



# NHS Sedra Sheet

Parshas Beshalach – Moshe’s Matteh – Wood or Saphir/Chessed or Din? – Rabbi M Taubman (reprint)

י"ג שבט תשע"ו – 23rd January 2016 – שבת פ' בשלח

Hashem commands Moshe to take the Match with which he struck the Nile (to turn it to blood) as follows:-  
"Hashem said to Moshe pass in front of the people and take with you some of the Elders of Israel and your staff with which you struck the Nile take in your hand and go." (Shemos 17:5)

The Meforshim discuss Moshe’s Match and note that no other Novi used a Match when producing Nissim. Rav Hirsch explains that a "match" can be considered as an extension of ones’ hand for support or an extension of ones’ sphere of power and influence.

Moshe was commanded to use the Match to show that Hashem is unlike other kings, who need to use different implements to strike and heal. Hashem can use the same object (the Match) to bring about hurt (the plague of blood) or healing (water from the rock). "Mortal man he strikes with a weapon and heals with a poultice. But me, with the [same] object I strike, I heal. Therefore, it is said, "And your Match with which you struck the Nile take in your hand" in order that everyone shall know that it is bracha. (Shemot Rabbah 26:2)

The Midrashim differ as to what the Match was made of? One Midrash explains that the staff that Moshe threw to the ground and which turned into a snake and reverted back to being wood, hints that the Egyptians would eventually also turn into dry wood. Another Midrash states explicitly that the Match was made of Sanpirinun (Sapphire). (It is in this Midrash that it is stated that the initial letters of the 10 Makkos were inscribed on it.) (Shemot Rabbah 8:6)

When Moshe was at the Sneh the following conversation took place. Vayomer Ailav Hashem mazel Beyadecha vayomer mazel. (Shemos 4:2) Hashem said to him, "what’s this in your hand?", he said, "a staff". The word "Mazel" is itself interesting, since two words Mah zeh are (in Hebrew) combined into one. Superimposing the word "match" (in Hebrew) onto the word Mazeh (in Hebrew) we arrive at the name "Moshe". (the zayin inserts itself into the middle of the Tes producing the letter "Shin". The "Zayin" in the word "Mazel" denotes weaponry and represents the aspect of Din within Moshe’s personality. The "Tes" in the word "match" denotes goodness and represents the aspect of Chessed within Moshe’s personality.

Moshe, in acting out Hashem’s commands, represents these two aspects of Hashem’s nature, which are themselves combined in Moshe’s personality - explaining why Moshe and Hashem have such a close connection. Thus Moshe is able to act in defence of the Bnei Yisrael in a manner of "Din" and to provide for the Bnei Yisrael in a manner of "Chessed". [One practical outcome of this is that the Match is able to make wet things dry (the Nile turns to blood-Din) and to make dry things wet (the rock produces water-Chessed). It also explains the connection between the Makkah of blood and the Nais of the rock as hinted to in the opening verse above.]

Having established this idea we can see that it in fact pervades the Midrashim that we mentioned above. Hashem is a unified being, who in essence, is total chessed but acts in a manner combining Din and Chessed and as such does not need two separate objects to perform His will. In a similar fashion there are two separate strands of thought indicating how Moshe acquired the Match. When Moshe was about to die, the Angel of Death was looking for him. "The Angel of Death said to the Tree of Life "Have you seen ben Amram?" He said, "From the day that he came to me and took the staff I have never again seen him." Otzar HaMidrashim Moshe Keta 20

The Match was created at twilight on Erev Shabbat and was given by Hashem to Adam. The Match eventually made its way through the generation to Yosef. On Yosef’s death, Paro took this Match and placed it in his safe until Yisro took it with him when he left Paro’s employ and went back to Midian. Yisro planted it in his garden where it took root until Moshe came and uprooted it. (Pirkei de R’ Eliezer Ch 39.)

Perhaps the Midrashim allude to the same idea that we mentioned above. According to one Midrash the Match was taken from the Aitz HaDaas and represents the aspect of Din given that it differentiates between the moral concepts of good and evil. (In contrast to the Aitz HaChaim, which represents Chessed).

The second Midrash would explain the Match from the perspective of Chessed. a) The Match was created by Hashem and b) it this Match that Moshe would use to release the Bnei Yisrael from their slavery. There can be no greater aspect of chessed greater than that.