

## Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Larry Moldo

Or, A Bit More About Prophets

This past week we read one of the paragraphs discussing the issue of true prophets and false prophets. Why do we have prophets in the first place?

The text is clear that we made the decision to have prophets during the revelation at Sinai, when we told Moses that between the noises we saw and the sights we heard on top of the fiery mountaintop, we just didn't think we would survive any more direct contact with God. God agreed, so we get prophets.

Prophets speak those things which God intends for them to say. How do we know when somebody is lying about it? Usually they trip themselves up by misunderstanding the role of the prophet. The prophet speaks the obvious truth, with the hope that reciting the obvious will lead to Teshuvah. The prophetic truths we still have are usually presented in poetic fashion, but the poetry is secondary to the obviousness of the statements. When a prophet says something about which you have to think a bit, then there can be doubt about whether God inspired the speech or not.

In a different section dealing with prophecy, God makes it clear that miracles used to prove a particular point are meaningless. A miracle is not the message, and when it comes attached with a message about worshiping a different God, then it is a test sent from God to see if we are paying attention to God, or just being distracted by the miraculous.

Prophetic truths all have an underlying dynamic: if this goes on, then God will elect to have you kicked out temporarily and nearly destroyed. Sometimes the dynamic is tweaked a bit to indicate that since the misbehavior has been going on already for quite some time, the process of kicking you out temporarily is already in motion.

Reading future history into prophetic utterances is making a Midrashic interpretation. This does not make the interpretation entirely inaccurate, but one should always be careful to state when an interpretation is based on Midrash, and when the text directly states something.

Somewhere in the back I hear somebody ask, "Where is the obviousness in the prophetic talk about "the end of days?"

The key dynamic about the "end of days" or "the final days" is that things will be dramatically different. Until nature changes completely to the degree that carnivores stop needing to eat meat and forget how to hunt, the end of days has not yet arrived. One of the differences that these end of days will bring about will be peace for the Israelites from the outer enemy as well as peace for the Israelites from within. No one shall make anyone afraid, which implies that abusiveness will have gone the way of the carnivorous lion. All Jews will be accepted as Jews by every Jew.

May we soon get to the point that this is no longer theoretical.