



Likkutei Sichos

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The Sprouting Staff

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SIGNS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE CHOICE OF THE LEVITES

It has been reiterated multiple times that Rashi, in his Torah commentary, provides answers to all questions that arise in the straightforward understanding of the verses, making it accessible even to a young child learning Chumash. However, where Rashi does not offer an explanation, it is presumed that the answer is self-evident based on the plain meaning of the verse.¹ Alternatively, the problem was already resolved by Rashi's commentary here, or in an earlier place.

In our *parshah*, Scripture relates the punishment of those who were swallowed — “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them,”² about which it says earlier that “*through this you will know that Hashem has sent me to perform all these deeds* — which I have done by the word of Hashem; conferring the high-priesthood on Aharon.”³ Following this narrative, the Torah records the punishment of those who were burnt to death: “a fire came forth from Hashem and consumed the 250 men who were bringing the incense.”⁴ This incident proved that “the man who will be chosen by Hashem is the holy one” and “{the chosen one will survive, but} all of you will be lost.”⁵ And finally, after the narrative about the plague, the Torah recounts the blossoming of Aharon's staff.⁶

Why were the punishments and clear signs insufficient to quell the complaints of the Jews,⁷ necessitating the additional sign of Aharon's staff blossoming?

On the verse,⁸ “Return the staff of Aharon before the (Ark of) Testimony to be preserved as a symbol...,” Rashi comments it is “for a remembrance that I

¹ Otherwise, when there is no straightforward explanation, Rashi writes, “I don't know” (*Bereishis* 28:5, and in a number of places), or the like.

² *Bamidbar* 16:32.

³ *Ibid.*, v. 28; and Rashi, ad loc.

⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 7, and Rashi, ad loc.; see Rashi, there on v. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17: 11, et passim.

⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 20; see *Bachya*, ad loc: “This verse intimates that some Jews still complained after being punished with **three punitive measures** — swallowed up, incinerated, and afflicted with a plague.” He then specifies what each of these measures accomplished.

⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 25.

chose Aharon to serve as *kohen*, so that they will never again dispute the priesthood.”

Ramban, citing Rashi's comment, states that the staff was merely a symbol for the tribe of Levi, which was chosen above all other tribes, but not specifically for Aharon to possess the priesthood. *Ramban* comments: “*Preserved as a symbol* — referring to the tribe of Levi, who replaced the firstborn, because the incineration was a symbol for the priesthood, while the blossoming staff served as a symbol for the Levites.”

Some commentators explain at length that the symbol served by the staff — “Aharon’s staff blossomed” — applied to both concepts: first, that Aharon was chosen for the priesthood; second, that the tribe of Levi was chosen for the service of the Levites. They further explain the necessity of this interpretation by pointing out the following:

If the staff was merely a “symbol” for the selection of the tribe of Levi, (a) the staff would have been called the staff of Eliezer ben Aharon, who was the *Nasi* of the tribe of Levi,⁹ similar to how the other tribes designated their *Nasi*’s staff;¹⁰ (b) the names of the *Nesiim* and Aharon would not have been inscribed on the staff (as stated:¹¹ “You shall write each man’s name on his staff... and the name of Aharon on the staff of Levi),” but rather the name of the tribe itself.¹²

Other commentators offer explanations as to why the sign of the blossoming staff is (also) related to Aharon’s priesthood:

a) The blossoming specifically occurred in the letters of the name “Aharon” and not on any other part of the staff.¹³

⁹ As the verse (*Bamidbar* 3:32) states: “The *Nasi* of the Levite princes was Elazar...” and Rashi explains: “The one in charge of all of them....”

¹⁰ See *Re’em* on Rashi’s commentary on *Bamidbar* 17:25 (see also *Gur Aryeh*).

¹¹ *Bamidbar* 17:17-18.

¹² *Nachlas Yaakov* on Rashi’s commentary on *Bamidbar* 17:25.

¹³ See *Levush* and *Sifsei Chachamim*.

b) The mention of “spouted a bud (***tzitz***)” alludes to the High Priesthood because it refers to the name of the golden head plate (***tzitz***) worn by the *Kohen Gadol*,¹⁴ and so forth.

Rashi’s commentary, however, neither mentions explicitly nor hints at these interpretations.

Also, it is important to consider the following point: Even should we accept the evidence for the sign being connected with Aharon’s priesthood, it is still unclear why this additional sign and test were necessary for Aharon’s selection. Why were the previous signs not enough?

One possible explanation for all this can be found in Rashi’s commentary on the verse,¹⁵ “and it produced a blossom,” which will be explained further.

2.

“IT PRODUCED A BLOSSOM”

There is a point that needs clarification:

Rashi’s commentary on the words, “*it produced a blossom* — meaning what the term denotes,” raises a couple of questions. (a) It is unclear why Rashi gives this interpretation on the third occurrence of this word instead of on the **first**.¹⁶

(b) Obviously, Rashi only explains the phraseology of a verse when the straightforward understanding of the verse is **not** evident from the words and context of the verse. Conversely, he does not provide explanations that are already self-evident from the verse, since there is no need for an **interpretation**.

¹⁴ See *Abarbenel*, ad loc.

¹⁵ *Bamidbar* 17:23.

¹⁶ In *Bamidbar* 17:20.

Thus, when Rashi uses the phrase “meaning what the term denotes,” or the like, he is negating an interpretation that is not self-understood, which is not “what the term denotes,” but nonetheless, might be presented based on the subject matter, or some other related consideration.

We need to clarify: What is the other interpretation and its proof — in our verse?

*Sifsei Chachamim*¹⁷ explains:

Wherever there are two terms, as in our verse: “blossomed,” and then afterwards, “sprouted a bud,” where the meaning of the term *blossomed* {*parach*} is known but the meaning of the term “a bud” {“*tzitz*”} is not known, Rashi comments on the {known term} “blossomed”: “meaning what the term denotes,” and so it needs no explanation. In contrast, the meaning of the term “a bud” {“*tzitz*”} is unknown. So this term does require an explanation, which is “the emergence of the {developing} fruit when the blossom falls.

However, according to this self-stated rule of *Sifsei Chachamim*, the opposite is the case and the question is even stronger: Were Rashi to explain **only** the words: “sprouted a bud” {“*vayatzeitz tzitz*”}, the contrast would make it even clearer that “brought forth a blossom” {*vayotzei perach*} does not need to be explained (because it means “what the term denotes”). However, now that Rashi comments, “meaning what the term denotes” – this implies that he is precluding and negating a different explanation, as above.

Later on, Rashi pauses on the word: “a bud” {*tzitz*} and explains: “the emergence of the {developing} fruit when the blossom falls.”

This comment calls for examination:

The style of Rashi is, as known, to explain the **straightforward** meaning of the verse – namely, the **meaning** of the words (and the subject matter), and

¹⁷ Printed in the Chumashim. (In the version of *Sifsei Chachamim* printed in *Otzar Pirushim* (with the *Re'em*), this explanation is not found.)

not just to add a description and detail, unless it is critical to the simple understanding of the verse. So we need to clarify: Why is it important here for Rashi to point out regarding the growth of flora that “the emergence of the {developing} fruit” is “when the blossom falls”?

3.

“AND DEVELOPED ALMONDS”

Afterwards, Rashi quotes the words, “developed, *וַיִּגְמַל*, almonds,” and explains:

When the fruit was identifiable, it was perceived that they were almonds, as in “the child grew and was weaned, *וַיִּגְמַל*.”¹⁸ This term is used {also} concerning fruit of the tree, as in “its bud becomes a ripening, *וַיִּגְמַל*, fruit.”¹⁹

As known, and mentioned many times, Rashi’s wording is precise. If so, one must understand: The reason Rashi cites the verse: “its bud becomes a ripening fruit” is understood (based on Rashi’s wording). This verse proves that this that this verb (*וַיִּגְמַל*) is used (not only in relation with children, since they are weaned, *וַיִּגְמַל*, from their mother’s milk but) also in relation to fruits. What, however, is Rashi’s intent by pointing out (and **adding** words): “fruits **of the tree**” and not just simply “fruits”?²⁰

¹⁸ *Bereishis* 21:8.

¹⁹ *Yeshaya* 18:5.

²⁰ Note commentators (Rashi, *Radak*) on *Yeshaya*, loc. cit.

4.

REPETITION AND ADDITIONS

One could posit that the explanation is as follows: In the plain understanding of this verse, several questions arise. Among them:

- a) Hashem had declared,²¹ “It shall be that the man whom I shall choose — his staff shall **blossom**.” Why (in actuality) was there a change (and additions) to this miracle? Not only did the staff “blossom,” but it also “sprouted a bud and developed almonds.”²² Furthermore, these extras required additional **miracles**!
- b) This verse seems to have repetitive expressions. After the verse states, “Behold! the staff of the house of Levi blossomed,” it says again, “it brought forth a **blossom**.”

[*Baalei Tosafos* explains that the repetitive expressions, “Behold! the staff of the house of Levi blossomed,” and, “it brought forth a blossom,” refer to two types of blossoming: On one side of the staff, there were blossoms that remained and never fell off.²³ And on the other side, “it brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud, and developed almonds.” These blossoms later fell off “like the manner of all blossoms of trees.”²⁴

However, Rashi’s words cannot be construed this way, because Rashi would have **explicitly** noted such a **novelty**, consistent with the style of his Torah commentary. Over here, though, he does not even hint at this explanation.]

²¹ {*Bamidbar* 17:20.}

²² As *Sifsei Chachamim* asks, ad loc. See also *Pnei Dovid* by the *Chida*, on our *parshah*, par. 10, s.v., “*ve’Rashi*”; and *ibid.*, par. 15, s.v., “*amnam*,” (in the name of *Rabbeinu Ephraim*), et passim. The solutions — do not align well with the plain meaning of Scripture.

²³ See *Yoma* 52; likewise in *Horios* 12a; and see further, Section 10,

²⁴ *Daas Zekeinim* on *Bamidbar* 17:23. This view that there were two types is evident according to several commentators. For example, see *Abarbanel*: “In this, there were four miracles: (1) That the dry staff blossomed; (2) that it first produced a blossom; (3) that it sprouted a bud, which is the beginning of the emergence of the fruit; and (4) that it developed ripe almonds {that remained constantly together with the blossom and bud}....”

And Rashi answers these questions with his interpretation that the phrase “brought forth a blossom” (*vayotzei perach*) is to be understood “what the term denotes,” and that “sprouted a bud” (“*vayotzei tzitz*”) means “the emergence of the {developing} fruit when the blossom falls.”

5.

BLOSSOMING IN A GENERAL OR IN A SPECIFIC SENSE?

From Rashi’s explanation that “brought forth a blossom” {*vayotzei perach*} means “what the term denotes,” i.e., an actual bloom, we understand that the expression used **earlier**, “will blossom” {*yifrach*}²⁵ “had blossomed”²⁶ {*parach*}, does not mean a blossom in the simple sense.

The expressions “*yifrach*” and “*parach*” (in the active tense), when speaking about a tree, mean “bloomed,” as the term denotes. This means that there was a flowering of blossoms. (And when used regarding a fruit tree, there is a blossoming of blooms from which fruit emerges later.)

When speaking about a staff, or the like, however, and not about a tree, the expression “*perach*” is not limited to meaning the blooming of a blossom. Rather, it can refer to growth in a general sense (an addition) to the **staff** — a **sprouting** (*perichah*), i.e., anything that grows and emerges later. (This usage would be analogous to its usage in the expressions, “blossoming (*poreach*) forth blisters,”²⁷ or, “the righteous will flourish (*yifrach*) like a date palm.”)²⁸

Therefore, upon encountering the expression, “brought forth a blossom” (*vayotzei perach*), Rashi must clarify that the word *perach* here means “what the term denotes.” A flower appears, an actual bloom — not like the terms “*yifrach*” and “*parach*” used earlier, which are not limited to meaning specifically what they denote. And in these previous instances, Rashi does not need to explain this

²⁵ {*Bamidbar* 17:20.}

²⁶ {*Bamidbar* 17:23.}

²⁷ *Shemos* 9:9.

²⁸ *Tehillim* 92:13, and Rashi comments, “like a date palm to produce **fruit**.”

explicitly (and at length) because the meaning of the word “*perichah*” has been taught previously,²⁹ and when Scripture speaks here about a staff, it is self-understood that the intent is not to the flowering of a bloom specifically, but to a general blossoming that includes a growth of flowers, buds, and fruit.

And since Hashem’s usage of expression, “his staff shall blossom,” when He spoke to Moshe, is meant in the general sense of sprouting — beginning with the emergence of the blossom and all the particulars that follow — it is understood that after Hashem said, in **general** (several times), that “his staff shall blossom,” the Torah afterwards specifies “it brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud, and developed almonds.”

On a similar basis, the repetitive expressions in the verse, “Behold! the staff of Aharon of the house of Levi had blossomed; it brought forth a blossom” is also understood: The Torah previously stated, in general — “the staff of Aharon blossomed” (just as Hashem said: “his staff shall blossom”). And then afterwards, the Torah delineates the specifics of the flowering: “it brought forth a blossom” (*vayotzei perach*) — “what the term denotes,” i.e. a blossom; “sprouted a bud” (“*vayatzetz tzitz*”) — “the emergence of the {developing} fruit when the blossom falls”; and afterwards, “developed almonds.”

6.

THE ALMONDS WENT THROUGH ALL THE PHASES OF GROWTH

In light of the above, however, the question arises: The clause, “it brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud, and developed almonds” elucidates what was said earlier in the verse — “the staff of Aharon of the house of Levi had blossomed.” Since first a blossom is brought forth, and in the **end**, “almonds,” it turns out that by the time, “Moshe **came** to the Tent of the Testimony,” all three steps had **happened already**. If so, the question emerges, as asked by

²⁹ Not specifically in connection with trees. See *Shemos* 9:9, “blossoming (*poreach*) forth blisters,” and Rashi comments, “To be rendered as in *Targum*... it produces bubbles.” See *Vayikra* 13:12, 20, 25, 39, 42, 57 {regarding *tzaraas*} (“It is an eruption (*porachas*),” and Rashi explains: “something which returns and erupts”); *Vayikra* 14:43.

Rashbam:³⁰ Why didn't Scripture record only the last phase of growth — considering that this was the only phase seen by Moshe — and not the earlier two stages?

It is difficult to say that when Moshe had entered the Tent of the Testimony, he witnessed the unfolding of all three phases of growth in rapid succession, as this would serve no apparent purpose. After all, wasn't the function of this miraculous sign, as stated earlier,³¹ “I shall cause to subside from upon Me the complaints of the **Children of Israel**,” that the **Jewish people** should recognize and believe that Hashem had chosen Aharon?³²

Therefore, in his comments on the phrase, “sprouted a bud,” Rashi adds: “This is the emergence of the developing fruit **when the blossom falls**.” His intent is to explain that the natural process of the fruit's development had taken place. And it was made possible for the Jewish people to realize this by **seeing** the shedding of the **blossoms**:

Moses took out all the staffs and showed them to the Jewish people, as it says, “Moshe brought out all the staffs from before Hashem to all the children of Israel; they saw....” He showed them everything, including the blossoms that had fallen when the fruit developed. And when they saw the staffs along with the almonds, and also the blossoms that had been shed, they realized what had transpired in the Tent of the Testimony: the entire natural process of “*it brought forth a blossom* — what the term denotes”; “*sprouted a bud* — the emergence of the developing fruit, and the blossom falling”; and “*developed almonds*.”

³⁰ In his commentary in our *parshah*, *Bamidbar* 17:23; see also *Moshav Zekenim*, ad. loc., at the beginning.

³¹ Loc. cit., v. 20.

³² {See *Bamidbar* 17:25.}

WHY DID THE ALMONDS HAVE TO GROW IN THE NATURAL WAY?

One might wonder, however, what purpose did it serve for the Jewish people to know this? And what purpose did it serve for the almonds to grow on the staff in a way that followed the entire natural process step-by-step, as in any event, what happened was an absolute miracle? Thus, why not have the staff produce ripened almonds immediately?

According to other commentators, the purpose of this miracle is understood. For they explain that the blossoms of **this** “*perach*” and “*tzitz*” magnify the greatness of the miracle. As *Radak* says,³³ “Scripture first tells us about the emergence of the blossoms, and afterwards about the bud. This sequence was the opposite of the order of how almond trees naturally grow. It happened this way to magnify the miracle.”

However, according to Rashi, who maintains that the phrase, “sprouted a bud,” refers to “the emergence of the fruit when the blossom falls,” it turns out that the reverse was the case: The order of growth followed the natural process of how almonds are produced.

Now if the reason that the staff grew the way it did was to magnify the miracle, the following is unclear: Rashi should have explained the sequence of growth in the same way as *Radak*. Namely, the growth did **not** follow the natural order of almonds. And if the reason that the staff grew the way it did was to bring about the core miracle, then why wouldn’t it have sufficed for the staff to have produced fully ripened almonds?

³³ In his work entitled, *Sefer HaShorashim*,” under the entry of “*perach*.”

8.

AHARON WAS HASHEM'S CHOICE

The explanation: The way the almonds grew embodied the main reason for the sign with the staffs.

After the ground had swallowed up all Korach's followers,³⁴ along with their property, everyone knew **Hashem had delegated Moshe** to perform all these deeds, that Moshe was Hashem's messenger, and that **everything** he did was by Divine decree. In particular, this was revealed when the 250 people who had brought the **incense** were burnt to death. Then it became clear to everyone that Aharon specifically was chosen by Hashem for offering the incense — for the High Priesthood.³⁵

Nevertheless, the complaining of the Jewish people still did not let up. What people knew was only that everything was done according to **Hashem's** command and that's why the disbelievers were punished. However, it was possible that Aharon **himself** was no different than other Jews; therefore, why should he presume to lord over them? Moreover, quite possibly, on account of the sin with the Golden Calf, Aharon, specifically, was not worthy; and others of the Jewish people were more worthy of receiving the position of High Priest. Furthermore, perhaps Hashem had appointed Aharon as High Priest in response to Moshe's petition or prayer, or something similar.

That's why Hashem performed the sign with the staffs: By itself, a staff could not naturally blossom and grow fruit. This could happen only because of Hashem's choice and His will.

³⁴ {See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 33, p. 170 for further clarification.}

³⁵ Several commentaries on *Bamidbar* 17:6, such as *Ibn Ezra*, *Rashbam*, *Daas Zekeinim*, and others (refer also to *Ramban* and *Abarbanel*), state that the fact that the 250 men were burned as a consequence of offering incense did not prove to the Jewish people Aharon was chosen as the High Priest and that the 250 men were liable to death because they were unfit for the priesthood. It is possible that those who offered the incense were burned due to Moshe's and Aharon's prayer or through a {secret} knowledge that they possessed (*Ibn Ezra*, *ibid.*). Another possibility is that they were burned because Moshe commanded them to offer a "foreign fire" {that Hashem did not command}, or for other similar reasons, (see *Rashbam*, *Ramban*, and *Abarbanel*, *ibid.*). Therefore, there was a need for the sign of the staff (as explained in the aforementioned commentaries). However, it appears forced to say that Rashi agrees with this view, for if that were the case, he should have explicitly stated so. It is worth noting Rashi's second explanation in his commentary on *Bamidbar* 17:13.

On the other hand, by seeing what happened with the staffs, they realized that the will of Hashem brought this all about. Namely, it was not an ordinary miracle, but rather a miracle that was linked to the **nature of the staff**.³⁶ Therefore, the blossoming unfolded in this way: First, “it brought forth a blossom,” as the term denotes; afterwards, it “sprouted a bud,” the emergence of the developing fruit when the blossom fell; and afterwards, it “developed almonds”; when the fruit was identifiable, it was perceived that they were almonds. This was a **natural** process of the growth of the fruits.

Understandably, this was the same process that happened regarding the Aharon’s priesthood. The appointment of Aharon to the priesthood was based on Hashem’s choice, as it says,³⁷ “It shall be that the man whom **I shall choose...**”; it was Hashem’s will to choose Aharon, and it was not prompted by any request from Moshe, or the like. And the choice itself was carried out in a way that for Aharon, the priesthood was transformed into a natural virtue.

On this basis, Hashem’s later command is also understood:³⁸ “*Return the staff of Aharon... as a safekeeping, as a sign* — as a remembrance that I chose Aharon as a *Kohen*, and they should no longer complain about the priesthood.” Since the priesthood was transformed into something natural³⁹ for Aharon and his children, it was not possible to say that this could change. (This was true even if someone else would be drawn to the priesthood and desire to serve in the *Beis HaMikdash*, or for other reasons.) Selecting someone else, at a later period, in his place was out of the question.⁴⁰

³⁶ In relation to this matter (in a different context), we encounter a similar concept as elucidated in other places (such as *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 18, p. 242, and the sources cited there). It highlights the existence of two distinct types of miracles:

(1) The miracle changes the nature and reality of the thing, and in order to return to its previous nature, another miracle is required (like with Moshe’s hand turning leprous as white as snow - *Shemos* 4:6-7).

(2) The miracle does not nullify the nature of the thing, and when the miracle ceases, the thing returns naturally to its previous state (as with *Kriyas Yam-Suf* - see *Shemos* 14:21 and *Tanya*, “*Shaar Hayichud VeHaEmunah*,” ch. 2; et al). Further explanation can be found there.

³⁷ *Bamidbar* 17:20.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 25, and Rashi, ad loc.

³⁹ {Possibly, genetic, or something along those lines,}

⁴⁰ See *Or HaChaim* on *Bamidbar* 17:20, and earlier there, v. 17, s.v., “*daber*,” near the end.

9.

ALMONDS ARE QUICK TO BLOSSOM

According to the above, we will also understand the continuation of Rashi's commentary on the words "developed, *וַיִּגְמַל*, almonds." The addition of a proof that "this wording is found regarding fruit" of the tree," is not only to prove that *וַיִּגְמַל* is used regarding fruits, (and not just regarding a child) but also to emphasize that the process by which the almonds grew on the staff here — *וַיִּגְמַל* — was the same as development of the **fruits of trees**.

In this context, we will also better understand the continuation of Rashi's commentary: "And why did Aharon's staff sprout almonds?" And Rashi answers, "It is the fruit that is quickest to blossom of all the fruits. So, too, one who raises objections regarding the priesthood, his punishment is quick to come":⁴¹

Since the development of the fruit on the staff was in the same way as fruit of the trees in order to emphasize that the phenomenon occurred following the natural process, and therefore, pertains to Aharon's priesthood, as explained above, it is understood that also the fact that specifically almonds sprouted is also related to the topic of priesthood about which we are speaking here.

Consequently, Rashi continues and says, "And why almonds?" Meaning the fact that they were specifically (this species of fruit) almonds (although this detail doesn't really add to the sign regarding the Divine choice of Aharon), is still related to the point here. It alludes to the fact that "one who raises objections regarding the **priesthood** is punishment, his punishment is quick to come.

⁴¹ See commentaries on Rashi (*Gur Aryeh*; *Sifsei Chachamim*) regarding the flow of Rashi's caption here.

10.

CONCEALING THE STAFF TOGETHER WITH THE BLOSSOMS

According to this explanation of Rashi, a passage in the Gemara, which the *Rishonim* grapple with, is understood:

The Gemara states:⁴² “When the Ark was hidden, hidden with it were... the staff of Aaron, with its almonds, and its blossoms.”⁴³ The commentators question:⁴⁴ Why does the Gemara mention the blossoms? — For Scripture says, “it developed almonds.” And after almonds ripen, no blossoms remain (as they had previously fallen, as above). The commentators answer⁴⁵ that “some blossoms remained on the staff in order to magnify the miracle.”⁴⁶

However, seemingly, we still need to clarify: Why does the Gemara have to specify the blossoms separately when it speaks about the **concealment** of the staff? Seemingly, according to the above, the blossoms were on the staff and when the staff was concealed, wouldn’t the blossoms also be concealed automatically?

Regarding the almonds, one could answer, at least with difficulty, that they were specified to clarify that we’re speaking about Aharon’s staff. However, why is it important to note the blossoms **here**?⁴⁷

According to what we said above regarding Rashi’s commentary — the **straightforward** meaning of Scripture, which does not differentiate between the blossoms — that **all** the blossoms had fallen off and that Moshe had shown them to the people **separately** from the staff, it is understood:

⁴² *Yoma* 52b.

⁴³ This is the version of the text in *Ein Yaacov*, and in *Dikdukei Sofrim*, in manuscript. In our Gemara, it reads, “and its almonds and its blossoms.”

⁴⁴ *Tosafos Yeshanim*, *Tosafos HaRosh* on *Yoma*, loc cit; *Ritva* there, also cited by *Pnei Dovid*, there, Sec. 15.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Similarly, in *Rabboseinu Baalei HaTosafos* on our *parshah*, on the verse.

⁴⁶ This is stated in *Ritva*, loc cit., “in order to magnify the miracle.”

⁴⁷ Note that Rambam in “*Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*,” ch. 4, par. 1, only mentions, “the staff of Aharon,” and does not add, “its almonds and its blossoms.”

To convey the natural character of Aaron's priesthood the first time, Moshe had taken out the staff together with the almonds, and separately, the fallen blossoms. He did so in order to show the Jewish people that the almonds had grown following the natural order, as explained at length.

Likewise, it is also understood that this same message be made when fulfilling the commandment to "*return the staff of Aharon to before the Testimony as a safekeeping, as a sign* – as a remembrance that I chose Aharon as a kohen, and they should no longer complain over the priesthood." For this "remembrance," it was important that the staff's "return" {before the Testimony} include the staff together with the almonds, as well as the blossoms separately. Specifically, in this way, the manner in which Hashem chose Aharon as a kohen {i.e., the priesthood became integrated into the fabric of Aharon's very nature} would be conveyed.

Accordingly, when speaking also about the concealment, it specifies, "the staff of Aharon with its **almonds** and its **blossoms**": The hiding place of the Ark was chosen not (only) to prevent the Ark from falling into enemy hands, but (as discussed at length on an earlier occasion)⁴⁸ because its place of concealment had the same halachic status of the Ark's designated place. (Therefore, King Shlomo, already at the **beginning** of the Temple's construction, sanctified it as a place to contain the holiness of the Ark, as it was in the Holy of the Holies. For Shomo had known that "ultimately, the Temple would be destroyed, and so he constructed in it a place wherein to conceal the Ark.")⁴⁹

The same was true of the other artifacts that were positioned "in front of the Ark." Their place of concealment was "with it," with the Ark, because this was **their** {designated} **place**. For this reason, also after these artifacts were relocated to their place of concealment, they continue to perform their intended spiritual functions.

And this is applicable particularly regarding Aharon's staff. For the exposition concerning its concealment together with the Ark is derived from the

⁴⁸ *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 21, p. 159 ff.

⁴⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*," ch. 4, at the beg.

words, “as a **safekeeping**, as a sign,”⁵⁰ teaching that it is “as a **safekeeping**, as a sign,” also in its place of concealment.

Therefore, regarding its concealment, the Gemara specifies, “Aharon’s staff with its almonds and its **blossoms**.”

All this will be revealed with our righteous Moshiach, about whom it says,⁵¹ “Let the righteous **flourish** {**yifrach**}, in his days.” “For in his day, the priesthood will be restored, and Aharon’s staff will **sprout** {**yifrach**}.”⁵²

— Based on a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas* Korach, 5741 (1981)

⁵⁰ *Yoma*, loc. cit.

⁵¹ *Tehillim* 72:7; see *Baal HaTurim*, ad loc.

⁵² The words of *Baal HaTurim*, ad loc.