“The writing on the wall”
by Jeffrey M Cohen

“Can you read the writing, son,
The writing on the wall?”
“Dad, you must be joking,
The writing’s much too small!”

“So how is it so clear to me,
So magnified and sharp,
Writ large in ink of blood-red hue,
With a message blunt and stark?”

“Dad, the wall you’re looking at
Is pure imagination;
Racism is outlawed now,
As is discrimination.

“There’s no divide any more
On grounds of faith or creed;
The world’s a global village, dad,
We share a common need!”

“Of course, son, how wonderful
To learn from lessons past;
But if what you say is the truth,
Then why are Jews the last?

“The last to be thrown a morsel
Of moral vindication,
The last with rights protected
Like every other sovereign nation?

“When we’re constrained to defend ourselves,
After years of provocation –
Of suicide bombs and rockets,
Spreading deadly devastation –
Why is the term ‘aggressor’ used
Of us who’ve pursued peace,
With painful land withdrawals
That just made terror increase?

“And why have they denied us,
Throughout the long decades,
The land our biblical fathers built
With hands and hoes and spades?”

“Hold on, dad,” interrupted the son,
“That’s just national self-pity;
The Arabs also claim they own
Jerusalem ’s fair city.

“We were the conquerors, they affirm,
Of fertile Arab land;
We didn’t allow them to build
Cities out of sand!”

“Really, son; is that how it was?
How easily truth’s concealed.
But if you delve deeply enough,
It will surely be revealed.

“You can’t read the writing, son,
For you’re facing the wrong wall;
The Kotel’s living testimony
To our version and our call.

“Four thousand years have already passed
Since the start of our story;
We built cities here and sanctuaries,
And kings reigned in all their glory.

“Nations came and nations went;
We were exiled, with our spirits spent.
But three times daily our people prayed:
‘To Zion, Lord, direct Your aid’.

“You argue, son, from the Arab side,
That possession by conquest must be denied.
If so, the Israel in dispute
To Turkey we should attribute!

“For centuries it was Ottoman,
Until the Allies overran
The German ally on their Turkish base,
With Britain mandated to administer the place.

“Jews and Arabs were asked to partition –
A solution the latter dismissed with derision.
Five wars they waged against the Jewish state,
Rejecting peace, fomenting hate.
Each time they lost more of their land,
Herding their refugees into camps on sand.

“So if land through conquest you cannot accept,
By what right did the Allies – in law adept –

Disinherit the Turks with their hold on that region,
To be partitioned by Jews and the Arab Legion?

“The inference, son, is that, like it or not,
Those who gamble their land in a military plot –
Like the Turks and the Germans in the First World War –
If defeated, will lose it – And that’s for sure!

“ Israel, however, in its quest for peace,
Restored occupied land, but violence increased.
The reward for restraint was intensified bombing,
Launched from nurseries and schools,
And where people were shopping.”

“But, father, if this is,
Indeed, the true situation,
Why is Israel always blamed
For every altercation?

“Why do nations articulate
The view that if she’d capitulate
To her enemy’s desire to annihilate,
World terrorism would abate?

“Yes, Israel would be swept away,
But that’s surely a price worth paying,
For Iran to abandon its nuclear threat,
And al-Qaida to focus on praying;
For all the ills of society
To be healed in a flash,
No more Tsunamis, earthquakes or floods,
No more volcanic ash?”

“Son, I believe you’re beginning to see
The writing on my wall;
But the letters before you are still rather blurred,
And insufficiently tall.

“See, ‘Israel’ is a code word
For all who hate the Jews:
To avoid that charge, they circumlocute,
While peddling their venomous views.”

“I now see the writing on the wall;
I read it, father dear;
With its letters written in blood-red ink,
And its message loud and clear.
“That’s where I must make my home,
Before it is too late;
For hate feeds upon itself

And states disintegrate,
When they pander to the racist voice
And capitulate,
Allowing much-vaunted values
To just evaporate.

“There’s only one strip of land
Where a Jew can be secure,
Where Zion’s voice reverberates
That Israel will endure.”

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