

“The obscenity of murderous revenge”

by
Jeffrey M Cohen

(This poem is a sequel to the author’s recently released poem,
“On the slaying of three Israel teenagers.” Tragically, the events that
inspired the latter poem were overtaken by the wicked revenge killing of an innocent Arab boy and the burning of his
(still-living) body, an act that has outraged the entire Israeli public, as well as world Jewry.

The author does not wish to pre-empt the judicial process, and this poem should be viewed, therefore, as a ‘gut-
reaction’ to the very possibility that any Jewish youth should even have been suspected of such a crime, one which flies
in the face of the basic sensibility and religious, moral and political philosophy of Judaism.
The author does not know the identity of the suspects, so this poem should not be construed as implying their guilt or as
supportive of any specific allegations made against them.

*This poem should only be circulated in full and without alteration or abbreviation. For further poetry and works by
Rabbi Dr Jeffrey M Cohen, see www.rabbijeffrey.co.uk)*

Now it’s the turn
Of *our* boys,
To murder
In cold blood;
Burning a living being
On an altar
Of dried wood.

Fanning the flames
Of hatred,
Martyrdom’s
Distorted goal;
Stirring volatility,
Usurping
The zealot’s role.

Following in the footsteps
Of Goldstein and Amir,
Who shed the blood
Of innocents,
For the cause
That they held dear.

You’ve tarred
An entire nation
With the guilt
Of terrorists’
Bands;
You’ve caused us all
To be perceived
As with blood
On our hands.

Did you once
Stop to think,
Before you carried out
Your crime,
How the image of your people
Would be besmirched
With grime?

Weren't you taught
Of the sanctity
Our Torah attaches
To man:
'A creation in God's image;'
Each unique,
In His plan?

Who were the teachers
That turned your hearts
To stone?
And who were the preachers,
Who, for so much,
Should atone?

They gave you a cause,
Noble at its core;
But with means to achieve it
That one can but
Abhor.

Muhammad Abu Khdeir
Was someone's child;
Was it really his fault
If he grew up wild?
Was not his generation fed
A diet of hate,
Was not the fruit of violence
Served up
On his plate?

Did he really understand
The complex situation,
The claims and counter-claims
Of each warring nation?
Could he have assessed,
With objectivity,

Terror's ramifications
And futility?

Alas, for lads,
Brain-washed
To follow their peers,
When the muezzin's urgent call
Comes ringing
In their ears:
To pick up rocks,
Intended for construction,
And convert them into missiles
Of wholesale
Destruction.

Riots ensue
When robotic youth
Respond to
A narrative
Presented as truth,
Written by elders
Who choose to excise
Every subtle nuance
Of compromise.

As a parent, grandparent,
And a man of peace,
A rabbi and a teacher,
I beg you,
Let this cease:
This obliteration
Of God's imprint
In our soul;
This spiral of bloodshed –
Both nations'
Deep, black hole.

“You scholars,” –
Said an ancient sage –
“With what you say,
Beware,”
For impressionable youngsters
Take what you declare
As more than a concept
Or a personal view,

But as divine fiat,
With reward
To accrue.

So don't distort
His teachings;
Don't presume,
God's mind,
To read;
For you'll just confuse
Your students,
When it's guidance
That they need.

“Justice, only justice,
Shall you pursue” –
Instead of calls for vengeance
That pay terrorists
Their due.

“Truth and peace
Embrace” –
That's the challenge
That we face,
If we wish to receive
God and Allah's
Benign grace.
