

Exodus Chapter 7 Midrash

A change in the Serpent from *tanniyn*^{H8577} to *nachash*^{H5175} causes a change in law form

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Introduction

This article was extracted from one of my “Torah Series” articles ^A because I noticed a distinction between two Hebrew words that had been translated as one English word. If you didn’t bother to look for the underlying words that was translated as **serpent** you wouldn’t catch the difference and it would be “disguised” in the translation.

The word serpent caught my attention and I was encouraged to dig deeper because of a couple of things, first was the highly symbolic nature of “serpent” and because of what the serpent came from...rod (הַמִּטֶּה) ham· mat· Teh).^B

The rod is also a highly symbolic item and it is related to law which is my passion.

^A See “Exo-7-8-to-8-7-Ki-Yidaber-When-He-Speaks”, article #[1005](#).

^B **Word Study H4294 *matteh* rod**

מִטֶּה From H5186; a **branch** (as extending); figuratively a **tribe**; also a rod, whether for chastising (figuratively correction), ruling (a **sceptre**), throwing (a lance), or walking (a **staff**; figuratively a support of life, for example **bread**): - rod, staff, tribe. See “Word-Study-H4294-matteh-rod-branch-tribe-and-H7626-shevet-staff-sceptre-tribe”, article #[664](#).

Relevant Verses

In the aforementioned article the context is Moses and Aaron's confrontation with Pharaoh and it occurs right before any of the [plagues](#) begin. The first Hebrew word that I'm interested in is [tanniym](#)^C.

Exo 7:8-12 – A show of rods turning into serpents, but Aarons rod swallows Pharaoh's

⁸ And YHVH spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

“⁹ When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, ‘Show a miracle (מוֹפֶת) for you’: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, ‘Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent (לְתַנִּיּוֹן^{le-tan-Nin}).’ ”

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as YHVH had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent (לְתַנִּיּוֹן^{le-tan-Nin}). ¹¹ Then Pharaoh also called the wise men (לְחַכְמַיִם) and the sorcerers (וְלַמְכַשְׁפִּים): now the magicians (חַרְטָמִי)^D of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments (בְּלֵהֲטִיהֶם).^E ¹² For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents (לְתַנִּינִים^{le-tan-ni-Nim}): but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. ¹³ And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as YHVH had said.

Continuing down in the same chapter we see the English word serpent showing up again.

Exo 7:14-15 – Pharaoh's heart is hardened re letting the people go

¹⁴ And YHVH said unto Moses,

“Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. ¹⁵ Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent (לְנֶחָשׁ^{le-na-Chash}) shalt thou take in thine hand.

But now the Hebrew word is different, it's now [nachash](#)!^F

This word *nachash* is first used way back in Genesis chapter 3 describing the “wiley” serpent in the garden.

Gen 3:1-4, 13-14 – the Serpent in the Garden

^{3:1} Now the serpent (וְהַנְּחָשׁ^{ve-han-na-Chash}) was more subtil (עָרוּם^{a-Rum}) than any beast of the field which YHVH God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ² And the woman said unto the serpent (הַנְּחָשׁ^{han-na-Chash}), We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³ But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye

^C See Word-Study-H8577-tanniyn-tanniym-dragons-serpents-whales-monsters-oh-my, article #671.

^D חַרְטָמִי^{H2748 KJC:11} magicians¹¹ Gen 41:8, 24, Exo 7:11, 22, Exo 8:7, 18-19 (2), Exo 9:11 (2), Dan 1:20, 2:2

^E לֵהֲטִי^{H3858 KJC:2} enchantments¹ Exo 7:11, flaming¹ Gen 3:24

^F See “Word-Study-NaChaSh-H5175-and-H5172-to-H5180”, article #311 and “Word-Study-H7080-H7081-QaSaM-Divination-compare-to-H5172-NaChaSh” article #325.

shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. ⁴ And the serpent (הַנָּחָשׁ ^{han·na·Chash}) said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

3:13 And YHVH God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent (הַנָּחָשׁ ^{han·na·Chash}) beguiled me, and I did eat. ¹⁴ And YHVH God said unto the serpent (הַנָּחָשׁ ^{han·na·Chash}), Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field (הַשָּׂדֶה ^{has·sa·Deh}); upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust (עָפָר ^{ve·'a·Far}) shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

Not Moshe's First Rodeo Handling the Magic Rod

If you have been systematically studying along with this story in the Torah you will know probably remember what happened at the beginning of Exodus chapter 4

Exo 4:2-4 – Moshe's rod (*matteh*) magically transformed into a serpent (*nachash*)

² And YHVH said unto him,

“What is that in thine hand?”

And he said,

“A rod (מִטֵּה ^{mat·the}).”

³ And he said,

“Cast it on the ground (אַרְצָה ^{Ar·tzah}).”

And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent (לְנָחָשׁ ^{le·na·Chash}); and Moses fled from before it.

⁴ And YHVH said unto Moses,

“Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail.”

And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: ⁵ That they may believe that YHVH God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

Before I continue on with my midrash, I wanted to point out that the only other time the Hebrew word *nachash* appears before Exo 4:3 and Exo 7:15 is regarding the tribe of Dan.

Gen 49:16-18 Dan's blessing from his father Jacob ^G

¹⁶ Dan (דָּן) shall judge (דָּן) his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁷ Dan shall be a serpent (נָחָשׁ ^{na·Chash}) by the way, an adder (שִׁפִּיפֹן ^{she·fi·Fon}) in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. ¹⁸ I have waited for thy salvation (לִישׁוּעָתְךָ ^{li·shu·a·te·Cha}), YHVH.

^G Excerpt copied from “Gen-48-01-to-49-26-the-sceptre-shall-not-depart-from-Judah-until-Shiloh-come”, article #993.

I included Gen 49:16-18 so that I can give a complete list of usage of this word (at least up Exodus), but I also wanted to point out the connection to the law (which fits with the theme of this article). What does it say about Dan who “shall be a serpent / *nachash*? It says he shall judge.

So back to this story, what’s the difference between how these two Hebrew words *tanniym* and *nachash* are used? Well obviously Aaron’s *tanniym* serpent was superior i.e. more powerful than then Pharaoh “*phlunkies*”. But the next day Moses meets Pharaoh and grabs the “serpent” which is now a *nachash* serpent.

Connection to the Law – the rod *matteh*

Exo 4:14-17 – YHVH instructs Moses to take the rod (*matteh*) in his hand to do signs.

¹⁴ And the anger ^H of YHVH was kindled against Moses, and he said,

“Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach (וְהוֹרִיתִי)

ve·ho·rei·Ti) I אַתְּ ^J you what ye shall do. ¹⁶ And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. ¹⁷ And thou shalt take rod ^K (הַמֶּטֶה ^{ham·mat·Teh}) in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs (הָאֵתוֹת ^{ha·’o·Tot. signs}).” ^L

For the record, the only other times it’s used prior to this is in the story is Gen 38:18, 25 regarding Judah and Tamar.^M

My passion is to study Torah law i.e. what I call the Torah law form. A fundamental concept of law is jurisdiction which is driven by or determined by the law form that is applicable to you in a particular situation. When jurisdiction is established then the relevant statutes and ordinances are applicable.

I view the scriptures as a law form that is hidden in this awesome story ^N about YHVH and his creation and ultimately his covenant with Israel. Therefore in my studies I’m always trying to decode it by looking for

^H Foot note removed for brevity, see Exo-04-14-to-6-1-VaYeled-Moshe-Then-Moses-Departed #1001.

^I **H3384** *yara* KJC⁸² teach(ers)(ing)⁴⁹, sho(o)t(ers)¹⁸, archers⁵, cast(eth)⁵, rain², (instructed direct, inform, instructed, laid, showed, watered)¹

See Word-Study-Tav-Vav-Resh-like-Torah, article #403; and also #399, #388.

^J ...“I will teach *etchem et taasun*”... there is actually two Strong’s #H853 that aren’t translated. See e-Sword notes of #1001 .

^K YHVH is telling Moses to “take this rod” Which rod? The one Moses (presumably) came with, or a special one given to him by YHVH “wherewith thou shalt do signs”?

^L Foot note removed for brevity, see Exo-04-14-to-6-1-VaYeled-Moshe-Then-Moses-Departed #1001.

^M See Gen-38-Judah-and-Tamar, article #975.

patterns and symbols that will shed light on my understanding of it and, more importantly, what I'm supposed to do with it i.e. how do I relate to it.

Symbols

Therefore my thoughts or midrash is the following. The rod symbolizes the execution and enforcement of the law and the symbol of the serpent represents the law form i.e. jurisdiction, since there are two serpents (*tanniym* and *nachash*), there are two law forms / jurisdiction.

Questions of Jurisdiction

There are different types of jurisdiction ... personal ^O, territorial ^P and subject matter ^Q. It would be a good exercise to try to apply the types of jurisdictions to each type of serpent. How do this different type apply to considering that Israel is a Kingdom of Priests?

My Midrash – connection symbols with law forms

Let's try to determine where the serpents that are of the *tanniym* type are located by using the translations that are used elsewhere in the bible. This word is translated as serpent only three times and all of them are in Exodus chapter 7 (which I have already shown above see Exo 7:9-10, 12). The remaining translations are dragon, whale and sea monsters. What do they all have in common? **They live on the water.**^R Is there a law form associated with water? Have you ever heard of **admiralty/maritime**^S jurisdiction?

Law forms contrasted between *Nachash* and *Tanniym*

If you can accept that the law form / jurisdiction of the *tanniym* is admiralty maritime, and you know "hidden in the translation" that there is a completely different Hebrew word *nachash* that is used, does it make sense to continue with our midrash and compare and contrast these words?

The Hebrew word changes when Moses grabs the *tanniym* serpent (identified in the previous verses) by the tail for which the text identified it by calling in a *nachash* type of serpent.

^N **ToDo:** identify this with one of Marsings-Rules-and-Key-Definitions article #501.

^O **Personal jurisdiction** is a court's jurisdiction over the parties to a lawsuit, as opposed to subject-matter jurisdiction, which is jurisdiction over the *law and facts* involved in the suit. If a court does not have *personal* jurisdiction over a party, its rulings or decrees cannot be enforced upon that party, except by comity; i.e., to the extent that the sovereign having jurisdiction over the party allows the court to enforce them upon that party. A court that has personal jurisdiction has both the authority to rule on the law and facts of a suit and the power to enforce its decision upon a party to the suit. In some cases, territorial jurisdiction may also constrain a court's reach, such as preventing hearing of a case concerning events occurring on foreign territory between two citizens of the home jurisdiction. ...
Source [Wikipedia](#).

^P **TERRITORIAL COURTS** The courts established in the territories of the United States. Vide Courts of the United States. ^{Source}
Bouvier's 1856 Law Dictionary

^Q **SUBJECT-MATTER**¹. The cause, the object, the thing in dispute. ². It is a fatal objection to the jurisdiction of the court when it has not cognizance of the subject-matter of the action; as, if a cause exclusively of admiralty jurisdiction were brought in a court of common law, or a criminal proceeding in a court having jurisdiction of civil cases only. 10 ... ^{Source} Bouvier's 1856 Law Dictionary

^R Even the *tanniym* serpent described in Exo 7:9-10, 12 are associated with water, because in Exo 7:15, YHVH instructs Moses to meet Pharaoh at the river bank when he goes out to the water.

^S **ADMIRALTY** The name of a jurisdiction which takes cognizance of suits or actions which arise in consequence of acts done upon or relating to the sea; or, in other words, of all transactions and proceedings relative to commerce and navigation, and to damages or injuries upon the sea. ^{Source} Bouvier's 1856 Law Dictionary

So what, if anything, does that mean?

First off the *tanniym* that remained was from Aaron's rod turned serpent and this was the one that had swallowed up the rod turned serpent that came from Pharaoh's men.^T If those *tanniym* serpents represented the jurisdiction of the sea, can we conjecture that the *nachash* serpent that Moses grabbed symbolically has a jurisdiction from the land.^U

Why would I say this?

If you go back three chapters earlier to the beginning of Exodus chapter 4 you will see this is not the first time Moses experienced this.

Exo 4:1-13 Moses' miraculous rod that turns into a serpent (*nachash*)

¹ And Moses answered and said,

“But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, YHVH hath not appeared unto thee.”

² And YHVH said unto him,

“What is that in thine hand?”

And he said,

“A rod (מִטָּה mat-the).”

³ And he said,

“Cast it on the ground (אֶרֶץ Ar-tzah).”

And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent (לְנָחַשׁ le-na-Chash); and Moses fled from before it.

⁴ And YHVH said unto Moses,

“Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail.”

And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: ⁵ That they may believe that YHVH God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

The *nachash* serpent of Exodus chapter 4 is the same type of serpent that got changed by Moses in Exodus chapter 7. Here is my speculation, YHVH, through Moses, is bring the case that Pharaoh has against Israel from out of the jurisdiction of the sea and onto the jurisdiction of the land.

ToDo:

- Related how this applicable today and connect it to the formation of Social Security. It has been suggested (and I tend to believe) that the application for Social Security benefits ([SS5 Form](#)) is intrinsically a contract that is dependent on admiralty/maritime.

^T In fact Aaron's rod => serpent swallowed up to the three rods => serpents of Pharaoh's men. I say three because the text of Exo 7:11 has three separate words, wise men, sorcerers & magicians. You could do a midrash on this as well e.g. 3 is the number of perfection and revelation.

^U see the definitions I gave in a previous footnote for the terms admiralty and subject matter)

- How does this relate to the fiery serpents of Numbers 21.^V
- How does this relate to the serpent in the Garden found in chapter 3.

Connection in the New Testament

Can we project forward and see some symbolism in the New Testament by looking at the Greek? As it turns out the Greek does the same thing by using two different words (i.e. two different Greek words). In the LXX, the Hebrew word *tanniym* is translated as δρακων *drakon* and the other Hebrew word *nachash* is translated as οφιν *ophis* .

For the most part my interest in the LXX is because it's a pass-through / cross-reference to the New Testament which we have Greek manuscripts of. In the New Testament, δρακων *drakon* is only found in the book of Revelations (8 times in chapter 12, 3 times in chapter 13 and once each in chapters 16 and 20).

The Greek word οφιν *ophis* which is the Hebrew word *nachash* is found 14 times in the New Testament (Mat 10:16, 23:33; Luk 10:18-19, 11:9-11; Joh 3:14; 1Co 10:9, 2Co 11:3 and Rev 9:19, 12:9, 12:14-15, 20:2

ToDo:

- Expand on how this can shed new light on what, for example, Revelation chapter 12^W is talking about?

^V See Numbers-21-fiery-serpents, article #[307](#).

^W Revelations chapter 12 - **The Woman and Her Son Versus the Dragon** (see Rev-ch-12, article #[667](#).)

^{12:1} And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: ...

Appendix

The 10 Plagues

I added this table so that this article can have context because

ToDo

- I need a better i.e. more detailed version of this table along with verses notations.
- What I probably need is a separate article dedicated just to the plagues.

#	plague
1	Aaron strikes the Nile, the waters turn to blood;
2	Swarms of frogs overrun the land;
3	Lice infest all men and beasts. Still, Pharaoh remains stubborn;
4	Hordes of wild animals invade the cities,
5	a pestilence kills the domestic animals,
6	painful boils afflict the Egyptians.
7	Fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail. Still, "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the children of Israel go; as G-d had said to Moses."
8	a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; ^x
9	a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land.
10	Death of the first born who do not have the blood of the lamb on the door post

^x These plagues descend upon Egypt.