

NON PROPHET ORGANIZATION

by Rabbi Berel Wein

One of the frightening phenomena of civilizations, both ancient and modern, is discussed in the Torah reading this week. That recurring phenomenon is the one of the false prophet. The Torah warned the people of Israel that there would be false prophets in their future. It also warned them how dangerous and sinister such people are, because for all of their charisma and attraction, their influence is lethal. Even if the false prophet gives signs and omens to substantiate the prophecy that he is advancing, and those signs and omens apparently become actual and real, nevertheless the Torah admonishes us "do not dare to succumb to listen [and have belief] in him." The Torah wants us to carefully inspect both the message and the messenger before investing our behavior and future in the forecasts of anyone. The Torah especially emphasizes the danger of "dreamers of dreams," the purveyors of utopian schemes, unrealistic magic and ideologue nonsense. Look at what Karl Marx' dreams, theories and ideological certainties have accomplished for mankind. How about the false prophets of all of the major idealistic movements of our sad century? Hitler, Mao, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Pol Pot, etc. all prophesied the emerging "New Order," the "Brave New World," "Democratic Collectivism," "Redesigning the World," and all of their prophesies gained millions of believers. But all their dreams, certainties and bravado ended up as pure nonsense, or better put, impure bloody nonsense. False prophets are deadly expensive luxuries for human societies.

How does one spot a false prophet? Again, the Torah is most instructive in dealing with this problem. If the prophet promotes goals, or means to achieve those goals, which are contrary to the accepted value norms of Torah, then he is automatically a false prophet. The promotion of paganism, the unjustified violence in the supposed cause of good, "moral" political and intellectual leaders who are personally immoral, radicals who are determined to destroy everything old to make way for the purportedly blessed new - none of these scenarios is allowed by the Torah. They should not be condoned by society, certainly not by Jewish society, either. Our world is always looking for a new false prophet. The new ideologues such as the Greens, who are dangerously close to pantheism, if not paganism; the homosexual lobby, interested in proselytizing others and debasing all standards of accepted human behavior established over the last two millennia; and the true believers, both Right and Left, who believe that coercive social engineering is the panacea for all our inner and communal ills, are all part of the group of the false prophets of our time. We should be steadfast in avoiding being swayed by their currently, but only temporarily, political correct, siren song. Anything that does not conform to God's natural law of nature and humans, as clearly expressed in the Torah, is a dangerous delusion and a false and destructive type of prophecy.

The Jewish society, because of its innate, almost naive, search for spirit, perfection, and a compassionate and just world, is particularly prone to the disaster of false prophets. The Jewish world in its long history has been able to identify and reject false prophets and false messiahs. But that ability has suffered over the past two centuries. Our Jewish world has embraced many Jewish and non-Jewish false prophets, ideologies, programs and goals recently. The disastrous consequences of such recklessness in the Jewish world are by now patently obvious to all unprejudiced observers. The admonition of the Torah to ignore and reject the false prophets of the world is as valid today as ever. We disregard it at our extreme peril.

Shabat Shalom.
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