''*Eileh Ezk'ra*: The slaying of the Har Nof sages''

By Jeffrey M Cohen

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

Eileh ezk'ra: The slaying of sages,

Since Roman times,

And down the dark ages,

Has been an objective

Of those who view war

Against those committed

To Torah law

As an enterprise

To prioritize,

And The Chosen People

To cut down to size.

Our nation's survival,

Even *they* perceived,

Lies in that law

At Sinai received,

And handed down,

With oral explanation,

From teacher to pupil,

To our own generation;

Each adding its insights

And distinctive voice

To a covenant,

Making our Maker

Rejoice.

So, their special targets

Have been our sages;

Custodians of mysteries

Underlying the pages

Of Holy Writ and oral tradition,

Masters of piety

And erudition.

And for those that live

The Zionist dream—

A loathing

Utterly extreme.

Islam, especially, has a view

That land it has once controlled

Is a gift from Allah, sacrosanct,

For no one else to hold;

So, Israel is dubbed

A *nakba* disgrace;

In the Arab world,

With no place.

Hence, terror

Is not merely justified,

But an instrument

To inspire pride.

Their God,

They assert,

Takes great delight

In the blood of deniers

And in those who incite

Hatred, violence,

Dehumanisation,

Wars, Intifada—

No negotiation! —

Suicide bombing,

The human shield,

Tunnels of terror,

Knives to wield;

Thousands of rockets,

Indiscriminately aimed;

Rejoicing when Jews

Are killed or maimed;

Cars to run over

Women with prams;

The Bombing of buses

And light-railway trams;

Mouthing peace to the media,

For foreign consumption;

But, in Arabic, calling

For warfare's resumption.

They brain-wash their children

That Jews are scum

Who'll murder their father

And rape their mum;

And if they wish to attain

Heaven's reward,

All they need is to put

Jews to the sword.

Libbi, libbi, lechallelei Yisrael—

For my people's martyrs

I constantly wail;

For sages and students,

For those at prayer;

For parents and children,

My heart,

I lay bare.

O, sages of Israel,

And men of good will,

Unrivalled in

Analytical skill,

At whose erudition

Crowds would thrill;

Scions of dynasties,

For scholarship,

Famed;

Authors of works,

Widely acclaimed –

Use your persuasion

Before the heavenly court,

To bring the redemption,

So desperately sought.

Like the Berdichev saint,

Express your defiance;

Insist that God

Must renew His alliance;

Demand that your blood—

In synagogue, shed,

While enwrapped in tefillin,

Tallit on your head—

Be redeemed by a promise

To come to our aid;

Recompense for our sins—

O, how we've repaid!

Father of mercy,

Who dwells on high,

Remember fondly

Those who lie

In holy soil,

In martyrs' rows,

Innocent victims,

Felled by blows;

Men of faith

And righteous rigour,

Fulfilling Your word

With love and vigour,

Cut down in an instant

By men of blood,

Kinsmen of Satan's

Brotherhood.

O, hasten the day

When men will say,

'The taking of life

Is a crime;

And no longer will we

Send our youth

Into war,

While in their prime.'

O, send the anointed

To save our world,

Spinning out of control;

Lord, apply Your soothing balm,

To heal us in body and soul.

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