

THE RELIGIOUS ARE Insane!

TORAH IS NOT!

by HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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My, how the mighty have fallen! **We witness around us a world full of religion, yet empty of G-d, righteousness and rationality.** It does not take too much common sense to tell the difference between right and wrong, and between what is smart and what is stupid. Unfortunately for us, common sense is no longer so common. These days, **Right and wrong, smart and stupid are easily confused and regularly reversed.** And all of us suffer because of it.

The ever deluded rationalizing human intellect proclaims with all its high and mighty arrogance how it knows the solutions to all the worlds problems. To sum it all up, the problems in the world obviously lie in everyone else except oneself; therefore the simpleton mind concludes that if everyone stopped what they were doing and instead changed to be just like "me," then all our problems would be solved. Unfortunately, the world is full of "me's." **This is the "Me" generation.** **Everyone believes that the world should revolve around them.**

Groups of all kinds have especially become chauvinistic in this fashion. They establish a norm for themselves and without having to say it consider themselves to be the one true role-model and style that everyone should follow. In these groups individuals are expected to conform to the "group-think." They all play "follow the leader" (or better to say, "follow the Rebbe") and never bother thinking twice about their own conceited world views and their arrogance towards others not sharing it. Such followers have given up independent thinking and their own minds. **They have become psychological slaves to an external, unnatural order and embrace it totally unaware, oblivious and indifferent to the consequences of their actions.**

I believe the greatest danger facing all of human society today is the radicalization of all the world's religions. Political systems recognize themselves as man-made tools, created simply to establish and maintain power for the ruling elite. Yet, religious systems, do not consider themselves man-made. Therefore, they are not subject to change based upon the needs of the elite or the voice of the people. Religious beliefs proclaim their absolute correctness and infallibility. They are unmovable and unchangeable. This is what religion has become, the haven and domain for the fundamentalist and the intolerant. This is a psychological danger not only for the individuals involved but also for everyone with whom they have contact. This means us!

Students of religion, those with a real education are well aware that religious systems are not monolithic, but rather very diverse. There are many paths that one can walk within the context of one's religion. The educated see this and know this.

The fundamentalist on the other hand has no such broad education. The fundamentalist is educated to look at only a narrow view of the religion and to exclude all other views. In fundamentalist eyes, all opposing religious views are considered to be worse than wrong, they are

heresy and those fellow coreligionists who embrace the opposing views are heretics. Every good fundamentalist believes with complete faith that G-d hates the heretics and that the heretics will receive their punishments directly from Heaven. And although G-d does not intervene to strike down the evil heretic, the fundamentalist believes it is G-d's Will to shun the heretic, to mock them, and to treat them with scorn. They are not "one of us," as such "they" are the cause of all the problems that "we" face.

Fundamentalists may not verbalize it, but they strongly believe that G-d hates the members of all the other camps. **How sad it is that these deluded fundamentalists do not realize that it is not G-d who hates, rather it is them.** The fundamentalist is easily recognized as the one filled with prejudice and hatred towards his own coreligionists who do not conform to his own brand, culture or school of thought. **They are very happy in their narrow little perversions and all too happy to see everyone outside them go to hell.**

Do you recognize of whom I speak? I am not addressing groups or issues outside of Judaism, I am even not addressing groups or issues outside of the Torah camp. No, **I am speaking directly about the terrible disgrace of this type of division that exists right now in the Orthodox Jewish communities world-wide.** I do not ascribe any Torah legitimacy to Jewish groups, denominations, organizations or beliefs that negate the authority of Torah and Halakha. Such groups may indeed be Jewish and thus part of the greater Jewish community, still their denials of Torah authority have disqualified them from having any say or voice in domain of Torah. They are not the topic of which I speak. We disagree with them in matters of Torah, but hatred is not our response to them.

With this being said, I turn now to address all those factions inside the Torah camp and we see that they are legion. We would think that with Torah as our common denominator that all Torah based groups would have common cause and reason to not only get along, but to embrace one another and to work warmly with one another. Yet, for centuries, and not just today, we see the glaring truth how this is not the case.

Fundamentalist factionalism runs rampant in Torah circles; it always has and it still does. It has always been more than a proverbial thorn in the side; **Torah factionalism has been a scorn to greater Israel and a disgrace and shame in the Eyes of G-d.** Yet, every faction, while agreeing with what I have just said still points the finger of blame at all the other groups saying if everyone was "just like us" all this factionalism would be over. Everyone blames everyone else. Individuals of every group learn from a young age to look down upon the other groups. There is never any cohesion, never any unity. With the lack of union comes a lack of power. With lack of power comes lack of accomplishment. **This is why there is no abundance of blessings upon Israel. And we wonder why Mashiah has not yet come.**

How can Mashiah come? Whose Mashiah would he be? If he were to arise out of one group, he would be rejected by the others. How can he unite all of Israel, when Israel itself refuses to be united. What kind of magic can he possibly bring to turn bad hearts good? Isaiah prophecies that Mashiah will heal the sick and bind the wounded, but with all these spiritual abilities he still cannot change evil into good.

Arrogance, self-importance, fundamentalism and narrow-mindedness; these are the evils which inflict us today. How can Mashiah save us from the evils that we inflict upon ourselves?

Centuries ago, G-d sent us prophets. They came with signs and wonders accompanied with messages of admonishment. While we were awed by their powers and wonders; we failed to hear

and embrace their message. Rather than accept them, the prophets for the most part were rejected, tormented and many were outright murdered. So much for bringing a voice of unity.

Why would we expect that Mashiah would receive any less of a warm welcome? Mashiah will have to use miraculous powers just to stay alive, not from his enemies amongst the nations who hate Israel, but from those inside the nation, amongst the very religious who proclaim that “we want Mashiah now.”

Many want Mashiah in theory, but when the real deal comes, it will be interesting to watch just how many who called for his coming will reject him once he arrives.

I have long said that the greatest impediment to people embracing religion is the behavior of the religious. Normal and sane people view the religious with scorn and seek to avoid them. They clearly see the hypocrisy that the religious themselves cannot. What was once a people who were not religious, have now become a people who are “anti-religious.” What has polarized them so? The equal and opposite polarization of the religious fundamentalist has made this so.

Yes, the **religious factionalism has bred religious fundamentalism and insanity.** The Torah in turn weeps over her lost and rebellious children. Torah's light of wisdom, reason and rationality shines as bright as ever; but falls upon blind eyes that proclaim that they can see. Like Solomon said long ago, “there is nothing new under the sun.”

The world is now full of messianic speculations. Everyone sees how bad everything is. Everyone wants a solution. Everyone is desperate for magic. Everyone expects a magical Mashiah who will wave his magic wand and make all our problems go away. Mashiah will magically make all our enemies go away and with equal magic turn everyone else into clones of “us.” Mashiah will do this “or else!”

Torah teaches us how to solve our problems. Torah teaches us how we can better ourselves and our world to merit an intervention from outside that will unite our world with others above. Yet, Torah also teaches us what will happen if we do not walk the road to betterment. We have witnessed our own human depravity for thousands of years. We are now finally in a position where we can destroy all life on our planet. I do not believe that there will be a magical intervention to save us from ourselves.

The nation of Israel and the world at large needs to learn a collective lesson or we will all share a common fate. We must learn the great lesson eloquently articulated by Patrick Henry...

“Let us trust G-d, and our better judgment to set us right hereafter.

United we stand, divided we fall.

Let us not split into factions which must destroy that union upon which our existence hangs.”