

## Sorcery in Islam

### (part 1 of 2): Serious sins that endanger a person's hereafter



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Islam's position on sorcery for both the one who practices magic and the one who believes in sorcery can be summed up in just one sentence. Sorcery is absolutely forbidden. However, let us try to discover why Islam forbids it. Remembering that Islam is a way of life, not just a set of beliefs that people may or may not practice, we find that sorcery is forbidden because of the damage it can do to individuals, families and the community.

Since the dawn of time, human beings have been fascinated by sorcery in all its forms. They have been mystified and awe inspired and often times unaware of the dangers inherent in sorcery. Sorcery is known in Arabic as *sihr* and it is one of the tricks that Satan uses to lead humankind astray. It is for this reason Islam warns against magic. God warns against it in the Quran.

**“And indeed they knew that the buyers of it (magic) would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their own selves, if they but knew.”  
(Quran 2:102)**

Sorcery is performed with the aid of the Jinn<sup>[1]</sup>, whose help is attained when the sorcerer or sorceress does acts of disbelief and worships the Jinn and Satan. Thus they take the Jinn and Satan as lords besides God. Once the Jinn are pleased with the sorcerer or sorceress, they will do what they ask them. Renowned Islamic scholar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Sheikh Ibn Baz, may God have mercy on him, said, “*Sihr* (sorcery) is a word referring to something hidden. It is real and there are kinds of witchcraft that may affect people psychologically and physically, so that they become sick and die, or husbands and

wives are separated. It is a devilish action, most of which is only achieved by means of associating others with God and drawing close to the minions of Satan”.

Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, counseled his followers to avoid the seven destructive sins. “Making anyone or anything a partner with God; **practicing sorcery**; killing a living being without justification whose life has been declared sacred by Allah; practicing usury; misappropriating the property of an orphan; running away in a battle; and slandering chaste, innocent, believing women.”<sup>[2]</sup>

During the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad one of the most popular forms of sorcery was to tie knots in a rope and then recite incantations over knots, thus bewitching or harming another person. This is mentioned in the second to last chapter of the Quran where we are encouraged to seek refuge from this evil. **“And from the evil of those who practise witchcraft when they blow on knots.” (Quran 113:4)**

This form of sorcery was done to Prophet Muhammad but God did not allow it to cause him any harm. An evil man cast a spell on Prophet Muhammad using a hair that was caught in a comb along with a few fibers of a date palm. After the spell was cast the Prophet began to imagine that he had sexual relations with one of his wives when he had in fact not done so; The affect of the spell was limited and it did not in any way interfere with his responsibility of conveying the Divine Message. His beloved wife Aisha narrates that, “One day he (Prophet Muhammad) made supplication to God and then he said, “Do you know that God has shown me where my cure is? Two men came to me and one of them sat at my head and the other at my feet. One of them said to the other, ‘What is ailing the man?’ He said: ‘He has been bewitched.’ He said, “who has bewitched him?’ He said: ‘Labeed ibn al-A’sam.’ He said, ‘With what?’ He said, ‘With a comb, a hair that was caught onto it, and the fiber of a male date palm. He said, ‘Where is it?’ He said, ‘In the well of Dharwaan.” He went to the well, came back and said, “Its date palms are like the heads of devils.” I said: “Did you take it out?” He said: “No. God has healed me, and I feared that that might bring evil upon the people.” Then the well was filled in. <sup>[3]</sup> Prophet Muhammad again warns his followers about the dangers of magic (sorcery or witchcraft) when he states that, "Whoever ties a knot and then says incantations over it has committed sorcery and whoever commits sorcery has associated partners with God and whoever relies on something (other than God) will be turned over to it." <sup>[4]</sup>

Another form of sorcery that is extremely popular nowadays is listening to predictions made by fortune tellers and consulting horoscopes. It is worth remembering what Prophet Muhammad said about these forms of sorcery, “Whoever goes to a fortune-teller and asks him about something, his prayer will not be accepted for forty days.” <sup>[5]</sup> This does not mean that a person is exempt from the prayer it means he will gain no reward from his prayer.

“Whoever goes to a fortune-teller or soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad.” [6]

“He does not belong to us who believes in good or ill omens or asks others to give their views on good or ill fortune based on the motion of worldly objects, or who seeks divination or who has that done for him, or who practices witchcraft or has that done for him. Whoever goes to a soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad.”[7]

Sorcery, *sahr* in Arabic, which includes witchcraft, fortune telling of any kind, astrology or divination is strictly forbidden in Islam. In all cases it involves dealing with the unseen and in most cases it involves ascribing partners with God. These are both very serious sins and will at the very least involve the person, who either practices or believes in sorcery, in behaviour that may lead to his or her eternal downfall.

In the second article we will discuss cures for sorcery. What to do if one is affected by sorcery or if one want to protect oneself from the evil effects of sorcery.

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#### Footnotes:

[1] To learn more about the Jinn, please see: (<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/669/viewall/>)

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[3] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[4] *An Nasa'i*

[5] *Saheeh Muslim*

[6] *Abu Dawood*

[7] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim.*

## (part 2 of 2): The Cure

Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, told us that sorcery was real, and that it was dangerous both physically and spiritually. However if we face a problem or become ill we should not immediately think we have been harmed by sorcery. Often those who truly believe they are affected by sorcery one of the first things they think of doing, is using sorcery to heal themselves. This is entirely incorrect. Evil cannot, under any circumstances whatsoever, be removed by more evil. Evil can only be cured or removed by good.

Many diseases of the mind and body mimic the effects of magic therefore a person should always seek help from qualified medical practitioners before

jumping to the conclusion that they have had a spell cast on them. However the reality is that God does allow these things into our lives, either as a test or as a means to greater reward. It is wise to remember that nothing happens without the permission of God, and God may heal the person affected by sorcery, without any action on the part of the person affected, or others on his behalf, because He is Able to do all things, and He is Wise in all that He does.

**“Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, ‘Be!’ and it is!” (Quran 36:82)**

Prophet Muhammad told us that, “The greatest reward comes with the greatest trial. When God loves a people He tests them. Whoever accepts that wins His pleasure but whoever is discontent with that earns His wrath.”<sup>[1]</sup> God does not leave us defenceless in the face of any danger, sorcery included. There are many ways to protect ourselves from the ill effects of sorcery. They begin as always with the words of God, the Quran.

Reciting verses from the Quran, certain supplications and words of remembrance will create a protective barrier between a person and the harms of sorcery, thus it is a very good idea to make this a regular practice. The opening chapter of Quran is known as the greatest chapter and it one of the greatest forms of protection, along with other verses and chapters of Quran including the last three chapters, and Chapter 2, verse 255. This verse is known as the greatest verse in Quran and Prophet Muhammad said that whoever recited this verse at night would be protected until morning and whoever recited it in the morning would be protected until nightfall.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Quran talks extensively about sorcery in chapter 2 and this chapter is one of the greatest means of protection from evil of all kinds. It is wise to recite or play this chapter in your home on a regular basis.

**“And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon. It was not Solomon who disbelieved, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. But the two angels did not teach anyone unless they said, ‘We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic].’ And [yet] they learned from them that which can cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by the permission of Allah. They learned what harmed them, not what benefited them, knowing full well that the buyers of it [magic] would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold themselves, if they but knew.” (Quran 2:102)**

Every person, whether affected by sorcery or not, should try to depend on God alone and put his trust in Him in all affairs, knowing that God does not send a disease for which there is no cure. God has given us permissible means for treating those who have been harmed by sorcery and for protecting ourselves from it. A person should turn to God; beseech Him with supplication at the beginning of the day, at night and after every prayer. For God is the One who removes harm and relieves distress and He is merciful; He answers the supplications of all those who call upon Him. In addition, while holding fast to God, seeking refuge with Him, and putting our trust in Him, we can attain protection from sorcery by striving to do what is right in the sight of God, and turning away from sin.

Finally let us discuss a few important points to bear in mind about the topic of sorcery. Sorcery is often referred to as **black** magic. This gives the false impression that there is something called white magic and thus not dangerous or as dangerous. Magic is magic no matter what colour is used to describe it. While the intent of the practitioner may range from evil to good, believers have been told categorically to stay away from magic in all its forms.

There is a lot of information about curing a person affected by sorcery circulating on the internet that is downright dangerous, as dangerous as magic. Some sites will tell you that physical symptoms of ill health are signs of a magic spell, this is often incorrect. People suffering from flu like symptoms or strange conditions should seek the help of medical practitioners. Well known and understood mental illnesses are often misdiagnosed as the effects of sorcery; this is particularly dangerous, especially when a person is suffering from delusions or hallucinations. When medical efforts have been exhausted and the symptoms have not been explained then it would be wise to seek the help of a qualified person of Islamic knowledge. However, be certain that any “cures” you are given must strictly be in accordance with the instructions given by God and His messenger, Prophet Muhammad.

Lastly remember that using the words of God, that is the Quran itself, as a shield from magic is at all times recommended for it achieves several purposes, including bring a person closer to God.

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#### **Footnotes:**

[1] *At-Tirmidhi*

[2] *An-Nasai & At-Tabarani*