

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## DID HARUT AND MARUT TEACH DARK MAGIC?

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The popular belief that Harut and Marut taught dark magic to mankind has no basis in the Quran and is often a result of poor translations of verse 2.102 and interpretations based on [Islamic secondary sources](#).

To understand the nature and remit of what Harut and Marut taught at Babylon, this brief article will cite the relevant verse (2:102) and then discuss it in parts.

### 002:102

"And they followed what recited the evil ones / devils (**Arabic: shayatinu**) over the kingdom of Solomon. And Solomon did not disbelieve, but the evil ones (**Arabic: shayatina**) disbelieved, they taught people magic **and what (wa'ma)** was sent down (**Arabic: unzila**) to the two angels in Babylon, **Harut and Marut**. And they both would not teach anyone unless they both said "We are only a trial, so do not disbelieve" But they learned from them the means of what causes separation between man and his spouse; But they could not thus harm anyone except by God's permission. And they learned what **harmed them** and not **profited them**, and certainly they knew that whoever bought it (engaged in evil magic) would have no share of good in the hereafter and surely evil was the price for which they sold their souls, had they but known this."

We learn from verse 2:102 that the evil ones (Shaiten) were aware of two different arts at Babylon. One was evil magic (sihr) and the other, whatever was sent down (unzila) with Harut and Marut. The separation of the two arts is emphasised once we study the Arabic carefully which makes a point of inserting the conjunction and pronoun '**wa-ma**' (and what) to separate 'sihr' (magic) from the knowledge that both Harut and Marut possessed.

002:102 (part)

"... they taught people magic (Arabic: sihr) and what (wa'ma) was sent down to the two angels in Babylon, Harut and Marut..."

يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكِينَ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ

wa'ma

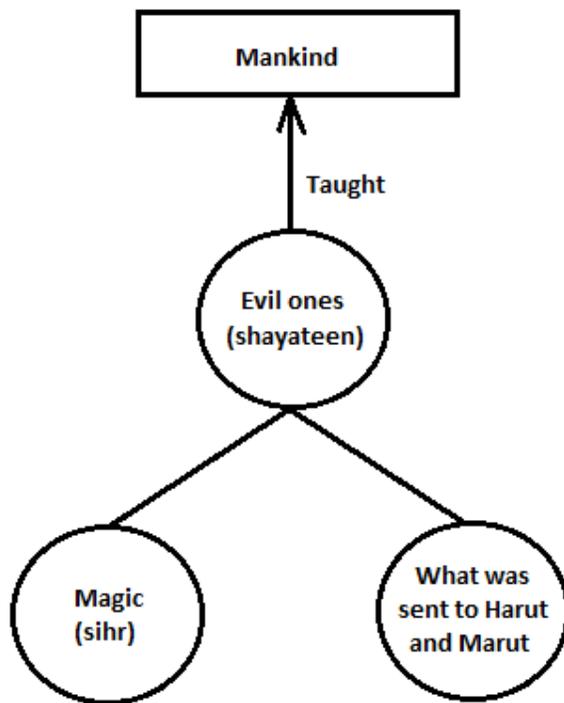


Illustration - Joseph Islam

The fact that magic (sihr) as a dark occult art was already known at the time of Babylon is clear from the verse. The Quran further proceeds to contextualise the general remit of what Harut and Marut taught and to vindicate them of any wrongdoing. The verse intimates that both Harut and Marut possessed some form of knowledge from which people were eager to learn from. Furthermore, they both made it clear that whatever they possessed in the way of knowledge was a clear trial and warned them not to disbelieve with it which indicates two uses, one good and one with evil consequences. The neutrality of their knowledge which could be utilised for both good and evil is made clear by the Arabic "**wayata'allamuna ma yadurruhum wala yafa'uhum**".

002:102 (part)

"...And they learned what harmed them (Arabic: yadurruhum) and not profited them (Arabic: yafa'uhum)..."

وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ

It is evident from the above excerpt that one could potentially learn from Harut and Marut in a manner that could also **profit them**.

Therefore, the knowledge that Harut and Marut possessed had no intrinsic evil bias. Rather, it had two uses. However, those inclined to evil, clearly made use of their knowledge for evil intent such as causing dissension between husband and wife. This is made clear in the verse by the earlier comment:

002:102 (part)

"...But they learned from them the means of what causes separation between man and his spouse"

فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

The belief that Harut and Marut taught 'magic' or 'evil magic' to separate man and wife has no warrant from the Quranic verses. They taught no such thing. Harut and Marut merely possessed some form of knowledge which could be used for both good and evil. Those inclined to evil (shayateen), made use of 'magic' (sihr) **and the** knowledge that Harut and Marut possessed for evil intent and taught those of mankind that were willing to engage in such corruption.

The Quranic condemnation of their works has been sharply emphasised by likening it to the selling of their souls (sharaw bihi anfusahum).

Many forms of knowledge exist today such as those known to science that can be used for both good and to cause harm. One can cite many examples, nuclear energy being one. The Quran does not elaborate what knowledge Harut and Marut possessed but is keen to separate it from 'magic' (sihr) which only has one purpose and that being one of evil.

It is in this context, that any translation of verse 2:102 should be studied with regards to Harut and Marut.

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