

Conformity and Personal Expression

Deuteronomy 18:20

But the prophet, that shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

Rashi ad loc.

WHICH I HAVE NOT COMMANDED HIM TO SPEAK — but which I may have commanded his fellow-prophet to speak

OR THAT SHALL SPEAK IN THE NAME OF OTHER GODS — even though he be in exact agreement with the Halacha, — that he forbids what is forbidden, or permits what is permitted, [but does so in the name of other gods]

Deuteronomy 18:21-22

And should you ask yourselves, "How can we know that the oracle was not spoken by the LORD?"

if the prophet speaks in the name of the LORD and the oracle does not come true, that oracle was not spoken by the LORD; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously: do not stand in dread of him.

Deuteronomy 13:2-4

If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams--and he give thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto thee--saying: 'Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them'; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or unto that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God putteth you to proof, to know whether ye do love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Maimonides Laws of the Foundations of Torah 8:3

Therefore, if a prophet performs great signs and wonders and attempts to deny the prophecy of Moses, we don't listen to him and we know for certain that the wonders he performed were simply tricks and sorcery.

Mishna Sanhedrin 11:5

A "False Prophet": He who prophesies what one has not heard, or what was not told to him, is executed by human hands.

Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 89a

"He who prophesies what he has not hear" E.g., Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah

דברים יח:כ

אף הנביא אשר יזיד לדבר דבר בשמי, את אשר לא-צויתיו לדבר, ואשר ידבר, בשם אלהים אחרים--ומת, הנביא ההוא.

רשי שם

אשר לא צויתיו לדבר. אבל צויתיו להקרו:

ואשר ידבר בשם אלהים אחרים. אפלו כגון את ההלכה לאסור את האסור ולהתיר את המתיר

דברים יח:כא-כב

וכי תאמר בלבבך איכה נדע את-הדבר אשר לא-דברו ה':

אשר ידבר הנביא בשם ה' ולא-יהיה הדבר ולא יבא הוא הדבר אשר לא-דברו ה' בנדון דברו הנביא לא תגור ממנו

דברים יג:ב-ד

פי-יקום בקרבך נביא, או חלם חלום; ונתן אליך אות, או מופת. ובה האות והמופת, אשר-דבר אליך לאמר: גלכה אחרי אלהים אחרים, אשר לא-ידעתם--ונעבדום. לא תשמע, אל-דברי הנביא ההוא, או אל-חולם החלום, ההוא: כי מנסה ה' א-להיכם, אתכם, לדעת הישכם אהבים את-ה' א-להיכם, בכל-לבבכם ובכל-נפשכם.

רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה ח:ג

לפיכך אם עמד הנביא ועשה אותות ומופתים גדולים ובקש להכחיש נבואתו של משה רבינו אין שומעין לו ואנו יודעין בבאור שאותן האותות בלט וכשוף הן

משנה מסכת סנהדרין יא:ה

משנה. נביא השקר, המתנבא מה שלא שמע, ומה שלא נאמר לו - מיתתו בידי אדם.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף פט עמוד א

המתנבא מה שלא שמע. כגון צדקיה בן כנענה,

1) There was a lull of-a three years, with no war between Aram and Israel. (2) In the third year, King Jehoshaphat of Judah came to visit the king of Israel. (3) The king of Israel said to his courtiers, “You know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and yet we do nothing to recover it from the hands of the king of Aram.” (4) And he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you come with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?” Jehoshaphat answered the king of Israel, “I will do what you do; my troops shall be your troops, my horses shall be your horses.” (5) But Jehoshaphat said further to the king of Israel, “Please, first inquire of the LORD.” (6) **So the king of Israel gathered the prophets, about four hundred men, and asked them, “Shall I march upon Ramoth-gilead for battle, or shall I not?” “March,” they said, “and the Lord will deliver [it] into Your Majesty’s hands.”** (7) Then Jehoshaphat asked, “Isn’t there another prophet of the LORD here through whom we can inquire?” (8) And the king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is one more man through whom we can inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies anything good for me, but only misfortune—Micaiah son of Imlah.” But King Jehoshaphat said, “Don’t say that, Your Majesty.” (9) So the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, “Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once.” (10) The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were seated on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, on the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. (11) **Zedekiah son of Chenaanah had provided himself with iron horns; and he said, “Thus said the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans till you make an end of them.”** (12) **And all the other prophets were prophesying similarly, “March upon Ramoth-gilead and triumph! The LORD will deliver it into Your Majesty’s hands.”** (13) **The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him: “Look, the words of the prophets are with one accord favorable to the king. Let your word be like that of the rest of them; speak a favorable word.”** (14) “As the LORD lives,” Micaiah answered, “I will speak only what the LORD tells me.” (15) When he came before the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we march upon Ramoth-gilead for battle, or shall we not?” He answered him, “March and triumph! The LORD will deliver [it] into Your Majesty’s hands.” (16) The king said to him, “How many times must I adjure you to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” (17) Then he said, “I saw all Israel scattered over the hills like sheep without a shepherd; and the LORD said, ‘These have no master; let everyone return to his home in safety.’” (18) “Didn’t I tell you,” said the king of Israel to Jehoshaphat, “that he would not prophesy good fortune for me, but only misfortune?” (19) But [Micaiah] said, “I call upon you to hear the word of the LORD! I saw the LORD seated upon His throne, with all the host of heaven standing in attendance to the right and to the left of Him. (20) The LORD asked, ‘Who will entice Ahab so that he will march and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ Then one said thus and another said thus, (21) until a certain spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’ ‘How?’ the LORD asked him. (22) And he replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then He said, ‘You will entice and you will prevail. Go out and do it.’ (23) So the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours; for the LORD has decreed disaster upon you.” (24) Thereupon Zedekiah son of Chenaanah stepped up and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and demanded, “Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak with you?”

א) וישבו שלש שנים אין מלחמה בין ארם ובין ישראל: {פ} (ב) ויהי בשנה השלישית ויבד יהושפט מלך-יהודה אל-מלך ישראל: (ג) ויאמר מלך-ישראל אל-עבדיו הַנְדַעְתֶּם כִּי-לִגְנו רַמַת גִלְעָד וְאַנְחֵנו מְחֹשִׁים מִקַּחַת אֹתָהּ מִיַד מֶלֶךְ אֲרָם: (ד) ויאמר אל-יהושפט התלך אתי למלחמה רמת גלעד ויאמר יהושפט אל-מלך ישראל כמוני כמוך כעמי כעמך כסוסי כסוקידי: (ה) ויאמר יהושפט אל-מלך ישראל דרשנא כיום את-דבר ה': (ו) ויקבץ מלך-ישראל את-הנביאים פארבע מאות איש ויאמר אליהם האלף על-רמת גלעד למלחמה אם-אתהלך ויאמרו עלה ונתן אדושם ביד המלך: (ז) ויאמר יהושפט האין פה נביא לה' עוד ונדרשה מאתו: (ח) ויאמר מלך-ישראל אל-יהושפט עוד איש-אחד לדרש את-ה' מאתו ואני שנאתיו כי לא-יתנבא עלי טוב כי אם-רע מיניהו בן-מלכה ויאמר יהושפט אל-יאמר המלך בן: (ט) ויקרא מלך ישראל אל-סרים אחד ויאמר מהרה מיניהו בן-מלכה: (י) וקלך ישראל ויהושפט מלך-יהודה ישבים איש על-כסאו מלבישים בגדים בגרון פתח שער שמרון וכל-הנביאים מתנבאים לפניהם: (יא) ויעש לו צדקנה בור-פנענה קרני ברזל ויאמר כה-אמר ה' באלה תנעם את-ארם עד-פלהם: (יב) וכל-הנבאים נבאים בן לאמר עלה רמת גלעד והצלח ונתן ה' ביד המלך: (יג) והמלך אשר-הלך לקרא מיניהו דבר אליו לאמר הנה-נא דברי הנביאים פה-אחד טוב אל-המלך יהי-נא (דבריד) [דברך] פדבר אתו מהם ודברת טוב: (יד) ויאמר מיניהו חיה' כי את-אשר יאמר ה' אלי אתו אדבר: (טו) ויבוא אל-המלך ויאמר המלך אליו מיניהו הנלך אל-רמת גלעד למלחמה אם-תחל ויאמר אליו עלה והצלח ונתן ה' ביד המלך: (טז) ויאמר אליו המלך עד-כמה פעמים אני משביעך אשר לא-תדבר אלי רק-אמת בשם ה': (יז) ויאמר ראיתי את-כל-ישראל נכצים אל-הרים כצאן אשר אין-להם רעה ויאמר ה' לא-אדגים לאלה ישובו איש-לביתו בשלום: (יח) ויאמר מלך-ישראל אל-יהושפט הלא אמרתי אליך לוא-יתנבא עלי טוב כי אם-רע: {ס} (יט) ויאמר לכן שמע דברה' ראיתי את-ה' ישב על-כסאו וכל-צבא השמים עמד עליו מימין ומשמאלו: (כ) ויאמר ה' מי יפתה את-אחאב ויעל ויפל ברמת גלעד ויאמר זה בכה וזה אמר בכה: (כא) ויצא הרוח ויעמד לפני ה' ויאמר אני אפתנו ויאמר ה' אליו במה: (כב) ויאמר אצא והליתי רוח שקר בפי כל-נביאיו ויאמר תפתה וגם-תוכל צא ועשה-כן: (כג) ועמה הנה נתן ה' רוח שקר בפי כל-נביאיו אלה וה' דבר עליך רעה: (כד) ויש צדקנהו בור-פנענה ויבה את-מיניהו על-הלחי ויאמר אי-נה עבר רוח-ה' מאתי לדבר אותך:

"He who prophesies what he has not hear" E.g., Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, as it is written, And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron. But what [else] could he have done, seeing that the spirit of Naboth had deceived him, as is written, "And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? ... And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him ... And He said, Thou shalt persuade him and prevail also; go forth and do so" ... **He (Zedekiah) should have scrutinized [the forecasts of the assembled prophets]. in accord with R. Isaac who said said "The same communication is revealed to many prophets, yet no two prophets prophecy in the identical phraseology."** [Thus,] Obadiah said, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee"; while Jeremiah said, "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart." But since all these prophets employed [exactly] the same expression, it proved that they had nothing [really divinely inspired].

המתנבא מה שלא שמע. כגון צדקיה בן כנענה, דכתיב ויעש לו צדקיהו בן כנענה קרני ברזל, מאי הוה ליה למעבד? רוח נבות אטעיתיה, דכתיב ויאמר ה' מי יפתה את אחאב ויעל ויפל ברמת גלעד... ויצא הרוח ויעמד לפני ה' ויאמר אני אפתנו ויאמר... תפתה וגם תוכל צא ועשה כן... הוה ליה למידק, כדרבי יצחק. דאמר רבי יצחק: סיגנון אחד עולה לכמה נביאים, ואין שני נביאים מתנבאין בסיגנון אחד. עובדיה אמרודון לבך השיאך, ירמיה אמר תפלצתך השיא אתך זדון לבך. והני, מדקאמרי כולהו כהדדי - שמע מינה לא כלום קאמרי.

Suzanne Last Stone, *Between Truth and Trust: Prophecy and Self-Deception* Hebraic Political Studies 4 Dec. 2009

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The individual prophet who speaks in his own voice, formulating the message he receives in language compelling to his audience and the needs of the times, has the capacity to inspire ethical and political action and can be trusted to stand up to the reigning powers or the masses. Like the non-conforming Micaiah, who calls the king to account before the kingdom of God, the prophet who speaks in his own voice announces that his words are impelled by God alone and so can be trusted to represent God's will. The "smooth words in unison" of the four hundred are, by contrast, "worthless," in that each is the product of a conformist, group mentality, motivated by the desire to please the king.

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[U]nique expressions may be a mark of a true prophet. Even talmudic-midrashic sources acknowledged the human contribution to prophecy. The true prophet does not function merely as a mechanism for transmitting God's words; rather, the prophetic relationship is dialogic. Thus, the prophet's individual expression may be viewed as a sign of genuine divine-human encounter.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), *The Prophets*, p xiv

The prophet's task is to convey a divine view, yet as a person he is a point of view. He speaks from the perspective of God as perceived from the perspective of his own situation. We must seek to understand not only the views he expounded but also the attitudes he embodied: his own position, feeling, response- not only what he said but also what he lived; the private, the intimate dimension of the word, the subjective side of the message.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), *God in Search of Man*, pp 184-185

The nature of revelation, being an event in the realm of the ineffable, is something which words cannot spell, which human language will never be able to portray. Our categories are not applicable to that which is both within and beyond the realm of matter and mind. ...The words in which the prophets attempted to relate their experiences were not photographs but illustrations, not descriptions but songs. ...Like all terms that express the ultimate, it (revelation) points to its meaning rather than fully rendering it. ...

We must not try to read chapters in the Bible dealing with the event at Sinai as if they were texts in systematic theology. Its intention is to celebrate the mystery, to introduce us to it rather than to penetrate or to explain it. As a report about revelation the Bible itself is a midrash.

“Torah scholars increase peace in the world”- Some people are mistakenly misguided with the notion that world peace will not be built except by establishing one standard of beliefs and traits. If this is the case, when they witness a Torah scholar engaging in intellectual inquiry, and via this study, differing opinions and sides to a matter are seen to increase, they believe that this is the cause of factionalism, the very opposite of peace. The truth is not so. For absolute peace can only be obtained in this world through the format of a multiplicity of peace. A multiplicity of peace means that all of the divergent facets of a matter, and the understandings which derive out of study, will all be illuminated, and it will become clear how all of them have a place, everything in accordance with its value, purpose, and content. When the true wisdom is uncovered with all of its many facets, the matters which at first appear extraneous or contradictory, will be seen as vital to the whole. It will become apparent that only through a synthesis of all the components, of all the details, of all the categories, and of all the opinions that at first appear different, specifically through them will the just and true light appear – the knowledge of God, His fear and His love, and the light of the true Torah. Therefore Torah scholars increase peace in the world. Through their exegesis, they evolve and explain new insights and reveal many new facets. Contained in each new understanding is a diversity of viewpoints. Through this multi-faced prism, which encompasses a matter from all of its sides, the Torah scholars increase peace. As it says, All your children are learned of God. It will be recognized that everyone, even people who are opposites in their paths and opinions, are all seekers of God. Within everyone of them there is a contribution that will be brought to light through the knowledge of God and the illumination of truth.

"תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם" יש טועים שחושבים, שהשלום העולמי לא יפנה כי-אם ע"י צביון אחד בדיעות ותכונות. וא"כ כשרואים ת"ח חוקרים בחכמה ודעת תורה, וע"י המחקר מתרבים הצדדים והשיטות, חושבים שבזה הם גורמים למחלוקת והפך השלום. ובאמת אינו כן! כי השלום האמתי אי אפשר שיבוא לעולם כי-אם דוקא ע"י הערך של רבוי השלום. הרבוי של השלום הוא, שיתראו כל הצדדים וכל השיטות, ויתבררו איך כולם יש להם מקום, כל אחד לפי ערכו מקומו וענינו. ואדרבא גם הענינים הנראים כמיותרים או כסותרים, יראו כשמתגלה אמתת החכמה לכל צדדיה. שרק ע"י קיבוץ כל החלקים וכל הפרטים, וכל הדעות הנראות שונות, וכל המקצעות החלוקים, דוקא על ידם יראה אור האמת, והצדק, ודעת ד', יראתו, ואהבתו, ואור תורת אמת. על-כן "תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום" כי במה שהם מרחיבים ומבארים ומילדים דברי חכמה חדשים, בפנים מפנים שונים, שיש בהם רבוי וחילוק ענינים, בזה הם מרבים שלום, שנאמר "וכל בניך למודי ד'", כי כולם יכירו שכולם גם הפכים בדרכיהם ושיטותיהם כפי הנראה, המה כולם למודי ד', ובכל אחת מהנה יש צד שתתגלה על ידה ידיעת ד' ואור אמתו.



Gil Shefler, "Breaking with all black, some Chabad men pushing fashion boundaries" for Jewish Telegraph Agency May 17, 2013

NEW YORK (JTA)—Yosel Tiefenbrun looked in the mirror and he liked what he saw.

The 23-year-old Chabad rabbi and apprentice at Maurice Sedwell, a bespoke tailor's shop on London's Savile Row, was wearing a vintage double-breasted jacket with gold buttons, tasseled Barker shoes, a claret bow tie and matching handmade hat and square handkerchief. Then he ran out the door to attend the "Oscars of tailoring"—the Golden Shears Award ceremony honoring the best in British fashion.

Several of his colleagues were in the running for a prize. They came back empty, but Tiefenbrun did not.

Nick Carvell, the online fashion editor at British GQ, snapped his picture and posted it the following day on the magazine's website, naming Tiefenbrun "best in show." Within days, the photograph of the hasidic rabbi and his natty attire was picked up by Jewish publications around the world.

“This is a very important message,” Tiefenbrun told JTA. “You can be a [religious] man and still be successful in whatever you do if you are constantly working on yourself and keeping your Jewish life alive.”

Hasidic Jews are well known for flouting the conventions of contemporary fashion, adhering to a strict dress code that originated in Eastern Europe and emphasizes modesty and piety. For men, the uniform mandates a black hat, coat and pants with a white shirt.

But in recent years, some haredi Orthodox women have sought to push the limits of tznius, or modesty, wearing more elaborate and, in some cases, slightly more revealing clothes. Now a group of young men affiliated with the Chabad hasidic movement are doing the same, in some cases breaking dramatically with their community’s sartorial codes.

Last year, Rabbi Dovi Scheiner and his wife, Esty, a Chabad couple who run the “boutique” SoHo Synagogue in Lower Manhattan, were named among the Big Apple’s 50 best dressers by Stylecaster, a fashion news website. The 36-year-old rabbi posed for the online outlet sitting on a velvet chair wearing a smart gray suit and laceless Converse sneakers.

Meanwhile, Mendy Sacho, a South African designer based in New York, has gained mainstream media attention for his innovative take on kapotas, the long black frocks worn by hasidic men. Sacho invigorates the traditionally drab coats by adding colorful linings and a sharper cut.

Rather than seeing their sartorial sensibilities as a departure from traditional dress, this new crop of fashionable hasidim tend to see being stylish and religiously observant as complementary.

“Look at the rebbe,” said Sacho, referring to Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late spiritual leader of Chabad. “When he was young, he was a very well-groomed man. The style he wore in the ‘50s in France is the style many Chabadniks are now adopting.”

Photos of Schneerson from the period show him in dapper outfits that sharply contrast with the conservative look he adopted later as Chabad’s leader.

Samuel Heilman, a Queens College sociologist and co-author of a biography of Schneerson, said the rebbe’s followers have tended to overlook those years in Paris, partially because of the liberal taste in clothes he exhibited.

“[In his youth] he dressed in a much more cosmopolitan fashion, sometimes wearing a beret,” Heilman said. “In the absence of a living rebbe, there are capacities for all these hasidim to project on the rebbe all sorts of things that would not be possible if he were alive.”

Tiefenbrun, who served as a religious emissary in Singapore for two years before returning to London, wears suits that are much more ostentatious than the subtly augmented frocks sold by Sacho. On his Tumblr page, Tiefenbrun posts photos of himself in outfits not commonly seen on hasidic men. His style favors boldly colored shoes, trendy hats, bow ties, sharply cut jackets and pocket squares.

Tiefenbrun spends a day-and-a-half each week learning his craft at Maurice Sedwell's tailoring academy. The rest of the week he works the front desk, where he has waited on sheiks, soccer players and TV personalities.

One non-Jewish client, noticing his yarmulke, asked him for a blessing for his shirts. Another discovered they had a mutual acquaintance, the Chabad emissary in San Diego. But Tiefenbrun is careful to note that his clothing choices are his alone and not emblematic of any Chabad-specific trend.

"It's not like it's a Chabad thing, it's me," Tiefenbrun insisted. "I love art. I love quality clothing."

With its sprawling global network of emissaries working to inspire religious observance among secular Jews, it's perhaps little surprise that Chabadniks are practically alone within the hasidic world in pushing the boundaries, if gently, of their community's dress codes.

"One can make the case Chabad, more than any other hasidic group, is in direct contact with the non-hasidic world, so they have a real good feel for that world outside," Heilman said. "They have learned how to recruit there."

Sacho said there is little interest in his stylish kapotas from members of other hasidic communities. Chabad men are selling "a product called Judaism" to the wider world, he said, and that tradition impacts their choice of clothes.

"People will listen and appreciate you more if you dress well and look presentable," he said.

Within the confines of the hasidic community, however, it's often a different story. Young customers come in looking for one thing, but then their mother arrives and "chews my ear off," Sacho said.

But still, Sacho insists the style-conscious community is growing in the Chabad world and someday kapotas like his will be the norm.

"There are quite a few of us," Sacho said. "All my clients are younger. It's the future."