

Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

February 1, 2006

Volume 5 Number 3

Seeking Familiar Spirits

Before Israel arrived in the land that Yahweh had promised to give them, the people who lived there were already quite spiritual. Unfortunately, their worshipping practices were an abomination to Yahweh. Therefore, He took their land and gave it to Israel, along with a clear and specific warning:

- 9 When you are come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.
- 10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,*
- 11 *Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.*
- 12 For all that do these things *are* an abomination to Yahweh: and because of these abominations Yahweh your God does drive them out from before you. -Deuteronomy 18

Child sacrificers, consulters with familiar spirits,* necromancers, witches, wizards, astrologers, fortune tellers, and sorcerers were among those on the list.

*A familiar spirit is the spirit of a dead person which is invoked for advice, prophesy, or favor. Those who seek after familiar spirits are also called necromancers, because they invoke the dead. (The word “necromancy” is based on the Greek words “nekros,” meaning dead body, and “manteia,” meaning divination.)

The Hebrew word which is translated as “familiar spirit” is אֹב (owb). It is based on the Hebrew word אב (ab), meaning father, but with the idea of “prattling” a father’s (or ancestor’s) name. The word “prattle” means to chatter, or to babble, in a meaningless repetitive fashion.

As its name suggests then, familiar spirits are often invoked through chattering or babbling words in a repetitive pattern or formula, as in a monotonous chant. The technique is known as incantation. Using incantations, familiar spirits are invoked as a means of contacting the spirit realm, while avoiding prayer directly to Yahweh, the living God.

The command of Yahweh is clear concerning those who turn to familiar spirits and wizards:

- 6 And the soul that turns after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. -Leviticus 20

With such strong warnings from Yahweh, why do many who claim to be His people still pray to the spirits of the dead, which are familiar spirits? We can learn much concerning this practice by observing the example of Saul, the first king of Israel. He inquired of the spirit of the prophet Samuel, who was dead.

Samuel was clearly the key prophet in the early kingdom of Israel. He was the person through whom Yahweh communicated His word and will for Israel. It was he who anointed Saul as its first king. Unfortunately for King Saul, however, it was Yahweh’s will that the kingdom be taken away from him and given to David. Therefore, Samuel anointed David as Israel’s second king.

However, even the great prophet Samuel was mortal:

- 1 And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran. -1 Samuel 25

Although consulters with familiar spirits were condemned by Yahweh in Israel long before Saul became its first king, it is interesting to note that there is no record that Saul tried to rid them from the land while Samuel lived. However, that changed after Samuel died:

- 3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. -1 Samuel 28

Saul had rebelled and sinned against Yahweh by rejecting His word. Therefore, Samuel told Saul that Yahweh had also rejected him as the king of Israel:

- 23 For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, he has also rejected you from *being* king. -1 Samuel 15

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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Determined to hold onto his kingdom by his own power, Saul desperately sought to kill David. Is it also possible that he put away those with familiar spirits and wizards fearing that they would contact the spirit of Samuel? Did he fear that Samuel's spirit would only confirm to the people Yahweh's will to give the kingdom to David?

As Saul saw the Philistine army, he was frightened even more. In a time of great fear and trouble, Saul made an attempt to contact Yahweh for help:

- 5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.
6 And when Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. -1 Samuel 28

Saul found no answers because He was in a state of rebellion against Yahweh and His Word. When we seek Him only in a time of trouble, while remaining in a state of unrepentant rebellion, He will not listen to us. Yahweh told Jeremiah concerning rebellious Judah:

- 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. -Jeremiah 14

Not hearing from Yahweh, Saul had another plan. He would contact the spirit of the dead Samuel, who had a close relationship with Yahweh. Perhaps Samuel's spirit would favorably intercede to Yahweh for him. He sought a woman with a familiar spirit:

- 7 Then said Saul to his servants, Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that has a familiar spirit at Endor. -1 Samuel 28

Not wanting to be seen, Saul disguised himself and went to the woman by night:

- 8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray you, divine to me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name to you. -1 Samuel 28

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Saul's request of the woman, who is sometimes called the "witch of Endor," demonstrated his total disobedience to Yahweh and His word. The practice of calling upon the spirits of the dead is strictly forbidden by Yahweh.

Nevertheless, Saul asked the woman to call up the spirit of Samuel. When the spirit came, Saul bowed before it:

- 14 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.
15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I shall do.
16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then do you ask of me, seeing Yahweh is departed from you, and is become your enemy? -1 Samuel 28

The reason why Saul called upon the spirit of the dead Samuel, instead of upon the living God, was clear. Saul could not communicate with Yahweh because he refused to obey His word. He went into further rebellion by contacting the spirit of Samuel, which confirmed his worst fears. The kingdom would be given to David:

- 17 And Yahweh has done to him, as he spoke by me: for Yahweh has rent the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, *even* to David: -1 Samuel 28

Those who seek answers to prayers offered to familiar spirits do so because they are walking in darkness and not in the light of the knowledge of the Word of God:

- 19 And when they shall say to you, Seek to them that have familiar spirits, and to wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek to their God? for the living to the dead?
20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. -Isaiah 8

If we know God and love Him, then we will believe Him. Yahshua (Jesus) said:

- 26 At that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you:
27 For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. -John 16

If we know God and believe Him, then we will also know that He loves us. Why would we then disobey Him by seeking after the spirits of the dead, instead of praying by faith in the name of Yahshua (Jesus) directly to the living God?