

## The Origin of Moses' Staff

עֲשָׂרָה דְּבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ בְּעֶרֶב שַׁבָּת בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת וְאֵלוּ הֵן: פִּי הָאָרֶץ, וּפִי הַבְּאֵר, וּפִי הָאֶתּוֹן; וְהַקֶּשֶׁת, וְהַמָּן, וְהַמָּטָה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר; וְהַכֶּתֶב, וְהַמַּכְתֵּב, וְהַלּוּחֹת. וַיֵּשׂ אֲדָמִים אֶף הַמַּזִּיקִין, וְקִבּוּרָתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה. וְאֵילוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ. וַיֵּשׂ אֲדָמִים אֶף צֶבֶת בְּצֶבֶת עֲשׂוּיָהּ.

Ten things were created at twilight on the eve of Shabbat and they are: The mouth of the earth [that would swallow Korah's rebellion], the mouth of the well [that opened for Israel in the wilderness], the mouth of the she-ass [that served to open the eyes of Balaam]; and the rainbow [of Noah], the manna, the staff [of Moses], the shamir [worm that split the stone for building the Temple]; and the script [of the Torah], and the inscribing tool [that God used for engraving the Ten Commandments], and the stone tablets [on which they were engraved]. And some say that demons were also created then, and the tomb of Moses [known to God but never found by Israel]; and the ram of Abraham our father [that he substituted for Isaac]. And some say the tongs with which the first tongs were made. (Pirke Avot 6:5)



רַבִּי לִוִּי אָמַר: הַמָּטָה שֶׁנִּבְרְאָה בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת נִמְסַר לְאַדָּם הָרִאשׁוֹן בֶּגֶן-עֵדֶן. וְאַדָּם מָסְרוֹ לְחֵנוּךְ, וְחֵנוּךְ מָסְרוֹ לֵנֹחַ, וְנֹחַ מָסְרוֹ לְשֵׁם, וְשֵׁם מָסְרוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם, וְאַבְרָהָם מָסְרוֹ לְיִצְחָק, וְיִצְחָק מָסְרוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב, וְיַעֲקֹב הוֹרִידוֹ לְמִצְרַיִם וּמָסְרוֹ לְיוֹסֵף בְּנוֹ. וְכַשְׁמַת יוֹסֵף, נִשְׁלַל כָּל בֵּיתוֹ וְנִתֵּן בְּפִלְטָרִין שֶׁל פְּרָעָה. וְהִיא יָתְרוֹ אֶחָד מִחֲרָטִמֵּי מִצְרַיִם וְרָאָה אֶת הַמָּטָה וְאֶת הָאוֹתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו וְחָמַד אוֹתוֹ בְּלִבּוֹ וּלְקַחוֹ וְהִבִּיאוֹ וּנְטָעוֹ בְּתוֹךְ גֶּן בֵּיתוֹ. וְלֹא הָיָה אָדָם יָכוֹל לִקְרֹב אֵלָיו עוֹד. וְכַשְׁבָּא מֹשֶׁה לְבֵיתוֹ, נִכְנַס לְגֶן בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁל יִתְרוֹ וְרָאָה אֶת הַמָּטָה וְאֶת הָאוֹתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו וְשָׁלַח יָדוֹ וּלְקַחוֹ. וְרָאָה יִתְרוֹ אֶת מֹשֶׁה וְאָמַר: זֶה עֲתִיד לְגַאֵל אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם.

The staff that was created at twilight was entrusted to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam entrusted it to Enoch, Enoch to Shem, Shem to Abraham, Abraham to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob took it to Egypt and entrusted it to his son Joseph. When Joseph died, his household effects were confiscated and deposited in Pharaoh's palace. Now Jethro was one of Pharaoh's counselors. When he saw the staff and the signs on it, he coveted it and took it, brought it to his place and planted it in the garden by his house. No man could come near it until Moses arrived in the land of Midian, entered the garden of Jethro's house, saw the rod and the signs on it, stretched forth his hand, and took it. When Jethro saw this, he said: This man is destined to redeem Israel from Egypt. (Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 40)