

Geez Qene Translations

1

ዕጣካ ሞገር/Etane Moger (Casting Incense)

ጠፈረ ኤርትራ ሰማይ አመ ያቀውም በኃይል
ኢኃሠሠ ዓምደ ሚካኤል
አኩኑ መንክራቲሁ አጸውተ ሲያል ማዕበል
ዘሐረዮሙ እስራኤል።

When he set the Eritrean firmaments of sky by His power
St. Michael didn't require a pillar
Because his miracles shut the flood gates of hell,
For his chosen Israel.

This poem was expressed on St. Michael's day as Emperor Menelik was facing Italian invaders in Adwa. And it alludes to God who set the firmament of the sky in place without the need for pillars, and so too can St. Michael's miracles stop the enemy's advance (the flood gates of hell) on his chosen people, Israel (meaning, Ethiopians).

አሠረ ንጉሥ/Asere Nigus (Bind / the king)

ምኒልክ ግበር ላዕለ ሮምያ መጠነ እደክ ትክል
አምጣካ ለአጼድ በጽሐ ማእረራ ወመዋእሊሃ ለኃጉል
ዓዲ ተዘከር ውስተ ወንጌል
ላዕለ ሮምያ በለስ ኢሀሎ አሰካል
ከመ ደቤ ወልደ ያሬድ ቃል።

Oh Menelik, do unto Rome all that your hands can do
As the time of here harvest is due and her demise is at hand
And remember what the Gospels say:
'Rome, the fig tree has yielded no fruits'
Said the Son, and St. Yared too, has repeated it

Again this poem was uttered when Emperor Menelik was preparing for a war against the Italians, and it alludes to the New Testament story of Jesus and the fig tree that does not bear fruit. It is cursed and dies. (Mat. 21: 19) St. Yared too has mentioned this in his poetry, the Degua.

2

ክብር ይእቲ/Kibir yieti (She is Honored)

እመብልዓ ጽድቅ ተኃጉለ አብርሃም በኂሩቱ
እስመ ኢቀተሎ ለወልድ እንዘ የኃድር በቤቱ
ከመ መብልዓ ጽድቅ አምላክ አመ የአምር ባሕቱ
አሐዱሰ ይትረፍ እምኢሐደጎሙ ለክልኤቱ

Abraham due to his kindness failed to eat sacred food
And didn't kill the Son when he spent a night in his house
Had he known God, Bread of Truth, spent the night in his house,
Let alone The One, he wouldn't have spared the other two.

The theme here is the Genesis story where God visited Abraham "...as he sat at the entrance of his tent... He looked up and saw three men standing near him..." (Genesis 18), but it is interlaced with the New Testament theme where Jesus says: "I am the Bread of Life...he who eats of my flesh and drinks of my blood shall live forever." (John 6:51) and also alludes to the Trinity of God.

3

አሠረ ንጉሥ/Asere Nigus (Bind the king)

ምኒልክ እርግ ደብረ ሲና ከመ ኢትንበር በታሕቱ
ወደብተራ ብርሃን ጠይቅ በህዩ እምቃለ ነብያት ክልኤቱ
እስመ ለደብተራ ዘበውስቴቱ
አኮ ከመዝ ስነ ርእየቱ፣ ወከመዝ ኢኮነ ትርሲቱ።

Oh Menelik, climb Mount Sinai, so you don't remain down below
And learn from the two prophets about a Tabernacle of Light
For the teacher who lives inside there
Thus is not his beautiful sight, nor is thus his mantle.

Here the author is expresses his sadness in not being rewarded by the king. So he called on him with this verse saying, Menelik, ask the two prophets at Mount Sinai(Elijah and Mosses) but he was actually referring to the

two prominent officials of Menelik at the time (The Honorable Scribe, Gebre Selassie, and the King's Mouthpiece, Estiphanos), and concludes saying he deserves a better reward.

4

መወደስ/Meweds (Praise)

ሰይፈ ምኒልክ ክርስቶስ ዘኢይሠኦር
ላእክ ኮነ ለግዝረተ ክሳድ በየውሃቱ።
ወእንተ ኢዘርኡ ሰብአ እምኢትዮጵያ ገራህቱ
የአርሩ እንበለ ጊዜሁ አስይፍት መገብቱ።
ወኢተዘከረ ምኒልክ
ለመሥዋእት በግዓ አምጣኝ ሮማዊ መሥዋእቱ።
አሕጸረሂ ኑኃ ምልክና በመጠኑ ፀሐይ መስፈርቱ
አምጣኝ ረስየ አድማሰ ወሰነ ለመንግሥቱ።
ወእንዘ ይእንዝ ምድረ ለባሕቲቱ
ሰማየ ለሥላሴ ኅደገ በኅሩቱ።

The sword of Menelik, the undefeated Christ,
Became a kind messenger to circumcise necks
Those who didn't sow on Ethiopia, the farm,
Only harvest untimely to feed the swords of his chiefs
And Menelik seems to have forgotten
The sacrificial lambs, the Romans, should be sacrificed.
As he shortened the measured realm of the sun
So shall his reign be to the ends of the far horizon
He shall secure the earth unto himself and
In his kindness will leave the heavens to the Trinity.

This is a Qene uttered to praise the king, where the author likens the undefeated Christ to the sword of Menelik, as a messenger who circumcises the stiff necks of the unbelievers, and Roman invaders who try to harvest Ethiopia untimely, and what they did not sow, as sacrificial lambs. It also has echoes on the story of Abraham who did not (forgot to) take a sacrificial lamb when he took his son, Isaac, to the mountain to make a burnt offering for God. (Genesis 22)

5

ሚበዝኅ/Mibezhu (How Plenty)

ቃላተ ነብያት አኃው
አልህምተ ግብፅ ይርአዩ ውስተ ቤተ ፈርዖን ቦኡ
ውውስተ ምሳሌ ገራህት ሕጠጣተ ፈርዖን ዘርኡ
ወዘዘቤተ ፈርዖን ቃል ወይነ ምሳሌ ሐዲስ ጣዕመ ሞህድና አይድኡ።

Words of brotherly prophets
Entered Pharaoh's house to herd Egyptian cows,
In fields of simile sowed Pharaoh's seeds
And told of same new wine and its flavor

This is a complex Qene which touches on many levels from the seven cows in Pharaoh's dreams to the seven ears of wheat, and how Pharaoh's two dreams were one, (Genesis 41:25) and how the message of all the prophets of the Old Testament, though seemingly different, was really one, in that they all pointed to the single new wine of the New Testament – Christ.

6

ጉባኤ ቃና/Gubae Cana (The Council of Cana)

ጸባብ አንቀጽ ጉባኤ ቃና ይእቲ
አምጣኝ ውሐዳን ሰብእ እለ ይበውኡ ባቲ

Gubae Cana is such a narrow gate
And exceedingly few are those who enter through it

This verse refers to the strait and narrow gate mentioned in the New Testament: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction..." (Matthew 7:13) By the narrow gate here, the author actually is referring to Geez Qene in general, and a verse form known as Gubae Cana in particular.

ዋዜማ/ Wazema (On the eve)

ሊያዕቆብ አመ ጸውያ
 ተማየጠ ዮሴፍ ሠረገላ ሐጺን ወብርት
 ያዕቆብ እስመ አረጋዊ ወፍና ዕቅፍት
 አመ አግካዚሰ ገብረ ጸውኦተ እሙ ንግሥት
 ሠረገላ ኤልያስ ከልአ እስመ ርቱዓት
 ፍናዊሃ መቃብር ወሞት።

When he called Jacob
 Joseph purchased (sent) a chariot of iron and steel
 Because Jacob was old and the road was hard
 But when the Lord called his mother, The Queen
 He denied her the powerful chariot of Elijah
 As her way to death and the grave was direct / peaceful.

This verse was composed on Filseta or Asteryo Mariam, St. Mary’s day of death (Ascension). It compares how Joseph sent his father, Jacob, a chariot to travel on the difficult journey to Egypt, but that when the Lord called his mother to heaven, he would not send her Elijah’s chariot of fire on her journeyed to death and the grave. But it also suggests that St. Mary did not require any chariot as her death was peaceful.

መወደስ/Meweds (Praise)

ወጽኦ ይዝራዕ ደመ አጻብእ
 ዘርዓ እግርኪ በርደተ ዝናም በቀል፣
 ወለአስዋካ ግብፅ ቦሙ መከየድኪ ምጽላል፣
 አምጠነ ረኃብ ወድካም
 ገብሩ በዓለ ተሐውሶ በከርስኪ ሐቅል።
 ወእምድመፀ አእባን ዘይኬልሁ
 መርፈቀ ሰኩና ጥጎት አጎዝ ይትለዓል።
 ይጼልሉሂ በተባርዮ ዲበ ገጽኪ ምስሐል
 ዘአዕይንቲሆሙ ብዙኃት ተውላግተ መልክዕ ኪሩቤል፣
 ብዝኃ መባልዕት አዕማት ዘኢያትለውኪ ድንግል
 እግዚአብሔር እንዝ ምስሌኪ እስመ አንብዓ ገጽ ኢያሴሰል።

The farmer went out to sow with fingers of blood
 Your feet sow in rain of vengeance
 And on Egyptian thorns your path is in shade
 With plenty of exhaustion and hunger
 They feasted in the hardship of your belly
 And from the sound of the shouting rocks
 The threshold of the doorway rises up a step
 Taking turns to guard, and beseech your merciful face
 The many eyed and changing faces of Cherub
 The Virgin not allowing wealth or followers
 Though with you, God did not wipe away your tears

This verse is about a very difficult time the author had at a certain Church of St. Mary where he was put in charge for a short time. Jealous rivals rose up against him and he left the place. He starts with the Parable of the Sower (Mathew 13:1) and moves on to the saying of Jesus: “Foxes have dens, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not wherein to rest his head” (Matt. 8: 20), and then to St. Mary’s flight to Egypt. “...take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt... for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” (Mathew 2:13) He concludes making a pun on the words of Isaiah 25:8 “He shall wipe away their tears...” by reversing them into: God would not wipe away tears...

ሥላሴ/Selassie (Trinity)

ሐሚተ ዘኢይደሉ
 ርእሰ ዮሐንስ ነሐምዮ
 ወንኤዝዞ ይሰደድ እምነ ተበፅዖ ሀገሩ
 እስመ ርእየ ደቀተ አካል ወኢሐፀ ፍቅሩ።
 አስይፍትሂ አሐው ዘበተሆህዶ ነበሩ

A totally unnecessary blame
 We level at John’s head
 Instead of praise in his land, cruelly, we order him into exile
 Though he saw his body weaken, his love never diminished
 And the brotherly swords were in harmony

ላእሊ ርእሰ ዮሐንስ ተማከሩ፤
ካልዓ ቤተ በሰማይ ይግበሩ
እስመ ጸበ መቃብር ማኅደሩ።

Conspiring on the head of John
To build (him) another mansion in heaven
As the grave, his home, was too small.

The verse was composed on the feast of St. John's. It is a pun on the sword that cut St. John's head off.

10

ዋዜማ/ Wazema (On the eve)

ሰሎሞን በብዝሃ ክብሩ
ድኅረ ቤተ ርእሱ ዐባዩ ወቤተ እግዚአብሔር ፈጸመ
ኢጸመወ ለቤተ ባዕዳን ከመ ያተርፍ ስመ።
ሥርዓተ ሕንጻ ዓለም እመ ከመዝሰ ቆመ
ለቤትከ ጳጥሮስ አሠኒ ቅድመ
ወለሙሴ ትሔሊ ገሠመ።

Solomon in all his glory
After building his own palace and that of his Lord
Continued to work for others in order to get fame.
If such be the way for earthly buildings
Beautify your own home first, O Peter
Then you can think about Mosses tomorrow.

A verse composed on Debre Tabor day (Mount of Transfiguration) probably giving an approval to the king who had started to build his palace.

11

ዋዜማ/ Wazema (On the eve)

ኢይበቀሩ ክብረ አዝማድ።
እስመ ወልደ ባዕል ወድቀ ውስተ እደ ረኃብ ኃያል
አግብርት እንዘ ጽጉባን ወይተረፍ እክል
ምሳሌ ዝኒ ነገር አጠየቀተነ ጎል
አምጣነ ወልዳ ኢድኅነ እምለቢሰ ቁጽል
እንዘ ወርቀ ትፈትል ድንግል።

The wealth of relatives is valueless.
The prodigal son fell on great poverty and hunger
While servants were full and had plenty to spare.
We learn this lesson from the manger
Her son was not spared the wearing of leaves
Though the Virgin weaved with golden threads.

A verse composed on Christmas, which compares the prodigal son who fell on poverty and hard times though his father's servants had plenty to eat, (Luke 15:11-32) and then it moves on to Jesus who was wrapped in swaddling clothes even though his mother, the Virgin, weaved with golden threads...

12

ዋዜማ/Wazema (On the eve)

መቃብር ዘይትራድኦ
ለሊቀ ካህናት ሞት በተልእኮ ድንግል መቅደሱ
ተከልዓ እምበሊዓ ሥጋ ወፈትሐ በርእሱ።
እመ እምቀትለ ፈርዖን ጐዩ በኃይለ ሙሴ ፈረሱ
ነሢኦ ሥጋሁ ለዳታን ምስለ ነፍሱ
እስመ ጸግበ ወኢሐጸ ከርሡ።

The grave, assistant of
The high priest, who serves the Virgin /temple/
Passed judgment on himself, and would not eat meat
Fled from Pharaoh's war riding Mosses, his horse,
He snatched Datan's live meat (body and soul)
He (the grave) was full and his stomach never hungered

A complex verse composed on the Day of Ascension, echoing of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16:23-50) who wanted to be priests and rebelled against Mosses '...and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up live', but it points to the Virgin Mary's ascension to heaven in the flesh.

መወደስ/Meweds (Praise)

ትዕግሥተ ንባቡ ለኢዮብ እምነብ ኢሰምዓ	Having not heard the story of Job’s patience
ባሕታዌ ልደት ኤልያስ ለሀገረ ልማድ ዘየኃይሣ	Strange Elijah’s birth is better than the traditional
ዕራቆ ኢወጽኦ ለወላዲቱ እምከርሣ።	He did not come out naked from his mother’s womb
ወለ እንተ ዝናም ይውኅዛ	And the sky which always had rain flowing
ጠፈረ ሰማይ በቃሉ ፈወሳ።	He healed her with his words
እምጣኑ አልቦ እንተ ያርኑ	There is none other that can open
ወዘየዓፁ ሰማየ ዘእንበሌሁ ጊዜ ኃሠሣ።	Or close the sky as he pleases.
አንስትሂ ዘሰማርያ ለእመ ረኃብ ፀንሳ	Women of Samaria pregnant with hunger
ለልደተ ቅብዕ ኢያስተባባዩ ዘፈረ ልብሱ ከመ ይግሥሣ።	Did not seek the hem of his garment for their oil
ወለሠገራት ዘወጽኡ ለኃሂሠ በቀል አንበሳ	And the soldiers seeking the lion’s vengeance
ነብ ማዕዱ ነደ እሳት አርፈቆሙ በበሃምሳ።	He sat them in rows of fifty on his table of fire

This verse touches on so many levels from Job, to the prophet Elijah who was stayed with the widow whose oil never ran out, to ‘the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years’ and was healed when she touched the garment of Jesus, (Matt. 9: 18-26) and back to Elijah who stopped rain from coming down from heaven by just uttering his word, and to the fifty soldiers sent to him but he ordered a fire from heaven to come down and devoured them... (2nd Kings 1: 10). It is very cleverly crafted tapestry that shows the depth of knowledge of the author and his superb dexterity in manipulating Qene in the way he so quickly connects various parts of the bible, indicating their unity and similitude. One needs to remember these verses are composed on the spot, and orally uttered or sung to fit the occasion, and are only written down much later.

ዘይእዜ/Zeyeeze (Current or for the day)

ለዓይ ሰዓት፣ ወለማእዜ	For what occasion and for how long
እግዚአብሔር ዓቀብ ኃይለ ኪሩቤል አፍራስ	Did God hide the power of Cherubs, his horses?
ወለምንት በቤተ አቡሁ ይትመካህ ክርስቶስ	And why does Christ boast of his father’s mansions
አመ ጠስ ቅንኣት መልዓ ልቡና አይሁድ ቤተ-መቅደስ።	While the heart, /Jew’s temple/ was filled with jealous smoke
እምጣኑ ፈረሱ መስቀል ዘእንበለ ነፍስ	For his horse, the cross, is lifeless
ወማኅደሩ ፀቢብ መቃብረ ስጋ ሓዲስ።	And the grave, the new abode of his flesh, is narrow.

It is referring to the verse where Jesus says, “In my father’s house there are many mansions” (John 14:2) and asks: ‘Why didn’t God let his Cherubs rescue Jesus who carried a lifeless cross to a narrow grave’?

ሥላሴ/Selassie (Trinity)

ለሚልኮል ተጸውዖታ	Michal’s mission
ለዳዊት ዕቅፍተ ከመ ተኩን።	Was to ensnare David
እምጉንደ ሚካኤል ዘወጽኦት፣ ባሕቱ ወለተ ጊዮርጊስ ዘይት	But Wolete Giorgis, /oil,/ extracted from Michael
ቅብዓ ርእስ ነያ ወአኮ ዕቅፍት	Is the anointing of the head, and not a snare.
ወእምሕሊና ሔዋን እም እንዘ በሕሊና ርሕቅት	In her mind she is far from the mind of Eve
ምስለ ሔዋን እመ ኅብረት	Though as a woman she is united with Eve
ለኃይለ ሥላሴ ይእቲ ፍኖተ ሕይወት	For Hailesellassie she is the path of life

ወተስፋሁ ለዓለም መንግሥት

And his hope to future kingship.

The author composed this ‘prophetic’ verse in Harar to the future Queen, Etege Menen, while her husband, Teferi, was still a Dejazmach. Six months later, he was made a Ras. The comparison is between King Saul giving his daughter, Michal, in marriage to David in order to ensnare him, (1st. Sam. 18) and Eve too, became Adam’s downfall, but that Michael’s daughter, (Etege Menen’s father, King Michael of Wollo) unlike the other two, became the oil of anointment for Teferi, and a path of life and glory.

16

ሣህልክ /Sahleke (Thy grace)

ማእዜ ለመደት ገዳመ እዝራ

How soon she got used to Ezra’s monastery!

አስካለ ማርያም ዘወጽአት እምድካመ አንስት ብሔራ፣

Askalemariam, free from exhaustion of women of her country,

ለዘይሬእያ ኃይለ ጸላኢ

To enemy forces that see her

እሰመ ብእሲቶ ኢኮነት በግብራ።

She is not (wifely) / feminine in her actions.

Another poem also uttered to Queen Etege Menen, named here Askalemariam (her baptismal name?). Now that she is a queen, she need not work the exhausting chores of the women of her country, and to her enemies, she they will not see her as a woman anymore. (As Ezra saw Jerusalem in a vision as a young woman...)

17

ሥላሴ/Selassie (Trinity)

ዘካርያስ አበ አሀዱ ወአበ በዙኃን አብርሃም

Zachariah fathered one and Abraham fathered many

እምወሊደ ውሉድ አቀብ ዙጥጥ በርስዓኖሙ ኢሰእኑ

They fathered though in old-age it’s a sandy uphill trek

አብ እምነ ውሉድ ይቀድም አኮነ።

As fathers beat their children in races

ለኢትዮጵያስ እም ዕቢያ ዘኢይትረከብ መጠኑ

And the infinite greatness of Ethiopia

እስከ ጽንፈ ዓለም ከመ ንዜኑ

We proclaim it to the ends of the earth

እምነ ከሉ ትውልድ በበዘመኑ

Every generation and in every age

አበዊሁ ዘወለደ መኑ።

Whoever heard of a child fathering his own father?

This verse was composed in Addis Ababa at the time Abba Abraham and Abba Yakob were appointed to official positions, and Ethiopia named a native Patriarch, breaking the long tradition of getting Patriarchs from Egypt. There are allusions to Ethiopia’s ancient great status predating Egypt, being referred here as a child.

18

መወድስ/Meweds (Praise)

ጸድቅ ይምሕር ነፍሰ እንስሳሁ

A kind person spares the life of his animal

ለዝሰ ሕግ ያዕቆብ ተሃየዮ።

But Jacob ignored this rule

አመ ደመ በግዕ በግፍዕ ለልብሰ የሴፍ ሴረዮ

As Joseph’s cloth was unjustly stained with a lamb’s blood

ኃዲጎ በግፃ እንተ ተገፍፃ

Without any concern for the lamb that was unjustly slain

ያዕቆብ አምጣነ ለወልዱ ብዙኃ በከዮ

Jacob cried and grieved deeply for his son

ወእንበለ ጌጋይ የሓምዮ

And blamed it (the wild animal) for something it did not do

ለአርጭ ንጽሕ እንዝ ይነግር እከዮ

He defamed an innocent wild animal

አብሰ ግፍፃ በግዕ ወዘያዕቆብ ርእዮ

But the Father (God) seeing the injustice of Jacob

ለወልዱ ኢተራሕርሐ እንዝ ቤዛ በግዕ ይሬስዮ

Didn’t spare his son, but gave him up in the place of a lamb

ከመ ጸላኢ ኢይበል ከመ ያዕቆብ ኢርእዮ ምስሌሁ ቅድመ ዓለም ወድገረ ዓለም ኢተሌለዮ። So the enemy may not say: “He did not see him like Jacob.”
Was with him before & after the creation of the world, never left him.

This is a very beautiful and very deep theological verse that compares Jacob’s sorrow when Joseph was sold into slavery to Egypt by his brothers and how he was shown his son’s coat stained with a lamb’s blood, and contrasts it with God who didn’t spare his own son, but gave him as sacrificial lamb, but did not abandon him though it all from before the creation of the world and even after the end of the world.

19

ዋዜማ/ Wazema (On the eve)

ፍጡራን ላዕለ ፈጣሪ	All creatures should cast upon the Creator
ሕሊናሆሙ ይግድፉ በሕገ ልቡና ተጽሕፈ	Their anxieties as is written in the law of the heart
ይእክሱ እምግበረ ልማዱ ፈጣሪ አዕረፈ	But now the Creator has rested from his duty
እስመ እንዘ በጎል ይሬኢ ንዴተ ወልዱ ትሩፈ	Seeing the shame and anger of his son at Golgotha
መንበረ መንግሥት ኢይጎሥሥ ወዘወርቅ አጽፈ	He does not seek a throne or golden robes
ሕሊናሁ በድንግል ገደፈ።	Because he left all his thoughts upon the virgin

Composed at Harar during Christmas. It is on the theme of David’s and the Gospels where it says: “Cast your burden upon the Lord...” Mathew 11: 28-30, Psalms 55 : 22

20

መወድስ/Meweds (Praise)

መዝገበ ተግሣጽ አንበሩ በይነ ውሉደሙ	They left discipline account for their children
አበወ ሥጋ ዘሠመሩ መዓዛ ፍቅርሙ ዕዕ	Flesh parents who stuck to the tree of love
ከመ ኢይትአፀው ቦሙ ሕይወተ ውሉድ አንቀጽ	As not to close their children’s door of life
ወበበገጸሙ ይክዕዉ ቅብዓ ተሣህሎ ከመ ይብራህ ገጽ።	They pour oil of forgiveness to brighten their faces
ባሕቱ ድገረ ዘመን	After many years
መወልጠ ሥርዓት አብ እመ ኃቤሆሙ ይሖውጽ	When the Father who changes order came to them
ለመዝገበ ልማድ ቀበርዎ ውስተ ቀራንዮ ምርዋጽ	They buried the account of tradition at Calvary
እስመ አብ ዘወለዶ በእንተ ርእሱ ኢይጌሥጽ	Because the Father does not rebuke the Son He begot
ወእንዘ ፍቅሩ ምሉእ እመስፈርተ ይስሓቅ ቢጽ	His full and greater love than to Isaac, his friend
በግዓ ለቤዛሁ እምጉንደ መስቀል ኢያሠርጽ።	A lamb in his place did not sprout from under the cross

Composed during Himamat days – a week before Easter - touching on many levels and comparing the love of parents who discipline their children and the love of Abraham for Isaac, and how God the Father, though He loved the Son, did not provide a lamb to take his place at the cross.

21

መወድስ/Meweds (Praise)

ልሙዳነ ጸብእ ሎጥ ወአብርሃም	Abraham and Lot who always fought
እንዘ እሙንቱ አጎው ከመ ይኩኑ ባዕዳነ	Like strangers, though they were related
በጎብለ በቀል ፈለጡ እምነ መካን፣ መካነ።	With the rope of grudge they made borders
ነብያትሰ አስተዳለው ሀገረ ዋሕድና ዘድንግል ማጎፀነ	Prophets prepared unified land, /Virgin’s womb/
ለሥጋ ወመለኮት፣	For the flesh and for the Spirit

<p>ፍኖተ ኃጥአን አጎው ተፈልጦ እስመ ማሰነ ለሎጥሂ ወአብርሃም እለ ፈለጡ መካነ በይነ ጽንኦ ልብ ይግእዞሙ ሥጋ ዘእምኔነ ንበ ተአጎዎ ኢሠምረ ወበጸ መለኮት ኢኮነ አምጠነ ምስሌሁ ኢተካፈለ ጸጋመ ወየማነ።</p>	<p>The path of sinners and brotherly enemies is no more And for Lot and Abraham who made borders He, of our own Flesh, condemns their heart Unless united with the brother and befriended in spirit Will not partake or have a place on his left of right hand</p>
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A poem composed during lent at Hararge, (Ethiopia’s eastern province) which touches on how Abraham and Lot used to fight over grazing land and created borders between them, but how the prophets had prepared a way that would bridge the divide between God and man through the Virgin’s Womb /Jesus/, and unless one loves his fellow man, will not partake or have a place on his left or on his right.

22

ዘይእዜ/Zeyeeze (Current or for the day)

<p>ነጸረ ጴጥሮስ የፈ ሰማይ እንበለ ማእረር ወዘርዕ ለእሠንዮ ጽርሕ ትሩፍ። እስመ እንበለ ዘርዕ ወማእረር ለምጽላለ ርእሳ ዘትጸሙ ዮፍ። ወአመ ይሰምዕ ቃለ እምነ ደመና ልብሰ መትከፍ ተዘክረ ታቦር በዓለ መጽሐፍ ድንጋጼ ለጴጥሮስ ከመ ደዌሁ ዘዘልፍ ተዘክረ ታቦር በዓለ መጽሐፍ።</p>	<p>Peter saw /learned from/ the bird of the sky, how they sow not, nor harvest, but live very well, For it is without sowing or harvesting that a bird strives to build a shelter for itself, Hearing voice in the clouds, his garment He remembered the Teacher of Mount Tabor And his shock became his eternal pain He remembered the Book Master, Tabor</p>
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Composed in Hararge, comparing the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor where their garments shone like light, and with: ‘Consider the lilies of the field, and the birds of the sky; they toil not nor labor, they sow not nor harvest, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not refined like one of them...’ Matt. 6: 29

23

ሣህልክ /Sahleke (Thy grace)

<p>ንጽሕተ ትኩን ኢትዮጵያ እምአበሳ ጽርፈት ወትርግምተ ሮሜ ጌጋያ ሣህልክ ይርኩብ ኃይለሥላሴ እግዚአብሔር ዘኩሉ ኬንያ</p>	<p>May Ethiopia be free From sin, transgressions, and the curse of Rome And may Haileselassie find thy grace /mercy/ O thou all knowing God.</p>
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This poem was composed during the difficult times of Italian occupation.

24

መወድስ/Meweds (Praise)

<p>እግረ ህላዌነ ሕጽብ በማየ ሕይወት ወቅብዓ ተሣህሎ ንጽሐ ከአው ዲበ ርእስነ አምጣነ ድኩም ውእቱ ወእድጎኖተ ሰብእ ስዕነ ጸመ ሊቀ ካሕናት ዘሥዩመ ለነ። ወእንተ ላዕላይ አፀደ አፍ በእግረ ዝንጋዔ ኃለፈ ጳውሎስ ጸሎትነ።</p>	<p>Wash the feet of our existence with Living Waters Pour on our head the clean oil of forgiveness For <i>he</i> is weak and cannot deliver us <i>Fasting</i>, the High Priest named for us, In the upper mouth Our prayers pass under the forgetful feet of Paul</p>
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<p>ንርእይሰ በዓይነ ተስፋ ዘገጸ ርገራጌክ ስነ አንብዓ ነነዌ ሕገ የሪት መርሐ ኮነትነ። ወኑኃ ምሕረትክ ልብስ ሕይወተ መግቶ መጠነ እግዚአብሔር እንበለ ጻማ አስበ ተአጎም ዘወሃብከነ።</p>	<p>That we may hope to see thy eyes of mercy upon us The Law, tears of Nineveh, has become our guide As thy loin cloth of mercy covered the cripple You freely gave us brotherly status with thee.</p>
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This poem too, was composed during the difficult times of Italian occupation. It begs for forgiveness and for God to cleans his people, and not let their prayers and fasting be only lip service.

25

ጉባኤ ቃና/Gubae Cana (The Council of Cana)

<p>እኃዝን አነ ለየፈ ገዳም መንግሥቱ እስመ ኢይትፈታሕ ምንተ ጉባኤ ቃና መሥገርቱ</p>	<p>I fee sorry for the wild bird /Mengistu/ dominion Entangled (ensnared) in Gubae Cana, his pinion</p>
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It was composed when the author was a student of Qene, and is a play and pun on words. I has no particular meaning, except to say that Mengistu, which means Dominion is hooked on Gubae Cana.

26

መወደስ/Meweds (Praise)

<p>ጥቀ ሐጸ እምኃይለ ሥላሴ መልአክ ጥበባት ሰሎሞን በብዝኃ ጥበቡ ዕበይ መካነ ሥላሴ አዳም አምጣነ ጥቀ ሠናይ ወመቅደስ ሰሎሞን እንተ ደክመ ነበረ ታሕተ ጽላሎቱ ወአኮ እሩይ። ወኪሩቤል ለርእይ እምደብረ ቅዳሴ ወረዱ ውስተ ዘአንክሮ ቀላይ ተባሃሉሂ ለሥላሴ ብዑላነ ስብሐት ንዋይ እንተ ከመዝ ማኅደረ ጸጋ አልቦሙ በሰማይ። እስመ አስተዳለወ ሎሙ ኃይለሥላሴ ኅሩይ መካነ ሥላሴ ዘተስፈዉ በሃይማኖቱ ዕንቁ ባሕርይ።</p>	<p>Slightly less than Haileselassie, Solomon, master of wisdom, in his greatness The Church of Trinity is absolutely splendid While Solomon’s Temple has declined And under its shadow would not even look well The Cherub to see (The Church of Trinity) Came down the Holy Mount to the River of Wonderment And said to each other: the Trinity are wealthy in praise And Their abode in heaven is not even as great As this one prepared by Haileselassie, their elect, Which he had promised by his oceanic jewel of faith.</p>
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This was poem of praise composed on the inauguration of The Trinity Cathedral of Addis Ababa.

27

ዋዜማ/ Wazema (On the eve)

<p>አነ ወዝናም እንዘ ንጹሐን እምነውር ወእንዘ በቀል አልብነ አሮን እምበዊአ ቤቱ በከንቱ ከልአነ እስመ እመ ዐረግነ ላዕለ ወእመ ታሕተ ወረድነ ዘምስለ አቡነ አሮን ያስተሳልመነ አረጋዊ ኢተረክበ ለነ።</p>	<p>I and the rain Though clean and pure (without blemish) In vain, Aaron prevented us from entering into his home No matter how many times we go up or down, We found no one to reconcile us with Father Aaron Not a single worthy elder</p>
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The poem plays on words where Aaron’s abode, Monastery of St. Aaron, a cave, does not let in the rain. This is a famous Monastery where the poet studied Geez Qene in his youth.

Additional Verses by other Poets

Aleka Welde Yared

ጉባኤ ቃና/Gubae Cana (The Council of Cana)

አኃውዮ ንገድግ ፍቅረ እንስሳ ዓለም	O Brothers, let us leave love of the world /animal/
በሰኑይ ዕለት እስመ ይቀሥፈን ጾም።	For on Monday fasting /hunger/ will be gripping us tight

This is a poem that alludes to some quaint Ethiopic literature about fasting on a Monday

Aleka Engeda Werk-Hailu

መወድስ/Meweds (Praise)

በዓመተ ሞተ ላሕም ንጉሠ ዓለም	In the year that the cow, king of the world died
ርኢክዎ አነ ዲበ ከነዓን መንበሩ	I saw him in Canaan on his throne
ለአምላክ ሥጋ ረሃብ ዘሕልቀተ ዓለም ማዕረሩ	With hunger, god of flesh, whose harvest is end of the world,
ወስእንኩ ጠይቆቶ ለዕርቃን ቤተ ፈያታዊ ዘበረድ ኅብሩ	In vain I searched for nakedness, home of snow white bandit,
ማይ እስመ ጠፈሩ።	And water its canopy
ወመኑ ውእቱ ዘይትቃወሞ ለቁሩ።	For who can withstand its freezing cold?
ከነዓንሰ ለእመ ነደ ወእመ ይጠይስ ደብሩ	But if Canaan burns and its mountains should smoke
አድባረ ጽልመት ዘከነዓን ምስለ ደብረ ብርሃን ኢይትናጸሩ።	Dark Canaan cannot compare with Debre Berhan
ወሊቃውንቲሃ ኪሩቤል እንዘ የኅብሩ	And when Cherub, its wise scholars, will unite
መልአከ ብርሃናት ቀዳማዊ ኃበ ዘአንጸረ የሐውሩ።	They will march to the first Angel of Light they see

This verse was composed during the dark days of Italian occupation and has many connotations to local events and local personalities of the time. It is rather difficult to translate and do justice to it without knowing all the details associated in it.

Aleka Tetemko

መወድስ/Meweds (Praise)

ይሁዳ ኢጸድቀ በአትሕቶ ርእሱ	Judas was not righteous by submissiveness /humility/
ወኢኮነኖ እግዚእ ለመርዶክዮስ ዓለም	And the Lord did not condemn Mardochai /world/
እመ ላእለ ሐማ ይትዔበይ። አምጣነ ይኩን ሥዩም	for his pride over Haman. In order (Judah) to be named
ቅድመ ሆሳእና ወልደ ዳዊት	Was given kingship before Hosanna son of David
ሰላመ ይቤ ወአልቦ ሰላም።	Who says 'Peace' where there is no peace.
ክብረ ሆሳእና ኢየሁብ ለአማሌቃዊ ብእሴ ደም።	Not to give Hosanna's glory to Amalek, man of blood
ሐሰተሰ ከመ ይኩን ጽድቀ ነገርነ ሕልም	To turn our truth and dream of justice into lies
መንበረ መንግሥቱ አስተዳለወ በአትሕቶ ርእሱ አቤሴሎም	As Absalom paved his way to the throne with humility
ወዘኢወጽአ ሕዝቅያስ እምኢያእምሮ ገዳም	And Hezekiah didn't go to a place he did not know
በዓቂበ ሕግ ተመክህ ወተውኅበ ለሕማም።	Priding himself with law keeping but was afflicted

Another difficult verse to translate... It has many echoes and biblical references from Judas Iscariot to Mardochai and Haman, to Jesus who is referred to as Son of David, to Hezekiah and his affliction. It is a verse most likely composed during the Italian occupation and seems to suggest that paying lip service to the enemy and showing humility towards an invader was not the way to go.

Translated by **G. E. Gorfu**