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Why Consult the Dead on Behalf of the Living

8: 16-22

Why consult the dead on behalf of the living DIG: How had Judah gotten into such a mess both politically and spiritually? How does Isaiah respond to Judah's rejection of his message? How is his family a *sign* and a *symbol* from the LORD (see 7:3, 14 and 8:3)? How does Isaiah bring out the contrast between mediums and spiritists to God? What should the people be seeking? What "blackout" will result from their refusal to do so?

REFLECT: The nation of Judah was looking to Isaiah and his family to represent God. Who do you think is looking at you as God's representative? You personally might be the only person that represents God in that person's life. Does that mean you have to be perfect? What does it mean? Is it a dark day for you right now? What is the only way out of that darkness? What does the rise of occultism and spiritism tell you about people's spiritual hunger today? What would Isaiah say to those involved in it? What kind of spiritual food have you been eating lately?

This was a dark time for the nation of **Judah** both spiritually and politically. Aside from a small believing remnant, **she** was in rebellion against **God**. Having been warned **not to follow the way of this people (8:11)**, Isaiah reaffirmed **his** dependence on **God**. **For this is what ADONAI said to me: Bind up the testimony and seal up the Torah among My disciples (8:16)**. The **Torah** is the first five books of the TaNaKh, and **the testimony** is the words of the prophets. By binding up **the testimony and** sealing up **the Torah**, **Isaiah** was in effect inscribing it on the hearts of the believing remnant. **God's** presence was with this remnant, and its attitude was one of quiet trusting and waiting. There are times in our lives that we have to wait on **the LORD** before **He** can bless us. For in the act of waiting we acknowledge our helplessness and complete dependence upon **Him**. In **Isaiah's** day, the believing remnant was faithful in the midst of the darkness.

During that time the believing remnant said as one unified voice: **I will wait for ADONAI, who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob, a common metaphor of the Bible for God's displeasure**. It was no surprise to them that **God** was withholding His blessing from the nation. Ahaz alienated the favor of **the LORD** for the nation. **Isaiah** and the

believing remnant were not immune from the resulting darkness, but within that darkness they had the light of faith. Opposed to the faithless nation, however, they declared: We **will put our trust in Him (8:17)**. Their attitude was that they would **wait and look for the LORD (Romans 8:25; First Thessalonians 1:3b)**. Looking in the sense that **He** will fulfill **His** word. Just as they learned from **the Torah and the prophets (8:16)**, a characteristic of the believing remnant was, and is, faith.

Even with **God** withholding **His** blessing at that time, **Isaiah** still had confidence in **Him**, knowing that **he** and **his** two sons were signs to the nation. The prophet spoke for **himself**, when **he** said: **Here am I, and the children ADONAI has given me. We are signs and symbols in Isra'el** (here meaning the southern kingdom of **Judah** and the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** as a whole) **from the LORD of heavens armies (8:18a)**. Consider the meaning of these divinely appointed names. Each name held significance for the nation's future. Only by listening to **ADONAI's** word through **Isaiah** - reinforced by the **signs and symbols** that **Isaiah** and **his** sons represented - would the light dawn for **Isra'el**. All three of **their** names were important. In **9:8** to **10:4** he used the name **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz**, meaning *quick to plunder, swift to spoil* to illustrate **the Lord's** anger against **Isra'el**. In **10:5** to **34** he uses the name **Shear-Jashub**, meaning *a remnant will return* to illustrate that a remnant would indeed return. And in **11:1** to **12:6** he uses **Isaiah**, meaning **the LORD is salvation** to illustrate the salvation of **God**.

The last thing **Isaiah** points us to is the fact that we have faith in **the One who dwells on Mount Zion (8:18b)**. **The LORD** never goes back on **His** promises. **He** chose **Zion** for **His** dwelling and in **the far eschatological future**, when the final restoration of **Isra'el** takes place: **Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, My holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her (Joel 3:17)**. Thus, this gave **Isaiah** and the believing remnant an objective assurance of faith, just as **he** and **his son's** names were subjective assurance.

The believing remnant themselves were evidence that **ADONAI's face** would not be hidden forever. **He** was still dwelling in **Jerusalem, His holy hill (2:2)**. They were proof that the coming turmoil and devastation of the Babylonian Captivity was ultimately temporary. The same is true for the believing remnant today. **Jesus** still sits **at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Romans 8:34)** because Satan **accuses us before ADONAI day and night (Revelation 12:10)**. We are evidence that **His face** will not be hidden forever and the wickedness of this world is ultimately temporary. **Messiah** says to us today: **Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what they have done. I Am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the**

Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:12-13).

Most people want to know the future. The reading of horoscopes, whether western astrology or Vedic (or Hindu astrology), are enormously popular today. There are daily horoscopes available in newspapers, free telephone horoscope lines, and many horoscope websites.

Mediums and spiritists provide psychic and tarot card readings, biorhythms, runes (the alphabet of mystery), and they all claim to be able to direct your love life, your finances and your future. This whole underbelly of the spiritual world in effect says, "In the dark? Get enlightened here with us! See the future!" **The Jews** living in **Judah** during **Isaiah's** lifetime had the same fondness for spiritual adultery.

Even people in **Judah** were lured into the pagan practice of worshiping **mediums and spiritists**. **They** specialized in trying to contact **the dead** by using unintelligible ecstatic utterances. **They** also sought out direction by using animal intestines and studying the stars. The original meaning and purpose of astrology had been completely corrupted by the world (see the commentary of **Genesis, to see link click Lw - The Witness of the Stars**). Today, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The occult, witchcraft, and spells abound, while Harry Potter is a worldwide phenomenon. The appetite of our society for the occult today is ravenous.

For those who did not have the faith of **Isaiah** and the believing remnant, the temptation to turn to Spiritism was overwhelming. The revival of superstition is always connected with the loss of faith. **When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God (8:19a)?** Again, **Isaiah** speaks of the people's sinful behavior. There is a warning against consulting with **mediums and spiritists**, especially in view of the pending devastation that will be coming upon **Judah**. To speak to **the dead on behalf of the living** was clearly against the Torah. Moshe had written: **Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritists or who consults the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; also see Leviticus 19:31; 20:6).** Consequently, if we refuse **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** who asks for our belief in **Him**, sooner or later we must have **the spirits**, who appear to ask for nothing, but in reality, **they** intend to make us slaves.

Because of the occultic practices, especially the ecstatic utterances that comes out of the occult, they **whisper and mutter**, not giving a clear and reliable prophecy. **They** were unclear ecstatic sounds. **Their** prophecies were always general, never specific, so **their** prophecy could be fulfilled no matter what happened. Both verbs mock the antics of the mediums and expose the absurdity of turning from the plain **Word of God** to mumbo-jumbo.

The sad declension from **my people (3:12)** to **this people (6:9 and 8:12)** exposes **their** devotion to fortune-tellers and messages from **the dead**.

By **their** actions **they** claimed that **the dead** possessed greater powers and superior knowledge to the living. But the Bible does not back that up. The TaNaKh teaches us that leaving **their** bodies behind, **the dead** can only be mere shadows of what they were before **(14:10)**. **The dead** prophet **Samuel** knew no more in death than **he** did in life when talking with king Sha'ul (see the commentary on [the Life of David By - Sha'ul and the Medium at Endor](#)).

Ancestor worship was rampant during **Isaiah's** day. Therefore, **the Holy Spirit** asked: **Why consult the dead on behalf of the living (8:19b)?** We have some examples of this whispering and muttering giving the people unclear prophecies. The Spartans declared war on the Athenians and the Greeks went to the priestesses in the temple at Delphi to find out what they should do or not do. The Spartans came to them and asked, "Should we go to war against the Athenians?" The priestesses decreed, "Yes, go and fight!" The Spartans went and fought and lost. So they went back to the women and said, "You told us to go fight, and we lost." They answered, "We never told you to go fight and win. We merely said, 'Go fight.'"

Here is another example. Cresous, the King of Lydia, was opposed by a rising threat in the east, King Cyrus of the Medo-Persain Empire, and he wanted to know if he should attack Cyrus. When he consulted the Oracles at Delphi they said, "If you go fight Cyrus, a great king will fall." He went off to fight Cyrus and lost. The great king that fell was Cresous. This was an example of whispering and muttering. They only gave general prophecies, never anything specific, so they could not be proven wrong.

In modern times, Spiritism started with the French teacher and educator Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, whose pen name was Allen Kardec. He is known today as the systematizer of Spiritism for which he laid the foundation with the five books of the Spirit Codification. More recently, a self-proclaimed psychic medium named John Edward (McGee) became a celebrity with his television show, "Crossing Over." He uses channeling and "spirit guides" to supposedly communicate with **the dead**. He even wrote a book called: *Answers from the Other Side*. And while he professes only to be helping bereaved relatives and friends, God's message is the same today as it was during **Isaiah's** lifetime: **Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?**

Next **the Spirit of God** told those living in **Judah** that the proper source of the authority in their lives was not **the dead**, but **the living Word of God**. It was not the occult and the

hidden things of Satan, but the revealed **Word of God, the Torah and the testimony** of the prophets. There is no hope outside of what **the LORD** has spoken. Every utterance, however seemingly spiritual, which fails to agree with the Scriptures, is only **darkness** without **light**. **If they do not speak according to this Word, they have no light of dawn (8:20)**. If it does not conform to Scripture, no matter how exciting it might be, it has no spiritual **light**. **This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed (Yochanan 3:19-20)**. The psalmist was very wise when he said: **Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105)**.



ADONAI will eventually judge **mediums and spiritists** and those who consult **them**. Here **Isaiah** again reiterates the **darkness** to come will end in judgment in **the near historical future**. The land of Judah would be devastated in 586 BC when the Babylonians destroyed the Temple and sent the people of Judah into captivity. King Nebuchadnezzar took the best and the brightest back to Babylon. **Dani'el** and others would sit on the banks of the Euphrates Rives for seventy years trying to figure out what happened. But a few of the weakest and downtrodden were left in Judah. **Depressed and hungry, they will roam through the Land; when the Babylonians were finished** deporting the rest of **their** countrymen, **they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king Ahaz and their God** for bringing judgment upon them **(8:21)**.

Interestingly enough, we see the same thing in **the far eschatological future**. The reaction of **those** who hate **God** for **His** judgment is the same, no matter what age **they** live in. **Revelation** tells us that **Men** will gnaw **their tongues in agony** and curse **the God of**

heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they will refuse to repent of what they had done (see the commentary on [Revelation Ef - The Fifth Angel Poured Out His Bowl on the Throne of the Beast, Plunging His Kingdom Into Darkness](#)). The end result will be hopelessness and separation from **the LORD** (see the commentary on [Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment](#)).

No matter where **they look, they** find no help. How can **those** who are in **distress and darkness** like **themselves** help anyone else? **Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness** without hope (**8:22**). All the verbs in **8:21-22** are singular because judgment, like salvation, is individual and personal. **Those** who depend upon the world for solutions to **their** problems only multiply **their darkness**. **These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them (Second Peter 2:17)**. Ironically, those who look to **the dead** for answers will be forced to join them!

So the problem of the occult is nothing new. It was widespread even during the days of **Isaiah**. But today we need to remember that there are only two kinds of spiritual food. There is angel's food or devil's food; and if you aren't eating one, you're eating the other.