

Moses – part 27

Kill witches and those who practice magic
by Victor Torres

We have seen how the Lord wants Moses and Israel to deal with people who hurt others, who steal from others or who take advantage of others. This is the common theme with these rules. They are designed to protect God's people from getting harmed.

And then we come to this rule:

[Exo 22:18 \(KJV\) Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.](#)

The Hebrew word translated as “witch” in that verse means to whisper a spell, to enchant or practice magic. So the Lord wants Israel to kill anyone who whisper spells or anyone who practice magic.

Practicing magic is a serious offense to God. It is so serious He wants those who practice magic to be put to death. Some of you may ask, what's wrong with doing magic? How does it hurt people? We have to make it clear that the magic we are talking about here is not referring to magic tricks like card tricks or making a bunny appear out of a hat. These are just entertainment. The magic we are talking about here is the supernatural kind, things that defy the laws of physics.

To understand more about the magic we are talking about, let's look at some examples from the stories we have studied before.

In the story of Jacob, we saw his father-in-law Laban performing divination, a form of magic used to tell the future or discover hidden knowledge using signs.

Here is Laban convincing Jacob to stay with him:

[Gen 30:27 \(BBE\) And Laban said, If you will let me say so, do not go away; **for I have seen by the signs** that the Lord has been good to me because of you.](#)

We are not told how Laban performed divination but we see modern versions of this magic in horoscopes, palm reading or tarot card reading. Men have always been fascinated with what the future holds. We have always looked for physical signs to predict when our Lord will return and rule the earth. Some are predicting a physical temple will be built in Jerusalem and the antichrist will be ruling from there. They say this will be the sign of Christ's second coming. My former church has even alluded that the tsunamis and earthquakes that destroyed parts of Thailand back in 2004 were signs that Jesus is about to come back.

Looking for physical signs exhibits lack of faith. Our Lord bluntly described what kinds of people look for physical signs:

Mat 12:38 (CEV) Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law of Moses said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a sign from heaven."

Mat 12:39 But Jesus replied: **You want a sign because you are evil and won't believe!** But the only sign you will get is the sign of the prophet Jonah.

That's right, only evil and unbelieving people want a sign to believe in something. Today, we here people say, "Lord, please give me a sign to know that he is the right one for me" or "Lord, please give me a sign that I am making the right decision".

Don't do that! Read the Bible instead. It tells you what kind of man or woman you should marry. Study the Bible, compare your thoughts with what is written in there. We have always taught you to not think above what is written in the Bible. Ask for advice. If you are making a difficult decision, ask your dad or your mom. Ask those in the body of Christ if you are unsure of what to do.

Speaking of advice, in the story of Joseph, we see these magicians performing the role of advisers to the Pharaoh.

Gen 41:1 (CEV) Two years later the king of Egypt dreamed he was standing beside the Nile River.

Gen 41:2 Suddenly, seven fat, healthy cows came up from the river and started eating grass along the bank.

Gen 41:3 Then seven ugly, skinny cows came up out of the river and

Gen 41:4 ate the fat, healthy cows. When this happened, the king woke up.

The Pharaoh went back to sleep and dreamed another dream. It was about seven healthy heads of grain that got swallowed by seven thin, unhealthy heads of grain.

Gen 41:8 (CEV) The next morning the king was upset. **So he called in his magicians and wise men** and told them what he had dreamed. **None of them could tell him what the dreams meant.**

These magicians and wise men were the Pharaoh's trusted advisers. They were the first people he went to and asked for the meaning of his dreams. They could not tell him what his dreams meant. Imagine how embarrassing it was for them! Some of them undoubtedly performed all kinds of magic and tried to read all kinds of signs to interpret the dreams. However, Joseph was the one given the

wisdom by the Lord to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

In the story of Moses, we saw these magicians again, as Moses and Aaron confronted the Pharaoh to tell him to let Israel go.

Exo 7:8 – 9 (CEV)The LORD said, "Moses, when the king asks you and Aaron to perform a miracle, command Aaron to throw his walking stick down in front of the king, and it will turn into a snake."

Exo 7:10 Moses and Aaron went to the king and his officials and did exactly as the LORD had commanded--Aaron threw the stick down, and it turned into a snake.

Exo 7:11 **Then the king called in the wise men and the magicians, who used their secret powers to do the same thing--**

Exo 7:12 **they threw down sticks that turned into snakes.** But Aaron's snake swallowed theirs.

These magicians had real power. They were really able to turn their walking sticks into snakes! It was not an illusion. They were real snakes that got swallowed by Aaron's snake.

So what's the difference? We can clearly see that Aaron performed something with supernatural powers. He was the first one who turned his stick into a snake. Let's read the first two verses again to see the difference between Aaron's miracle and the magicians' magic.

Exo 7:8 – 9 (CEV)**The LORD said,** "Moses, when the king asks you and Aaron to perform a miracle, command Aaron to throw his walking stick down in front of the king, and it will turn into a snake."

The main difference is Moses and Aaron were performing these miracles according to God's instructions. The magicians, on the other hand, used their secret powers to oppose the servants of God.

Where did these magicians get their power? God has given power to evil spirits, and these magicians are working with these evil spirits to perform wonders.

Let's look at the story of king Saul to see another kind of magic that we are not supposed to do. Many of you probably don't know who king Saul is. He was the king before David became king. Many of you probably know who David is because the story of David and Goliath the giant is widely told to children.

After the time of Moses, the Israelites wanted a king to rule them, so God sent the prophet Samuel to appoint a king. Samuel appointed Saul as the first king of Israel. We'll look at the part of Saul's story after the prophet Samuel died.

1Sa 28:3 (ESV) Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. **And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land.**

Mediums and necromancers are people who try to talk to spirits of the dead. This is another form of magic that God prohibits. "And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land". Why didn't he kill them? I thought they were supposed to kill the witches and those who practice magic?

The command to kill witches is for Israel and the foreigners who live with them.

Exo 12:49 (CEV) This law applies both to **native Israelites and to those foreigners who live among you.**

Exo 22:18 (KJV) Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Deu 18:11 (ERV) Don't let anyone try to put magic spells on other people. **Don't let any of your people** become a medium or a wizard. And no one should try to talk with someone who has died.

However, for the witches of the nations that Israel conquered, the Lord told Israel to "force them out of the land".

Deu 18:9 (ERV) "When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, **don't learn to do the terrible things the people of the other nations there do.**

Deu 18:10 Don't sacrifice your sons or daughters in the fires on your altars. Don't try to learn what will happen in the future by talking to a fortuneteller or by going to a magician, a witch, or a sorcerer.

Deu 18:11 Don't let anyone try to put magic spells on other people. Don't let any of your people become a medium or a wizard. And no one should try to talk with someone who has died.

Deu 18:12 The LORD hates anyone who does these things. **And because these other nations** do these terrible things, the LORD your God will force them out of the land as you enter it.

Deu 18:13 You must be faithful to the LORD your God, never doing anything he considers wrong.

Deu 18:14 "**You will force the other nations out of your land.** They listen to people who use magic and try to tell the future. **But the LORD your God will not let you do these things.**

Remember Saul and all of Israel was in Ramah at this time, mourning the death of Samuel. Ramah is part of Palestine, so that's why Saul forced those practitioners of magic "out of the land" instead of killing them.

Let's continue Saul's story:

1Sa 28:4 (CEV) The Philistines went to Shunem and set up camp. Saul called the army of Israel together, and they set up their camp in Gilboa.

1Sa 28:5 Saul took one look at the Philistine army and started shaking with fear.

Why is Saul shaking in his boots? Probably because the Philistine army was much larger than his army.

1Sa 28:6 (CEV) So he asked the LORD what to do. But the LORD would not answer, either in a dream or by a priest or a prophet.

Good move! Saul asked the Lord what to do to win against this terrifying army. However, the Lord would not answer him, and we'll see later why.

1Sa 28:7 (CEV) Then Saul told his officers, "**Find me a woman who can talk to the spirits of the dead.** I'll go to her and find out what's going to happen." His servants told him, "There's a woman at Endor who can talk to spirits of the dead."

Uh oh! After driving those mediums out of Ramah, Saul is now desperately seeking one for advice. One of his men told him of a medium at Endor, another part of Palestine.

1Sa 28:8 (ERV) So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you."

1Sa 28:9 (CEV) The woman said, "Why are you trying to trick me and get me killed? You know King Saul has gotten rid of everyone who talks to the spirits of the dead!"

1Sa 28:10 Saul replied, "I swear by the living LORD that nothing will happen to you because of this."

1Sa 28:11 (ESV) Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

1Sa 28:12 When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed. Then she turned to Saul and said, "You've tricked me! You're the king!"

1Sa 28:13 "Don't be afraid," Saul replied. "Just tell me what you see." She answered, "I see a spirit rising up out of the ground."

1Sa 28:14 (HCV) And he said to her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man comes up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

Did the woman and Saul really see the ghost of Samuel? What does the Bible tell us about the dead?

Ecc 9:5 (KJV) For the living know that they shall die: **but the dead know not any thing**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

The dead are dead. They don't know anything. When we die, our spirit goes back to God, and our bodies turn back to dust. "Dust you are and dust shall you become".

When we die, we don't go to heaven and live with God forever. Neither do we go to hell and burn forever. Israel was never taught these lies. It is only the other nations who believed they can talk to the dead. Sadly, many Christians believe this lie that we are conscious after we die. You often here someone talking about a dead loved one in this way: "I know you're in heaven looking down on us and smiling."

If it is not really Samuel talking to the woman and Saul, then who is it? Just like Saul tricked the woman by disguising, this evil spirit is disguising as Samuel here.

1Sa 28:15 (CEV) "Why are you bothering me by bringing me up like this?" Samuel asked. "I'm terribly worried," Saul answered. "The Philistines are about to attack me. God has turned his back on me and won't answer any more by prophets or by dreams. What should I do?"

1Sa 28:16 Samuel said: If the LORD has turned away from you and is now your enemy, don't ask me what to do.

1Sa 28:17 I've already told you: The LORD has sworn to take the kingdom from you and give it to David. And that's just what he's doing!

1Sa 28:18 When the LORD was angry with the Amalekites, he told you to destroy them, but you didn't do it. That's why the LORD is doing this to you.

That is why the Lord was not answering Saul's prayers. The Lord told Saul to destroy the Amalekites, but he didn't do it. On top of that, he is now consulting with someone who claims to talk with the dead.

1Sa 28:19 (CEV) Tomorrow the LORD will let the Philistines defeat Israel's army, then you and your sons will join me down here in the world of the dead.

1Sa 28:20 At once, Saul collapsed and lay stretched out on the floor, terrified at what Samuel had said. He was weak because he had not eaten anything since the day before.

What that spirit said would happen did occur. Saul and his sons died a tragic death. In the book of Chronicles, we are clearly told why Saul died.

1Ch 10:13 (CEV) Saul died because he was not faithful to the LORD. **He did not obey the LORD'S word. Saul also went to a medium and asked her for advice**

1Ch 10:14 **instead of asking the LORD.** That is why the Lord killed Saul and gave the kingdom to Jesse's son David.

Saul did not obey the Lord's word. He also went to a medium and asked her for advice instead of the Lord. That is why the Lord killed Saul and gave the kingdom to David.

God wants to protect Israel from the evil influence of these magicians and mediums. That's why He told Israel to kill those who practice magic. That's why He commanded them to drive out the evildoers of other nations out of the land.

The practice of magic has never been acceptable to God. It is so disgusting to Him that He gave the most extreme punishment for Israel if they ever do it: death. And yet today, people who claim they are Christians do not see the evil in these practices. Movies and books like Harry Potter continue to be popular.

Here's an excerpt from dailynews.com, a website of the Los Angeles Daily news:

With the debut of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter last April, attendance at Universal Studios Hollywood skyrocketed by 986,000 to 8.1 million visitors — **a nearly 14 percent leap from the previous year**, according to an annual report released Thursday.

It's not only the Harry Potter films, but movies of Disney princesses contain magic, exposing young minds to these abominable acts. The movie Mulan even featured ghosts of the main character's ancestors.

God promised those who are faithful to Him that they will rule the whole earth with Christ. We need to deny ourselves of these harmful entertainment if we want to get this reward. If we don't, we will lose our rulership like king Saul.

1Sa 15:26 (ESV) And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. **For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king**