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**The Staff of Moses**

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The Torah contains some of the most [awesome](awesome.html) concepts buried in the most unlikely places. I believe that the reason for this, is to [save](salvation.html) the diamonds for those who would “mine” (intensely [study](study.html)) them. The jewels, so to [speak](mashal.html), are not left out in the open for casual gathering.

In this [study](study.html) I would like to examine the staff,[[1]](#footnote-1) or rod, of Moshe (Moses) in an attempt to expose some deeply hidden diamonds. In the process, we will also find that there is a very intriguing origin for some of the [world](worlds.html)‘s myths. My suggestion is that the parables of the [Midrash](orallaw.html) are often changed by the [world](worlds.html) into the myths that we learn as children.



So, let’s get some background on this staff. The [first](one.html) use of staff ([Hebrew](hebrew.html): *mateh*) is found in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 38:18*** *And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that [is] in thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*. And he gave [it] her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.*

In this [first](one.html) use of “staff”, we see the conception of the kingly and Messianic line. Tamar has engineered this encounter to produce the Kings of Israel, and the [Mashiach](mashiach.html). The staff is used to guarantee Yaakov’s acknowledgement of his offspring. It is used to show the greatness of [Yaaqov](israelja.html) who will stand up and admit the sordid details despite the cost. This amazing encounter will also lay the foundation for the [tikkun](tikkun.html), the correction by [Ruth](ruth.html) and Boaz, as we have discussed in our paper on [Ruth](ruth.html). Thus we see that that the staff is intimately related to kingship and to exercise of the [authority](authority.html) of a king.

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) also shows this staff as a symbol of [authority](authority.html) by describing it as a spear:

***Soncino*** [***Zohar***](orallaw.html)***, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 6b*** *The next verse reads: “And he smote an Egyptian, a man of good appearance, etc.” The mystical meaning of this verse is that every* [*time*](time.html) *Israel* [*sins*](sin.html)*, God leaves them and withholds from them all the blessings and all the lights which illumined them. “He smote an Egyptian”: this signifies the light of Israel’s great luminary, to wit, Moses, who is called an Egyptian, as it is written, “And they said, an Egyptian delivered us, etc.” (Exod. II, 19), for there he was born, there he was brought up and there he was vouchsafed the higher light. “A man of good appearance” (mar’eh) also signifies Moses, of whom it is written “ou-mar’eh (by clear appearance) and not in dark speeches” (Num. XII, 8); so too “man” (ish), as he is called “man of God” (Deut. XXXIII, 1), the husband, as it were, of the Divine glory, leading it whereso he would upon the earth, a privilege no other man had ever enjoyed. “And the Egyptian had a spear in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*,” to wit, the divine rod that was delivered into his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, as we read: “With the rod of God in my* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*“ (Exod. XVII, 9), which is the same rod that was created in the twilight of the Eve of* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, and on which there was engraven the Divine* [*Name*](name.html) *in sacred* [*letters*](letters.html)*. With the same rod Moses sinned by smiting the rock, as we read: “And he smote the rock with his rod twice” (Num. XX, 11). The Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, said to him “I have not given the rod for that purpose; by thy life, from henceforward it will not be in thy* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *any more.” Immediately “He went down to him with a rod”, i.e. He judged him rigidly, “and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian’s* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*,” for from that moment he lost it and never more regained it. “And slew him with his spear,” i.e. through the* [*sin*](sin.html) *of smiting the rock with that rod he died without entering the Holy Land, and thereby that illumination was withheld from Israel.*

Strong’s defines staff as:

4294 **mateh**, mat-teh’; or (fem.) mattah, mat-taw’; from 5186; a branch (as extending); [fig](bethphag.html). a [tribe](tribes.html); also a rod, whether for chastising ([fig](bethphag.html). correction), ruling (a sceptre), throwing (a lance), or [walking](walking.html) (a staff; [fig](bethphag.html). a support of life e.g. bread):-rod, staff, [tribe](tribes.html).

The KJV translates this [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word as staff, rod, *or* [*tribe*](tribes.html). In fact, this word is more often translated as “[tribe](tribes.html)“, than any other way. So, our [first](one.html) task is to try to understand how a staff is related to a [tribe](tribes.html). Further, *mateh* comes from a [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word which means *branch*. In order to bring this concept home in a very sharp manner, it is instructive to note that there is a second [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word that means *branch*.

07626 שבט shebet *shay’- bet*

from an unused root probably meaning to branch off; n m; [AV](feasts.html)-[tribe](tribes.html) 140, rod 34, sceptre 10, staff 2, misc 4; 190

1) rod, staff, branch, offshoot, club, sceptre, [tribe](tribes.html)

1a) rod, staff

1b) shaft (of spear, dart)

1c) club (of shepherd’s implement)

1d) truncheon, sceptre (mark of [authority](authority.html))

1e) clan, [tribe](tribes.html)

*Shevet* is used in the following Torah pesukim:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:10*** *The sceptre <07626> shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his* [*feet*](heel.html)*, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:16*** *Dan shall judge his people, as* [*one*](one.html) *of the* [*tribes*](tribes.html) *<07626> of Israel.*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 49:28*** *All these are the* [*twelve*](twelve.html)[*tribes*](tribes.html) *<07626> of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every* [*one*](one.html) *according to his blessing he blessed them.*

Here again we see that a [tribe](tribes.html) and a staff (branch) are related. Chazal [teach](teacher.html) that if we have [two](two.html) meanings for the same word, then the [two](two.html) meanings are really just [one](one.html) meaning with [two](two.html) perspectives or manifestations.

According to most of our classical commentaries, *shevet* is to be defined as a ruling rod whereas *mateh* is a supporting staff.

A staff is a branch which bends away from a tree, which has been smoothed and sized for the owner. A [tribe](tribes.html) is the descendants of a particular person. So, [Yaaqov](israelja.html) would be like a main branch of a tree, with his [twelve](twelve.html) sons being “staff” sized branches which bend away from their father. In the course of their lives, [HaShem](hashem.html) has given His Torah to these sons in order that they might be smooth and properly sized.

Both a [tribe](tribes.html) and the staff are tools used by the [hand](fourteen.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html) to accomplish His purposes. From the definition given to us by Strong’s, we can see that there are several uses for the staff, and therefore for the [tribes](tribes.html).

From our understanding so far, we can see that there is a very deep concept behind a seemingly insignificant staff.

# Prince

[Avraham](avraham.html) was the shepherd of Israel.

[Yitzchak](isaac.html) was the shepherd of Israel.

[Yaaqov](israelja.html) was the shepherd of Israel.

[Yosef](joseph.html) was the shepherd of Israel.

These are the Patriarchs of Israel. They are the men with whom [HaShem](hashem.html) restated His [covenant](covenant.html).

[Avraham](avraham.html) lived 175 years

[Yitzchak](isaac.html) lived 180 years

[Yaaqov](israelja.html) lived 147 years

[Yosef](joseph.html) lived 110 years

Each of these men were considered a prince, a ruler. [Avraham](avraham.html) was called a prince by the inhabitants of the land.

For example, the sons of Chet replied to [Avraham](avraham.html) saying to him:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 23.6*** *Hear us my master, you are a prince of G-d in our midst.*

It follows that upon the death of [Avraham](avraham.html), [Yitzchak](isaac.html) would be considered a prince, and upon the death of [Yitzchak](isaac.html), [Yaaqov](israelja.html) would be considered a prince, and upon the death of [Yaaqov](israelja.html), [Yosef](joseph.html) would be considered a prince.

Now both a shepherd and a prince rule. Both are leaders. The rod that a shepherd and a prince carry is a point of identity. When [Avraham](avraham.html) died, [Yitzchak](isaac.html) officially carried his father’s rod of leadership. When [Yitzchak](isaac.html) died, [Yaaqov](israelja.html) officially carried his grandfather’s and father’s rod of leadership. When [Yaaqov](israelja.html) died, [Yosef](joseph.html) officially carried his great grandfather’s, grandfather’s and father’s rod of leadership. This is why the Torah states, “A [new](new.html) king came into power over Mitzrayim who did not [know](daat.html) [Yosef](joseph.html)“. {[Exodus](exodus.html) 1:8} In other words, he did not [know](daat.html) [Avraham](avraham.html), [Yitzchak](isaac.html), [Yaaqov](israelja.html) or [Yosef](joseph.html). He did not recognize their rod of leadership. After [Yosef](joseph.html)‘s death it was as if the rod disappeared. From [Yosef](joseph.html) to Moshe we do not read of a leader in Kal Israel. That was a period of 59 years. [Yosef](joseph.html)‘s older brother, Levi, lived [twenty](twenty.html)-[three](three.html) years after [Yosef](joseph.html)‘s death. After Levi’s death [thirty-six](thirtysix.html) more years passed before the [birth](thebirth.html) of Israel’s next leader, Moshe.

# Moshe’s Staff

The staff of Moshe [first](one.html) appears in Torah when Moshe encounters the burning bush:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 3:16 – 4:5*** *Go, and* [*gather*](gather.html) *the elders of Israel together, and say unto them,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God of your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, the God of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, of* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*, and of* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and [seen] that which is done to you in Egypt: And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God of the* [*Hebrews*](bereans.html) *hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee,* [*three*](three.html) *days’* [*journey*](stages.html) *into the wilderness, that we may* [*sacrifice*](korbanot.html) *to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *our God. And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*. And I will stretch out my* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put [them] upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians. And Moshe answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *hath not appeared unto thee. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto him, What [is] that in thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*? And he said,* ***A rod****. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moshe fled from before it. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moshe, Put forth thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and caught it, and it became a rod in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*: That they may believe that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, the God of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, the God of* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*, and the God of* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, hath appeared unto thee.*

The [midrash](orallaw.html) comments on the reason for delivering the staff to Moshe. After persuading a reluctant Moshe to accept his mission, God delivers the staff and informs Moshe that it will be the apparatus for performing the miracles. The [midrash](orallaw.html) comments that [HaShem](hashem.html)informed Moshe, "even if you are unwilling to fulfill my mission, this staff, inanimate as it is, is capable of executing My will". This sobering message should ideally assure Moshe's continued commitment despite his lingering ambivalence. It also depersonalizes Moshe (which may contribute to his conviction). If the staff is fully capable of miracles, there is little reason to impute these powers to Moshe. In this light, referencing the staff on the night of [Pesach](passover.html) is strategic. Moshe's [name](name.html) is conspicuously absent from the [seder](haggada.html) – and for good reason. This is the night of [HaShem](hashem.html); as the well-known Drasha confirms, "I alone, without any intermediary agent." Just as the association of angelic agents is suppressed, so is Moshe's mortal agency. To emphasize the absence of a human intermediary, the staff and its message is mentioned.

Implicit yet a [third](three.html) imagery of the mateh is provided by the continuation of that same [midrash](orallaw.html). Having delivered the staff to Moshe, [HaShem](hashem.html) informs him of a post-Egypt role for the staff in producing heavenly manna, water, clouds of glory and various other gifts. A staff which had been so clearly aligned with [plagues](plagues.html) and human suffering would also be pivotal in ensuring human welfare. It is an icon of "otot - [signs](signs.html)", many different forms of miracles and not merely of [plagues](plagues.html); Moshe must be aware of these potentials even as he wreaks havoc upon Egypt though the mateh's curses. After the [Exodus](exodus.html), religion may have been miscast by some as centered around death and suffering. In announcing himself to the ancient [world](worlds.html), [HaShem](hashem.html) destroyed the cradle of civilization and riddled them with months of misery. It is crucial that religion be viewed as a contribution to the human condition and that this Divine staff be responsible for wellbeing and human benefit as well. This broader role is already announced prior to the [Exodus](exodus.html), well before any of those benefits will be necessary, to ensure a holistic view of the staff. It is a staff of life not a rod of death.

The Targum pseudo Yonatan also describes this [event](feasts.html) and adds a very interesting detail:

*1. And Mosheh answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to me; for they will say, The Lord has not appeared to you. 2. And the Lord said to him,* ***What is that in your*** [***hand***](fourteen.html)***? And he said, The rod.*** *3. And He said, Cast it on the ground; and he cast it to the ground, and it became a serpent; and Mosheh fled from before it. [*[*JERUSALEM*](city.html)*. And He said, Cast it on the ground; and he cast it on the ground.] 4. And the Lord said to Mosheh, Stretch forth your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *and seize (it) by its tail. [*[*JERUSALEM*](city.html)*. And grasp the place of its tail.] And he stretched forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *and grasped it, and it became the rod in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*. 5. In order that they may believe that the Lord God of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, the God of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, the God of Izhak, and the God of Jakob, has revealed Himself to you.*

We will be talking at length about this rod, but it is important to note that the rod was simply a tool in Moshe’s [hand](fourteen.html). Notice the following:

**Shemot (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html)**) 4:20** So Moses took his wife and his sons, mounted them upon the [donkey](chamor.html), and he returned to the land of Egypt, and Moses took the staff of God in his [hand](fourteen.html).

The Targum goes on to emphasize that it was Moshe’s [hand](fourteen.html) that would perform the miracle.

***Targum pseudo Yonatan to Shemot 4:20*** *And Mosheh took his wife and his sons, and made them ride on the* [*ass*](chamor.html)*, and returned to the land of Mizraim. And Mosheh took the rod which he had brought away from the chamber of his father-in-*[*law*](law.html)*; and it was from the sapphire Throne of glory, in weight* [*forty*](forty.html) *sein; and upon it was engraved and set forth the Great and Glorious* [*Name*](name.html) *by which the* [*signs*](signs.html) *should be wrought before the LORD by his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*.*

Engraving always means that what is engraved is of the essence of the object - not applied *onto* the object as is writing but expressed in the very medium of the object itself.

The following verse emphasizes, again, that the miracle is *in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html), not in the staff.

**Shemot (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html)**) 4:21** The Lord said to Moses, “When you go to return to Egypt, see all the [signs](signs.html) that I have placed in your [hand](fourteen.html) and perform them before Pharaoh, but I will strengthen his [heart](body.html), and he will not send out the people.

Rashi add his voice to the above verse:

**that I have placed in your** [**hand**](fourteen.html) He did not say this in reference to the [three](three.html) aforementioned [signs](signs.html), for He had not commanded that he [Moses] do them before Pharaoh but before Israel, in order that they would believe him, and we do not find that he performed them before him [Pharaoh]. But [regarding] [signs](signs.html) that I am destined to put into your [hand](fourteen.html) in Egypt, such as: “When Pharaoh speaks to you [i.e., asking for you to perform [signs](signs.html)], etc.” (Exod. 7:9), do not wonder that it is written: “that I have placed,” [i.e., implying the past tense,] because this is what it means: “When you [speak](mashal.html) to him, I will have already placed them into your [hand](fourteen.html).”

# Staff and Serpent

At this point in the story we might think that this is a staff of wood that [HaShem](hashem.html) miraculously transforms into a serpent. However, a careful analysis of this [event](feasts.html) reveals that this serpent is so terrifying that Moshe, in the very presence of [HaShem](hashem.html), flees from this serpent in terror.

Let’s think about this. Moshe has an inanimate staff which is transformed into a serpent. Let’s assume, for the sake of this argument, that the serpent is extremely venomous and capable of killing Moshe. Let’s also assume that Moshe, at eighty years of age, is reasonably intelligent and well trained in the ways of the [world](worlds.html). If this is so, then Moshe would [know](daat.html) that the best defense for this [type](types.html) of serpent is to freeze in place and not move. What is Moshe’s response? He runs away as fast as his eighty year old [legs](body.html) will allow.

Now, let’s assume that the serpent is a constrictor [type](types.html) serpent and is not venomous. What would be the proper response to this [type](types.html) of serpent? The proper response is to back away slowly. What is Moshe’s reaction? He quickly flees!

This is no ordinary serpent! To understand this serpent we will need to understand this staff which has been transformed into this extremely fearsome serpent. Since the written Torah gives us no background, we will examine the [oral Torah](orallaw.html).

**Pirke D’Rebbe Eliezer 40** (a Midrashic work composed by the school of Rebbe Eliezer ben Hyrcanus [c.100]) gives the history of this amazing staff:

Created at twilight, before the [Sabbath](sabbath.html), it was given to [Adam](adam.html) in the [Garden of Eden](eden.html). [Adam](adam.html) gave it to Chanoch (Enoch), who gave it to Metushelach (Methuselah); he in turn passed it on to [Noach](noachide.html) ([Noah](noachide.html)). [Noach](noachide.html) bequeathed it to his son Shem, who transmitted it to [Avraham](avraham.html) ([Abraham](avraham.html)). From [Avraham](avraham.html) to [Yitzchak](isaac.html) ([Isaac](isaac.html)), and then to [Yaaqov](israelja.html) ([Jacob](israelja.html)), who took it with him to Egypt. Yaaqov gave it to [Yosef](joseph.html) ([Joseph](joseph.html)); upon [Yosef](joseph.html)‘s death all his possessions were removed to Pharaoh’s place. Yitro (Jethro) [one](one.html) of Pharaoh’s advisors desired it, whereupon he took it and stuck it in the ground in his garden in Midian. From then on no [one](one.html) could pull out the staff until Moshe came. He read the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) [letters](letters.html) on the staff,[[2]](#footnote-2) and pulled it out readily. Knowing then that Moshe was the redeemer of Israel, Yitro gave him his daughter Tziporah (Zipporah) in [marriage](mashal.html). Then, as a shepherd to Yitro, it was while investigating the phenomenon of the Burning Bush, that [HaShem](hashem.html) said to Moshe:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:2*** *“What is in your* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*? And he (Moshe) said, ‘a staff’.”*

The staff which Moshe pulled from the ground in Yitro’s garden had been fashioned by [HaShem](hashem.html) Himself who had then given it to [Adam](adam.html). It was passed down, after Moshe’s death, to King David and to the succeeding Kings of Judah.[[3]](#footnote-3) This was no ordinary wooden staff.

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) elaborates on this fantastic staff (rod):

***Soncino*** [***Zohar***](orallaw.html)***, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 9a*** *“And in the Egyptian’s* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *was a spear like a weaver’s beam” (I Chr. XI, 23). This alludes to the divine rod which was in Moses’* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and on which there was engraved the divine ineffable* [*Name*](name.html) *radiating in various combinations of* [*letters*](letters.html)*. These same* [*letters*](letters.html) *were in possession of Bezalel, who was called “weaver”, and his school, as it is written: “Them hath he filled with wisdom of* [*heart*](body.html)*... of the craftsman and the skilled workman, and the weaver, etc.” (Exod. XXXV, 35). So that rod had engraved on it the ineffable* [*Name*](name.html) *on every side, in* [*forty*](forty.html)*-*[*two*](two.html) *various combinations, which were illumined in different colors.*

Thus we learn that the staff was engraved with [forty](forty.html)-[two](two.html) [letter](letters.html) combinations, *each in a different* ***color***! The [Midrash](orallaw.html) tells this amazing story in a way which gives us [insight](insights.html) into this most powerful staff:

Moshe marries Zipporah[[4]](#footnote-4)

[*One*](one.html) *of the* [*seven*](seven.html) *maidens whom Moshe saw at the well attracted his notice in particular on account of her modest demeanor, and he made her a proposal of* [*marriage*](mashal.html)*. But Zipporah repulsed him, saying, “My father has a tree in his garden with which he tests every man that expresses a* [*desire*](needs.html) *to marry* [*one*](one.html) *of his daughters, and as soon as the suitor touches the tree, he is devoured by it.”*

*Moshe: “Whence has he the tree?”*

*Zipporah: “It is the rod that the Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, created in the twilight of the* [*first*](one.html)[*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *eve, and gave to* [*Adam*](adam.html)*. He transmitted it to Enoch, from him it descended to* [*Noah*](noachide.html)*, then to Shem, and* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, and* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*, and finally to* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, who brought it with him to Egypt, and gave it to his son* [*Joseph*](joseph.html)*. When* [*Joseph*](joseph.html) *died, the Egyptians pillaged his house, and the rod, which was in their booty, they brought to Pharaoh’s palace. At that* [*time*](time.html) *my father was* [*one*](one.html) *of the most prominent of the king’s sacred scribes, and as such he had the opportunity of seeing the rod. He felt a great* [*desire*](needs.html) *to possess it, and he stole it and took it to his house. On this rod the Ineffable* [*Name*](name.html) *is graven, and also the* [*ten*](ten.html)[*plagues*](plagues.html) *that God will cause to visit the Egyptians in a* [*future*](future.html) *day. For many years it lay in my father’s house.* [*One*](one.html) *day he was* [*walking*](walking.html) *in his garden carrying it, and he stuck it in the ground. When he attempted to draw it out again, he found that it had sprouted, and was putting forth blossoms. That is the rod with which he tries any that* [*desire*](needs.html) *to marry his daughters. He insists that our suitors shall attempt to pull it out of the ground, but as soon as they touch it, it devours them.”*

*Having given him this account of her father’s rod, Zipporah went home, accompanied by her sisters, and Moshe followed them.*

*Jethro was not a little amazed to see his daughters return so soon from the watering troughs. As a rule, the chicanery they had to suffer from the shepherds detained them until late. No sooner had he heard their report about the wonder-working Egyptian than he exclaimed, “Mayhap he is* [*one*](one.html) *of the descendants of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, from whom issueth blessing for the whole* [*world*](worlds.html)*.” He rebuked his daughters for not having invited the stranger that had done them so valuable a service to come into their house, and he ordered them to fetch him, in the hope that he would take* [*one*](one.html) *of his daughters to wife.*

*Moshe had been* [*standing*](mashal.html) *without all this* [*time*](time.html)*, and had allowed Jethro’s daughters to describe him as an Egyptian, without protesting and asserting his* [*Hebrew*](hebrew.html)[*birth*](birth.html)*. For this* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *punished him by causing him to die outside of the promised land.* [*Joseph*](joseph.html)*, who had proclaimed in public that he was a* [*Hebrew*](hebrew.html)*, found his last resting-place in the land of the* [*Hebrews*](bereans.html)*, and Moshe, who apparently had no objection to being considered an Egyptian, had to live and die outside of that land.*

*Zipporah hastened forth to execute her father’s wish, and no sooner had she ushered him in, then Moshe requested her* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *in* [*marriage*](mashal.html)*. Jethro replied, “If thou canst bring me the rod in my garden, I will give her to thee.” Moshe went out, found the* ***sapphire rod*** *that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *had bestowed upon* [*Adam*](adam.html) *when he was driven forth from Paradise, the rod that had reached Jethro after manifold vicissitudes, and which he had planted in the garden. Moshe uprooted it and carried it to Jethro.*

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) also speaks of this staff:

***[Midrash](orallaw.html) Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***VIII:3*** *‘Go and exact a penalty of him.’ He said to him: ‘How shall I bring upon him the* [*ten*](ten.html)[*plagues*](plagues.html)*? ‘ The reply was: ‘And thou shalt take in thy* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *this rod’ (IV, 17). R. Judah said: The rod weighed* [*forty*](forty.html) *seah[[5]](#footnote-5) and was of sapphire[[6]](#footnote-6) and the* [*ten*](ten.html)[*plagues*](plagues.html) *were engraved thereon in an abbreviated form -De Za K, aDaSH, Be’aHa B.1 God said: ‘In this order shalt thou bring upon him the* [*plagues*](plagues.html)*.’ And Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet (VII, 1). ‘Just as the preacher sits and preaches whilst the interpreter[[7]](#footnote-7) sits before him, so shalt thou* [*speak*](mashal.html) *all that I shall* [*command*](cmds613.html) *thee, [to Aaron] and Aaron thy brother will* [*speak*](mashal.html) *unto Pharaoh.’ By means of both of them were all these things performed, as it is said: And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh (XI, 10).*

So, now we discover that this fantastic staff is made out of *sapphire*,not wood.

The Targum Pseudo Yonatan, on [Exodus](exodus.html) chapter 2, also speaks of this rod (staff):

*15. And Pharaoh heard this thing, and sought to kill Mosheh; and Mosheh escaped before Pharaoh, to* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *in the land of Midian. And he sat by a well. 16. And the* [*priest*](priests.html) *of Midian had* [*seven*](seven.html) *daughters; and they came and drew, and filled the watering-troughs, to give drink to the flocks of their father. 17. But the shepherds came and drove them away. And Mosheh arose in the power of his might, and rescued them, and gave the flocks drink. 18. And they came to Reuel, their grandfather, who said to them, How is it that you are come (so) early to-day? 19. And they replied, A Mizraee man not only delivered us from the* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *of the shepherds, but also himself drawing drew and watered the flock. 20. And he said to his son’s daughters, And where is he? Why did you leave the man? Call him, and let him* [*eat*](eating.html) *bread. But when Reuel* [*knew*](daat.html) *that Mosheh had fled from before Pharaoh he cast him into a pit; but Zipporah, the daughter of his son, maintained him with* [*food*](food.html)*, secretly, for the* [*time*](time.html) *of* [*ten*](ten.html) *years; and at the end of* [*ten*](ten.html) *years brought him out of the pit. And Mosheh went into the bedchamber of Reuel, and gave thanks and* [*prayed*](prayer.html) *before the Lord, who by him would work miracles and mighty acts. And there was shown to him the Rod which was created between the evenings, and on which was engraven and set forth the Great and Glorious* [*Name*](name.html)*, with which he was to do the wonders in Mizraim, and to divide the sea of Suph, and to bring, forth water from the rock. And it was infixed in the midst of the chamber, and he stretched forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *at once and took it. 21. Then, behold, Mosheh was willing to* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *with the man, and he gave Zipporah, the daughter of his son, to Mosheh.*

Now that we understand that this is a most unusual staff, let’s see if the [Midrash](orallaw.html) can shed any more light on this fantastic staff:

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***VIII:3*** *‘Go and exact a penalty of him.’ He said to him: ‘How shall I bring upon him the* [*ten*](ten.html)[*plagues*](plagues.html)*? ‘ The reply was: ‘And thou shalt take in thy* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *this rod’ (IV, 17). R. Judah said: The rod weighed* [*forty*](forty.html) *seah[[8]](#footnote-8) and was of sapphire and the* [*ten*](ten.html)[*plagues*](plagues.html) *were engraved thereon in an abbreviated form -De Za K, aDaSH, Be’aHa B. God said: ‘In this order shalt thou bring upon him the* [*plagues*](plagues.html)*.’ And Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet (VII, 1). ‘Just as the preacher sits and preaches whilst the interpreter sits before him, so shalt thou* [*speak*](mashal.html) *all that I shall* [*command*](cmds613.html) *thee, [to Aaron] and Aaron thy brother will* [*speak*](mashal.html) *unto Pharaoh.’ By means of both of them were all these things performed, as it is said: And Moshe and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh (XI, 10).*

The Targum Pseudo Yonaton also describes this sapphire rod:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:20*** *And Mosheh took his wife and his sons, and made them ride on the* [*ass*](chamor.html)*, and returned to the land of Mizraim. And Mosheh took the rod which he had brought away from the chamber of his father-in-*[*law*](law.html)*; and it was from the sapphire Throne of glory, in weight* [*forty*](forty.html) *sein; and upon it was engraved and set forth the Great and Glorious* [*Name*](name.html) *by which the* [*signs*](signs.html) *should be wrought before* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *by his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*.*

From this [Midrash](orallaw.html) we learn that this sapphire staff weighed [forty](forty.html) seah. [Forty](forty.html) seah is the amount of water used in a [mikveh](forty.html) (baptismal) to immerse an object or a person. To put it mildly: This sapphire staff weighed [six](six.html) hundred and [seventy](seventy.html)-[two](two.html) pounds! No ordinary man could even pick it up much less pull it out of the ground or wave it around.

Let’s look at exactly what the [World](worlds.html) Book Encyclopedia[[9]](#footnote-9) can tell us about sapphire:

*Sapphire, a hard and clear gem, is a variety of the mineral corundum. The best-*[*known*](daat.html) *sapphires are blue. Their color results from small amounts of iron and titanium in the stone. Sapphires are also found in many other colors, including yellow, green, white, black, violet, and orange. Non-blue sapphires are called fancy sapphires. The red variety of corundum is* [*known*](daat.html) *as a ruby.*

*The most valuable sapphires once came from Kashmir, in India. They are a magnificent cornflower blue, the color to which all sapphires are compared. Today, Thailand is the most important source of blue sapphires. Blue and fancy sapphires are also found in Burma, Sri Lanka, Australia, and the state of Montana in the United States.*

[*Star*](mazaroth.html) *sapphires contain needles of the mineral rutile that reflect light in* [*six*](six.html)[*star*](mazaroth.html) *like rays. The most highly prized* [*star*](mazaroth.html) *sapphires are blue. Black or white* [*star*](mazaroth.html) *sapphires are less valuable.*

*Among minerals, sapphires and rubies rank second only to diamonds in hardness. For this reason, sapphires are sometimes used as abrasive or polishing agents. Large* [*numbers*](nchart.html) *of inexpensive imitation sapphires are manufactured every year. But the natural stones have maintained their high value because of a demand for the real gems.*

The Throne of Glory was also seen as made of sapphire.[[10]](#footnote-10) This stone is related to wisdom,[[11]](#footnote-11) and the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word *sappir* is related to *sefer*, a book (Tzioni). It is also related to *vision*.[[12]](#footnote-12) Some say that this “sapphire” is like a “[third](three.html) eye,” through which mystical vision is attained,[[13]](#footnote-13) and indeed, this [third](three.html) eye is associated with a sapphire blue color.

The [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word for sapphire is *Sapir*. The [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word “sefirah” has several meanings. The famous Kabbalist, the Ramak,[[14]](#footnote-14) in his monumental work the “[Pardes](remez.html)“, writes that “sefirah” comes both from the root “counting” (Mispar, [number](nchart.html)) and “sippur”, as in relating a story. A [third](three.html) root of “sefirah” is “sapir”, a sapphire stone, which is a translucent crystal that shines brightly.

During [Iyar](feasts.html), when the [first](one.html) [plague](plagues.html) began, the “lower reality” is slowly refined to become a proper vessel able to receive the revelation of the essence of the “higher reality.” This is accomplished by fulfilling the [commandment](cmds613.html) of Sefirat HaOmer (“the counting of the [omer](omer.html); the word for “counting,” sefirah is from the same root as “sapphire,” the brilliant stone [known](daat.html) as ‘even sapir’, denoting the light scintillating from within lowly materiality).

So, now we [know](daat.html) that sapphire is extremely hard. Engraved, not just written, on this, extremely hard, sapphire staff are the abbreviations for the [ten](ten.html) [plagues](plagues.html). At this point, we need to understand a bit about the [plagues](plagues.html) in Egypt in order to gain some [insight](insights.html) into this staff:

# 

# The Staff and the [Plagues](plagues.html)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The purpose of the [first](one.html) group:  **G-d’s existence.**  These were initiated by Aaron, with the staff of Moshe, and they involved water and land.[[15]](#footnote-15) | The purpose of the second group:  **Divine providence.**  These were initiated by G-d, without the staff of Moshe, and they involved those [dwelling](dwelling.html) on the land:[[16]](#footnote-16) | The purpose of the [third](three.html) group:  **A universal G-d.**  These were initiated by Moshe, with his staff, and they revealed G-d’s power to strike from the air:[[17]](#footnote-17) |
|  |  |  |
| 1. [**Blood**](body.html) - [Exodus](exodus.html) 7:14-25 | **4.** **Beasts** - [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:20-32 | **7.** **Hail/**[**Fire**](fire.html) - [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:13-35 |
| Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning |
| “…in the morning…” [Exodus](exodus.html) 7:15 | “… in the morning…” [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:16 | “…in the morning…” [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:13 |
| “…you shalt [know](daat.html) that I am [HASHEM](hashem.html) [Exodus](exodus.html) 7:17 | “…you will [know](daat.html) that I, [HASHEM](hashem.html), am in this land.” [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:22 | “… so you may [know](daat.html) that there is no [one](one.html) like me in all the earth. |
| Paro hardened his [heart](body.html). - [Exodus](exodus.html) 7:22-23 | Paro hardened his [heart](body.html). – [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:28 | [HASHEM](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paro. – [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:27,34,35 - [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:1 |
| Reduced the Egyptians in their own land to the insecure existence of strangers.[[18]](#footnote-18) | Reduced the Egyptians in their own land to the insecure existence of strangers. | Reduced the Egyptians in their own land to the insecure existence of strangers. |
| 2. **Frogs** - [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:1-15 | **5.** [**Plague**](plagues.html) - [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:1-7 | **8.** **Locusts** - [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:1-20 |
| Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning |
| “Go in to Pharaoh…” [Exodus](exodus.html) 7:26 | “Go in to Pharaoh…” [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:1 | “…Go in to Pharaoh…” [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:1 |
| Paro hardened his [heart](body.html). – [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:11 | Paro hardened his [heart](body.html). – [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:7 | [HASHEM](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paro. – [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:20 |
| Robbed the Egyptians of their pride, their possessions, and their sense of superiority, reducing them to lowly submission. | Robbed the Egyptians of their pride, their possessions, and their sense of superiority, reducing them to lowly submission. | Robbed the Egyptians of their pride, their possessions, and their sense of superiority, reducing them to lowly submission. |
| 3. **Lice** - [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:16-19 | **6.** **Boils** - [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:8-12 | **9.** **Darkness** - [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:21-29 |
| No warning! [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:16 | No warning! [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:8 | No warning! [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:21 |
| Paro hardened his [heart](body.html). – [Exodus](exodus.html) 8:15 | [HASHEM](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paro. – [Exodus](exodus.html) 9:12 | [HASHEM](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paro. – [Exodus](exodus.html) 10:27 |
| Imposed upon the Egyptians actual [physical](physical.html) suffering. | Imposed upon the Egyptians actual [physical](physical.html) suffering. | Imposed upon the Egyptians actual [physical](physical.html) suffering. |
| **10.** **Death** - **This was brought on by G-d:**[[19]](#footnote-19) - [Exodus](exodus.html) 12:29-33 | | |
| [HaShem](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paro – [Exodus](exodus.html) 14:4-5 | | |

From the above chart, we can see that [six](six.html) of the [ten](ten.html) [plagues](plagues.html) were performed with this staff. Further, we see that EVERY [plague](plagues.html) initiated by men, was initiated with THIS sapphire staff. The only [plagues](plagues.html) not initiated with this staff, were initiated by [HaShem](hashem.html) Himself. Never the less, since this staff was fashioned by [HaShem](hashem.html), we can understand why it was not necessary for those [plagues](plagues.html) which demonstrated Divine providence.

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) also speaks of this division of the [plagues](plagues.html):

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***XII:4*** *AND MOSHE STRETCHED FORTH HIS ROD TOWARD* [*HEAVEN*](heaven.html) *(IX, 23).* [*Three*](three.html) *of the* [*plagues*](plagues.html) *came through the agency of Aaron,* [*three*](three.html) *through Moshe,* [*three*](three.html) *through God, and* [*one*](one.html) *through the united efforts of all* [*three*](three.html)*.* [*Blood*](body.html)*, frogs, and gnats, being on the earth, were through Aaron; hail, locusts, and darkness, through Moshe, because they were in the air and Moshe had power over earth and* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*; the swarms, the murrain, and the* [*plague*](plagues.html) *of the firstborn through God, and the boils-- through all of them.*

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) also gives us some [insight](insights.html) into the engraving on this staff:

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***V:6*** *AND* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *SAID UNTO MOSHE: WHEN THOU GOEST BACK* [*INTO EGYPT*](thebirth.html)*, SEE THAT THOU Do BEFORE PHARAOH ALL THE WONDERS, etc. (IV, 21). To which of the wonders did He refer? Should you say to the serpent, to the leprosy, or the* [*blood*](body.html)*, well, did not God tell him to perform these wonders only before Israel? Moreover, we do not find that Moshe performed these wonders before Pharaoh?[[20]](#footnote-20) The meaning of ALL THE WONDERS WHICH I HAVE PUT IN THY* [*HAND*](fourteen.html) *(ib.) is the rod on which were inscribed the* [*Ten*](ten.html)[*Plagues*](plagues.html)*, for it had inscribed upon it the abbreviations De Za K, ‘a Da SH Be’a Ha B.[[21]](#footnote-21) God said unto him: ‘These are the* [*plagues*](plagues.html) *which I have put in thy* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*; do them before Pharaoh with this rod.’*

The [plagues](plagues.html) were performed in the following order on the date specified:

[**Nisan**](feasts.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [first](one.html) [plague](plagues.html): [**Blood**](body.html). [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***7:19*** [*Seder*](haggada.html) *Olam 3* (Sapphire staff)

[**Iyar**](feasts.html): No [plague](plagues.html).

[**Sivan**](feasts.html): No [plague](plagues.html).

[**Tammuz**](feasts.html): No [Plague](plagues.html).

[**Av**](feasts.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the second [plague](plagues.html): **Frogs**. [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***8:2*** [*Seder*](haggada.html) *HaDorot* (Sapphire staff)

[**Elul**](elul.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [third](three.html) [plague](plagues.html): **Lice**. [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***8:16*** *Zikhron Yemot Olam* (Sapphire staff)

[**Tishri**](feasts.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [fourth](four.html) [plague](plagues.html): **Beasts** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***8:24*** *Zihron Yemot Olam* ([HaShem](hashem.html))

**Cheshvan 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [fifth](five.html) [plague](plagues.html): **Cattle** [**plague**](plagues.html) [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***9:3*** *Zihron Yemot Olam* ([HaShem](hashem.html))

[**Kislev**](feasts.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [sixth](six.html) [plague](plagues.html): **Boils**. [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***9:9*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* ([HaShem](hashem.html))

**Tevet 1**: Egypt was afflicted with the seventh [plague](plagues.html): **Hail and** [**fire**](fire.html).[***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***9:24*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (Sapphire staff)

[**Shevat**](feasts.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [eighth](eight.html) [plague](plagues.html): **Locusts**. [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***10:4*** *Zichron Yemot Olam* (Sapphire staff)

[**Adar**](feasts.html) **1**: Egypt was afflicted with the [ninth](nine.html) [plague](plagues.html): **Darkness**. [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***10:21*** *Zikhron Yemot Olam*. (Sapphire staff)

[**Nisan**](feasts.html) **15**: Egypt was afflicted with the tenth [plague](plagues.html): **Death of the firstborn**. [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***33:3-4*** ([HaShem](hashem.html))

Later, in Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 4, we see this sapphire staff again:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:17,20*** *“And you shall take in your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *this staff (mateh), with which you will work wonders ... and he took the staff (mateh) of G-d in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*.”*

In this pasuk we see that [HaShem](hashem.html) intends to use this staff for wonders. From our look at the [plagues](plagues.html), we can see that this staff was, indeed, used to perform some of the most miraculous wonders the [world](worlds.html) has ever seen.

In Shemot 4, we see the [first](one.html) “wonder” performed with this staff:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:1-5*** *And Moshe answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *hath not appeared unto thee. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto him, What [is] that in thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moshe fled from before it. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moshe, Put forth thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and caught it, and it became a rod in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*: That they may believe that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, the God of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, the God of* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*, and the God of* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, hath appeared unto thee.*

This sapphire staff was turned into a serpent, and not just any serpent, as we have already seen. This was the serpent that tempted Eve. This was the same staff/serpent that set off the [ten](ten.html) [plagues](plagues.html); that divided the Reed (Red) Sea; and that brought forth water from rocks. Made of sapphire with [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s ineffable [Name](name.html) written upon it, this staff was no ordinary staff, its origin was part of the [creation](bara.html) process. It was the agent of [creation](bara.html) in that it controls [creation](bara.html). This staff was able to put the [world](worlds.html) on its track of goodness.

This staff is capable of transforming evil into its good form, and of transforming good into its evil form. This is graphically demonstrated when Moshe casts the staff down and it is converted into THE primal snake. When he grasps The primal snake’s tail, it is converted back into a staff. In his [hand](fourteen.html) it is a staff. On the ground, out of his [hand](fourteen.html), it is THE primal snake.

Since this sapphire staff was part of [creation](bara.html), it comes as no wonder that when it was transformed, on the ground (not in his [hand](fourteen.html)), it became the serpent of the [creation](bara.html) story. The [Midrash](orallaw.html) tells us why this particular serpent was used in this demonstration:

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***III:12*** *AND MOSHE ANSWERED AND SAID: BUT, BEHOLD, THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE ME (IV, 1). Moshe then* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *not befittingly; for God had said to him: ‘And they shall hearken to thy voice’ (III, 18), and he said: BUT, BEHOLD, THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE ME. Whereupon God answered him on his own lines and gave him* [*signs*](signs.html) *according to his words. See what it says after this: AND THE* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *SAID UNTO HIM: WHAT IS (MAZEH) THAT IN THY* [*HAND*](fourteen.html)*? AND HE SAID: A ROD (IV, 2), that is to say: ‘Thou art worthy of being smitten with that (mizzeh) which is in thy* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, for thou didst* [*speak*](mashal.html) *slanderously of my children who are believers and the sons of believers.’ They are believers, as it says: And the people believed (Ex. XIV, 31); and the sons of believers, as it says: And he believed in the Lord (Gen. XV, 6).[[22]](#footnote-22) Moshe had followed the example of the serpent who had spoken slanderously of his Creator, as it is said: For God doth* [*know*](daat.html) *(ib. III, 5); so just as the serpent was punished, so will he be punished. See what is written: AND HE SAID: CAST IT ON THE GROUND. AND HE CAST IT ON THE GROUND AND IT BECAME A SERPENT (IV, 3). Because he had copied the example of the serpent, God showed him the serpent, as if to say: ‘ Thou didst do the thing that this serpent did.’*

*AND MOSHE FLED FROM BEFORE IT. A Roman lady once boasted to R. Jose: ‘My God is greater than yours.’ ‘In which way?’ he asked. She replied: ‘For when your God revealed Himself unto Moshe at the thorn-bush, he merely hid his* [*face*](body.html)*, but when he beheld the serpent, who is my god, immediately he fled from before it.’ To which he replied: ‘Woe to her. When our God revealed Himself at the thorn-bush, there was no room for him to flee anywhere. Where could he flee? To the* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*? Or to the sea, or dry land? See what it says in reference to our God: Do not I fill* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and earth? saith the Lord (Jer. XXIII, 24).[[23]](#footnote-23) Whereas, your god, the serpent, a man can escape from merely by running away a few paces; for this reason does it say, AND MOSHE FLED FROM BEFORE IT,’ Another reason of his flight is because he had sinned by his words. Had he not sinned, he would not have fled, for not the serpent brings death, but* [*sin*](sin.html)*, as it is written in the story of R. Hanina b. Dosa.[[24]](#footnote-24) AND THE* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *SAID UNTO MOSHE: PUT FORTH THY* [*HAND*](fourteen.html)*, AND TAKE IT BY THE TAIL (IV, 4). We have already explained what the serpent implied for Moshe; but what did this* [*sign*](signs.html) *signify for Israel? R. Eleazar opined that the rod was converted into a serpent as symbolic Of Pharaoh who was called a serpent, as it says: Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh King of Egypt, the great-dragon (Ezek. XXIX, 3). He is also referred to as the leviathan the slant serpent (Isa. XXVII, 1), because he hit Israel. God said to him [Moshe]: ‘ Dost thou see Pharaoh who is like a serpent? Well, thou wilt smite him with the rod and in the end he will become like wood; and just as the rod cannot bite, so he will no longer bite’; hence: PUT FORTH THY* [*HAND*](fourteen.html) *AND TAKE IT BY THE TAIL. THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE THAT THE LORD, THE GOD OF THEIR* [*FATHERS*](fathers.html)*... HATH APPEARED UNTO THEE (IV, 5). Go and perform before them this miracle that they should believe that I appeared unto thee.*

So, midda kneged midda, measure for measure, [HaShem](hashem.html) punished Moshe’s slander with the [one](one.html) who [first](one.html) slandered. From the above [Midrash](orallaw.html) we can see that [HaShem](hashem.html) accomplished multiple tasks with this “serpent” [sign](signs.html).

Let’s look again at this passage in Shemot 4:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:17,20*** *“And you shall take in your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *this staff (mateh), with which you will work wonders ... and he took the staff (mateh) of Elokim in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*.”*

This pasuk indicates that the “staff of Moshe” was, in reality, the staff of Elokim (G-d). Elokim again reminds us of [creation](bara.html) where [HaShem](hashem.html) used this [name](name.html) for creating. The [Midrash](orallaw.html) gives some [insight](insights.html) into G-d’s staff:

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***VIII:1*** *…* [*One*](one.html) *must not make use of the sceptre of a mortal king, but God handed His sceptre to Moshe, as it says: And Moshe took the rod of God in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *(Ex. IV, 20). …*

# A Staff in the [Hand](fourteen.html)

As we have noted several times, the action of the staff when it is in the [hand](fourteen.html) of Moshe or Aaron is far different that the action of the staff when it is on the ground. Note that when Moshe went to Egypt, he took the staff, as we read in the Targum:

***TARGUM PSEUDO JONATHAN Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) ‎‎‎4:20****. So Moses took his wife and his sons, mounted them on the* [*ass*](chamor.html)*, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *the rod which he had taken from the garden of his father-in-*[*law*](law.html)*. It ­was of sapphire from the throne of glory, its weight was* [*forty*](forty.html) *seahs, and the great and glorious* [*name*](name.html) *was clearly engraved on it, and with it miracles were performed fr­om before the Lord.*

While it is in Moshe’s or Aaron’s [hand](fourteen.html) it performs the most amazing wonders, the wonders of [creation](bara.html):

It separates the waters and creates dry land:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 1:7*** *And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which [were] under the firmament from the waters which [were] above the firmament: and it was so.*

Versus:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 14:21*** *And Moshe stretched out his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *over the sea; and* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *caused the sea to go [back] by a strong* [*east*](east.html) *wind all that night, and made the sea dry [land], and the waters were divided.*

It creates animals and swarming creatures on the Earth:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 1:24*** *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.*

Versus:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 8:20-21*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moshe, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms [of flies] upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms [of flies], and also the ground whereon they [are].*

And:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 8:2-15*** *And if thou refuse to let [them] go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading troughs: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *spake unto Moshe, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.*

And:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 8:16-17*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moshe, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.*

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 17:4-6*** *And Moshe cried unto* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moshe, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moshe did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.*

So, in the [hand](fourteen.html) of Moshe and Aaron, [two](two.html) great Tzaddikim (righteous men), this sapphire staff had the power of [creation](bara.html). It was called Elohim’s staff because Elohim is the [name](name.html) [HaShem](hashem.html) uses when executing strict justice (The [world](worlds.html) was created with strict justice).

This link to [creation](bara.html) is also shown when Moshe let go of the rod and cast it to the earth. At this point, the staff transforms itself into the serpent who tempted Eve. Out of Moshe’s [hand](fourteen.html), this staff becomes unspeakable evil. When Moshe confronts his fear and takes the serpent in his [hand](fourteen.html) (taking control so to [speak](mashal.html)), the serpent becomes again an instrument of [creation](bara.html):

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:2-5*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto him, What [is] that in thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moshe fled from before it. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moshe, Put forth thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and caught it, and it became a rod in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*: That they may believe that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *God of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, the God of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, the God of* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*, and the God of* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, hath appeared unto thee.*

When we take a hold of [creation](bara.html) to perform the will of [HaShem](hashem.html), we create a G-dly reality. When we relinquish control to the base things of this [world](worlds.html), we unleash unspeakable evil on the earth. It is my fervent tefillah, [prayer](prayer.html), that we grasp and use [creation](bara.html) correctly, for the glory of [HaShem](hashem.html).

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) speaks of this staff as a spear, divine rod, Moshe’s rod, and the ‘rod of God’:

***Soncino*** [***Zohar***](orallaw.html)***, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 6b*** *The next verse reads: “And he smote an Egyptian, a man of good appearance, etc.” The mystical meaning of this verse is that every* [*time*](time.html) *Israel* [*sins*](sin.html)*, God leaves them and withholds from them all the blessings and all the lights which illumined them. “He smote an Egyptian”: this signifies the light of Israel’s great luminary, to wit, Moses, who is called an Egyptian, as it is written, “And they said, an Egyptian delivered us, etc.” (Exod. II, 19), for there he was born, there he was brought up and there he was vouchsafed the higher light. “A man of good appearance” (mar’eh) also signifies Moses, of whom it is written “ou-mar’eh (by clear appearance) and not in dark speeches” (Num. XII, 8); so too “man” (ish), as he is called “man of God” (Deut. XXXIII, 1), the husband, as it were, of the Divine glory, leading it whereso he would upon the earth, a privilege no other man had ever enjoyed. “And the Egyptian had a spear in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*,” to wit, the divine rod that was delivered into his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, as we read: “With the rod of God in my* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*“ (Exod. XVII, 9), which is the same rod that was created in the twilight of the Eve of* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, and on which there was engraven the Divine* [*Name*](name.html) *in sacred* [*letters*](letters.html)*. With the same rod Moses sinned by smiting the rock, as we read: “And he smote the rock with his rod twice” (Num. XX, 11). The Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, said to him “I have not given the rod for that purpose; by thy life, from henceforward it will not be in thy* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *anymore.” Immediately “He went down to him with a rod”, i.e. He judged him rigidly, “and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian’s* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*,” for from that moment he lost it and never more regained it. “And slew him with his spear,” i.e. through the* [*sin*](sin.html) *of smiting the rock with that rod he died without entering the Holy Land, and thereby that illumination was withheld from Israel.*

The [Zohar](orallaw.html) speaks of this staff as the staff of God, Metatron, and the Oral [Law](law.html):

***Soncino*** [***Zohar***](orallaw.html)***, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 27a*** *Similarly of Moses it is written, “And the staff of God was in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*.” This rod is Metatron, from* [*one*](one.html) *side of whom comes life and from the other death. When the rod remains a rod, it is a help from the side of good, and when it is turned into a serpent it is hostile, so that “Moses fled from it”, and God delivered it into his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*. This rod typifies the Oral* [*Law*](law.html) *which prescribes what is permitted and what is forbidden. When Moses struck the rock God took it back from him, and “he went down to him with a rod” (II Sam. XXXIII, 21), to smite him with it, the “rod” being the evil inclination, which is a serpent, the cause of the captivity.*

***Soncino*** [***Zohar***](orallaw.html)***, Shemot, Section 2, Page 48a*** *BUT LIFT THOU UP THY ROD, AND STRETCH OUT THINE* [*HAND*](fourteen.html) *OVER THE SEA, AND DIVIDE IT. This signifies: “Lift up thy rod, on which is engraved the Holy* [*Name*](name.html)*; stretch out thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *with the side bearing this Holy* [*Name*](name.html)*, so that the waters, beholding it, may flee before the power that is in its* [*letters*](letters.html)*. The other side of the rod will be used for other ends.” Said R. Eleazar: ‘How is it that the rod is termed sometimes “the rod of God” and sometimes “the rod of Moses”?’ R. Simeon replied: ‘In the book of R. Hamnuna the ancient it is rightly remarked that the* [*two*](two.html) *names are equivalent, the purpose of the rod in either case being to stir up the powers of Geburah (Might, or Judgement). “Thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*“ indicates the Left* [*Hand*](mashal.html)*, which is that connected with Geburah. Woe’, R. Simeon continued, ‘unto those who are deaf to the lessons of the Torah, which it proclaims to them every day. Water originates from the side of Geburah and issues thence. Now, therefore, that God desired to dry up the water, why did He bid Moses use his left* [*hand*](mashal.html)*? The answer is that Moses was bidden to “lift up his staff” to dry the waters, and to “stretch forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*“ to bring them back on the Egyptians, through the agency of Geburah-the* [*two*](two.html) *operations being distinct. What is called here “sea” is later called “deeps” (Ex. xv, 8). This shows that God performed* [*one*](one.html) *miracle within another: causing the deeps to congeal in the* [*heart*](body.html) *of the sea, so that “the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea“ (xv 8, 19).’*

# The Sword in the Stone

By now, I am sure that most of you have made the [connection](connection.html) between Moshe’s staff and Excalibur, the sword of King Arthur. In this myth, Arthur becomes king after he removes a sword named Excalibur, from a stone which miraculously held it. Because he was able to do this, Arthur was made king. As king, Arthur [redeemed](redemption.html) the people of England from all their enemies.

The parallels between Moshe’s staff and Excalibur are striking. Moshe removes the staff from Yitro’s (Jethro’s) garden (bed room), where it had been miraculously held. After doing this feat, Moshe is recognized as the redeemer of [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s people. Moshe eventually becomes like a king over the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people. Instead of using a sword to vanquish his enemies, Moshe uses the staff of God. Instead of a round table with [thirteen](thirteen.html) knights, Moshe has a “round” [camp](stages.html) with “[thirteen](thirteen.html)“ [tribes](tribes.html).

The truth of the parable of Moshe, though, is far more profound and powerful than the myth of King Arthur. There is some hint that most of the myths of the [world](worlds.html) are mere knockoffs of the truth found in the [Midrash](orallaw.html).

**The Staff of Power**

It appears that the origin of the magic wand, was Moshe’s rod.

This rod, in the [hand](fourteen.html) of Moshe, was an instrument of [creation](bara.html). When thrown to the ground, out of Moshe’s [hand](fourteen.html), it became a serpent of indescribable evil. It became the serpent which tempted Eve in the [garden of Eden](eden.html).[[25]](#footnote-25) These same thoughts are a part of the myth of the magic wand: That which is taken in the [hand](fourteen.html) to do good or evil.

The differences between the magic wand and the staff of Moshe are manifest:

* Moshe’s staff was too heavy to be picked up without miraculous intervention.
* Moshe’s staff was real.
* Moshe’s staff was made of sapphire.
* Moshe’s staff was G-d’s staff.
* Moshe’s staff was engraved with the [name](name.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html).
* Moshe’s staff was used by the righteous to perform the will of [HaShem](hashem.html).

# Miracles

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 7:23*** *Behold, I shall strike the waters that are in the River with the staff that is in my* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and they shall change to* [*blood*](body.html)*‘.*

In the [Pesach](passover.html) [Haggada](haggada.html), we say that Moshe’s staff performed “otot - אות”, “[signs](signs.html)“. Also, we refer to the [plagues](plagues.html) as “moftim”, “wonders”. What do these terms mean? R’ [Yitzchak](isaac.html) [Isaac](isaac.html) Chaver z”l[[26]](#footnote-26) explains:

The miracles that [HaShem](hashem.html) has performed for Israel fall into [two](two.html) categories. The [first](one.html) is called, “otot”, “[signs](signs.html)“, which describes miracles intended to foretell or even bring about a [future](future.html) [event](feasts.html). For example, in II Kings 13:15-19, the prophet Elisha tells King Yoash to shoot arrows toward the Kingdom of Aram as a [sign](signs.html) that Yoash would defeat Aram. When Yoash obeys only partially, the prophet tells him that he will weaken, but not destroy, Aram.

Moshe’s staff was a “[sign](signs.html)“ because the names of all of the [plagues](plagues.html) were carved into it, thus foretelling what would occur. Also, the staff was a [sign](signs.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s [desire](needs.html) to fulfill the will of the righteous, because the staff represented a king’s scepter, and its being in Moshe’s [hand](fourteen.html) foretold that [HaShem](hashem.html) would turn over a certain amount of control over the [world](worlds.html) to Moshe and Bne Israel, i.e., that the [world](worlds.html)‘s [future](future.html) would depend on the quality of Bne Israel’s deeds.

“Moftim”, on the other [hand](fourteen.html), are miracles that [HaShem](hashem.html) performs directly without a “[sign](signs.html)“ preceding them and without any participation by the righteous on earth. These are not meant to prove anything, but serve other purposes. The [plagues](plagues.html) in Egypt, concludes R’ Chaver, were both *otot* and *moftim*. They were “[signs](signs.html)“ because they were meant to prove a point, namely that [HaShem](hashem.html) gives control of the [world](worlds.html) to deserving righteous men, information that would encourage Bne Israel to receive and observe the Torah. They also were moftim, miracles that were designed to punish the Egyptians.[[27]](#footnote-27)

# [Mashiach](mashiach.html) ([Messiah](mashiach.html)) and the staff

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah - Genesis LXXXV:9*** *AND HE SAID: WHAT PLEDGE SHALL I GIVE THEE? AND SHE SAID: THY SIGNET AND THY CORD, AND THY* ***STAFF*** *THAT IS IN THY* [*HAND*](fourteen.html) *(XXXVIII, 18). R. Hunia said: A holy spirit was enkindled within her. THY SIGNET alludes to royalty, as in the verse, Though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon My right* [*hand*](mashal.html)*, etc. (Jer. XXII, 24); AND THY CORD (PETHIL - EKA) alludes to the Sanhedrin, as in the verse, And that they put with the fringe of each corner a thread (pethil) of blue, etc. (Num. XV, 38) AND THY* ***STAFF*** *alludes to the royal* [*Messiah*](mashiach.html)*, as in the verse, The* ***staff*** *of thy strength the Lord will send out of Zion (Ps. CX, 2). AND HE GAVE THEM TO HER... AND SHE CONCEIVED BY HIM-men mighty like himself and righteous like himself. AND JUDAH SENT THE KID OF THE GOATS (XXXVIII, 20). R. Judah b. Nahman quoted in the* [*name*](name.html) *of R. Simeon b. Lakish: Laughing in His habitable earth, laughing always before him (Prov.VIII, 31, 30). The Torah laughs at men. The Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, said to Judah: ‘ Thou didst deceive thy father with a kid of goats; by thy life! Tamar will deceive thee with a kid of goats.’*

In this next passage we see that the staff is meant to bring life:

***Pesachim 68a*** *R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in R. Jonathan’s* [*name*](name.html)*: The righteous are destined to* [*resurrect*](techiyat.html) *the dead, for it is said, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, every man with his* ***staff*** *in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *for very age;* *and it is written, and lay my* ***staff*** *upon the* [*face*](body.html) *of the child.**[[28]](#footnote-28)*

The Sforno also associates this staff with life in his commentary on [Exodus](exodus.html) chapter 3 and 4:

מַה-זֶּה בְיָדֶךָ – Here is a staff which is an inert object, and the [hand](fourteen.html) which is something very much alive. I will demonstrate that I can kill that which is alive and bring to life that which is dead. I will make your [hand](fourteen.html) useless and your staff will suddenly come alive.

In the Rambam’s work titled, “The [Laws](law.html) Concerning [Mashiach](mashiach.html)“, the Ramban also associates this staff with [Mashiach](mashiach.html).

*There is also a reference [to* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*] in the passage concerning Bilaam, who prophesies about the* [*two*](two.html) *anointed [kings]: the* [*first*](one.html) *anointed [king]**, David, who saved Israel from her oppressors, and the final anointed [king] who will arise from among his descendants and* [*save*](salvation.html) *Israel [at the* [*End of Days*](lastdays.html)*]**. The following [quoted] phrases are from that passage: [Bamidbar 24:17-18]*

*“I see it, but not now” - This refers to David; “I perceive it, but not in the near* [*future*](future.html)*“ - This refers to King* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*.*

*“A* [*star*](mazaroth.html) *shall go forth from* [*Yaaqov*](israelja.html) *“ - This refers to David; “and a* ***staff*** *shall arise in Israel” - This refers to King* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*.*

\* \* \*

Midrashic and Zoharic sources tell us that the staff of Moses was carved from the tree of knowledge (ets ha-da’at) in the Garden of Eden; that this was the same staff that Jacob carried over the Jordan; and that this staff will ultimately be placed in the hand of the messianic king of the future.[[29]](#footnote-29) The staff accordingly emerges as a symbol of continuity, marking every stage of humanity’s historic journey. R. Shmuel adds that this staff also bridges the poles of cosmic reality: It symbolizes the middle path that spans the entire hierarchy of existence, from keter, through da’at and Tiferet, and all the way down to malchut. In spanning the cosmos and collapsing its hierarchical facade, the staff of Moses acquires the miraculous power to reveal divinity in the place of concealment.

In R. Shmuel’s words:

*The staff of Moses and the staff of the future-to-come; both are of the same station as the staff of Jacob [who said, “for with my staff I crossed the Jordan”] … and for this reason the splitting of the sea [following the exodus from Egypt] was possible … In order for the sea to be transformed into dry land, which is a change from the way it was created … [G‑d commanded Moses] “and you raise up your staff,” the staff of Jacob, with which he crossed the Jordan, for Jacob is the middle bolt that runs from one pole to the other …[[30]](#footnote-30) for he is the station of beauty (Tiferet) [which arises from the combination of the entire spectrum of color], which rises to the transcendence of keter, drawing forth an easterly wind (ru’ah kadim) from the one who pre-exists the world (kadmono shel olam) so that the sea shall be transformed into dry land.”19*

\* \* \*

The following chart shows the wonders that were performed in Egypt with the staff of Moses:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The purpose of the [first](one.html) group:  [**HaShem**](hashem.html)**‘s existence.**  These were initiated by Aaron, with the staff of Moses, and they involved water and land.[[31]](#footnote-31)  **DeTzaCh** - דצ״ך | The purpose of the second group:  **Divine providence.**  These were initiated by [HaShem](hashem.html), *without* the staff of Moses, and they involved those [dwelling](dwelling.html) on the land:[[32]](#footnote-32)  **AdaSh -** עד״ש | The purpose of the [third](three.html) group:  **A universal** [**HaShem**](hashem.html)**.**  These were initiated by Moses, with his staff, and they revealed [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s power to strike from the air:[[33]](#footnote-33)  **BeAChaB -** באח״ב |
|  |  |  |
| 1. [**Blood**](body.html) - דם  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 7:14-25 | **4.** **Beasts** - ערוב  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:20-32 | **7.** **Hail/**[**Fire**](fire.html) **-** ברד  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:13-35 |
| Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning |
| “…in the morning…” Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 7:15 | “… in the morning…” Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:16 | “…in the morning…” Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:13 |
| “…you shalt [know](daat.html) that I am [HaShem](hashem.html) Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 7:17 | “…you will [know](daat.html) that I, [HaShem](hashem.html), am in this land.” Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:22 | “… so you may [know](daat.html) that there is no [one](one.html) like me in all the earth. |
| Paroh hardened his [heart](body.html). - Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 7:22-23 | Paroh hardened his [heart](body.html). – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:28 | [HaShem](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paroh. – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:27,34,35 – Shemot 10:1 |
| Reduced the Egyptians in their own land to the insecure existence of strangers.[[34]](#footnote-34) | Reduced the Egyptians in their own land to the insecure existence of strangers. | Reduced the Egyptians in their own land to the insecure existence of strangers. |
| 2. **Frogs** - צפרדע  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:1-15 | **5.** [**Plague**](plagues.html) - דבר  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:1-7 | **8.** **Locusts** - ארבה  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 10:1-20 |
| Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning | Preceded by a warning |
| “Go in to Pharaoh…”  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 7:26 | “Go in to Pharaoh…”  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:1 | “…Go in to Pharaoh…”  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 10:1 |
| Paroh hardened his [heart](body.html). – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:11 | Paroh hardened his [heart](body.html). – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:7 | [HaShem](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paroh. – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 10:20 |
| Robbed the Egyptians of their pride, their possessions, and their sense of superiority, reducing them to lowly submission. | Robbed the Egyptians of their pride, their possessions, and their sense of superiority, reducing them to lowly submission. | Robbed the Egyptians of their pride, their possessions, and their sense of superiority, reducing them to lowly submission. |
| 3. **Lice** - כנים  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:16-19 | **6.** **Boils** - שחין  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:8-12 | **9.** **Darkness** - חשך  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 10:21-29 |
| No warning!  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:16 | No warning!  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:8 | No warning!  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 10:21 |
| Paroh hardened his [heart](body.html)  Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 8:15 | [HASHEM](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paroh. – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 9:12 | [HASHEM](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paroh. – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 10:27 |
| Imposed upon the Egyptians actual [physical](physical.html) suffering. | Imposed upon the Egyptians actual [physical](physical.html) suffering. | Imposed upon the Egyptians actual [physical](physical.html) suffering. |
| **10.** **Death** - בכורות מכת **-** **This was brought on by** [**HaShem**](hashem.html)**:**[[35]](#footnote-35) - Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 12:29-33 | | |
| [HaShem](hashem.html) hardened the [heart](body.html) of Paroh – Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 14:4-5 | | |

The above wonders are important because we will see them again in the days of [Mashiach](mashiach.html), as the Prophet [spoke](mashal.html):

***Micah 7:15****'As in the days of thy* [*coming*](coming.html) *forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things.'*

A concluding thought:

***Sanhedrin 99b*** *R. Abbahu said: He who causes his neighbour to fulfill a precept is regarded by Scripture as though he had done it himself, for it is written, [The Lord said unto Moshe . . . take . . . ] thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river:[[36]](#footnote-36) did Moshe then smite it? Aaron smote it! But, he who causes his neighbour to fulfill a precept, is regarded by Scripture as though he had done it himself.*

\* \* \*

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1. The *mishna* in *Avot* lists the staff as one of ten elements created by *HaShem* during twilight immediately succeeding the six days of creation. According to the Rambam, this signifies that the miracles themselves which the staff would catalyze were already inserted within the natural order. As they are deviant from the normal system, they had to be “created” during the final twilight of Creation and not during the six days proper. However, as they were still “natural”, they must be rooted in those original six days. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Shem HaMeforash of HaShem (the 42 letter name of HaShem) and the abbreviations for the 10 plagues carved on it - בְּאַחַ”ב עַדַ”שׁ דְּצַ”ךְ . Also engraved on the staff were the names of the Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, as well as the names of the six Matriarchs, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. Also included were the names of Yaakov’s twelve sons, Reuben, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Yissachar, Zevulun, Dan, Naftali, Gad, Asher, Yosef and Binyamin. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “The Midrash Says – The Book of Shemot”, by Rabbi Moshe Weissman. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This excerpt is taken from “Sefer HaAggada”. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A measure of volume for dry objects and for liquids; cf. Sot. 34a. It probably means: the weight of 40 seah of water (v. Glos.). This miraculous staff weighed 40 seah, that is 240 okkas (672 pounds). The Turkish oka is a measure of weight, equivalent to 2.8 pounds. According to this, a seah is 16.8 pounds. Since one gallon of water weighs 8.35 pounds, a seah in liquid measure is then approximately 2 gallons. The specific gravity of sapphire is 4, and therefore, if the staff weighed 672 pounds (305kg), it had a volume of 76,000 cubic centimeters, 4638 cubic inches, or 2.68 cubic feet. If it is assumed that the staff was 8 feet long, it would have had an average thickness of seven inches. – The Torah Anthology, Yalkut Meam Loez , Exodus I, volume 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **Rashi Commentary for: ‎ Shemot (Exod.) 17:6** **and you shall strike the rock** Heb. וְהִכִּיתָ בַצּוּר. It does not say עַל-הַצּוּר, upon the rock, but בַצּוּר, [lit., into the rock]. **From here [we deduce] that the staff was of a hard substance called sapphire, and the rock was split by it**.-[from Mechilta] [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Heb. Amora. The teacher or lecturer whispered his points to the amora, who then amplified them to the congregation. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A measure of volume for dry objects and for liquids; cf. Sot. 34a. It probably means: the weight of forty seah of water (v. Glos.). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Contributor: Robert I. Gait, Ph.D., Curator, Department of Mineralogy, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ezekiel 1:26, 10:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Bachya on Exodus 28:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Bachya loc. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Raavad on Sefer Yetzirah 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. R. Moshe Cordovero, d. 1570 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Radal: But before Israel. For on his first visit to Pharaoh there is no mention of a miracle at all, whilst the miracle performed on his second visit was not on account of this general command but was specially enjoined (v. Vll, 9): similarly the plague of blood (ib. 16 f.), while there is no mention of leprosy at all as having been performed before Pharaoh. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The letters באח״ב עד״ש דצ״ך which are the initials of the names of the Ten Plagues in Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The reference is to Avraham. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The verse begins thus: Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Cf. also Ps. CXXXIX, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ber. 33a. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus III:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 1789-1852; Rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. II Kings 4:29. The staff was employed to revive the child (ibid. seq.), and the same purpose is assumed for it in the first verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See the numerous sources cited by R. Shmuel himself, and by the editors, in *Vekakhah*, 181-182. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Vekakhah*, 200-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XII:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ex. XVII, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)