

KA2. Being on Our Guard Against False Prophets.

We are to be on our guard against false prophets.

This precept is derived from His Word (blessed is He):

Key New Testament Scriptures

Matthew 7:15-16

Beware of the false prophets! They come to you wearing sheep's clothing, but underneath they are hungry wolves! You will recognize them by their fruit. Can people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?

Additional New Testament Scriptures

Matthew 7:15-20, 24:24

Mark 13:22-23

Luke 6:26

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

1 Timothy 4:1-5

2 Peter 2:1-3

1 John 4:1-6

Revelation 19:20, 20:10

Related New Testament Mitzvot

KA01 Being on Our Guard Against False Messiahs

KA03 Being on Our Guard Against and Not Associating with False Teachers

KA04 Not Prophecyng Falsely

NA23 Teaching or Giving Ourselves to False Doctrines

RA02 Correcting Those Who Teach and Follow False Doctrines

VA05 Guarding Against False Gods

Supportive Tanakh Scriptures

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

Everything I am commanding you, you are to take care to do. Do not add to it or subtract from it. If a prophet or someone who gets messages while dreaming arises among you and he gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder comes about as he predicted when he said, 'Let's follow other gods, which you have not known; and let us serve them,' you are not to listen to what that prophet or dreamer says. For ADONAI your God is testing you, in order to find out whether you really do love ADONAI your God with all your heart and being. You are to follow ADONAI your God, fear him, obey his mitzvot, listen to what he says, serve him and cling to him;

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

But if a prophet presumptuously speaks a word in my name which I didn't order him to say, or if he speaks in the name of other gods, then that prophet must die.' You may be wondering, 'How are we to know if a word has not been spoken by ADONAI?' When a prophet speaks in the name of ADONAI, and the prediction does not come true- that is, the word is not fulfilled- then ADONAI did not speak that word. The prophet who said it spoke presumptuously; you have nothing to fear from him.

Jeremiah 5:30-31

A shocking and horrifying thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the cohanim obey the prophets, and my people love it that way. But what will you do at the end of it all?

Jeremiah 14:14

ADONAI replied, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I didn't send them, order them or speak to them. They are prophesying false visions to you, worthless divinations, the delusions of their own minds.

Jeremiah 23:16

ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: "Don't listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are making you act foolishly, telling you visions from their own minds and not from the mouth of ADONAI.

Ezekiel 13:9

My hand will be against the prophets who have futile visions and produce false divinations; they will not be allowed into the council of my people, or be written in the register of the house of Isra'el, or enter the land of Isra'el. Then you will know that I am Adonai ELOHIM.

Comment

Scripture cautions us to beware of false Gods, false messiahs, false prophets, and false teachers, but this *Mitzvah* centers on false prophets. The functions of a prophet are twofold: (a) foretelling events of the future, and (b) communicating between a deity and a mortal or group of mortals. What makes a prophet true or false is whether the deity that empowers him is the one true God or an imposter. False prophets attempt to deceive us; they tell us what we want to hear or what we are disposed to hear rather than the truths of God. They are dangerous to those who are undiscerning enough to believe them, and it is therefore important that we be able to distinguish between prophets that are true and those that are false.

The most obvious way of identifying a false prophet is waiting to see whether his prediction comes to pass. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says it this way:

"You may be wondering, 'How are we to know if a word has not been spoken by ADONAI?' When a prophet speaks in the name of ADONAI, and the prediction does not come true- that is, the word is not fulfilled- then ADONAI did not speak that word. The prophet who said it spoke presumptuously; you have nothing to fear from him."

One way of identifying a true prophet is to first determine if he prophesies peace, and then to wait to see if his prophetic word is fulfilled. Jeremiah 28:9 says it this way:

“As for a prophet who prophesies peace- when the word of that prophet is fulfilled, it will be evident concerning that prophet that ADONAI indeed did send him.”

On the other hand, Deuteronomy 13:1-4 says:

“If a prophet or someone who gets messages while dreaming arises among you and he gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder comes about as he predicted when he said, ‘Let’s follow other gods, which you have not known; and let us serve them,’ you are not to listen to what that prophet or dreamer says. For ADONAI your God is testing you, in order to find out whether you really do love ADONAI your God with all your heart and being.”

But waiting for a prophetic result may be inconvenient or even risky, as we may need to know whether to act on a prophecy sooner rather than later. 1 John 4:1-3 gives us some help; it tells us:

“Dear friends, don’t trust every spirit. On the contrary, test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Here is how you recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Yeshua the Messiah came as a human being is from God, and every spirit which does not acknowledge Yeshua is not from God- in fact, this is the spirit of the Anti-Messiah. You have heard that he is coming. Well, he’s here now, in the world already!”

Acknowledging Yeshua is not merely believing in his existence, that he came from God, or that he is the Messiah. Even Satan and his demons know that Yeshua is the Messiah who was sent to earth by God, for we read in Matthew 4:1-11 how Satan tried to tempt Yeshua to turn away from God and failed to do so. No, acknowledging Yeshua in 1 John 4:1-3 means acknowledging Yeshua as Lord, and THAT Satan was not willing to do.

A related way of distinguishing false prophets from true prophets is described in the next three verses, 1 John 4:4-6:

“You, children, are from God and have overcome the false prophets, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore, they speak from the world’s viewpoint; and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God doesn’t listen to us. This is how we distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error.”

By implication, 1 John suggests that we who are believers engage an alleged prophet in a conversation of how his prophecy squares with Scripture. If he is a true prophet from God he will patiently listen to us, consider what we have to say, and discuss. If he knows little of Scripture and finds listening to us an annoyance, he is not from God.

The foregoing Scriptures are guidelines to help us distinguish true prophets from false prophets, but the matter ultimately comes down to discernment, assisted by the Holy Spirit.

Related Mitzvot in Volumes 1 & 2

Z01 Believing End-Time False Prophets & Messiahs