

# Exodus 4:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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**

וַיֵּקַח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֵּרֶכְבּוּ עַל־הָחֹמֶר וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וַיֵּקַח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים (בְּיָדוֹ)—Moses brings **his wife and his sons** (Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer—18:3-4). They travel by **ass** (donkey)—humble transport. The key phrase: **Moses took the rod of God in his hand** (מִטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים, matteh ha'Elohim). What was his shepherd's staff (v. 2) is now **the rod of God**—consecrated for divine purposes. This rod will execute judgment and salvation, demonstrating that Moses returns not as fugitive refugee but as God's commissioned deliverer. The rod's new designation shows Moses' transformed identity and authority.

## Historical Context

The rod of God becomes central to Exodus narrative: bringing plagues (7:17, 20; 9:23; 10:13), parting the Red Sea (14:16), bringing water from rock (17:5-6), and winning battles (17:9). Later tradition called it matteh ha'Elohim, recognizing its unique role in Israel's deliverance. Moses' humble donkey contrasts with Egypt's chariot power—God's power needs no impressive external trappings.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does your 'rod'—ordinary tool or gifting—need to be reconceived as 'the rod of God' consecrated for His purposes?
2. What does Moses' humble transport (donkey) despite wielding the rod of God teach about power dynamics in God's kingdom?

## Interlinear Text

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וָקַח	וְאֵת	אִשְׁתּוֹ	וְאֵת	בָּנָיו	וַיָּסֶתֶם	עַל
took	And Moses	his wife	and his sons	and set		
H3947	H4872	H853 H802	H853 H1121	H7392		H5921
וְהָיָה	וַיָּשָׁב	אֶל־רָצָה	מִצְרָיִם	וָקַח	וְאֵת	וְאֵת
them upon an ass	and he returned	to the land	of Egypt	took	And Moses	
H2543	H7725	H776	H4714	H3947	H4872	
וְאֵת	הָאֵלֹהִים	בְּיָדוֹ				
the rod	of God	in his hand				
H853 H4294	H430	H3027				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 17:9** (References God): And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

**Exodus 4:2** (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

**Numbers 20:11** (References Moses): And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

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