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by Peter and Christie Michas with Robert Vander Maten

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Messengers of Messiah, 7231 Boulder Avenue #164, Highland, CA 92346 USA

Tel. 909-425-8751 – www.messengers-of-messiah.org - christiem@messengers-of-messiah.org

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Chapter 6

Aaron's Rod, the Tree of Life, and the Crucifixion Tree

And the word of the LORD came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:11-12).

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15, emphasis added).

In the previous chapter, we showed the possible link of Aaron's Rod, a supernaturally sprouting branch of an almond tree, to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. In this chapter, we will show how the Almond Rod that Jeremiah saw in a vision may link to Aaron's Rod and the tree upon which Messiah Yeshua was crucified.

This understanding is based upon what Peter Michas saw many years ago during the time he was doing an in-depth study of the Tabernacle (see Preface by Peter Michas). As he saw Aaron's Rod placed in front of the Ark of the Covenant, he saw the entire picture of it being a branch from the Tree of Life that was passed down the generations from Adam; that it was the Almond Rod that Jeremiah saw; and that it grew into the tree upon which Messiah Yeshua was crucified. Peter firmly believes this understanding came from the Spirit of God.

In this picture, Peter also saw that Jerusalem was the site of the Garden of Eden; that the Tree of Life was on Mount Moriah, the place where God fellowshiped with Adam and Eve, the same place God chose for His Temple – the one place on Earth God chose as His dwelling place among humanity; that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was on the Mount of Olives; and that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden east of the Mount of Olives.

When Peter and Christie married, they began to research the Jewish source materials for information about Aaron's Rod and the Tree of Life. Amazingly, they found references that linked Aaron's Rod to the Tree of Life, and that it was passed down the line from Adam to David. As God chose the Jewish people to preserve His Word in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), and as the Jewish people have passed down their oral history in addition to the written Word of God, we believe that these references are worth investigating and including in our study of Aaron's Rod and the Tree of Life.

From the prophetic pattern we see, God's Master Plan of Redemption is a very powerful story that fits every precise detail of Biblical prophecy. There is nothing that is random in God's plan of redemption, just as there is nothing random in God's Creation (the Universe is finely tuned for life on Earth). Every detail of time, place, picture and pattern of God's Master Plan is meaningful, purposeful, and powerful because it shows the existence of our loving, merciful, and all-powerful Creator. What is true for God's Creation is true for God's Master Plan of Redemption for humanity. It is the very precise and purposeful design of God's Creation as well as the very precise, purposeful design of God's plan for humanity's redemption that shows, confirms, and proves that the God of the Bible is the one true God, and that Messiah Yeshua is the one and only way of salvation for humanity.

THE ROD OF GOD FROM ADAM TO DAVID

As explained in the previous chapter, Aaron's Rod is also called Moses' Rod (Exodus 4:2, 17) and the Rod or Staff of God (Exodus 4:20; 17:9).¹ According to the Sarajevo Haggadah,² God created the Rod in the twilight of the Sixth Day of Creation and gave it to Adam when he was expelled from the Garden of Eden.³ This is consistent with God creating Adam on the Sixth Day and placing him in the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Life (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7-9). From Adam, the Rod was passed down generation to generation until it came into the possession of Moses.⁴ There is even an oral tradition (legend) that the Rod came from the Tree of Life.⁵

According to the Sarajevo Haggadah, the Rod was passed down the line from Adam to Enoch, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses.⁶ The *Midrash Yelamdenu* also connects the Rod to Jacob, Judah, Moses, Aaron, and David:

...the staff with which Jacob crossed the Jordan is identical with that which Judah gave to his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Gen. xxxii. 10, xxxviii. 18). It is likewise the holy rod with which Moses worked (Ex. iv. 20, 21), with which Aaron performed wonders before Pharaoh (Ex. vii. 10), and with which, finally, David slew the giant Goliath (I Sam. xvii. 40).⁷

If God gave the Rod of an Almond Tree from the Tree of Life to Adam, it is logical to assume that such a gift from the Creator would have been most highly valued, preserved, and passed down through God's chosen line of descendants. Surely, stories concerning the Rod's origin and

¹ Merrill C. Tenney (Editor), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

² The Sarajevo Haggadah, an illuminated manuscript containing the illustrated traditional text of the Passover Haggadah which accompanies the Passover Seder [meal], is one of the oldest Sephardic Haggadahs in the world, originating in Barcelona around 1350 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarajevo_Haggadah) - accessed August 2014.

³ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (online), article "Aaron's Rod"; section "Haggadic Modification" – <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5-aaron-s-rod> - accessed August 2014.

⁴ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5-aaron-s-rod> - accessed August 2014.

⁵ Alan Unterman, *Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*, p. 201.

⁶ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6.

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5-aaron-s-rod> - accessed August 2014.

⁷ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6.

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5-aaron-s-rod> - accessed August 2014.

history would also have been told and retold through the generations and preserved in the oral history of the Jewish people, which was later recorded.

Let us not be too quick to reject information from oral traditions (legends) passed down through the generations. Remember that the legend of Troy and the Trojan War was regarded as pure myth until Schliemann's archeological discovery verified the existence of this city. Legends such as these often contain accurate and detailed information. However, such material requires very careful evaluation and correlation to other verifiable information.

THE ROD OF MOSES

According to the Sarajevo Haggadah, the Rod came into Jethro's possession before Moses obtained it from him:

On Joseph's death the Egyptian nobles stole some of his belongings, and, among them, Jethro appropriated the staff. Jethro planted the staff in his garden, when its marvelous virtue was revealed by the fact that nobody could withdraw it from the ground; even to touch it was fraught with danger to life. This was because the Ineffable Name of God was engraved upon it. When Moses entered Jethro's household he read the Name, and by means of it was able to draw up the rod, for which service Ziporah, Jethro's daughter, was given to him in marriage.⁸

This seems to be a rather fanciful story but perhaps it contains some elements of truth. Moses being the only person able to withdraw the Rod from the soil brings to mind the story of Arthur being the only person able to draw the sword Excalibur from the rock. Perhaps the point of this part of the story is to show that God gave authority to Moses to use the Rod. The Word of God shows this to be true.

⁸ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 5.
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5-aaron-s-rod> – accessed August 2014.

While there may have been a connection of the Rod to Jethro, perhaps Moses obtained the Rod while in Pharaoh's household, where he grew up as a prince of Egypt, having been adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:10). Whatever way Moses came into possession of the Rod, the Word of God shows this to be true.

Interestingly, this story tells us that the Name of God was engraved on the Rod. Clearly, the Rod was a symbol of God's authority and power. Therefore, it is certainly possible that the Name of God was engraved on the Rod.

This story also tells us that the Rod was planted, a rather unusual situation. The Word of God shows that the Rod supernaturally sprouted, showing signs of life. Perhaps the Rod was capable of being planted and even growing into a tree. We will show why we think the Rod could have grown into a tree, the tree upon which Messiah Yeshua was crucified.

Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt. Before his calling, he had fled Egypt and spent forty years in the land of Midian as a shepherd of Jethro's flocks. On Mount Sinai (Mount Horeb), Moses encountered the Living God at the Burning Bush and was given the mission to deliver the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt (Exodus 3:1-10).

When Moses asked by what sign the people would believe him, God commanded him to cast the Rod on the ground, and it was transformed into a serpent. God then commanded Moses to pick the serpent up by the tail, and it was transformed back into the Rod (Exodus 4:3-4). This same Rod was instrumental in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

After Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites, God worked spectacular miracles through the Rod (Exodus 5:2). It was transformed into a serpent as proof of God's power before Pharaoh and his court. Even though Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to duplicate this miracle through the power of Satan, the greater power of God was displayed when the serpent of Moses' Rod consumed all the serpents of the sorcerers' rods (Exodus 7:9-12).

As Pharaoh's heart continued to harden against God's will, a series of Ten Plagues fell on Egypt (Exodus 7–12). Moses used the Rod as an instrument of God's power and judgment for several of these plagues (water to blood; frogs; gnats; hail; locusts). Moses also used the Rod as an instrument of God's protection and provision for the Israelites – the parting of the sea allowing the Israelites to escape the pursuing Egyptians (Exodus 14:16), and providing water from a rock in the desert (Exodus 17:5-6).

THE ROD OF AARON PLACED BEFORE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

While in the wilderness, some of the Israelites rebelled against the authority of Aaron, brother of Moses, whom God had appointed High Priest (Numbers 16). In response, God directed Moses to place the rods of the leaders of the Twelve Tribes and Aaron's Rod inside the Tabernacle overnight (Numbers 17:2-6). The next morning, Aaron's Rod was seen to have miraculously sprouted buds, blossoms, and ripe almonds, confirming Aaron's authority as High Priest:

So Moses deposited the rods before the LORD in the tent of the testimony [Tabernacle]. Now it came about on the next day that Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, **the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds** (Numbers 17:7-8, emphasis added).

According to God's command, Aaron's Rod – with the living buds, blossoms, and ripe almonds – was to be placed “before the testimony” as a sign:

But the LORD said to Moses, “**Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony to be kept as a sign** against the rebels, that you may put an end to their grumblings against Me, so that they should not die” Thus Moses did; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did. (Numbers 17:10-11, emphasis added).

“Before the testimony” means in front of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the “testimony”, the tablets of the covenant, the Ten Commandments:

“And **you shall put into the ark the testimony** which I shall give you” (Exodus 25:16, emphasis added).

Then **he took the testimony and put it into the ark**, and attached the poles to the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark (Exodus 40:20, emphasis added).

There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt (1 Kings 8:9, emphasis added).

Like the Rod, the Manna was placed “before” the Ark of the Covenant:

And Moses said to Aaron, “Take **a jar and put an omerful of manna** in it, and place it before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations.” As the LORD commanded Moses, so **Aaron placed it before the Testimony**, to be kept (Exodus 16:33-34, emphasis added).

By placing the Rod and the Manna outside and in front of the Ark of the Covenant, they were visible to be seen as signs of God’s authority, mercy, and provision.

THE ROD FOR THE BRONZE SERPENT

Although the Rod was kept before the Ark of the Covenant, upon command from God it could be removed for a specific purpose. One such situation was when the Israelites did not have water and complained to Moses and Aaron. At the Tabernacle, God commanded Moses to take the Rod to bring water from the rock for the people and their animals:

Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting [Tabernacle], and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them; and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “**Take the rod**; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock

before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.” **So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him** (Numbers 20:6-9, emphasis added).

There may be another time when the Rod was removed and used as an instrument of God’s mercy. After the Israelites falsely accused God of bringing them out of Egypt to suffer and die in the desert from hunger and thirst, God sent poisonous snakes to bite and kill them as judgment (Numbers 21:5-6). They realized they had sinned and asked Moses to intervene for them:

So the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.” And Moses interceded for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live.” And **Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard;** and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived (Numbers 21:7-9, emphasis added).

God commanded Moses to make a serpent and set it on a standard. The Word of God tells us that Moses made the serpent and set it on “the” standard. This means Moses chose the standard on which he set the serpent. Would it not be natural for Moses to take the Rod and set the serpent upon it for the people to look to for healing? The Rod itself had transformed into a serpent as a sign of God’s power and authority. Therefore, to attach a serpent to the Rod fits the miracle of the Rod’s transformation. And the Rod had been used for a number of purposes related to miraculous delivery and survival of the Israelites. The Rod was the clear sign and symbol of God’s power, authority, mercy, deliverance, and provision.

In the Hebrew text, the word translated “standard” is *nes* (Strong’s #5251), meaning “standard”, “ensign”, “signal”, or “sign”.⁹ The prefix *ha* before the Hebrew word *nes* means “the”, referring to **the** standard, rather than “a” standard. This may indicate that Aaron’s Rod – not just any ordinary standard – was used as **the standard** for the serpent.

The serpent on the standard was raised up so that the people who had been bitten could see it. Those who looked to it with a repentant heart, trusting in God’s promise to forgive them of their sin and save them from death, were healed. In the next chapter, we will show how Aaron’s Rod, the serpent on the standard, and the Almond Rod of Jeremiah’s vision may connect to the tree upon which Messiah Yeshua was crucified.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man [Messiah Yeshua] be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life” (John 3:14-15, emphasis added).

And the word of the LORD came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, **“I see a rod of an almond tree.”** Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for **I am watching over My word to perform it**” (Jeremiah 1:11-12, emphasis added).

Regarding the Rod of an Almond Tree, it is interesting that “almonds, in connection with a prophecy or miracle, symbolize that the Almighty will bring about His decree in a hurry.”¹⁰ The Hebrew word *shaqed* (Strong’s #8247), meaning “almond,” is derived from *shaqad* (Strong’s #8245), meaning “hurry”, “hasten”, “be alert”, “watch for”, or “be wakeful”.^{11,12} The almond tree is named for blossoming early in January “as if it were in haste”.¹³ Those looking to the serpent on the standard needed a miracle of forgiveness and healing “in a hurry”, as do those looking to Messiah Yeshua for forgiveness and salvation.

⁹ NAS Hebrew Dictionary, *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Accordance Bible software.

¹⁰ Moshe Weissman, *The Midrash Says*, Vol. 4, p. 239.

¹¹ Weissman, Vol. 4, p. 239.

¹² Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, Old Testament Dictionary (#8247, #8245), p. 2058.

¹³ William Wilson, *New Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*, p. 11.

As Aaron's Rod was kept as a sign, the serpent on the standard was also kept, although it later became an object of idol worship (2 Kings 18:4). This may also show that the serpent was placed on Aaron's Rod, as we will explain below in the section "Hezekiah Destroys the Bronze Serpent".

THE ROD OF DAVID

From Adam, the Rod passed down the generations of the line that eventually led to the Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus), who came from the Tribe of Judah (the Jews). The prophetic blessing of Jacob on his son, Judah, shows that the ruler's staff or scepter was promised to the Tribe of Judah:

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples"
(Genesis 49:10).

The Rod may link to Judah's scepter and it may be that David received it from Samuel, the last of the judges. Samuel served in the Tabernacle at Shiloh and therefore had access to the Rod. After the Israelites took the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines, who captured it, Samuel would have retained possession of the Rod. Although the Philistines returned the Ark, it was never put back into the Tabernacle.

Samuel was directed by God to anoint Israel's first two kings: Saul followed by David. It seems likely that Samuel would have given the Rod to David, as He was God's choice as king; Saul being the choice of the people, not God's. After King David established Jerusalem as Israel's capital, he brought the Ark of the Covenant to the City of David and kept it in a tent next to his palace, just south of Mount Moriah (2 Samuel 6:12, 17; 7:1-2).¹⁴

According to the *Midrash Yelamdenu*, David carried the Rod into battle against Goliath.¹⁵ The Word of God tells us that David carried his staff, which we believe was Aaron's Rod:

¹⁴ Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, *From Sinai to Jerusalem: The Wanderings of the Holy Ark*, p. 56.

¹⁵ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 5. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com> – accessed August 2014.

Then he [David] took his staff [rod] in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but **I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel**, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17:40-45, NIV, emphasis added).

The Hebrew word *maqel* (or *maqalah*; Strong's #4731) translates as "staff", "rod", or "stick". The word comes:

from an unused root meaning apparently to *germinate*; a *shoot*, i.e. *stick* (with leaves on, or for walking, striking, guiding, divining):-**rod**, ([hand-]) **staff** (emphasis added).¹⁶

It is interesting to note the connection of this word to the meaning "germinate", referring to sprouting that produces leaves and buds. If the rod that David carried into battle against Goliath was Aaron's Rod, it bore live sprouts of almond buds, blossoms, and ripe almonds.

As David was chosen by God and represented the army of God, it makes sense that he would have carried the symbol of God's power, authority, and protection into battle against Goliath. David chose not to wear protective armor offered by King Saul, nor did he carry the typical weapons of battle. In contrast, the giant Goliath was fully armed and armored. David's victory was proof of God's supernatural intervention.

¹⁶ Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, Old Testament Dictionary, p. 1937.

THE ROD PLACED ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES BY DAVID

After David's son, Solomon, built the Temple, the Ark of the Covenant was placed inside the Holy of Holies. At this time, the Word of God tells us that the two tablets of the Ten Commandments were inside the Ark but there is no mention of Aaron's Rod or the Manna (1 Kings 8:3-9).

What may have happened to this supernatural Rod, the symbol of God's authority and instrument of His mercy, redemption, and provision? As we believe God preserved the Rod to become the instrument of redemption for the nation of Israel during the Exodus and Wilderness Period, we also believe God preserved it for the Crucifixion, to become the instrument of redemption for all humankind. Understanding how the Rod may link to the Crucifixion Tree is based upon the prophetic picture Peter Michas believes that the Lord showed him, one that centers on a pivotal event in King David's reign.

David was forced to flee Jerusalem when his son, Absalom, led a rebellion against him. As he fled eastward across the Kidron Valley, he came to the summit of the Mount of Olives:

While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people passed over. **The king [David] also passed over the brook Kidron [Kidron Valley]**, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness. Now behold, [High Priest] Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar came up until all the people had finished passing from the city. **And the king said to Zadok, "Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the LORD, then He will bring me back again, and show me both it and His habitation"** (2 Samuel 15:23-25, emphasis added).

Therefore **Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem** and remained there. And **David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives**, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they

went. ... It happened as **David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped**, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn, and dust on his head (2 Samuel 15:29-30, 32 emphasis added).

The High Priest, Zadok, and the Levites, who carried the Ark of the Covenant, followed David but he told them to return with the Ark to the city. David continued to the summit of the Mount of Olives, where God was worshipped (see Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion”, section “The Mount of Olives – ‘Where God was Worshipped’”.)

According to *The Midrash Says*, the Jewish kings were entrusted with preserving Aaron’s Rod.¹⁷ This is reasonable because the Rod was the symbol of God’s authority. We believe that David took the Rod under God’s direction at the time he fled. This may also explain why Zadok and the Levites followed David with the Ark of the Covenant, to keep the Rod and the Ark together.

In this regard, it is significant that the area within 2000 cubits (about 3000 feet) of the Ark was considered holy. Whether the Ark was moving or stationary, this 2000-cubit perimeter was deliberately kept.¹⁸

And it came about at the end of three days that the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, “When you see **the ark of the covenant** of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it **a distance of about 2,000 cubits** by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before” (Joshua 3:2-4, emphasis added).

The distance of 2000 cubits was also a Sabbath Day’s Journey:

A measure of distance ... which served as the limit of travel on the sabbath. ...

¹⁷ Weissman, Vol. 4, p. 239.

¹⁸ Nathan Bushwick (Translator), *The Book of Joshua* (The Torah Anthology Series), pp. 75-76.

The distance has been generally reckoned as 2000 cubits or approximately 2/3 of a m. Acts 1:12, the only instance of its occurrence in **the Bible specifies its length as the distance from Mt. Olivet [Mount of Olives] to Jerusalem.** (From the Eastern gate of Jerusalem [the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount] to the present site of the Church of the Ascension on Mt. Olivet is slightly over ½ m.)

It is assumed that the regulation had its origin in the Mosaic period in the injunction to the Israelite not to leave camp to collect manna on the sabbath (Exod 16:29). In the Jerusalem Targ. this command reads: “Let no man go walking from the place beyond 2000 cubits on the seventh day.” There are other regulations to which appeal is made in an effort to locate the origin of this practice or precept. One is the provision that **the area belonging to the Levitical cities included land which extended from the wall 2,000 cubits on every side** (Num 35:5). Another is the supposed **distance that separated the Ark and the people both on the march and at camp** (Josh 3:4). ...

The original intent of the provision was to insure a quiet, leisurely Sabbath and to keep it from becoming a harried and busy day (Exod 16:29). It was also **designed to keep the Israelitish worshiper in the area of the center of his worship** (emphasis added).¹⁹

Whenever possible, we believe that the Rod was kept within a 2000-cubit radius of the Ark of the Covenant, whether it was stationary or moving. In order to keep the Rod within this distance from the Ark, David would need to leave it behind on the Mount of Olives prior to continuing his flight eastward from the city. Because the summit of the Mount of Olives was “the place where God was worshipped” (2 Samuel 15:32), this would be the appropriate place for the Rod.

During the Second Temple period, this area became the site of the Red Heifer sacrifice.²⁰ The Word of God clearly states that Yeshua was crucified at the place where the bodies of the Day of

¹⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 189.

²⁰ *Mishnah*, Tractate Parah.

Atonement sacrifices were burned (Hebrews 13:11-12), outside the Eastern gate on the summit of the Mount of Olives. From the summit, there was a direct line of sight to the entrance of the Temple on Mount Moriah.²¹

The prophetic picture that Peter Michas sees is that David planted the Rod at the summit according to God's guidance, for the purpose God intended – the Crucifixion. Just as the Red Heifer was sacrificed with its face toward the Temple, Yeshua was sacrificed with His face toward the Temple. The Red Heifer, the holiest of sacrifices, represents Messiah Yeshua, the ultimate of the holiest of all sacrifices (see Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion”).

David wrote Psalm 22, a detailed description of the Crucifixion. At the time David was given a vision of the Crucifixion, we believe he was directed by God to plant the Rod – a living almond branch – that grew into the tree upon which Yeshua was crucified. If so, God used the Rod as an instrument of His love, mercy, and redemption by raising His Son up on the Tree of Life to provide forgiveness of sins, spiritual healing, and eternal life through His sacrifice.

David also wrote Psalm 23, that refers to “the valley of the shadow of death” and the comfort of God's Rod and Staff:

Even though I walk through the **valley of the shadow of death**, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; **Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me** (Psalm 23:4, emphasis added).

Perhaps the “valley of the shadow of death” is a prophetic picture of the Kidron Valley in the life of David, as he fled in fear for his life across the Kidron Valley to the summit of the Mount of Olives; and in the life of his descendant, Messiah Yeshua, as He crossed the Kidron Valley to the summit of the Mount of Olives, where He died for the sins of humanity.

²¹ Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem*, p. 267.

The Rod and Staff of the Lord are one and the same, which we believe to be Aaron's Rod. David says that the Lord's Rod brought him comfort. We believe that as David was given a vision of the Crucifixion, he was also shown that the Rod would grow into the tree upon which his descendant, Yeshua, the promised Messiah, would atone for the sins of humanity.

That God revealed the Crucifixion to David fits God's Master Plan of Redemption because God made a covenant with David that the Messiah would be his descendant and that His kingdom would be established forever:

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, **I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.** He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And **your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever**” (2 Samuel 7:12-16, emphasis added).

There will be no end to the increase of His [Messiah Yeshua's] government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:7, emphasis added).

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, when **I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He [Messiah Yeshua] will reign as king** and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land (Jeremiah 23:5, emphasis added).

IDOLATRY ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES UNDER SOLOMON

David was not overthrown by Absalom but instead was succeeded by his son, Solomon, who God chose to build the First Temple. Although known for his great wisdom, in his later years, Solomon was led away from pure worship of the Lord into idolatry by his many pagan wives. To please them, he allowed idols of pagan gods to be set up on the Mount of Olives:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For it came about **when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods**; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. Then **Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain [Mount of Olives] which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods** (1 Kings 11:1-8, emphasis added).

As King Solomon fell away from uncompromised worship of the one, true God, so too did the Israelite nation. The Mount of Olives became a place of idolatrous worship. After Solomon’s death, the United Kingdom of Israel disintegrated into a divided kingdom: the Northern Kingdom of the Ten Tribes of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin. During this time, idolatry ran rampant under the kings of both Israel and Judah.

HEZEKIAH DESTROYS THE BRONZE SERPENT

Eventually God brought judgment on the Northern Kingdom for its idolatry, allowing the kingdom to be conquered by the Assyrians and resulting in the dispersion of the Northern Ten Tribes. In the Southern Kingdom, idolatry became so widespread that the people even turned the bronze serpent that Moses made into an idol.

About three hundred years after King David, King Hezekiah destroyed the serpent, along with removing the pagan high places and cutting down the Asherah trees:

He [Hezekiah] removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah [Asherah-trees]. **He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made**, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan (2 Kings 18:4, emphasis added).

The “Asherah” may also be translated “Asherah-trees”,²² as Asherah groves were associated with the worship of the goddess Asherah.

Asherah is not mentioned in connection with the patriarchs nor is she associated with the kings of the monarchy, but later, after the kingdom split, Asherah is mentioned in connection with both the northern and southern kingdoms. Manasseh introduced Asherah into the Temple at Jerusalem (2 Kings 21:3, 7); Josiah brought the Asherah out of the Temple and burned it (23:4). The Israelites were commanded to cut down (Exod 34:13), or burn (Deut 12:3) the Asherim of the Canaanites, and also were forbidden to plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the Lord (16:21).²³

²² Nosson Scherman, *The Prophets: I-II Kings* (The ArtScroll Series), p. 369.

²³ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 355.

It is interesting to note that the bronze serpent is mentioned along with the Asherah trees and the high places of pagan worship, which would include the Mount of Olives, where we believe David planted the Rod.

Like the high places, it [bronze serpent] was capable in principle of finding its proper place within authentic worship of Yahweh [Yehovah], but **it eventually became in practice a focal point for idolatry, perhaps because of its association with the goddess Asherah.**²⁴

The serpent is often associated with pagan gods and goddesses, in this case Asherah.²⁵ So it would be natural for the people to begin to worship the bronze serpent at the time the Mount of Olives became a place of pagan worship. The fact that the serpent had become an object of idolatrous worship by the people shows that it was probably in a “high place” accessible to the general population, which fits the summit of the Mount of Olives.

While Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent, there is no mention of the standard to which it was attached at the time of Moses. We believe this is because the serpent was left attached to the Rod that grew into the Almond Tree on the summit of the Mount of Olives, and only the serpent was destroyed, leaving the tree intact.

JEREMIAH’S VISION OF THE ALMOND ROD AND THE NEW COVENANT PROPHECY

About one hundred years after King Hezekiah, the prophet Jeremiah warned the tribes of Judah and Benjamin of impending judgment for their idolatry. In one of God’s revelations to Jeremiah, there is a remarkable reference to “a rod of an almond tree”:

And the word of the Lord came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “**I see a rod of an almond tree.**” Then the LORD said to me, “You have

²⁴ John H. Walton (General Editor), *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 183.

²⁵ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 183.

seen well, for **I am watching over My word to perform it**” (Jeremiah 1:11-12, emphasis added).

God gave Jeremiah a vision of a Rod of an Almond Tree. There is only one Rod of an Almond Tree in the Word of God that is associated with God’s mercy and redemption – Aaron’s Rod. God tells Jeremiah that He is watching over His Word, Messiah Yeshua, “to perform it”, referring to something associated with the Rod of an Almond Tree:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:1-5, emphasis added).

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me’” (John 1:14-15).

King David wrote Psalm 22, a detailed description of the Crucifixion, and ended it with the words: “He has performed it”, referring to Messiah Yeshua performing the act of atonement and redemption.

They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that **He has performed it** (Psalm 22:31, emphasis added).

In the next chapter we will prove from the Word of God that Yeshua was crucified on a tree (see Chapter 7 “Messiah Yeshua Crucified on the Almond Tree”).

Christ [Messiah] redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, **“CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”** — in order that in Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:13-14, emphasis added).

Messiah Yeshua came into the world in human flesh to pay the price for humanity’s sins, to seal the New Covenant in His blood. Not only did God show Jeremiah the Rod of an Almond Tree, He also gave Jeremiah the prophecy about the New Covenant:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, **“I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people”** (Jeremiah 31:31-33, emphasis added).

We believe the Word of God shows clear linkage between the Rod of an Almond Tree, Aaron’s Rod, and the Crucifixion. This could only be if Aaron’s Rod grew into the tree of the Crucifixion. God said that He would make a New Covenant; this New Covenant would be sealed by the blood of Messiah Yeshua when He died on the tree as the complete and final sin-atonement sacrifice.

Despite Jeremiah’s warnings, and the warnings of other prophets, the people did not repent. Judgment fell when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and took the people into captivity (586 BC). Seventy years later, the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple. In the Fourth Century BC, Alexander the Great subdued this region in his pursuit to conquer and Hellenize the world.

After Alexander's short-lived empire, the Israelites experienced terrible persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (167 BC), but returned to autonomous rule after the Maccabean revolt (160 BC). However, self-rule soon came to a halt as the Roman Empire continued its inexorable expansion throughout the Mediterranean (63 BC). During the centuries of turmoil and instability, we believe that the tree that grew from Aaron's Rod was being preserved for the most important event in human history.

MESSIAH YESHUA AND THE ROD DURING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

When Messiah Yeshua returns, He will set up His Throne in Jerusalem, the place God chose to dwell on Earth. The prophet Ezekiel describes the Shekinah (Glory Cloud) that comes from the east to indwell the Third Temple:

Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; and behold, **the glory [Shekinah – Glory Cloud] of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east**. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. **And the glory of the LORD came into the house [Temple] by the way of the gate facing toward the east**. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, **the glory of the LORD filled the house**. Then I heard one speaking to me from the house [Temple], while a man was standing beside me. And He said to me, “Son of man, **this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. ...** (Ezekiel 43:1-7, emphasis added).

The Third Temple (Ezekiel's Temple) will be built on Mount Moriah, like the First Temple (Solomon's Temple) and the Second Temple. The Shekinah will come from the east, from above the Mount of Olives. Messiah Yeshua prophesied that His coming would be like “lightning flashing from east to west”:

“For just as **the lightning comes from the east**, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27, emphasis added).

Yeshua will descend from Heaven to the Mount of Olives, east of Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount:

And in that day **His [Yeshua’s] feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zechariah 14:4, emphasis added).

Just as Yeshua ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives, He will descend from Heaven to the Mount of Olives:

And after He [Yeshua] had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and **a cloud [Shekinah – Glory Cloud] received Him** out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? **This Jesus [Yeshua], who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.**” Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet [Mount of Olives], which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away (Acts 1:9-12, emphasis added).

According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*: “In the future, Elijah will reveal it [Aaron’s Rod] and hand it over to the Messiah (Num. R. 18:23).”^{26,27} Yeshua said that Elijah would come and restore all things:

²⁶ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (online), article “Rod of Aaron”; section “In the Aggadah”
<http://www.bjeindy.org/resources/library/encyclopediajudaica/> – accessed August 2014.

²⁷ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, p. 218.

And He [Yeshua] answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things”
(Matthew 17:11).

Perhaps Elijah will bring a branch from the Tree of Life, the symbol of God’s authority, power, mercy, and redemption, back to the place it originated in the Garden of Eden on Mount Moriah.

The Book of Revelation tells us that Yeshua will rule with a Rod of Iron during the Millennial Kingdom:

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and **He will rule them with a rod of iron;** and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:11-16, emphasis added).

The Rod of Iron symbolizes God’s power and authority. It also denotes the judgment of God, like Aaron’s Rod, the instrument of God’s judgment on Egypt:

An allusion to Ps. 2:9 fills out the portrayal of judgment. In Ps. 2:8-9, 12 is foretold how God’s “son” (2:7) will overthrow the ungodly “kings of the earth” who “take their stand ... and take counsel against the Lord and his Messiah” (2:2).²⁸

²⁸ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Editors), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 1144.

The Rod of Messiah Yeshua represents mercy and redemption for those who trust in Him for salvation, but judgment for those who reject Him and rebel against God. Could it be that Messiah Yeshua's scepter of authority is a branch from the Tree of Life? Could it be that Messiah Yeshua will be seated on the Mercy Seat with the Rod of Aaron, a branch from the Tree of Life, in the very place where the Tree of Life existed in the Garden of Eden and where God fellowshiped with Adam and Eve?

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