

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 (קָרְחָ מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֶשְׁתָוֹ וְאֶת-בָנָיו וַיַּפְגִּם עַל-הַמֶּרֶד יָשַׁב אֶל-אָרֶץ מָצָרִים וַיָּקֹחַ מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מַטֶּה כָּאֹלָהִים)—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** (מַטֶּה כָאֹלָהִים, 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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

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

וְיַעֲשֵׂה	מֵשֶׁה	וְאֶת	אֲשֶׁר	וְאֶת	בָּנָיו	וְרִכְבָּם	וְעַל
took	And Moses	H853	his wife	H853	and his sons	and set	H5921
H3947	H4872		H802		H1121		H7392
מֵשֶׁה	וְעַל	מֵאַת	יְמִינָה	וְאֶת	בָּנָיו	וְרִכְבָּם	וְעַל
them upon an ass	and he returned	to the land	of Egypt	took	And Moses		
H2543	H7725	H776	H4714	H3947	H4872		
וְעַל	יְמִינָה	בְּיַדְךָ	בְּיַדְךָ	וְעַל	מֵאַת	יְמִינָה	וְעַל
the rod	of God	in his hand					
H4294	H430	H3027					

Additional Cross-References

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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