

# Familiar Spirit

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Familiar Spirit (כּוּב *ob*, a leathern *bottle* or water-skins, [Job 32:19](#); hence, the conjurer, being regarded as the vessel containing the inspiring demon), a necromancer, or sorcerer who professes to call up the dead by means of incantations, to answer questions ([De 18:11](#); [2Ki 21:6](#); [2Ch 33:6](#); [Le 19:31](#); [Le 20:6](#); [1Sa 28:3,9](#); [Isa 8:19](#); [Isa 19:3](#)). Put also specially for the *python* ([Ac 16:16](#)) or divining-spirit, by the aid of which such jugglers were supposed to conjure ([Le 20:27](#); [1Sa 28:7-8](#)), and for the *shade* or departed spirit thus evoked ([Isa 29:4](#)). *SEE DIVINATION*. The term is rendered by the Septuagint ἐγγαστριμυθος, "a ventriloquist," but is rather a wizard who asked counsel of his familiar, and gave the responses received from him to others — the name being applied in reference to the spirit or demon that animated the person, and inflated the belly so that it protuberated like the side of a *bottle*. Or it was applied to the magician, because he was supposed to be *inflated* by the spirit (δαμονοληπτός), like the ancient Εύρυκλείς (εἰς ἀλλοτρίας γαστέρας ἐνδύς, Ar. *Vesp.* 1017, *malusa spirituns per verend t naturce excipiabat*; *Schosl.* in Ar. *Plut.*). The *ob* of the Hebrews was thus precisely the same as the *pytho* of the Greeks (Plutarch, *De def. Or.* 414; Cicero *De div.* 1:19), and was used not only to designate the performer, but the spirit itself, πνεῦμα Πύθωνος, which possessed him (see [Le 20:27](#); [1Sa 28:8](#); also [Ac 16:16](#)). A more specific denomination of this last term was the necromancer (literally *seeker of the dead*, אֲדָמָה כּוּב; [De 18:10](#); comp. אֲדָמָה כּוּב), one who, by frequenting tombs, by inspecting corpses, or, more frequently, by help of the *ob*, like the witch of Endor, pretended to evoke the dead, and bring secrets from the invisible world ([Ge 41:8](#); [Ex 7:11](#); [Le 19:26](#); [De 18:10-12](#)). Compare the חֲשִׁימָה *whisperers* ("charmners"), of [Isa 19:3](#). But Shuckford, who denies that the Jews in early ages believed in spirits, makes it mean "I consultants of lead idols" (*Connect.* 2:395). These ventriloquists "peeped and muttered" (compare τριζειν, Homer, *Il.* 23:101; "squeak and gibber," Shaksp. *Jul. Caesar*) from the earth to imitate the voice of the revealing 'familiar' ([Isa 29:4](#), etc.; [1Sa 28:8](#); [Le 20:27](#); compare στερνόμαντις, *Soph.*

*Frag.*). Of this class was the witch of Endor (Josephus, *Ant.* 6:14, 2), in whose case intended imposture may have been overruled into genuine necromancy (*Ecclus.* 46:20). On this wide subject, see Chrysostom ad 1 Corinthians 12; Tera tullian, *adv. Marc.* 4:25; *De Anima*, page 57; Augustine, *De doct. Christ.* § 33; Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 1:16, and the commentators on AEn. 6; *Critici Sacri*, 6:331; Le Moyne, *Var. Sacr.* page 993 sq.; Selden, *De Diis Syr.* 1:2; and, above all, Bottcher, *De Inferis*, pages 101-121, where the research displayed is marvellous. Those who sought inspiration, either from the dasmons or the spirits of the dead, haunted tombs and caverns ([Isa 65:4](#)), and invited the unclean communications by voluntary fasts (Maimon. *De Idol.* 9:15; Lightfoot, *Hor. Hebrews* ad [Mt 10:1](#)). That the supposed ψυχομαντεία was often effected by ventriloquism and illusion is certain; for a specimen of this even in modern times, see the *Life of Benvenuto Cellini*. *SEE NECROMANCER*.

Closely connected with this form of divination are the two following:

⇒ Bible concordance for FAMILIAR SPIRITS.

**(1.)** חֶבֶר, *che'ber*, a *spell* or enchantment, by means of a cabalistic arrangement of certain words and implements (De 18:11; Isa 47:9,12), spoken also of serpent-charming (Ps 58:6). *SEE CHARMING*; *SEE ENCHANTMENT*.

**(2.)** Sorcery (either *wizard*, יוֹדֵעַ *knowing* one, Le 19:31; Le 20:6; De 18:11; 1Sa 28:3,9; spoken also of the imp or spirit of divination by which they were supposed to be attended, Le 20:27; or some form of

שָׁפַט, '*kashaph*', to act the *witch*, literally by magic incantations, 2Ch 23:6; Ex 7:11; De 18:10; Da 2:2, etc.), which signifies practicing divination by means of the black art, with an implied collusion with evil spirits; applied usually to pretending to reveal secrets, to discover things lost, find hidden treasure, and interpret dreams. *SEE WIZARD*.

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