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Rav Aviner Backs Rav Amar in Jerusalem Rabbinat Race

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U.F.O.'s, Aliens and...Technology

Question: Does intelligent life exist on other planets?

Answer: In his letter to the Sages of Montpellier, Rambam writes that there are three available resources for examining any topic: prophecy, rational proofs and empirical evidence. In our case, the Torah and the prophets wrote nothing definitive in either direction. This is not surprising, for the Torah is not a science text but a book guiding us in what is good and what is bad. In order to become aware of reality, we possess scientific intellect, and that too is a divine gift. There is even a blessing for when one sees a scientist. We have nothing against the possibility of additional worlds, as Rabbi Chasdai Karshaks mentions at the end of his book "Ohr Hashem," yet we possess no decisive source in this regard. Neither do the theoretical research sciences offer any definitive proofs. So that leaves empirical evidence.

How remarkable it is, then, that for more than fifty years people have been talking about U.F.O.'s and aliens, and hundreds of thousands of people have testified that they saw them. Even so, their declarations have no scientific worth. Why? For in no museum on earth is there is any U.F.O. or any part of one that would enable a scientist to examine it. This is one of the elements characterizing the scientific approach, that one scientist cannot rely on the declaration of another. Rather, every experiment must be examinable. That is, it must be possible for any scientist on earth to repeat the experiment, and each is entitled to either accept the first scientist's assumptions or to prove their inaccuracy. Numerous commissions have been established to examine the various testimonies of people, and the phenomena have been explained in various ways, such as saying that the "U.F.O.s" were actually airplanes, missiles, meteorological balloons, kites, jets, helicopters, the moon viewed through fog, secret military devices, astronomical phenomena, comets, the Northern Lights, low flying clouds, automobiles on distant, cloud covered peaks, and so forth.

Science is critical. It does not accept anything without proof, neither does it reject anything out of hand. The matter has been investigated for fifty years, and we have nothing to show for it. All the same, people continue to express interest in this topic, and there continue to be hundreds and thousands of sightings. Likewise, this literary genre remains current and continues to fascinate people.

It is true that there are bizarre phenomena that science has not succeeded in explaining, and that some of the phenomena become explainable by means of the U.F.O.s. All the same, this is not an acceptable approach. There will always be unexplicable phenomena, but here those who believe in U.F.O.s grab a foothold where Science has no answers. They dig into the crack in scientific explanations, expand it into wide depths and introduce all sorts of conjecture into the hole. Yet that conjecture is just as far from being provable as the original phenomenon.

I am therefore puzzled by this stubbornness regarding faith in U.F.O.s. What is at work, however, is a modern myth with a psychological dimension of profound anxiety. I shall explain:

Why, in the imaginings of witnesses and writers, do the aliens come here? With their advanced technologies, what do they have to look for here? The closest star outside of our solar system is 40,000 years' travel in the fastest spaceship. Why should they go to all of this trouble? It must be -- some will explain -- that they are looking for women here in order to renew their species which has reached stagnation. Moreover, the alien is a very intelligent and hedonistic creature, but he lacks emotions. He neither cries nor gets angry. Worse, he has no morality and suffers from no dilemmas or inner turmoil. He is inhuman. Therefore, the alien is sort of a kidnapper, seeking to give new life to his species...

What does all of this nonsense have to do with us?

What we really fear is ourselves, the man of tomorrow, lest he be alien to us, steeped in technology but lacking a human approach to social relations. People are in fear of science and technology. It is true that science and technology, per se, are good things, but they are liable to cause dehumanization and the end of mankind. It will not be man's fault but such dehumanization will be caused by the deterioration of morality. You cannot talk to a computer.

Sometimes a computer eats an important file and the user pleads: "Please computer! Return the file to me!" But there is no one to talk to. The computer prints "error" and you really feel "Arur," cursed -- "cursed in your comings and cursed in your goings" (Devarim 28:19). People fear that man will turn himself into a computer, a sort of technobarbarian, more dangerous than the most primitive, barbaric man, since he will have in his hands powerful means of control which will serve his cruelty. Having no conscience, He is liable to send an atomic bomb by the push of a button. And all of this threatens society, namely, technology taking control of life. Hundreds and maybe thousands of books have been written about this in America, and all in vain. It is impossible to put a bridal on the insane gallop of the technological monster. People are afraid of a new mutation of the human race -- "computer-man," lacking a

conscience and armed with powerful means -- the beast within man attached to high technology. That is the alien we fear.

Efficiency, talent and excellence are taking control of man instead of morality and gentleness. A sort of totalitarian technology is appearing, at the center of which is a machine lacking human emotion.

Indeed, there is what to fear. Yet let us not stop technology. Let us rather increase morality, justice, the Torah and its light.



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