

The Disappearance of “Israel” as a Model: Why Do We Believe in Prophecies?



Humans have long been fascinated by what the future holds. Our innate curiosity compels us not only to interpret the present but to reach beyond it—seeking glimpses of tomorrow.

Throughout history, certain individuals have claimed the ability to foresee events before they unfold. Such claims often earned them reverence and status among their communities. Ancient civilizations heavily relied on seers before undertaking significant endeavors—be it wars, famines, or political decisions.

The Greeks, for instance, had their oracles and soothsayers like Shaqq ibn Anmar and the priestess Zabraa.

At its core, prophecy is defined as foretelling future events based on intuition or deduction. In religious traditions, it’s the domain of prophets entrusted with divine messages.

Muhammad Rushdi, in his book *The City of the Arabs in the Age of Ignorance and Islam*, argued that some people possess a luminous soul and keen temperament—traits that enable them to access hidden knowledge through spiritual insight and detachment from material distractions.

Human Nature and the Allure of Prophecy

Human reasoning typically adheres to the principle of cause and effect. Every outcome, it assumes, stems from a preceding cause. But even when people account for all known variables, unpredictable environmental, human, or cosmic forces can disrupt the expected chain of events.

This uncertainty is why prophets and seers never offer guarantees. They may analyze present trends, but they cannot account for every disruptive force. The philosopher David Hume referred to this as the “lack of a traceable causal mechanism.” Even under controlled lab conditions, genetic mutations can occur—how much more unpredictable, then, is the natural world?

Philip Tetlock, a professor at UC Berkeley, tested the accuracy of 82,361 predictions made by 284 experts over ten years. He found their success rate no better than chance—suggesting that most predictions are no more reliable than a roll of the dice. This raises an important question: why are people still drawn to prophecy?

The French thinker Gustave Le Bon offered a compelling answer: crowds are driven more by imagination than by logic or lived experience. As a result, emotionally charged, imaginative narratives often have more influence than rational, evidence-based arguments.

Prophecies as a Source of Hope

Prophecies—especially optimistic ones—can ignite the imagination and fuel hope. They create mental images of a desired future, often providing solace in times of despair. By presenting a vision of a better tomorrow, they can shift how individuals perceive and respond to their present circumstances.

Such forward-looking beliefs encourage optimism, diverting attention from past traumas. This enhances one’s ability to plan and act, driven by a hopeful outlook. A prophecy can thus become a motivational force, steering people toward tangible goals they may not have pursued otherwise.

Even in the absence of real change, those who believe in positive prophecies may feel uplifted. This stems from their newfound optimism about the future, which positively impacts their mental well-being and motivates them to pursue their plans more earnestly.

Moreover, there’s a reinforcing social dimension: the more people believe in a prophecy, the more effort is directed toward its fulfillment. Take, for example, economic predictions about the rise of a new cryptocurrency. As more people buy into it, belief strengthens, further fueling demand.

One recent case is the prophecy broadcast by Lebanese astrologer Layla Abdul

Latif on New Year’s Eve, foretelling the collapse of a Middle Eastern country. When war broke out on October 7, many interpreted this as validation of her prophecy, assuming “Israel” was the target. The prophecy’s apparent fulfillment led to increased public calls for action, spurred by a belief that the end of Israel was imminent.

The Fallout of Failed Prophecies

When prophecies fail, the psychological impact can be profound. Believers often experience cognitive dissonance—they resist acknowledging the complexity and unpredictability of real-world systems. People are emotionally invested in favorable visions of the future, so when those visions collapse, the disappointment can be severe, even if the prophecy had previously inspired action.

Positive prophecies that promise change without effort can be especially harmful. By cultivating false hope, they may discourage preparation for setbacks. When reality contradicts expectations, the resulting disillusionment can be devastating.

Psychological studies show that people tend to overestimate their control over future events. When a forecast proves accurate, they credit their abilities. But when it fails, they may blame themselves, experts, or even question their spiritual beliefs and fate itself.

The Prophecy of Israel’s Demise

Prophecies often draw on historical patterns. In the case of Israel, analysts have predicted its collapse by comparing it to empires like the Islamic Caliphate and the Roman Empire, which disintegrated after reaching their zenith.

In 1952, David Ben-Gurion declared that “The State of Israel was established on part of the Land of Israel”—a statement that reveals an enduring expansionist vision. This, to some, suggests a familiar arc: expansion followed by overreach and eventual collapse.

Such predictions have led to two dominant mindsets: one marked by fear and insecurity about the region’s future, and another inspired by liberation movements in colonized countries like Vietnam and Algeria—where resistance preceded independence. This alternate perspective imagines Israel’s end not through overextension, but through sustained resistance.

Ultimately, prophecies—whether realized or not—exert a powerful psychological and behavioral influence. Their credibility hinges on the personality and platform of the person delivering them, as well as the collective social mood. Positive prophecies can mobilize hope and action, while negative ones may breed anxiety

and unrest.

And when a prophecy fails, it can lead to either despair or relief, depending on one's expectations. In both cases, belief in prophecy reflects a deeper human yearning for clarity in a world full of uncertainty and flux.

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