

Put Aharon's staff before the Testimony as a safe-keeping. (17:25)

Leadership is commonly understood to be the result of an interplay among various leadership qualities and positive innate character traits, skills and the external circumstances which serve as the backdrop for the leader to perform his role. Obviously, the characteristics of the community which he must shepherd is a major component. Ultimately, who is to become *Klal Yisrael's manhig*, leader, is Divinely-mandated. Hashem confers leadership on whom He deems deserving of the position and who would best lead the nation during its present circumstances. Over time, the chosen leader will cultivate the qualities of communication, empathy, decision-making and vision which need to be tempered through the daily challenges confronting the leader.

I write this as a preface to explaining why Moshe *Rabbeinu's mateh Elokim*, staff of Hashem, was not put away for posterity, as was the *mateh* of Aharon *HaKohen*. Moshe used his *mateh* to facilitate the miracles and wonders that occurred in Egypt, including the Splitting of the Red Sea, and to initiate discipline for those who were guilty of spiritual breaches. Yet, it was not concealed. The distinction of the *mateh* of Aharon *HaKohen* was that it served as the Heavenly sign that Aharon was the Divinely-conferred *Kohen Gadol*; the idea that the staff was the symbol of peace that signaled the end of Korach's treachery was concealed.

Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl, explains that Moshe's staff was used to discipline the nation, as it facilitated punishment in Egypt. Aharon's staff was used to enable peaceful coexistence and an end to the strife that was tearing apart the nation. The *mateh* of Aharon had a place in the future, thus, it was preserved. Moshe's *mateh* was necessary at the time. The future hope, however, is that we would have no need for discipline.

We may add that Moshe's *mateh*, like his leadership, was Divinely-conferred upon him. It was handed down through the generations. *Pirkei D'R'Eliezer (Perek 40)* traces the *mateh's* history. It was created *bein ha'shmashos*, during twilight, on the sixth day of Creation, given to Adam *HaRishon* in *Gan Eden*, later given to Chanoch, who transferred it to Noach, who left it to his son, Shem. In turn, Shem gave it to Avraham *Avinu*, who bequeathed it to Yitzchak *Avinu*, who gave it to Yosef. When Yosef died, the contents of his palace were transferred to Pharaoh's palace, where Yisro (Moshe's father-in-law) noticed it and perceived its sanctity. He took it and planted it in his house in Midyan, where, due to its extraordinary holiness, it was untouchable, until Moshe came and noticed it. He, too, was able to perceive the unusual destiny of this staff. Yisro said to him, "This staff will facilitate the Jewish people's liberation from Egypt." When Yisro saw that Moshe understood the staff's unique value, he gave him his daughter, Tziporah, as a wife, and he gave him the *mateh Elokim*.

Having delineated the *mateh's* unique origins, we note that, actually, it was Hashem's *mateh* which He conferred through different means to individuals of worthiness. Thus, it reverted back to its

rightful Owner who will one day give it to the leader of His choice.

The *mateh Aharon* was the personal staff of Aharon *HaKohen*. When Korach defamed Aharon's position as *Kohen Gadol*, Moshe initiated a test, whereby each of the twelve tribes was represented by a staff upon which was written only the name of its leader. Aharon's staff bloomed forth almonds. [Various symbolism is associated with the immediacy of the almonds blooming.] Everyone now knew for certain that Hashem had conferred the High Priesthood on Aharon. His staff became the blooming symbol of peace. As such, it was put away to be revealed with the advent of *Moshiach*

Tziddkeinu. Two staffs – two purposes – two perpetual repositories.