# Justice

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I’ve often heard it said: *If God allowed even one unrepentant sinner into heaven, heaven would turn into hell.* As I slowly open my eyes, the truth of that statement has never been clearer.

Deborah clings to Yaffa’s dress, trembling as if to shut out the world. Gavriel paces in agitation, his shoulders sagging under a weight I can’t yet grasp. Priscilla sits beside Dipti, her bloodshot eyes a testament to relentless weeping. Yet Dipti remains composed—a steady center amidst the storm, her hand resting on Priscilla’s in quiet reassurance.

The room comes into focus. The soft glow of nanotech walls adjusts as I stir, tracking my vitals. The medical pod beside me hums with holographic updates on Uriel’s condition. Even the robots, silent and precise, seem to mirror the tension in the room.

Igor’s gentle face flashes before me, frozen in the moment of his final breath. My chest tightens, and I force the image away, but the weight lingers, pressing down on my heart. A tear escapes my eye. I can’t bring myself to tell Deborah about Igor—or maybe she already knows. Either way, the world I know is spiraling into chaos, hellbound on a freight train.

Dipti’s gaze meets mine, searching. There’s an unspoken understanding between us. I look away and turn to my left, where Uriel lies pale and motionless.

A blood transfusion tube runs from his arm. His eyes snap open, wide with shock, and his bandaged right arm twitches. I don’t need to ask what happened—I already know.

“Amiel,” I mumble under my breath.

Gavriel sees that I’m awake. He stands to my left, his footsteps hesitant. Our eyes meet, and he doesn’t have to say anything. Dipti moves to my side and grabs my hand.

“Your sons and daughters are waiting outside,” she says gently, patting my hand.

“I know. I can see them.” I glance toward the door, their anxious faces etched in my mind. “They’re distraught.” I tell them to wait. I don’t want them to see me like this. I glance at my wound, covered in tight bandages. The nanobots have done an incredible job, but I feel my condition would be disheartening for those who rely on me most. If they see me like this, I fear they might panic—or lose hope.

“It’s begun, Dipti,” I say, squeezing her hand. “The rebellion—it’s begun.”

I glance at Uriel, my mentat accessing his thoughts. Images flicker—Amiel as a boy, the two of them training under the sun, laughter echoing through the yard. Those moments once felt unbreakable, yet now they’re ghosts, eclipsed by Amiel’s relentless hunger for power. Uriel’s heart tightens; the cracks were always there, he realizes now. The quiet resentments, the ambition lurking behind Amiel’s smiles—he had been blind to it all. A fairytale, shattered in the face of this betrayal.

I know what I must do. Righteous anger fills my heart. I will punish Amiel to the fullest extent of the law, but first I must gather all the evidence against him and put him on trial for the world to witness. They must see that my judgment is not reserved for outsiders alone but extends to my own blood. Justice does not waver before the bonds of family. No one escapes the consequences of sin—not even those closest to me.

Ever since my dreams began, I knew I needed to test Amiel. My agents, now rebranded as SpecNet Operatives, carried out my will in silence. Former Mossad legends, they infiltrated every mentat connection and channel.

I designed a test for Amiel—a whisper of temptation crafted to reveal his true nature. The operative planted a ping in his network, hinting at an opportunity to buy a mentat faker—a rare and illegal device capable of mimicking mentat signals of any individual of choice. A tool that could rewrite the truth itself and be used to access places and do things as someone else.

The opportunity was irresistible. Amiel moved quickly, unaware that every step of his journey was being tracked. He met the operative in a hidden enclave outside the city—a haven for rebels and others who dream of dismantling my authority. There, under the cover of shadows, he bought the faker.

The price? An impossible sum—one million shekels. Enough to purchase a home along the Dead Sea's shores. Where could he have found such wealth? Certainly not from the modest allowance I grant him. Someone else must be involved.

I suspect he’s using mentat blockers. It’s the only explanation for how he’s managed to evade my mental grasp. Without access to his thoughts, I couldn’t intervene before his attack on Uriel. Perhaps that was his plan all along: to operate beyond my reach, shielded by cunning and chemicals.

Still, I allowed him to proceed. I needed to see the depths of his ambition. The mentat faker was just the first step, but his actions suggest a web of alliances and motives far larger than I anticipated. Perhaps his mother gave him this sum? Could she be part of this conspiracy? No, her thoughts remain open to me. I would have seen it.

Amiel is more dangerous than I imagined—a clever and conniving boy. But I will uncover the truth. I’ll test his blood for traces of mentat blockers. If he’s tampered with his very physiology to outwit me, that will confirm how far he’s willing to go.

Amiel must have used the mentat faker during his sparring sessions with Gavriel, bringing himself close enough to sync with Gavriel’s mentat signals. But this is still conjecture. The faker requires close proximity for five to ten minutes to complete the syncing process—a difficult task during a dynamic sparring match.

Tracking data revealed the faker was in Gavriel’s quarters for over an hour before being discarded in a waste container nearby. What was it doing there? Another mystery. Late at night, Amiel retrieved the device from the container. Using Gavriel’s mentat signals, he then accessed the armory in the dead of night.

How Amiel bypassed the heavy security remains unclear. I suspect he used a cloaking device, slipping past the guards during a moment of distraction or rest. The gate logs confirm it opened without any visible presence—a clear indication of cloaking technology at work.

Once inside the armory, he secured a dart shocker, a vital weapon in our warriors’ arsenal. The shocker allows users to fire deadly projectiles while maintaining agility and proficiency with their bio-weapons. Amiel used it on Uriel, striking him with a poisoned dart. The toxin is highly lethal; had Gavriel not intervened, Uriel would have perished—either from the poison or Amiel’s blade.

I could have stopped the fight the moment Uriel was poisoned, but I didn’t. I needed to know if Amiel truly had the will to kill his brother in the most gruesome way possible.

I glanced at Gavriel. He was stroking his beard—a habit he’d held for as long as I could remember. Despite the years, he still resembled the young man I had fought beside during the Battle of Jerusalem. His thoughts flowed into my mind, unguarded. I saw him, cloaked and hidden, watching Amiel and Uriel fight. He had waited until the last possible moment to intervene. Relief coursed through him, but so did a palpable shock as he looked at me in my current state.

Our eyes meet. “I can’t believe it,” he said, his voice trembling. “Seeing you like this—it’s too much for me.” His gaze darted to the wound on my shoulder, then to Deborah, who stirred at the sound of his voice.

She lifted her tear-streaked face from her mother’s lap, her red, swollen eyes locking onto Gavriel before she rushed to my side. Her small hands clutched at me as she buried her face in my chest, her sobs shaking her fragile frame.

I winced sharply as her weight pressed against the wound from Igor. Though the nanobots had expertly sealed the surface with regenerated skin cells from my body, the internal damage was still raw. Pain flared with each movement, a relentless reminder of how close I had come to death. Her tears soaked through my shirt, warm and persistent, as though trying to cleanse the horrors she had witnessed.

The physical pain was nothing compared to the ache in my soul. Deborah's innocence—the precious light I had fought so hard to protect—was gone. The old world, with all its cruelty and sin, had unveiled itself to her in ways I had tried so desperately to shield her from.

I had always known I couldn’t keep her safe forever. But knowing didn’t make it any easier. I held her trembling body, feeling the weight of my failure press down on me. I had hoped, foolishly, that I could delay this moment, that I could keep her untouched by the scars of this broken world for just a little longer. But now, no matter how tightly I held her, I couldn’t undo what had been done.

Her voice cracked as she choked out, “Why, Daddy? Why did Igor have to go? He won’t wake up. You… you killed him, didn’t you?”

Her words cut deeper than any blade. I opened my mouth to explain, to tell her the truth: *It was either him or me.* But the words stuck in my throat. Would it even matter? Could anything I said soothe the waves of pain coursing through her body and heart?

Instead, I let her see the memories, her own mentat showing her what had happened—how I had tried to stop Igor, how I fought to keep him alive. But we had never fully domesticated him before bringing him here. In the end, he reverted to his old nature, something I had never anticipated, never planned for.

“I tried,” the words breaking as they left me. “I tried so hard, Deborah. I’m so sorry. I didn’t want this to happen.”

Her sobs quieted, but the weight of her grief, and mine, hung heavy in the air. There was no undoing the damage, no way to turn back time. All that remained was the fragile hope that, one day, we might find a way to heal.

In the midst of my sorrow, my mind wandered to the temple. I longed to rise from this bed, to leave these burdens behind, and to sit in His presence. There were so many questions, so many things I needed to share with Him—things I couldn’t make sense of alone. The weight of recent events felt insurmountable, one pressing matter piling upon another, leaving me no time to breathe, let alone find clarity.

My thoughts drift from the temple to the river and its fruit. The image of its glistening waters, flowing from the holy sanctuary into the Dead Sea, brought a flicker of hope. Soon, I would draw strength from its life-giving leaves and fruit. They would restore what the nanobots couldn’t reach, knitting together the unseen wounds in my body and soul. I clung to the promise of renewal, to the belief that I would be whole again.

But a shadow of doubt crept into my thoughts, a gnawing worry I couldn’t shake. What if this *is* the rebellion? What if these strange events are the first signs of the upheaval we’ve long feared? And if it truly is, what will become of the river and its fruit?

A chill ran through me as the possibility took root. If the rebellion overtakes us, will the river dry up? Will the fruit that grants us restoration vanish? Without them, their miraculous effects would cease, and the inevitable decay of the world would reclaim me. I would begin to feel the aches and frailty of my once-ailing body again.

The thought was unbearable. I had come so far, fought so hard, only to face the prospect of losing it all—the strength I had regained, the life I had rebuilt. I closed my eyes, my grip tightening around Deborah as if holding her could anchor me against the storm in my mind. I know the end has to come, but that doesn’t comfort me. I’ve been happy with the life that I’ve lived till now. Memories of my old life return to me. My aching knees, the sleepless nights, the quarrels, the arguments with my enemies, prison, my withering eyes as they poured over the Scriptures searching for answers as to the reasons behind the purpose of my difficult trials, the rejection, my heart sick from hopes deferred and on, on…. The burning anger, the righteous indignation, I just want to jump out of my body.

I closed my eyes and whisper a prayer, my voice breaking under the weight of it: “Let the river flow. Let the fruit remain. Not just for me, but for all of us. Please… let this not be the end.

Uriel’s voice breaks through my ponderings. He’s in my mind.

“Father, I’m filled with something I’ve never experienced before. It’s something that burns within me. I don’t know how to explain it. My jaw clenches every time I think of a Amiel. My stomach burns, my hands clench, my palms become sweaty. I’m filled with us overpowering rage. I want to find Amiel and…and….”

I see an image of Uriel’s burning sword flash through the darkness and Amiel’s head severing from his muscular yet developing body. I see Uriel over his body gloating.

“I want justice. I want to avenge the wrong done to me by Amiel. I will kill him father I swear. The Lord is my witness, I….” I interrupt Amiel, I understand his anger. I’ve been there a thousand times, that dark place where only the hand of the Almighty can pull me out.

“Vengeance is mine, I will repayeth says the lord,” I quote to him. “You give Amiel to me. I will do your vengeance. He will be punished in front of all of Israel.”

I sense tears flowing down his eyes and intense pain in his body caused by the deep cut in his arm and the poison coursing through his body having been blocked by the antidote.

# The Prince of Darkness

Amiel hit the cold, hard floor of the cell with a thud, the echo of his impact fading into the silence. Anger burns in his chest as he attempts to scramble to his feet, hands clenched into fists. How dare they treat him this way? He is a prince, destined for greatness, and yet here he is, locked in a cell like a common criminal.

He struggles to get up. He’s completely exhausted having formed so many weapons in his anger and rage he’s surprised that he’s even alive. He crawls to his cell bars and pulls himself up. He bangs his fists against the heavy iron bars, his voice rising in furious protest.

“I’ll have your heads on a platter, you’ll see.”

One guard speaks with him patiently and respectfully.

“Prince Amiel please note that your personal bible has been placed by your bed. Please take this time to reflect and examine yourself. We hope this experience will end in your repentance.”

Amiel's fists fell silent, his defiant shouts echoing away as he heard the guard's calm words. A bitter scoff escapes his lips, “*Repentance?”* Then he thinks, as if he, of all people, needs to reflect or change. Yet something in the guard’s respectful tone gnaws at him, a quiet discomfort settling beneath his anger.

Turning, he spots the small,

But a gnawing fear surfaces in his mind. How would his father react to his attack on Uriel? Amiel was certain he would not accept it easily. Nothing like it had ever happened in the royal palace for centuries.

Amiel makes his way to his bed carefully trying to keep his balance. He stumbles and falls on the firm mattress. Composing himself he sits up, takes a deep breath while picking up the bible then opens it skimming for words he could use. Maybe there was another route.

He closes the Bible and falls back onto his bed. His voice echoes off the stone walls of his cell as he murmurs, *“Let that man do whatever he wishes. No matter what he says, my path is set in stone.”*