



## *Shepherds need to know the Biblical Meaning of “Rod”*

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*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:1-2*

Over the past year and a half, the thematic method of Scripture study and drawing from the ancient Hebrew meanings of words has resulted in a number of new understandings and further study in several areas. Among them is this one: exploring the meaning of the “Rod” from the root of Jesse. It is this “Rod” the central heart of the golden lampstand that is our Messiah, the governing aspect of all Seven Spirits of YHWH that rest on Yeshua.

With my Lutheran background, I have long understood that Messiah is this Rod that shoots forth from the root of Jesse, or David’s house. Clearly translators have seen this when they capitalize the word. I have been wearing a menorah necklace for nearly ten years since I have understood that this is Messiah’s symbol. I have known for all of that time that this metaphor comes from Isaiah 11: -2 which is supported in Revelation 1:12-13 but never had I felt any inclination to know more about the context of those verses or anything more specific about the Rod! This makes me think of an unforgettable line from “The Sound of Music” movie when the Von Trapp family is trying to escape at night only to come face to face with the Gestapo. The real question of what they are doing is carefully avoided as Captain von Trapp observes, “ Apparently, we both suffer from a deplorable lack of curiosity.” Apparently, I have had a deplorable lack of curiosity, too, and was quite satisfied just to know that this image represents Messiah. Sometimes I am amused by that long term satisfaction and sometimes dismayed.

Two things come to mind that make greater understanding of this term and image important for those who provide leadership to the Flock of Messiah. We need to respond to His direction to “feed my sheep” by

- learning more about what that means
- more clearly defining one who is walking in the way of all 7 Spirits rather than in the counterfeit way of the world, the flesh and the evil one.

A valid third point would be the importance of those who come under the leadership of another knowing the character and “heart” of their leaders in order to be wise in their choice of assemblies.

“Spare the rod and spoil the child.” Is this “rod” the same as that referred to in our description of Messiah? This is a common saying, though it is a misquote of several verses in Proverbs and is often presented as the rationale for physical “discipline” commonly called corporal punishment. The more one learns of the Biblical meaning of the term, the more it becomes clear that this is NOT the intended meaning, however often it may be used in that sense. Those who speak of the rod as referring to corrective discipline which is a teaching tool are much closer to the original intent. That word rendered rod is “shebet” Strong’s # 7626; “rod, staff, branch, offshoot, club, scepter, tribe a. rod, b. staff (of spear, dart) c. club (of shepherd’s implement) d. truncheon, scepter (mark of authority e. clan, tribe.” It is found in many places in Proverbs as noted above and in the beloved verse from Psalm 23 though it is NOT the word used in Isaiah 11:1 despite some relatedness. “Shebet” is the root word under “scepter” in Esther 4:11 referring to “a rod of empire.” Aaron’s rod with which he turned dust to lice (Exodus 8) is a different word yet: “mattah” Strong’s # 4294 from #5186. which means: “A branch, (as extending) fig. A tribe, also a rod, whether for chastising (fig. Correction ) ruling (i.e. scepter) throwing (a lance) or walking (a staff; fig. A support of life ( e,g, bread) rod, staff, tribe.” This word is also translated as “staff” and is used of a “staff of bread” in Lev. 26; 26; and for the “bread of wickedness” in Numbers 14:9.

Back now to our original verse in question, Isaiah 11: 1, in which “choter” is the word translated “Rod.” NIV is nearly alone in rendering the key phrase “a shoot from the stump of Jesse” with the majority choosing the term “Rod” from the “root” of Jesse, yet in this case, the choice may be closer to the original Hebraic picture.

“Rod” is Strong’s # 2415 “choter” chet tet resch “from an unused root of uncertain significance; i.e. a twig—rod.” This gives us very little to go on! Vine’s Expository Dictionary does not include “rod” in the OT section. Benner’s Ancient Hebrew Lexicon offers this information: (reading right to left)

Benner # 2157	HhThR	resch	tet	chet
		Head of a man	Clay basket	Tent wall
		Chief, top,	Contains	to protect
		beginning, first	Modern number 6	inside & outside

.It appears then, that the ancient functional meaning of this word would involve the responsibility of the head man or Chief to contain what is important and to protect the family from dangers both inside the group and from outside sources. This certainly makes sense from the perspective of one keeping sheep as well as “sheople.”

Though other sources were also vague on the significance of the word “choter” TWOT had some relevant information. Here it carries the number 643 and is “the assumed root of 643a, branch or twig.” It is suggested that it is also related to two possible words: Hida 616a meaning “riddle, difficult question, parable” or to Hay 644a meaning “living” or Haya 644b meaning “kinsfolk” generally but a more extensive description is also included: “Haya -- to live or have life; remain alive, sustain life, live prosperously, live forever, be quickened, revive from sickness, discouragement, or even death...”

Now, this connection does appear relevant to our “choter” in these verses. The connection between this “life” and the Spirit active on the First Day of creation is indicated in Proverbs 3: 16

*Long life is in Wisdom’s right hand.*

TWOT further notes “Physical life, is in God’s hands; the tree of life and death. Life is the ability to exercise all of one’s vital power to the fullest. Death is the opposite.”

There is a lengthy and interesting discussion of these aspects in TWOT pages 279-281 for anyone who’d like more detail. Of particular interest to those who have studied the Creation Gospel is the connection made with various passages that refer to the connections between a path of life and the Rod who is able to lead us correctly. Particularly Psalm 16: 11

*“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

There is also confirmation that the way of Messiah and the way of the evil one are different and that He can instruct us:

*Concerning the works of men, by the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer. Uphold my steps in Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip.* Psalm 17: 4-5

Clearly, a “Rod” that can show the path of life and nurture, contain and protect life is one to be sought after! Shepherds, we would also echo the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 17: 15 as we follow our Rod, Yeshua:

*“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”*

Now with all these variations and possible concepts underneath the English word, “rod”, what is the frequency of their use in Scripture? Does the usage of these words teach us anything more about the “Rod” of Isaiah 11: 1?

There is indeed. There are many words that have a similar connotation to rod which include staff, branch, scepter, twig; and there are various combinations usages in which the two seem almost interchangeable such as rod/hand, rod/staff as bread, rod/mouth, rod/inheritance, rod/wrath. So when one stretches out their hand it is as though it were a rod, and so forth. To do a study of these combinations, particularly hand/rod, seems it would be an enlightening subject also. (perhaps Ezekiel 20: 37 to begin)

These comparisons can be found most easily using the Englishman’s Concordance. There, we learn that “matteh” is most frequently used at nearly 300, and “Shebet” follows at approximately 200. There are only about 18 usages of “makkeh!” (# 4731) which makes it a more interesting word to check as it must have a more detailed or specific meaning than the more generally used words.

Now, the real surprise to me was this: **“choter” sometimes transliterated as “ghohter” has only 2 usages!** One is in our Isaiah 11:1 verse and the other is in Proverbs 14: 3:

*In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride. (but the lips of the wise will preserve them.) NKJV*

Clearly then, this rod, “choter” is not exclusively connected with YHWH’s Truth. A “choter” can be connected with both sustaining and protecting life AND with foolishness and pride! Perhaps there is a case to be made for the rod of pride in the mouth to be related to the untamed tongue as well?

This revelation then sent me back to check out the context of our Isaiah 11: 1 verse which we know is regarded as Messianic prophecy for those in Judaism, and as Messiah Yeshua specifically for His followers.

So many times we have seen the picture of the holy and the unholy in metaphor: prowling lion and the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God and the lamb-beast, Proverbs 31 woman and the harlot for example. The number 2: witness and division –and now we can add the Rod and the rod. Now the pairings of obedience/blessing, and disobedience/cursing come into focus as well.

Wise shepherds would certainly prefer to be led by the Rod that has the 7 Spirits of YHWH resting on Him, rather than by a fool with a rod of pride! We would also certainly prefer to lead others while walking with the Rod of YHWH rather than

falling to an untamed tongue and foolish pride. It is also pretty safe to assume that those who are *being* led would prefer the Rod over the rod; if they only know how to discern the difference!

What do we need to know to discern the difference between these rods?

Let's look at the context of Isaiah 11. As many know, the chapters and verses were a later addition and do not always reflect an entirely new subject or division. I was quite surprised to read Isaiah 10 and learn that the context in which the declaration about the Rod from the root of Jesse was made was that of discipline and judgment. In verses 5 and 15 we find the parallel:

*Woe to Assyria, **the rod** of My anger and **the staff** in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge. Isaiah 10: 5-6*

*Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if **a rod** could wield itself against those who lift it up, or as if **a staff** could lift up, as if it were not wood! Isaiah 10: 15*

Going back another chapter we find another Messianic prophecy in 9: 6 and Isaiah expounding on how the government will be on His shoulder before the sins of the people are addressed. YHWH is continuing to extend His hand despite His anger and the disobedience of the people, including the observation that "the leaders of this people cause them to err" (v.16) Four times He expresses His merciful call to return without response. THEN He declares as above, that He will use Assyria as a "rod" of punishment for those disobedient people. "Staff" is "matteh" as noted earlier. "Rod" is \_\_\_\_\_

He declares His intention to use the King of Assyria to bring judgment yet then declares that He will "punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks." Many of the descriptions found here are included among the seven abominations of Proverbs 6:16-19 which we know to be working in rebellion against the seven Spirits of YHWH.

*These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him; A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run swiftly to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.*

After this punishment/discipline is carried out against the rebellious people, He will turn back to them and restore them. They will have learned dependence on Him rather than on a "king."

*Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: "O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a **rod** and lift up his **staff** against you, in the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction." And the Lord of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; as **His rod** was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt. Isaiah 10: 24-26*

"Staff" and "rod" are "matteh" here. Most often used as in the sense of a tribe, according to Strong. The descriptions of what was/is to be done to the rebellious people are graphic and intense. YHWH makes it clear that He is the one giving the power to carry this out through His chosen "rod" of Assyria.

The initial fulfillment was found in ancient times as the Assyrian King raised his hand against Israel. As is so often the case, this description regarding the King of Assyria is thematically connected with other "kings" or "Pharaohs" who raised their hand/rods in destruction toward the House of Jacob. "In the manner of Egypt" refers to the first exodus events as well as to the final, greater exodus.

Having thoroughly described the intent and results of raising the rod of the Assyrian against Jacob, Isaiah turned to the declaration found in Isaiah 11:1.

In stark contrast to the arrogant, haughty ways of the King of Assyria as a rod, we now see the blessings of the Spirits of YHWH resting on His Chosen Rod of deliverance for His beloved people, *ami dodi*. This Rod will walk in wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and awe of YHWH. He will judge with righteousness. He will "strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked." (Isaiah 11: 4) Though there will be great distress for those who have chosen a disobedient path, there will be no question of foolishness or pride coming from this Mouth! Nor should there be from one who desires to wake up in the likeness of the nurturing leadership of our Head as He protects His people from dangers within and without.

The Seven Spirits of YHWH as contrasted with the seven abominations of Proverbs 6 are a good place to begin when considering whether a leader might be a rod of punishment/arrogance in YHWH's hands or wicked in his own way; or under the guidance of THE Rod from the root of Jesse as He moves through His chosen vessels/people for restoration.

*Abba, our Father, our Creator;*

*We do look to You for our strength and nurturance, the Rod of the strength of Yisrael.. It is often lonely to lead others, and difficult to find wise counsel as we do so. Sometimes those we try to help even rise up and accuse us. The powers of this world are bold and overwhelming at times. We do need to grow into Your*

*likeness if we are to be among the shepherds who haven't disappointed You; feeding the sheep rather than feeding off them. In our humanness, our weakness, it would be far too easy to fall into arrogance or judgment when we continue seeing our people struggle and often seem to forget what they have learned, just when they really need it the most. We cannot rely on ourselves for the wisdom, and understanding to counsel rightly without falling into judgment..*

*We can see the difference between one who may be a rod bringing punishment and destruction, given to arrogance and deceit in that entire "package" of abominations and one who is walking after Messiah Yeshua, clinging to the path of life despite the trials.*

*We declare that You are our chosen portion, Yeshua Messiah, our chosen Rod, to lead us in Your paths of righteousness, actively seeking the daily work of all Seven Spirits in our lives. . We rejoice in Your Presence and the knowledge that You not only show us by Your example but are well able to equip us to carry out Your plan in our lives. You defend us and speak justice. We do not need to fear or doubt that You would set a standard we can never meet. The way "up" is truly "down"; in humility and deep awareness that You supply us with all we need to nurture, contain and protect Your sheep from dangers within and without, as You do. We must decrease and You must increase.*

*May we awaken in Your likeness more and more fully each day.*

*B'shem Yeshua ha Maschiach. Omayne.*

*"And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people, for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious." ....He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Isaiah 11:10, 12 NKJV*

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Comments always welcome at [info@set-apart-ministries.org](mailto:info@set-apart-ministries.org)

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