

The Bedrock: a Poem for the Days of Awe

More valuable than gold,

More nourishing than the finest food,

More beautiful than the Mona Lisa,

More inspirational than the greatest poetry,

More hopeful than even the rising sun,

Those tablets of stone,

That ancient message emerging from a windswept mountaintop:

Thou shalt not covet.

Thou shalt not lie.

Thou shalt not steal.

And thou shalt not murder.

That is the eternal bedrock of our faith,

A divine gift from that which is the essence of everything,

An infinite treasure given to us in a desert wilderness,

Our sacred task is to protect and nurture it,

Our eternal duty is to call out all those who would betray it,

Our repentance is for our failures to do that,

Our atonement is to speak out, persuasively and with compassion - not arrogantly but fearlessly,

As the Almighty said in the Vision of Isaiah:

“Children have I raised but they have rebelled against me”.

So as the prophet says, we must “seek justice and correct the oppressor”,

“Cry aloud. Do not hold back, let your voices resound like a shofar”,

“Unlock the shackles of injustice”.

Those timeless tablets of stone, the bedrock of our faith, must not be betrayed.

And the message given on that ancient mountaintop had a sequel:

Under the desert sun, our ancestors heard the desert wind, felt the sands of Sinai carve furrows in their brows and heard a warning from their maker:

“If you bow down to other gods, you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess”.

That was an eternal warning to all Israel - and to all mankind:

Respect the divine essence of all that is,

Heed the commandments of the Almighty,

Do not supplant the Eternal One by worshipping the false gods of land, of nation, of tribe, of conquest, of greed, of theft and of domination.

For, as the Proverb says, “hearts that make wicked plans and hands that shed innocent blood are an abomination” to that eternal force that created and inspired the bedrock of our faith.

So, in these troubled times and for ever, we must be the guardians of those ancient tablets:

Thou shalt have no other Gods.

Thou shalt not covet.

Thou shalt not lie.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not murder.

Let us therefore now *not* commit the sin of silence,

Let us speak truth to those who would betray the message of the stones,

Let us all cry aloud like an army of shofars,

To stop the “abomination” and to “unlock the shackles of injustice”