

## Did Joseph use divination?

Samuel Hanna says:

‘It is also clear from the Bible that Joseph practised witchcraft (Genesis 44:5), so he could well have been referred to as a magician.’<sup>1</sup>

Actually, what is clear is that Joseph would have rejected witchcraft. He was so careful to reject even tempting sins against God, e.g. with Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:9). And when he interpreted the dreams of the Pharaoh and his butler and baker, Joseph made it clear that God was the One who gave him the answer (Gen. 41:16, 40:8).

Gen. 44:5 says:

‘Is not this *the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practises divination? You have done evil in so doing.’

But context is vital. This was what Joseph told his house steward to say to Joseph’s brothers after finding the planted cup in their possession. This was all part of his test of the brothers, so the ‘divination’ *was still playing the part of the Egyptian vizier the brothers thought he was.*

But the second part of Mr Hanna’s quote could well be right. Word of Joseph’s accomplishments could have easily spread without knowledge of the true God behind them. So it’s plausible that Joseph was called a magician.

Jonathan Sarfati  
Brisbane, Queensland  
AUSTRALIA

### References

1. Hanna, S., Biblical chronology (Letters), *TJ* 17(2):70–71, 2003.