

מטות משה ואהרן

אבנר רמו



“Victory O Lord” by John Everett Millais (1871). At the Battle of Rephidim against the Amalekites. Moses is holding his staff. And Aaron and Hur are supporting his hands.

In the Book of Exodus we hear God speaking to the skeptic Moses in the Mountain of God:

ויאמר אליו יהוה, מזה (מה-זה) בידך; ויאמר, מטה.
ויאמר השליכהו ארצה, וישלכהו ארצה ויהי לנחש; וינס משה מפניו.
ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, שלח ידך ואחז בזנבו; וישלח ידו ויחזק בו, ויהי למטה בכפו.
“And *YHWH* said to him: What is that in your hand?’ 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 Moses fled from before it.
And *YHWH* said to Moses: Put forth your hand, and take it by the tail--and he put forth his
hand, and laid hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand” (Ex 4:2-4).

ואת-המטה הזה תקח בידך, אשר תעשה-בו את-האתת.

“And you shall take in your hand this rod, wherewith you shall do the signs” (Ex 4:17).

ויקח משה את-אשתו ואת-בניו וירכבם על-החמר, וישב ארצה מצרים; ויקח משה את-מטה האלהים בידו.

“And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand” (Ex 4:20).

Later we hear that with this rod Moses brought upon Egypt two of the plagues:

ויט משה את-מטהו על-השמים, ויהוה נתן קלת וברד ותהלך אש ארצה; וימטר יהוה ברד על-ארץ מצרים.

“And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and *YHWH* sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down unto the earth; and *YHWH* caused to hail upon the land of Egypt” (Ex 9:23).

ויט משה את-מטהו על-ארץ מצרים, ויהוה נהג רוח-קדים בארץ כל-היום ההוא וכל-הלילה; הבקר היה-ורוח הקדים נשא את-הארבה.

“And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and *YHWH* brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all the night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts” (Ex 10:13).

Still later, when the Egyptians were pursuing the Israelites we are told:

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, מה-תצעק אלי; דבר אל-בני-ישראל ויסעו.

ואתה הרם את-מטך ונטה את-ידך על-הים-ובקעהו; ויבאו בני-ישראל בתוך הים, ביבשה.

“And *YHWH* said to Moses: Wherefore cry you to Me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward.

And lift thou up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground” (Ex 14:15-16).

It appears that Aaron had a supernatural rod of his own:

ויאמר יהוה, אל-משה ואל-אהרן לאמר.

כי ידבר אלכם פרעה לאמר, תנו לכם מופת; ואמרת אל-אהרן, קח את-מטך והשלך לפני-פרעה-יהי לתנין.

ויבא משה ואהרן אל-פרעה ויעשו כן, כאשר צוה יהוה; וישלך אהרן את-מטהו לפני פרעה ולפני עבדיו-ויהי לתנין.

ויקרא גם-פרעה לחכמים, ולמכשפים; ויעשו גם-הם חרטמי מצרים בלהטיהם-כן. וישליכו איש מטהו ויהיו לתנינים; ויבלע מטה-אהרן את-מטתם.

“And *YHWH* spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying:

When Pharaoh shall speak to you, saying: Show a wonder for you; then you shall say to Aaron: Take your rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it becomes a serpent.

And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, as *YHWH* had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their secret arts.

For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods” (Ex 7:8-12).

Aaron employed this rod to bring upon Egypt the first three plagues:

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, אמר אל-אהרן קח מטך ונטה-ידיך על-מימי מצרים על-נהרתם על-יאריהם ועל-אגמיהם ועל כל-מקוה מימיהם-ויהיו-דם; והיה דם בכל-ארץ מצרים ובעצים ובאבנים.

“And *YHWH* said to Moses: Say to Aaron: Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.” (Ex 7:19).

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, אמר אל-אהרן נטה את-ידיך במטך על-הנהרת על-היארים ועל-האגמים; והעל את-הצפרדעים על-ארץ מצרים.

“And *YHWH* said to Moses: Say to Aaron: Stretch forth your hand with your rod over the rivers, over the canals, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt” (Ex 8:1).

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, אמר אל-אהרן, נטה את-מטך והך את-עפר הארץ; והיה לכנם בכל-ארץ מצרים.

“And *YHWH* said to Moses: Say to Aaron: Stretch out your rod, and smite the dust of the earth that it may become gnats throughout all the land of Egypt” (Ex 8:12).

After leaving Egypt we hear that when the congregation of the Israelites arrived at Rephidim: **ועם** - “and they encamped in Rephidim; and there was no water for the people to drink” (Ex 17:1). As the people became enraged Moses appealed to God:

ויצעק משה אל-יהוה לאמר, מה אעשה לעם הזה; עוד מעט וסקלני. ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, עבר לפני העם וקח אתך, מזקני ישראל; ומטך אשר הכית בו את-היאר-קח בידיך והלכת. הנני עמד לפניך שם על-הצור בחרב, והכית בצור ויצאו ממנו מים ושתה העם; ויעש כן משה לעיני זקני ישראל.

“And Moses cried to *YHWH*, saying: What shall I do to this people? They are almost ready to stone me.

And *YHWH* said to Moses: Pass on before the people, and take with you of the elders of Israel; and your rod, wherewith you smote the river, take in your hand, and go.

Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel” (Ex 17:4-6).

Alas, it appears that the writer of verses 17:4-6 of the Book of Exodus forgot that the rod that was employed for smiting the river did not belong to Moses but was Aaron’s rod (Ex 8:1).



Moses brings forth Aaron's staff. *Budding of Aaron's Staff* by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld_ *From The Bible In Pictures*{1860

After the event about the challenge to the leadership of Moses and Aaron by Korah and his men ended, God ordered Moses to:

וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר.
 דבר אל-בני ישראל, וקח מאתם מטה מטה לבית אב מאת כל-נשיאיהם לבית אבתם-שנים
 עשר מטות: איש את-שמו תכתב על-מטהו.
 ואת שם אהרן תכתב על-מטה לוי: כי מטה אחד לראש בית אבותם.
 והנחתם באהל מועד-לפני העדות, אשר אועד לכם שמה.
 והיה האיש אשר אבחר-בו-מטהו יפרח;

“And *YHWH* spoke to Moses, saying:

Speak to the children of Israel, and take of them rods, one for each fathers' house, of all their princes according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; you shall write every man's name upon his rod.

And you shall write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi, for there shall be one rod for the head of their fathers' houses.

And you shall lay them up in the tent of meeting before the testimony, where I meet with you.

And it shall come to pass, that the man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud” (Num 17:16-20).

וידבר משה אל-בני ישראל, ויתנו אליו כל-נשיאיהם מטה לנשיא אחד מטה לנשיא אחד לבית אבתם-שנים עשר מטות; ומטה אהרן בתוך מטותם וינח משה את-המטת לפני יהוה, באהל העדות.

ויהי ממחרת ויבא משה אל-אהל העדות, והנה פרח מטה-אהרן לבית לוי; ויצא פרח ויצץ ציץ, ויגמל שקדים.

“And Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and all their princes gave him rods, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

And Moses laid up the rods before *YHWH* in the tent of the testimony.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and bore ripe almonds” (Num 17:21-23).

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, השב את-מטה אהרן לפני העדות למשמרת

“And *YHWH* said to Moses: Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept there” (Num 17:25).

It appears rather odd that Aaron's but not Moses' rod is the one kept “before the testimony.” while Moses' rod which is referred to as: **מטה האלהים** - “the rod of God” (Ex 4:20; 17:9), and that was turned to a serpent (Ex 4:3-4), brought hail and locusts upon the Egyptians (Ex 9:23; 10:13), divided the sea (Ex 14:16), and brought the victory against Amalek (17:9-13) did not share such an eminent status.

As previously happened in Rephidim, when the people reach Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, there was no water for the congregation (Num 20:1-2). Now we hear God:

וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר.

קח את-המטה, והקהל את-העדה אתה ואהרן אחיך, ודברתם אל-הסלע לעיניהם, ונתן מימיו; והוצאת להם מים מן-הסלע, והשקית את-העדה ואת-בעירם. ויקח משה את-המטה מלפני יהוה, כאשר צוהו.

ויקהלו משה ואהרן את-הקהל אל-פני הסלע; ויאמר להם, שמעו-נא המרים-המן-הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים.

וירם משה את-ידו, ויך את-הסלע במטהו-פעמים; ויצאו מים רבים ותשת העדה ובעירם.

“And *YHWH* spoke to Moses, saying:

Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you, and Aaron your brother, and speak you to the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water; and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock; so you shall give the congregation and their cattle drink.

And Moses took the rod from before *YHWH*, as He commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them: Hear now, you rebels; are we to bring you forth water out of this rock?

And Moses lifted up his hand, and smote the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle” (Num 20:7-11).

Unfortunately, the writer of verses 20:7-11 of the Book of Numbers refers to this rod as Moses' rod, apparently not remember that it was Aaron's rod that was kept “before *YHWH*” (Num 17:25).