

THE ROD

The English word “rod” in the King James Version of the Bible is a translation of 4 different Hebrew words and 1 Greek word. With reference to the “rod of Moses”, and the “rod of Aaron”, however, only one Hebrew word “matteh” and one Greek word “rhabdos” are used.

The Hebrew word “matteh” is found about 247 times in the Bible. In the KJV it is translated 49 times as “rod”, 16 times as “staff”, and 182 times as “tribe”.

The Greek word “rhabdos” is found 12 times in the Bible. In the KJV it is translated 6 times as “rod”, 2 times as “scepter”, and 4 times as “staff”.

There are 4 references to the rod of Moses in Exodus 4. (vss. 2, 4, 17, 20) Since Moses was a shepherd, I assume this was a shepherd’s staff. This is the rod, or staff, as you know, that became a serpent when Moses threw it on the ground. In vs. 17 Moses was told to take “this staff” so he could perform miraculous signs with it. In vs. 20 this same rod is called the “rod” or “staff of God”.

As a point of interest the Bible teaches that all shepherds were detestable to the Egyptians (Gen. 46:34). It is both interesting and significant that God would command Moses to take his shepherd’s staff into the presence of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

There are 8 references to this rod in Exodus 7. {vss. 9, 10, 12, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20). It is specifically said to be the same rod or staff that God commanded Moses to take before the Pharaoh. In this regard it would therefore be “Moses rod”. In this chapter, however, at least 4 times it is also said to be “Aaron’s rod” (vss. 9, 10, 12, 19).

In chapter 8 of Exodus all three references to the same “rod” designate it as “Aaron’s rod” (vss. 5, 16, 17).

In the next 3 references the same rod is again called the rod of Moses (Ex. 9:23; 10:13; 14:16; 17:5).

- This miraculous rod was associated with sending and removing the 10 plagues.
- It was used to divide the Red Sea (Ex. 14:16).
- God commanded Moses to strike the rock at Horeb with this rod so it would bring forth water (Ex. 17:5, 6).
- In Ex. 17:9 the same rod is again called the “rod of God” and was used to help bring victory over the Amalek.

In the book of Numbers we are told that each of the 12 tribes was to place a “rod” or “staff” in front of the Testimony. This is the way that passage is translated in the NIV: **“The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff. On the staff of Levi write Aaron’s name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. Place them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I meet with you. The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites.” So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron’s staff was**

among them. Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the Tent of the Testimony. The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They looked at them, and each man took his own staff. The LORD said to Moses, "Put back Aaron's staff in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die." **Moses did just as the LORD commanded him.**" (Num 17:1-11)

While it may be impossible to prove, it is distinctly plausible that the staff representing the tribe of Levi was in fact the miraculous one that Moses and Aaron took before the Pharaoh. As you know Moses and Aaron were brothers and their father and mother were both from the tribe of Levi (Ex. 2:1). If you were Aaron why would you not want to use this staff?

This miraculous staff is mentioned 3 more times in one more scenario in the book of Numbers. Here is the passage for your consideration: **"The LORD said to Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so that they and their livestock can drink." So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank."** (Num 20:7-11)

- Note that Moses took the staff "from the Lord's presence". It was obviously the same staff that they had earlier been placed in the Lord's presence.
- Note also in Num. 20:12 that both Moses and Aaron were condemned by God for not trusting Him. Earlier Moses had been commanded to "strike" the rock in Horeb, but now God specifically commanded them to "speak" to the rock. Instead, they "struck" the rock twice. Please consider: **"But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."** (Num 20:12)

SUMMARY

While the Hebrew word "matteh" and the Greek word "rhabdos" could be translated as "scepter" it seems obvious that in the case of Moses and Aaron it referred to a shepherd's staff. As such, it would have been long enough to use as a weapon, help control the sheep, and assist in walking. The ark of the covenant was only 3 3/4 feet long and consequently Aaron's staff could not have been placed inside the ark unless it was cut.

This staff was placed before the Lord and removed on various occasions. If the staff had been inside the ark it would not have been accessible.

The letter to the Hebrews states that the ark "contained" Aaron's staff. Please consider: **"Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now."**

(Heb 9:1-5)

The Greek word translated as “contained” is “en”. Here are the ways this word “en” is translated in the King James Version of the Bible.

- among -114
- as - 22
- at - 106
- by - 142
- in - 1863
- into - 11
- on - 45
- through - 37
- to - 15
- unto - 9
- with - 139
- within - 13
- etc.

The Greek word “en” is usually translated as “in” (1863 times). Hence the translator concluded that the ark “contained” these items. What if, however, we translated the word “en” as “with”. It is translated in this way 139 times in the KJV of the Bible. It is certainly true that all three of these were associated “with” the ark, I am not certain that all three were “inside” of it.

God will be found true even if every man is found a liar - (Rom. 3:4). The Bible does not have to repeat things many times in order for them to be true. If the Bible states one time that the golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod were in the ark with the Ten Commandments that is all the evidence we need.

I am inclined to believe, however, that Aaron’s rod was behind the curtain, and “beside” the ark, and not “inside” of it. Other items in the same category would include the golden pot of manna, and the book of the Law. Note these words of Moses: **“he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.” (Deut 31:25-26)**

This would also help to explain these words about the ark when Solomon built the Temple: **“There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.” (I Kings 8:9)**

CONCLUSION

It is important that we not become so engrossed in trivia that we fail to recognize the power of God. God is “ALL POWERFUL”. He created the vast universe and upholds all things by the word of His power. Some day He will destroy this present system and create a new heaven and a new earth. Some day you will stand before Him in Judgement. He gave you physical life, and offers you spiritual life. Please accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior!