

Deuteronomy 18:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

Analysis

The forbidden practices continue: **a charmer** (חֹבֵר חֶבֶר, chover chaver—one who binds spells, casts charms, uses incantations); **a consulter with familiar spirits** (שׂאֵל אוֹב, sho'el ov—one who inquires of spirits of the dead, a medium who claims contact with departed souls); **a wizard** (יִדְעוֹנִי, yidde'oni—a knowing one, spiritist, one who claims secret knowledge from spirit guides); **a necromancer** (דֹּרֵשׁ אֶל-הַמֵּתִים, doresh el-hametim—literally "one who seeks unto the dead").

The final category, necromancy, makes explicit what some earlier terms implied: attempted communication with the dead to gain knowledge or power. Isaiah 8:19 condemns this: "Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" The living God provides living prophets; seeking the dead shows covenant unfaithfulness.

These eight/nine categories (some overlap) comprehensively ban occult practices. The common thread: seeking spiritual knowledge, power, or guidance through sources other than God's authorized revelation. This prepares for verses 15-19, where God promises a prophet like Moses—the legitimate source of divine communication, making occult practices both unnecessary and rebellious.

Historical Context

Necromancy was practiced throughout the ancient Near East. Egyptian Book of the Dead, Mesopotamian descent myths, and Canaanite texts all describe attempts

to contact the dead. King Saul's visit to the medium at Endor (1 Samuel 28:7-25) occurred after God stopped answering through legitimate means (dreams, Urim, prophets). The episode demonstrates both the reality of spiritual forces and God's condemnation of consulting them outside His authorized channels.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why does God comprehensively forbid all occult practices rather than allowing 'harmless' ones?
2. How does God's promise of legitimate prophetic revelation (verses 15-19) address the human desire for spiritual knowledge that drives people to forbidden practices?

Interlinear Text

וְחָבֵר Or a charmer H2266	חֵבֶר H2267	וְשֹׂאֵל or a consulter H7592	אֹב with familiar spirits H178	וְיֹדְעַן or a wizard H3049
וְדַרְשׁ or a necromancer H1875	אֶל H413	הַמֵּתִים H4191		

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 19:31 (Spirit): Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

