

Hegera's Curse

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What kind of family have I been born into?

Will any of us ever put a foot right? Is it truly God who, as Grandfather Avineri used to preach, is directing all our lives and actions in accord with some grand intent, or testing us every step of the way, or shaping us on the anvil of turmoil to His desired form?

Or is it instead some fatal flaw that we — human beings that we are — carry as if in our genes, compelling us, generation after generation, to create enemies amongst ourselves and stirring discord between husband and wife, father and child, brother and brother; and all this, in our case, in a family that — so Grandfather claimed receiving the pledge directly from God — has been elected to produce great and numerous dynasties of godly men to serve as model, paragon, beacon to all?

Ha! I could laugh — both at the conceit of the notion and how in three generations we have moved not one hair's breadth nearer its realisation.

And I ask: why is this so?

Where did our family go so grievously wrong?

When did it go so grievously wrong?

Where? When? Why?

And I declare: from the very beginning! From that singular and seminal moment when Grandfather Avineri, able no more to contain his scorn for his own father's pieties and effigies,

pronounced them primeval superstitions shot through with contradiction, fantasy and illusion. For to Grandfather had been revealed another truth, come to him in a near-blinding vision on a mountaintop and attended by a voice which, calling him by name, announced itself as "That Beside Which There Is No Other" whom Grandfather chose to call "God". That voice declared itself too to be that of the creator, master and arbitrator of all things in the universe, and promised, in exchange for honour, obedience and a renouncing of all earthly effigies, to bless Grandfather with progenitors of great nations that would flourish in abundance and distinction.

What rancours followed Grandfather's bold pronouncement! So provoked to wrathful lividness did his own father become at this barefaced heresy that he slapped Grandfather in full sight of all so mightily that a less sturdy man should have suffered a broken jaw; after which, notwithstanding the pleas of Grandfather's mother for reconciliation and forgiveness, the father never spoke to the son again.

In these circumstances, Grandfather could not remain at home. A formidable big-boned man with a flowing mane and an intense, imposing and authoritative way, he carried his vision to others in the family and to his friends, who, when won over, joined him and Grandmother Sterah in ever wider more distant reaches to draw people into the new persuasion, working the while in whatever occupation could be had to support themselves. The movement grew as Grandfather Avineri, at its head as its leading thinker, organiser and policy-maker, refined his vision more precisely and elaborated upon the promise he had received, upon the movement's personal and communal rituals and prayers and upon the guidelines of membership and codes of conduct.

So the movement grew indeed. But to Grandfather's and Grandmother's quiet grief and mounting desperation, it grew from without but not from within. That is, it gained adherents wherever their disciples went, but although I call them my grandparents, they had already been a long time man and wife

without children of their own to further the line. It was baffling that Grandfather, who had been promised progeny that would become great nations, should remain for so long childless.

The same appeal of patriarchal authority and passionate purposefulness that Grandfather held for his followers attracted young women too, one of whom became his mistress, a fact for a long time not known to Grandmother. Both gave all their time to the movement — which subsisted on tithes donated by its members — but where Grandmother worked solely in the Centre, Grandfather was often out carrying his message into the field. Hence, Grandfather had little difficulty keeping his liaison a well-guarded secret.

Who knows how the affair would have continued had this mistress, Hegera, not given birth to the son, Ishmarian, he had long and achingly craved? For there followed an instant change in him. He began to return home ever later from his missions. He withdrew more money each week from the movement kitty which he said he needed for his evangelical work further afield. And, whether in the Centre or at home, he became increasingly distracted from matters at hand until, on receiving no clear answers to her probings, Grandmother began to look beneath the surface of the various and often inconsistent reasons he offered in explanation. She eventually found him out. She set a trusted cousin to be his shadow and when his course led to one constantly recurring address, she scanned the membership lists to learn who it was he so regularly visited. But she did not make trouble. After all, she was childless and very naturally feared that any confrontation could lead Grandfather to abandon her for his mistress and the child, heir to the destiny rightfully due a child of her own.

A small woman though she was, she was also tough and wily and gifted with bountiful patience. Instead of stirring nests of wasps, she thought the matter through and with fire and spirited determination set about, as she had already done once before, to seek out physicians about new advances by which she might conceive. Her renewed resolve yielded the wanted

fruit. For it happened that after trials of different medications, conceive she did and she too bore a son. This son, named Yischar, was in time to be my father.

That moment of triumph for her — and joy, of course — set in train a sequence of actions which were to spawn consequences within the family reverberating to this day, embroiling me too, still two generations removed, in their malignity.

Grandfather Avineri certainly made the required festive fuss and jovial noises over this so-long awaited newborn son. But if Grandmother had thought that by giving him a son she might bring Grandfather nearer again, in this one detail she proved mistaken. For it quickly became limpid clear that in his heart he shared in neither her accomplishment nor her exuberance over the birth, and that he could, almost constitutionally, not give the child more than the most rudimentary paternal attention; while any boast by Grandmother Sterah — who still kept her knowledge of Hegera and child under seal — that they finally had God's promised gift they had so prayed for distorted his lips to a smile curled to a sneer. This was not without its reason. For, given that the vision and thrust behind his mission was one ultimately universal faith, with perfection and harmony by divine grace, it did not bode well that the child born to his inheritance and command had visible imperfections. Born to them far beyond customary child-bearing years, the infant Yischar had a large head, puny frame and changeless vacant look, was given to convulsions and to ceaseless crying, and developed slowly. It irked Grandfather to the core to contemplate this unprepossessing child, and how much more bitterly so when, visiting Hegera and having a sunny Ishmarian run into his arms, he recognised how trapped he was in having, for the sake of peace with Sterah, to set his natural son above this illicit one who was foreseeably every bit a true patriarch, a man of mission and a leader of men.

Black desperate entrapment led to black desperate action.

No-one witnessed the episode in full, but from splintered accounts of assorted passers-by, it came to be surmised — though the surmise may as equally be wrong as right — that, one

midnight, he hastened as if driven by voices or visions with Yischar over a shoulder to a lightless embankment beneath a bridge, there to slay him, bind him in tarpaulin and sink him in the river. Notwithstanding his desperate driven state of mind bent on murder, he had in all phases been wholly lucid. He had deliberately selected a dry ill-lit night and had attended to all details at home to have the child's disappearance seem a kidnapping. After the act he would return not home but to the movement quarters, there to research a paper he was preparing. He had also reconnoitred where to dispose of the knife and brought a change of clothes lest he be soiled with blood. Hence, if ever the infant Yischar's body were discovered, no clues would point to him. If suspicion was to turn to him, his quarters were safe alibi. While, if truly found out, his action, he would say, was not one of deliberate infanticide. It was a sacrifice demanded of him by his God, for the sake of the movement, for all the generations to follow, for the eventual divinity of all nations and for God Himself.

In the end Grandfather didn't kill his son, future father to myself and my twin brother Asa. What stayed his hand was movement nearby. A homeless drifter sleeping in an alcove but a few steps away was wakened by Grandfather's preparations. To the man's sudden, "Hey, what do you want here? Go away, I have nothing to give you!" Grandfather was startled and indeed left the spot, carrying Yischar back with him. Nor did he go to the quarters, nor sink the tarpaulin, dispose of the knife or need to change his clothes. Instead he returned home and put Yischar back in his cot, knowing that other more propitious occasions would arise. Long after, in an especially moving narrative he offered his adherents, he told of the father who was so repulsed by his son that he had devised to kill the boy; and would have done so had not a guardian angel in the guise of a vagrant caused the child to be saved — the message to be drawn being that God looked after all His children equally, from the most endowed to the most imperfect.

Although Grandfather had for a while changed his ways to spend more time with Sterah and the child, as was seemly, he

soon relapsed into late homecoming, increased spending and distraction. Whereupon, judging the time ripe, Grandmother resolved to bring her publicly much-honoured and virtuous husband to heel. She set out one afternoon to the home of the woman Hegera with infant Yischar in her arms, strode up the path and rapped at the door. It was Hegera herself who opened it, a well-formed energetic woman who, Grandmother saw at a glance, was no manner of fool or homely drudge. Dark, erect and self-possessed, beside whom stood a similarly assured black-haired boy with the probing curiosity of the forward and precocious, the woman greeted her matter-of-factly, "Ah, Avineri's Sterah! I have wondered often when this moment would come."

Grandmother Sterah suffered no preamble.

"I have come for my husband, the father of this wedlocked child," she replied, "and will play fiddle to this deceit no longer."

Hegera shrugged.

"He is as much husband to me as he is to you. Perhaps no documents have been signed, nor rings exchanged, nor ritual words gabbled before any law, but in every way else and our child above all . . ."

"There is no other way else!" Sterah cut in.

Grandfather Avineri approached just then down the hallway, large, erect and with heavy tread.

"So you have traced me, Sterah," he said.

"Long ago," she countered.

"And now you are here to persuade me home?"

"I should persuade the master," she replied, tossing her chin at Hegera, "when between myself and this harlot you have not even the smell of a choice? As lawful wife, as helpmeet in your work, as mother of your child unsullied by bastardy, there are no two ways about the matter — you owe everything to me. Of course, you may continue to consort with your slattern and ill-begotten son under this roof, but never will you then step under ours again, nor reclaim one thread of what we have built up, nor see our son anymore, while the great founder, leader and teacher of the new belief will be stripped so naked before

all that your revelation, your movement and your labours will with one word all come undone.”

Hegera, however, herself still had another card to play.

“It is true,” she said, confronting Sterah square-on with her hands resting on Ishmarian’s shoulders before her. “I do not have such claims to marital ownership that a paper scroll and tinsel on a finger secure, and your husband may therefore well march off with you if that is his will. He may abandon us if he must. Expel us from his life. And cut us off if thereby he should sleep more easily. But let him do so and the chickens will yet come home to rule the roost.”

Hegera now addressed them both.

“Not right away,” she went on. “Not necessarily even soon. But when Ishmarian’s descendants come to outnumber those of your Yischar who, as you yourself, Avineri, told me, is a tortoise to a hare, then there will be many among yours to the hundredth generation and beyond who will have good cause for grieving at such a decision today, little as you may see it now. Being the elder, your true heir is Ishmarian. By leaving, deny him this, and as surely as he will despise your son when full understanding comes, so will Ishmarian’s heirs as virulently despise your Yischar’s. And then, Avineri, God help them!”

“And so am I invidiously caught,” said Grandfather Avineri.

In the end, Grandfather returned to his wife by law. He gave Hegera a goodly sum to leave and set herself up in another place, and bore in silence to his closing day his profound and ceaseless ache at never again seeing either Hegera or Ishmarian or any of the children that, as he heard it, issued periodically from that line.

That my father Yischar was slow — a tortoise to a hare — was regrettably true, however unseemly it might be for a son to confirm it. By all accounts, spared though he was from would-be sacrifice, he grew up as Grandfather had feared: awkward, slow in speech, thought and action, and, though stemming from so illustrious a father, himself carving no distinctive place of his own. There were of course his sorry characteristics to

contend with — his large head, convulsions and timidity. But setting these aside, precisely as the son of a man as grand and domineering as Grandfather, even had he been well-endowed, Father would scarcely have been capable of casting a light in any wise comparable. The movement, for instance, needed a go-getter, and a go-getter he certainly was not. Even a bride had to be found for him, and that when he was forty — at an age when other men were already giving their sons and daughters away in marriage. What was more, the bride was a cousin selected from among the granddaughters of Grandfather’s surviving brother. The one good fortune for Father was that in Recca, a plain, thick-ankled, plumpish woman, he gained a very organised and capable homemaker who let him go about his daily gardening on his return from the movement centre, where he worked in an office well away from Grandfather’s sight, and who shielded him from domestic matters — house-keeping, repairs and the raising of two such different sons as Asa and myself. Upon her, too, as the wife of Grandfather’s second in line, devolved much of the work of evangelising the faith, a task in which, here also, she succeeded remarkably. That she had agreed to leave her home far off and, sight unseen, become Father’s wife long puzzled me. But stray remarks dropped at different times let me learn this much: that, to her family’s growing discomfort and shame, she had never had a suitor; that with each passing year her prospects for marriage were decidedly dimming; and that in acceding to the match as presented to her, she would at once annul the shame, fulfil her role as a woman and marry into a household of considerable means, station and public honour. Mother indeed proved a dutiful homemaker, but having known only a modest life till then, she came to develop a sound liking for bright dresses, fine necklaces and ornate headbands, bangles and rings. Father indulged her enormously, while for himself content with simpler things. In this, though we were twins, Asa was Father’s son, and, being surrounded by plenty, asked for very little, while I became increasingly Mother’s son: already having much, I wanted ever more. Asa was by nature always the livelier, more open,

happier one, while I was given to daydreaming, brooding and scheming for purposes of gain.

With my young days now far behind, and having since then also suffered sorry deception and exploitation, I kick myself with ceaseless simmering shame at the vulgar offences I committed then. Forgiven though I may be by my changeless decent brother, I will to my dying day not live down having so cruelly robbed him first of his birthright and then of Father's blessing, both of which were so assuredly his.

Asa was truly ill when he returned from work one day and asked for some of the stew I had been warming for myself.

In the mood to tease, I replied, "No."

"Joachim, please!" he said. "I'm hungry, I haven't eaten since morning, I'm dropping."

"There is not enough for two," I countered in ongoing jest.

"I will pay you for it if you wish. I am faint and falling away. Please, Joachim, give me just some of it!"

Asa lay down upon the couch against a wall.

"Oh, and how will you pay me?" I went on, stirring the pot and sipping from the ladle in full view of him. "With money, with your albums, with one or two of your trophies?"

"With anything you want!" he said.

"With anything?" I repeated. "Then . . ."

The very roots of my hair tingled in the hold of a sudden, mighty, dizzying audacity as teasing turned in one breath to destiny.

"Then what do you say to paying with your birthright?"

Asa was either delirious or truly desperate, for he acquiesced.

"Even that," he said. "Even that! For if I do not eat, of what use will my birthright be to me?"

Asa recovered within a day, but the birthright, against all his later pleas to have it returned, was in my keep forever.

As for the other thing, it happened one evening that Father, who had recently suffered a heart attack and feared that his number was drawing near, raised in an awkward tortuous way the question of passing on the family blessing to Asa as the older son. Asa and I were on the verge of manhood and Father was

certainly aging visibly and had over the preceding year become blind.

To his remark, Mother, passing a hand over his balding scalp, said, "Nonsense, there is still much time, plenty of time to talk about such things." Father, wiping his chin of the food that had dribbled there, did not press the issue.

The next afternoon, as I was helping her store away in the pantry the food she had bought, Mother said of a sudden, "Joachim, something you might think strange came to my mind today. Why don't you grow a beard like your brother and let your hair grow in curls like his? Handsome though you are, I think you'll look even more so. What about trying it for a time?"

The request did seem strange, given how often she passed her hand along my cheeks, so different from Asa's bearded pimply ones, saying, "Velvet could not be smoother."

But I did as she suggested.

Since I was nearer to her in tastes and sentiment, Mother had always liked me above Asa. Asa was born first, but I had given her the harder time at birth, requiring assistance to bring me forth. Perhaps for that alone she showed me greater favour. Against this, Asa was Father's favourite, a jolly ruffian who liked climbing trees, exploring nests, and running, swimming, playing ball till dark and helping Father in his gardening, to which I had an aversion.

I should have known that when Mother, however cheerily, broached new or unusual ideas, she did so with a purpose, which in the matter of my hair and beard became clear to me only much later.

Some six months after first broaching the subject, Father again raised the issue of his blessing. This time Mother did not push it away but agreed to set a time for the blessing to be given. Asa was, of course, the one to receive it. But shortly before the appointed hour and before Asa was yet due home, Mother unfurled before me her design, tutoring me swiftly in what I was to say. Dismissing with a wrist any qualms or questions that I had, she led me in to Father and, pushing me

forward, said, "The time has come for the blessing upon Asa, so we are here."

Father, of course, being blind, knew nothing of the time. For my part I was bewildered and tossed, having had no prior knowledge of Mother's intent. But I could not here expose and embarrass her for her deception; and indeed, on thinking upon the matter further, what profit might not follow as the bearer of Father's blessing, by which I would become direct carrier of the patriarchal line descended from Grandfather Avineri?

Father reached out a hand to me, felt my head of curls, felt my beard, and not suspecting that I was not Asa, said in his slow awkward way, "Asa my son, draw nearer that I may . . . that I may recite the blessing over you. On receiving it . . . As next head of the family, all that I own, all of it will be passed on to you . . . And the movement . . . when I die, you will lead it . . . while sitting by the side of God, your grandfather and father will be proud."

And so I received Father's blessing and was leaving just as Asa, having returned home and bathed, entered the room. Mother had clearly anticipated Asa's rage at being so deviously robbed and, furnishing me with provisions, urged me to leave instantly for her brother Leman's home till the matter boiled over. I did as she said, hearing behind me a stricken wounded howling that even from wolves unfed for a month could not have been as wild.

On my leave-taking Mother had said, "You will write, won't you?"

"Yes," I promised, "I will."

"And when I judge the time is ripe, I will send for you."

But I neither saw nor heard from Mother again. If I had been superstitious I might have called it just retribution. For, to my initial letter written two weeks later, another horribly painful one dictated by Father came back, informing me that Mother had developed a sudden illness and had just died. Uncle Leman travelled to his sister's funeral, but for fear of Asa I remained behind. On returning, Uncle told how Asa — once so happy and easy-going — had, out of intense bitterness against Mother, also

left the family home and now lived in lodgings; no-one knew where. So I could well have attended the funeral, for Asa had stayed away.

I found with Uncle Leman the instant refuge arranged for me by Mother, but it was twenty years before I ventured home again, my brother having himself returned on making peace with our wholly guiltless Father. On recalling that day of my flight, I wonder now which would have been the better: to confront my brother's wrath and deal with it there and then, or to have gone as I did to my uncle there to smoulder resentfully, sometimes murderously, year in year out as his servant, bound to him through trickery of his own. If only I'd known! Allowing me not a moment to collect myself, Mother had discounted any wavering on my part, but at what price? As the trickster tricked, what a waste were the ill-tempered years that followed, married to Leman's elder daughter Liyala whom I did not love but was duped by him into taking as wife ahead of his younger who was my truly more beloved Raqela! And even now, so long after, I can only say "Poor Liyala, poor sorry Liyala, poor ordinary unloved Liyala!" — the shabbiness with which I treated her having been so unhusbandlike by any standards that Uncle, seeing what was what, acceded to my severance from her and fulfilled his original promise to let me have my long-awaited wished-for Raqela. To this day, so potent had been my distaste for the one and love for the other that, even against my wiser counsel, it remains evident in the ways I address the sons I had by Liyala and those by Raqela.

I should have been happier from here on, but I felt too bruised by my pauseless exploitation over the preceding years to simply spit out the bitterness. Apart from his daughters as wives and a brood of children by both, I had little of substance in reward for my labours. So it was with an easy conscience — however heinous now — that as son-in-law and nephew I presented to him a business plan at once pleasing and respectably profitable, but which, pivoting upon one small detail known only to myself, disguised the fact that its implementation would work vastly to my advantage.

By the time Uncle Leman and his sons discovered my perfidy — in which Raqela, herself for so long cheated out of our wished-for marriage, worked by my side — we were very cosily provided whereas they reaped mysteriously little. Angered at first, they were eventually placated; but continuing to live and work in their midst was strained. Murder could have been committed. So Raqela and I packed our possessions to the last thread and splinter, disposed of our house and, taking with us my sons and Liyala, who would not be parted from them, returned to my birthplace home — where Father, ever the sick and frail one, was miraculously still alive. Grandfather, Grandmother and Mother had all long since died in my absence.

On contemplating the return, I knew that I should have to confront Asa again. Through all the years, my guilt had not abated by as much as a mite.

I still feared him.

And prayed he would be kind.

Which he was; and kind beyond any conceivable expectation.

For, on being notified of my arrival at Father's home, he came to greet me with all his family, not one child of which was not there. And when we came face to face, where I held back, he hurried forward and embraced me, crying, "Joachim, Joachim! How cruel it has been without a brother!"

Asa had prospered less well than I, but being like Father whose life had always been modest and needs always few, he retained his unaffected humble streak and envied me nothing. At a feast he arranged, our families dined together and, with Father too being present and, blind as he was, delighting beyond delight in having all his grandchildren around him as he had never had to that day, we drank toasts to the health, prosperity and goodwill of all. But if I thought that we might ever be reunited as truly intimate, loving and inseparable brothers, I erred. It was not acrimony, accusation or guilt that lay between us. The truth was more prosaic. We had both altogether changed and, though twins we were — as also kindred in our common grandfather's faith — in all other things we were

separated by a canyon's divide with nothing remaining to keep the bond.

And so, a solid year passed before we met again.

And that was a week ago, on Father's passing.

At the funeral both Asa and I, as his sons, recited in unison the prayer for the dead. Afterwards we shook hands, parted and went our separate ways. I wondered then whether in reciting the prayer over Father, we might equally have been reciting it for each other.

On Grandfather Avineri's death some fifteen years ago, Father had taken his place at the head of the movement, as Grandmother even further back had insisted and contrived should be the order of things. He did not contribute anything even remotely ground-breaking to the movement, but, surrounded by loyal, energetic and enthusiastic workers who revered God and Grandfather's memory and Father for his kindness towards them, the movement grew healthily even during his time. And now, as possessor of both my brother's birthright and Father's blessing, upon me has fallen the onus of furthering Grandfather Avineri's mission of truth.

To which I say, "Thank you, God! I am honoured! Well have I earned it!"

I do not expect answer. Grandfather claimed God spoke to Him. No other has heard God since. For my part, even when I have dreamt of Him, as I did last night, and asked if my leadership of the movement is part of His plan, He turned aside — it could have been in disgust, so abominably have its true heirs been robbed, Ishmarian first, then Asa, of what should by custom and by law indisputably have been theirs.

But where Father — awkward, simple man that he was, by everyone far more acted upon than acting — was guiltless, I can enter no comparable plea. I know — and how I know! — by what ill-begotten means I usurped Asa's birthright and Father's blessing, the one through a teasing jest turned to an impulsive irresistible covetousness, the other as an accessory to a connivance that defrauded Father and Asa alike. And how my

domestic crimes stare me in the face as I contemplate too those seven black years trapped with Liyala, my dupery of Uncle Leman, and my cold and silent distance from my sons by Liyala, sorry fruit of my cruel and loveless marriage to their mother.

Now that events have brought me to this state as paterfamilias of Grandfather's sanctified line and Patriarch of the movement he created in God's service, I neither merit the inheritance, nor want it, nor welcome it. Gladly would I pass it to Ishmarian, Grandfather's favoured son born of his uncommonly formidable mistress Hegera; or if not to him, then to *his* eldest to whom it would after him have gone! And if Ishmarian's family cannot be traced, then, for conscience's sake, could I but make amends forever by returning both birthright and Father's blessing to Asa. But Asa is happy, he is content, he loves and is loved by his wife, by his children and by everyone with whom he has any dealings, and he made it clear when we met that he would exchange not a thread of what he owned for greater wealth, higher station or any veneration to be had from a people's leadership. As for handing down the mantle: it is to Jose I should wish in time to yield it, my beloved son by my beloved Raqela. For it can only be to the movement's good to have a pure and gentle dreamer at its head, one who, free of any deep-sunk wounds of intractable family mayhem, commands easy affection, loyalty and popular trust yet is endowed with a practical bent for dealing with men. But I have learned many lessons. And so tutored, and for the sake of peace in the home, it will be the eldest, it will be Ruban, mothered by Liyala, who will in his time carry my title of Patriarch. It cannot be otherwise; it dare not be otherwise. Never again will the younger rule over the elder — a principle which Ruban wants enacted into law as already he is daily staking his eventual claim, challenging almost every tenet I propose, cutting into every practical suggestion I venture, and questioning every administrative decision I take. Raised the child of mutual parental enmity, Ruban is a hard, angry and ambitious man who, if

pushed, could as readily kill his father as Grandfather Avineri was ready to sacrifice his son.

But setting even reluctance aside, it is with no little fear that I assume the patriarchal mantle, whether with or without God's blessing I will never know. And it is a fear that I dare reveal to none — to none! — as, more than I fear for myself, I fear for the movement's ever more numerous devout, ecstatic and dedicated adherents and, after them, their children and their children's children to the hundredth generation, amen. For ours has been an ill beginning, begun the moment Grandfather in that near-blinding light heard that voice which announced itself as "That Beside Which There Is No Other" whom he in turn gave the name of "God". Since then, a sickness corroding the soul has touched us all; the anvil has grown hot with every beating we have given each other, whether through rejection, deception, banishment, spite, rivalry or rapaciousness; while, victim to our dismal flaws, we have created enemies the worst kind of all: enemies between kin unjustly wronged and sorely aggrieved.

Pray then —

Pray then that the lineage of Ishmarian and Asa multiplied into their millions might not in later time thirst for reprisal upon our own.

Pray that, brothers and cousins that they are, they leave us in peace to worship God as laid down by our common father in Avineri.

And pray that, left in peace, we may truly realise someday God's promise to make of us crown, paragon and beacon to the nations.

If this is not to be, then, Grandfather Avineri, for all the family injuries and discords you set in train, God help us.

Then God help us — both now and forevermore!