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Hiža of Mile

Mak Dizdar

The hiža [1] of our fathers was founded here to fix virtue more strongly in the hearts of men
May it ever be open wide for welcome visitors and for the great of heart
For guests for elders and other believers
For all good people for all good Bosnians
For all warriors in the war that is waged against war
And various other small and mighty harms and evils
For all who flee from their flaming homes
For those fleeing the blazing circle of pyres and fleeing the hangman's noose
For all who are burnt for ever aspiring to the sun far and great
For all who have uttered the right word in the right hour
Who had their hands cut off for a single word on the bloody path seeking an outcome
For the word that bread is bread that wine is wine and that water is water
For those whose living flesh was burned and cheeks marked with a burning brand
By those who ever appeal to the laws of God's mercy and to canon law
For those whose tongues were torn from their throat for not betraying the word they gave
For those condemned to die on horses' tails
between two horsemen
May the hiža of our fathers be open wide
For those damned by the heaviest curse
From the consecrated altars of Provence, Lombardy, Zara, Arcady, and Rascia
In the stupor of incense in the militant press of crosses and swords in that bitter choir
For those thrice damned for they were not yet
Butchered and slaughtered on their own doorstep before women and children
May the great hiža of our fathers be always open wide
For those who pay no heed to ancient and new tzars
For true kings and false for bans and barons for boyars
For their ample treasure, for many ducats, gold dinars, for that evil money
For men who never miss paying taxes but never bribe the collectors blaming and cursing them
openly
May the doors of the house of our fathers be open wide
For those who in meetings speak words mild and pure not only to their kin and kind

For those who live without envy yet life always beats them, only mocks and laughs at them
May it be open for the unknown comrade for the unknown brother
For all that pine in the darkness of their body's confinement
Yearning that that word be for all men that they become brothers with that word
May the hiža of our fathers be open wide all night and always
For the one who left long ago and now treads in darkness toiling from afar
But knows that he will arrive awake where someone awaits him
May the house of our fathers be open wide
But if someone in love of himself shuts that door of virtue
May the house of our fathers crumble to its foundations in my soul
Into a heap may it be crushed may it turn into bare soot and black ashes
May hot scorpions and snakes breed in it as in the den of Satan
Forgive you who are condemned and cursed in this slander of the slanderer
But the house of our fathers without the welcome traveler and the dear guest
The house of our fathers it is not

Translated by Omer Hadžiselimović – © 2005 Omer Hadžiselimović

Notes

1. Mile was for a time the seat of the head of the Bosnian Church. King Tvrtko (who ruled Bosnia from 1353 to 1391) was probably crowned there as King of Bosnia. The djed's house served as a safe house for all those who were persecuted and sought sanctuary in it. Djed means grandfather, which was the title given to the leader of the Bosnian Church. ↩

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