allow the foe to tread this ground down.

**PEOPLE**

1970 We do promise!

**MOSES**

I give my thanks to you.  
Let you return into your tents in peace now  
And let you wait the word of Joshua then;  
Because Moses will say good-bye to you

And starts to die.  
*(exit towards the mountains; people disperse)*

**JOSHUA**

But not running away.  
1975 I took the oath, – I escort you to your grave.  
*(exit after Moses)*

## Scenery four

*(Outside the camp, in the mountains the tree with wide-spreading branches on the bold cliff can be seen from here, too.)*

### FIRST SCENE

*(Moses, Joshua)*

#### MOSES

I said you son, return; it's holy place.  
Jehovah waits His servant here to work out  
The last account. – Now, leave me to myself – go.

#### JOSHUA

1980 Let you forbear, Moses, that I won't do.  
I rather hang about the place where you are  
And hide myself behind the holt and cliff.

#### MOSES

It's childish wish! But why?

#### JOSHUA

To mark the grave where  
I will entomb your tenement of clay then.

#### MOSES

1985 You are malignant! – Do you want to make  
My grave a slave though throughout in my life I  
Express'd my wish: let be it stilly, free?!  
You want to mark this grave that later on  
It will be load'd by untrue tears and curses?

#### JOSHUA

1990 And should not be the folk beside its prophet  
To close his far-sight'd eyes after the last sigh,  
Further, to dig a cosy bed for his heart?

#### MOSES

Don't fear, the Lord prepar's a bed for His  
Servant to have a rest.

#### JOSHUA

How shall I know that  
I have to start into our novel homeland?

#### MOSES

1995 You see the lonely tree on headland of  
The cliff also from camp of ours – it's clear.  
Look every day the tree, – when it falls down...

#### JOSHUA

Then Moses also bows his head and dies.

#### MOSES

2000 Well-said, – and you start into the Promis'd Land. –  
Now, shake my hand. – And leader! Go in your camp!  
*(exit Joshua)*

### SECOND SCENE

*(Moses, Voice of Jehovah)*

#### VOICE OF JEHOVAH

Are you ready, Moses?

**MOSES**

I am ready.

I ask the only favour of you, my Lord:

You deem'd me more than once, your poor servant,

To speak to me. I could not see your bright brow

2005 Because I knew: who see you face to face,  
Will immediately die. – Now, show your face, please.

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

Let see my face but don't take fright.

**MOSES**

*(blindly falls down)*

My Lord!

I want'd to face the sun – it makes me blind.

Now, call me off. Why should I wait but more?

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

2010 Get up, my son. Get up and follow my word.  
Get on this stony height in front of you.  
But higher up, – it's good, – and look ahead now:  
This land in farness is there Canaan.

**MOSES**

My heart! let be in rest, 'cause burst my chest. –

2015 I fought throughout my life to live to see this,  
I painted, form'd this picture in my fancy.  
And now, when see my fancies as a blunt fact:  
The scene undreamt so far astounds and shocks me –  
How rich 's the plain and how green are the hills.  
2020 Towers of hundred bright cities are gleaming  
Among them; fatted flocks are everywhere,  
Rivers are running like the silver bands.  
In soul I see just now my folk as goes  
Ahead, always ahead. Maybe the waft

2025 That leaves a greeting kiss now on my brow,  
Tomorrow flutters my triumphal flag. –  
At half-way there, at Sion's rising cape  
I see the tabernacle that 's in gleam,  
It does not wander more like hunted wild beast,  
2030 But stands immovably there like a cliff:  
And shows the righteous way to our deprav'd world,  
As rising high it looks around and far.

**VOICE OF JEHOVAH**

Let you rejoice and be delight'd, my son,  
In this prospect – you fairly well deserv'd it.

**MOSES**

2035 I have deserv'd, but tell my Lord, by what?  
Now all the painful years elapsed between  
Egypt and Canaan into the past fell  
And all the woes are traces of a nightmare,  
You ceas'd it – if I had some worth – because  
2040 You made it unimportant through recompense. –  
Oh, holy ground! betroth you with my last kiss!  
*(prostrates himself, bushes and rocks cover up him)*

## Scenery five

*(Joshua and people proceed to the tabernacle)*

### JOSHUA

Now we collected at the tabernacle,  
We make a halt and wait the promis'd sign.

### PEOPLE

Let's start at last, direct us Joshua!

### JOSHUA

2045 It's thirty days that Moses has left us,  
And 'cause his burning soul is not with me:  
My heart is harden'd and my power fails. –  
Although we are ready to start, to combat,  
And heart of ours is afflicted by suspense:  
2050 I have to wait for message of the Lord. We  
Expect with faith the sign of Him. My Lord!  
Oh, come and help, almighty Lord of my folk!  
*(heavy blows of axe are heard from the mountains)*  
Hush! Hush! What's that? – or it's a reverie?  
Oh, no – again! – again! How fatal 's this sound!  
2055 Like shocking beat of some gigantic grand arms  
Resounds with thunder-clap among the cliffs,  
The human heart recoils from hearing this sound. –  
*(the tree with wide-spreading branches on the cliff top falls  
down into the depth with loud crash)*  
Moses is dead! – Prostrate yourself my folk!  
Your grand prophet went down into the tomb;  
2060 The painful age of doubtful fight is ceas'd. –  
But don't believe that period of pains  
And mourning was in vain. It bore our new age,

The pains of which he only felt, – but its bloom  
Will be our fruit when this generation  
2065 Will enter it with faith in victory. –  
Let blow the horns but loud! – And go ahead! Go!  
To gates of Jericho. – When name of Lord  
Will be our shield, the sound of horns of ours will  
Reduce to dust its fortified, strong walls.

### PEOPLE'S CHOIR

2070 He is a cliff... his might 's perpetual.  
He is the only Lord, the glorious.  
The life and death came always from his hands,  
No one exists who could you save from Him.  
He commands us, his face is like the sun.  
2075 The rising folk that grew in the desert  
Will conquer and preserve its home with Him  
2077 And will exalt Him in his holy church.

*(the curtain falls slowly down)*

**THE END**

## EPILOGUE

Madách (1823–1864) is an individual phenomenon in the literature of Hungary. His works have been criticized, over- and/or underestimated, elevated or degraded but by all means both the professional and the unexperienced public dealt with them. In the middle of the 19th century the social and political environment provided special medium for the people who wanted to deal with the moral, social and national problems of their own or of their nation. It is well-known from the history that prior and subsequently to the fight for freedom (1848–49) the Hungarian society went through remarkable changes, e.g. the change of thoughts of the nobiliary layer, the reformation of the Hungarian language, the relation of Hungary to the Habsburg Empire and last but not least the change in mind of the everyday people to have more affinity to culture, to enjoy music and literature etc. This medium determined the efforts of public figures and forced people dealing with literature to create more, new and first of all nation-oriented works. Let me mention the politicians, first and foremost Széchenyi, his modern thoughts on national economy and society as well as on the Hungarian nation; Deák who proved to be the first person being adherent of political realism; Kossuth with his enthusiasm for freedom and the rank seems to be infinite. Among the poets it is enough to mention the names of Arany, Vörösmarty, Petőfi who were strongly committed to the political-social rise of Hungary.

Madách joined the thoughts of these outstanding men but in a peculiar manner. After the suppression of the fight for freedom he was sentenced to one year prison for taking part in the organization of the events and he could return to his family home only after exhausting mental and physical efforts to assure his own liberty. His state of health has declined, his family relations changed for the worse, his younger brother died at the age of 22 – so after the mid-fifties of the 19th century he lived the provincial life of landowners, full with troubles and with more heavy than happy days.

It has been a question for more than hundred and fifty years whether Madách was an anchorite or a man of full consciousness of his time. Both versions are true. He knew the drama construction from books, was practically excluded from the social life and only books gave him information about the external world. In spite of all these unfavourable facts he started and continued his activity in the field of literature and wrote the **Tragedy of the Man** in 1859–60 and the **Moses** in 1861. The **Tragedy** is a work that was born with a caul. After the improvement by Arany it became one of the most famous Hungarian literary products in Hungary, it has been adapted to stage many times, it has been translated to more than fifty languages, only its English translation is known in ten versions.

Out of the other dramas of Madách the **Moses** can and has to be mentioned. In the original version this ponderous play, with its meaningful content but of a structure that differs considerably from those of the so-called academic trends, Madách produced a peculiar drama with challenging characters on the basis of a well-known Scripture history so it is surprising that theatres did not try to present this drama many times in Hungary.

Károly Horváth says in his essay on the **Moses**: “It is the great intellectual value of the play **Moses** that in a historic period of decisive importance it stimulates the unflinching fidelity for nation and freedom with a whirling force that cannot be found in literary works of that time”. Maybe, this statement is true. I do not want to analyze the historic background of this dramatic poem and do not want to deal with the political overtone but I want to mention two circumstances that acted against the success of the **Moses**.

First: the dramatic poem was submitted to a competition and did not win any prize. Madách could not make any corrections in this work since he died shortly after finishing the **Moses**. The short story: it was written in 1861, it was first published in 1880 in the omnibus Madách volume. It was adopted to stage first at Kolozsvár in 1888, unfortunately with no success. The National Theatre tried to revive the **Moses** in 1925 also without success. It seems that either the public was insensitive to the message of the **Moses** or the drama itself proved to be insufficiently



important for the public at that time. Any of the two reasons were true, the final result was the same: the **Moses** had no success. On the contrary, in 1966 the drama was presented in Veszprém (Hungary) according to the version of Dezső Keresztury and it had a resounding success. Later on this play was also a remarkable successful performance in the interpretation of the National Theatre in Budapest with the unforgettable acting of Imre Sinkovits as Moses.

Second: the language of the **Moses** is rather old-fashioned, many of the sever critics mentioned the heavy prosody of Madách, the immature dramatic structure and the lack of correct metric solutions throughout the work. This latter criticism is unfortunately true. But in spite of all these facts, the **Moses** has the attractive force both from the moral and from the dramatic points of view.

As far as I know, the **Moses** was not translated so far into English and this is the first English version of the dramatic poem. I know that a translation cannot be perfect and a translation ought to be an original, independent work but I do hope that this translation reflects the sense and dramatic power of the **Moses**.

As a conclusion let me say some words about the translation. I had to choose between two ways: either to translate the original work together with all its unfavourable intrinsic features or to try to find the form that may be digestible for the public. I chose the second variant and this is why I chose the **Moses** in the form improved by Dezső Keresztury. First and foremost: this is dramatized to stage rearranging the structure of the play and correcting some ambiguous parts. Further: Keresztury corrected the text only when it was necessary! He adopted the text to the language of the 20th century and omitted some parts that were unnecessary for understanding. Otherwise he insisted on to keep everything in this dramatic poem and did not want to replace Madách by himself! Many-many thanks to Dezső Keresztury for his thorough but humble work that made possible to enjoy this dramatic poem in its natural beauty.

In sense of the above-mentioned facts, I should like to concern some “secrets” of the translation. I kept the original names of characters. I know very well, that for instance Maria is found in the Bible under the

name of Miriam (or Mirjam). I made only smaller modifications, e.g. in case of Dathan or Khaleb I preferred the English version of the names instead of the Hungarian ones (Dátán, Káleb).

I followed strictly the text of Madách or, more correctly the text improved by Keresztury, respectively. So, the translation was made on the basis of the edition of the Magvető Publishing House, Budapest (1966). The numeration of lines is my own “innovation”, in this manner I had some lightening in the course of the work and this ensured me to avoid every “re-writing” of the text. I do hope that my efforts have been successful.

Finally, I want to express my deepest thanks to Mr. Csaba Andor, President of the Madách Society, for his stimulation of this work and last but not least to Mrs. Dezső Keresztury for her permission of publishing the English version.

*Ottó Tomschey*

A MADÁCH KÖNYVTÁR – ÚJ FOLYAM EDDIG MEGJELENT KÖTETEI

1. I. Madách Szimpózium (1995)
2. II. Madách Szimpózium (1996)
3. Fráter Erzsébet emlékezete I. (1996)
4. Imre Madách: Le manusheski tragedija (1996)
5. III. Madách Szimpózium (1996)
6. Balogh Károly: Gyermekkorom emlékei (1996)
7. Nagyné Nemes Györgyi–Andor Csaba: Madách Imre rajzai és festményei (1997)
8. IV. Madách Szimpózium (1997)
9. Andor Csaba: Ismeretlen epizódok Madách életéből (1998)
10. Andor Csaba: Madách Imre és Veres Pálné (1998)
11. V. Madách Szimpózium (1998)
12. Fejér László: Az ember tragédiája bemutatói (1999)
13. Madách Imre: Az ember tragédiája. I. Főszöveg (1999)
14. Madách Imre: Az ember tragédiája. II. Szövegváltozatok, kommentárok (1999)
15. I. Fráter Erzsébet Szimpózium (1999)
16. VI. Madách Szimpózium (1999)
17. Imre Madatsh: Di tragedye funem mentshn (2000)
18. Majthényi Anna levelezése (2000)
19. Komjáthy Anzelm: Önéletírás (2000)
20. VII. Madách Szimpózium (2000)
21. Imre Madách: Tragedy of the Man (2000)
22. Fráter Erzsébet emlékezete II. (2001)
23. II. Fráter Erzsébet Szimpózium (2001)
24. Bárdos József: Szabadon bűn és erény közt (2001)
25. VIII. Madách Szimpózium (2001)
26. Madách Aladár művei. I. Versek (2002)
27. IX. Madách Szimpózium (2002)
28. Imre Madách: A Traxedia do Home (2002)
29. Enyedi Sándor: Az ember tragédiája bemutatói.  
I. Az ősbemutatótól Trianonig (2002)
30. X. Madách Szimpózium (2003)

SOROZATON KÍVÜLI KIADVÁNYOK

- Madách Imre: Az ember tragédiája (2002)  
Andor Csaba: Százegy aforizma (2002)  
Györe Balázs: A jámbor Pafnutyij apát keze vonása  
(Györe Balázs művei 1., 2002)  
Palágyi Menyhért: Madách Imre neje (2003)  
Györe Balázs: A 91-esen nyugodtan elalhatok  
(Györe Balázs művei 2., 2003)

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