

The Origin of Moses' Staff

עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות ואלו הן: פִי הָאָרֶץ, וַיְפִי הַבָּאָר, וַיְפִי הַאֲתֹנוֹ; וַיְמַקְשֵׁת, וַיְמַפְתֵּח, וַיְשַׁמְּרֵה, וַיְכַתֵּב, וַיְלַחֲזֹת. וַיְשִׁיא אָזְמָרִים אֶלְפָתִים, וַיְקַבְּרוּתָו שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה. וַיְאִלּוּ שֶׁל אֶבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ. וַיְשִׁיא אָזְמָרִים אֶלְפָתִים בְּצִבְתְּ עֲשָׂוִיה.

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)

ק

רַבִּי לְוִי אָמַר: הַמִּפְתֵּח שֶׁנֶּבֶרָא בֵּין הַשְּׁמַשּׁוֹת נִמְסֵר לְאָדָם הָרָאשׁוֹן בְּגֹן-עָדָן. וְאָדָם מִסְרֵרָו לְחַנּוֹן, וְחַנּוֹן מִסְרֵרָו לְנֵחֶן, וְנֵחֶן מִסְרֵרָו לְאֶבְרָהָם, וְאֶבְרָהָם מִסְרֵרָו לְיִצְחָק, וְיִצְחָק מִסְרֵרָו לְיַעֲקֹב, וַיַּעֲקֹב הַזָּרִידֹו לְמִצְרָיִם וְמִסְרֵרָו לְיַוֹּסֵף בֶּןּוֹ. וְכַשְּׁמַת יוֹסֵף, נִשְׁלַל כָּל בֵּיתוֹ וְנִתְנוּ בְּפְלִיטָרֵינוּ שֶׁל פְּרָעָה. וְהִיא יִתְרֹא אֶחָד מַחְרְטֵמִי מִצְרָיִם וְרָאָה אֶת הַמִּפְתֵּח וְאֶת הַאוֹתּוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַלְיוֹן וְחִמֵּד אָזְטוֹ בְּלִבּוֹ וְלִקְחָוּ וְהַבְּיאָו וְנִטְעָו בְּתֹוךְ גַּן בֵּיתֹו. וְלֹא קִיהְיָה אָדָם יִכְלֶל לְקִרְבָּא אֵלָיו עוֹד. וְכַשְּׁבָא מֹשֶׁה לְבֵיתוֹ, נִכְנֵס לְגַן בֵּיתֹו שֶׁל יִתְרֹא וְרָאָה אֶת הַמִּפְתֵּח וְאֶת הַאוֹתּוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַלְיוֹן וְשַׁלֵּחַ יְדוֹ וְלִקְחָו. וְרָאָה יִתְרֹא אֶת מֹשֶׁה וְאָמַר: זֶה עַתִּיד לְגַנְּאֵל אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם.

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)