

PARASHAS KEDOSHIM

The Secret of Clairvoyance

You won't bump into many sorcerers and wizards on the streets of New York or Chicago, but that doesn't mean they don't exist. There are innumerable reports about the feats of practitioners of the occult. Granted that a good many of them are nonsense, but some are probably true. Where there's smoke, there has to be at least some fire.

The Torah acknowledges the existence of sorcerers and wizard, as well as an entire list of other occult practices, such as witchcraft, divination and necromancy, and strictly prohibits them in the strongest possible terms. Reading through this long list is an eerie, bone-chilling experience, and when it is over, we stumble across a strange juxtaposition.

What is the first commandment the Torah gives us after the subject of the occult comes to an end? It is the prohibition against cursing one's father or mother. The commentators are puzzled. What is the connection between this cursing a parent and the occult?

Let us now consider for a moment the Torah prohibition against the occult. Imagine a person at a major crossroads in his life. Face with difficult decisions, confused, he wants desperately to know what the future holds in store. So what does he do? He consults a necromancer or another occult diviner of the future. Why is this such a terrible sin?

The commentators explain that it is actually possible to discover the future by ascending the Kabbalistic ladder through the fifty levels of holiness to the ultimate level of divine inspiration. This is actually the secret explanation of the powers of the occult. All things in the world exist in dichotomies in order to provide people with free will. If there is a holy path to clairvoyance, then the Almighty will create, as a counterpoint, an unholy path to clairvoyance. Therefore, when a person seeks clairvoyance on the unholy path of the occult, he is in essence rejecting the holy path to clairvoyance, which leads directly to the embrace of the Almighty.

This is what the Torah is telling us by the juxtaposition of the prohibition against cursing parents to the prohibition against the occult. Do not think for a moment that occult practices are a harmless, non-denominational spiritual experience. They are a rejection of the Almighty, just like cursing your parents instead of blessing them is a rejection of the people to whom you owe most in the world.

A young traveling in a distant land man sought out a famous guru. The guru, painfully thin and wearing only a stained dhoti, received the young man while sitting cross-legged on the dirt floor of his hut. He stared at the young man with large, liquid eyes and told him all about his past and his future. The young man was astounded.

Upon returning home, the young man visited a great sage and told him about the guru.

“Interesting,” said the sage, “but tell me, how did he treat his wife?”

“Well, he was a little sharp and abrupt with her.”

“Then he is nothing. His powers come from unholy sources. If he were a man of genuine spirituality and elevation of the soul, he would treat his wife with more consideration.”

In our own lives, living as we do in such an intensely materialistic society, we are witnessing a great upsurge of interest in things spiritual, as is to be expected. But unfortunately, much of this interest is being diverted into unholy channels. People who are accustomed to seeking easy fixes for material pleasure are now seeking out the occult and other ersatz spiritual experiences as easy fixes for spiritual fulfillment. We even hear about degenerate media celebrities dabbling in the Kabbalah. It is all a farce. There is no easy path to true spirituality, nor is there a substitute for it. If we want real spiritual fulfillment, we must embrace the Torah, its values and its ideals. This is the only path that leads to the Almighty Himself.