

# The Stick of JUDAH

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An edict of the Empress Wu, to which her successor, the Emperor Tai Tsung (763-779 A.D.), has appended an amplification by having the new scroll placed beside the old and bound to it with a silken cloth. Here the two sticks that are joined into one in the emperor's hand are actually scrolls.

(After J. Lechler, *Vom Hakenkreuz* (Leipzig, 1934), p. 74.)

The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?

Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: . . . (Ezekiel 37:15-21.)

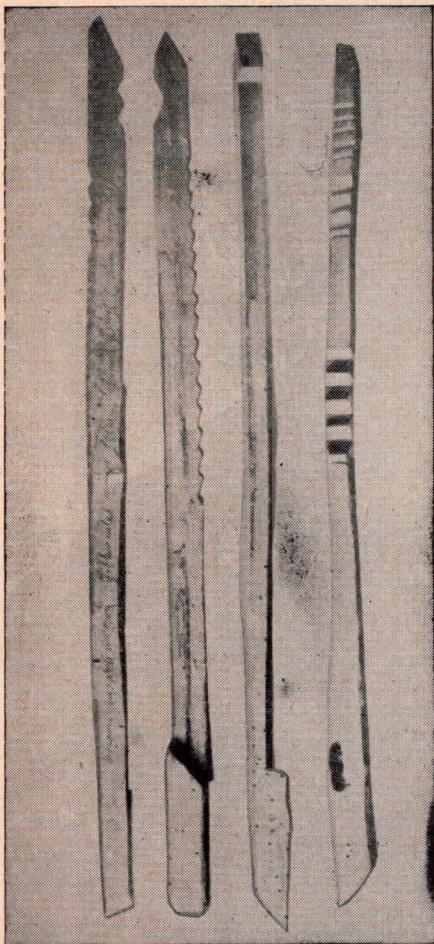
## I THE DOCTORS DISAGREE

**I**N MAINTAINING that Ezekiel in his account of the sticks of Judah and Joseph (Ezek. 37:15ff) was actually referring in prophetic language to the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the Latter-day Saints may invoke the prerogative of any pious reader of the scriptures to interpret any symbolic passage in whatever way carries the most conviction. But the more aggressive use of the passage to support the claims of the Book of Mormon can but elicit loud protests and challenges from the outside world. To answer these, it is necessary to demonstrate not only that our interpretation of the passage is a possible one—for there are many possibilities—but that it is also the one most likely intended by the Prophet Ezekiel. The one way to do this is to show (1) that Ezekiel's strange conception and manipulation of the sticks was not a bizarre or original conceit, but that it was strictly in accordance with ancient practices perfectly familiar to the Jews of that time though lost to the modern world, and (2) that the prophet put a definite interpretation on the stick ritual according to which it can hardly have represented anything but the two books in question.

In explaining this remarkable chapter we are not bound by the opinions of even the most learned so long as there is no consensus among them. Fortunately, we find ourselves in perfect agreement with them in all those points on which they agree among themselves. But for the rest we need not and cannot follow them, for they all rush in different directions. Nor do we expect others to follow our opinions in the matter, but only to view the evidence and form their own. The distinguishing mark of Biblical commentaries in general is a dignified unconcern for anything

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been intended a different word would have been used. "Nor have we even to think of a flat board, but simply of pieces of wood upon which a few words could be written," adds Dr. Keil, thus denying the wood any form at all.<sup>10</sup> But since the Septuagint renders Ezekiel's "wood" as *rhabdos* "staff," "rod," and the Bible itself offers convincing parallels (especially Numbers 17), the commentators overwhelmingly favor some form of staff, and in this we gladly concur. As to Ezekiel's refusal to call a staff a staff, upon which Keil lays so much stress, we shall see that that is significant when we come to deciding what the "woods" actually were.

Next we are told that the two sticks are joined together to make one. How was that done? According to the broken-staff theory, by joining together the two broken ends;<sup>11</sup> according to the pilgrim-staff theory by simply carrying the two sticks together in one hand;<sup>11</sup> they were *tied* together according to some—and the Septuagint would bear

this out;<sup>12</sup> but still other methods have been suggested, such as "by a notch, dovetail, glue, or some such method."<sup>13</sup> Skinner says the prophet "put them end to end, and made them look like one," but also suggests the possibility that "when the rods are put together, they miraculously grow into one."<sup>14</sup> Is it necessary to suppose that Ezekiel did anything at all with sticks? "It is a little difficult to decide," says the authority just cited, "whether this was a sign that was actually performed before the people or one that is only imagined. It depends on what we take to be meant by the joining of the two pieces. If the meaning is . . . that when the rods are put together, they miraculously grow into one . . . it is no longer necessary to assume that the action was really performed."<sup>14</sup> "This symbolical action," writes Davidson in the Cambridge Bible, "may have been actually performed, though this supposition is scarcely necessary."<sup>15</sup>

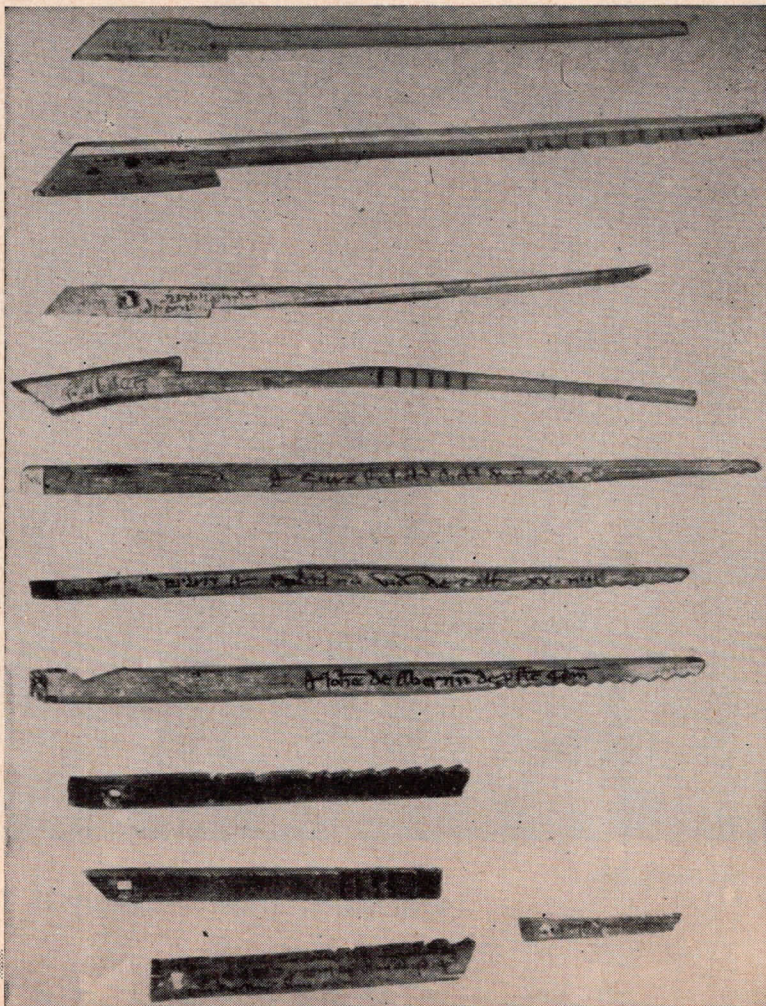
(Continued on page 38)

Left, Exchequer Tallies, eighteenth century. Reduced about one-third.  
Below, Exchequer Tallies, thirteenth century, and Private Tallies, fourteenth century. Reduced about one-half.

that might be called evidence on the subject. The sheer momentum of a heavy theological phraseology, sustained by an occasional (often irrelevant) passage of scripture is thought quite sufficient to override any "saucy doubts and fears" of the layman.

Two sticks are mentioned. What were they actually? Simply "sticks or small pieces of wood," according to some writers,<sup>1\*</sup> the two parts of a broken scepter,<sup>2</sup> "two pieces of what was probably a broken, scepter-shaped stick,"<sup>3</sup> "sticks probably shaped like scepters,"<sup>4</sup> according to others. "Tribal rods" is another interpretation, based on Numbers 17;<sup>5</sup> and even "pilgrim rods" has been suggested.<sup>6</sup> Shepherds' staves,<sup>7</sup> branches cut from a common trunk,<sup>8</sup> and boards for writing<sup>9</sup> have also been considered. Against all of these one of the weightiest authorities, Keil, insists that there is not the slightest proof that 'etz "wood," the Hebrew word here so lyrically interpreted, means "staff" or "rod" at all, and that if any kind of staff had

\*Bibliography will be found at end of chapter.





## "AS UNTO THE BOW..."

(Continued from page 36)

tion of Captain Charles Whitlock, to ride with all speed to help Justensen's company.

At the first crack of dawn, a savage war cry split the silence, and the battle was on. The little company had barricaded themselves as best they could during the night and were ready to sell their lives dearly.

The whooping Indians rode first in a wide circle around the wagons, then suddenly they came straight towards the barricade at full speed

with murder in their hearts. The relief party, waiting for just such a move, mounted their horses, and rode in behind the Indians, who were quick in noticing them.

This unwelcome and wholly unexpected assistance to the besieged wagons threw the Indians off for a few seconds, but then they began firing, shots were discharged from both sides, and several men on both sides were killed.

Chief Black Hawk was a shrewd warrior, and he was quick to retreat

when he knew that he was outnumbered. He let the battle go on for a while, and then signaled his warriors to retreat.

Great was the rejoicing of Captain Justensen's company as they returned to Ephraim, deciding that they had been overly anxious to get on their farms.

(To be concluded)

## The Stick of Judah

(Continued from page 17)

So all the experts have to offer us is a vague admission that there were sticks and that they were joined: What the sticks were and *how* they were joined remains a mystery. As to *why* they were joined, Ezekiel himself gives an adequate explanation, only to encumber it, in the view of the critics, by a needlessly complex description of what was done. "The purpose of the signs is not merely to suggest the idea of political unity," writes Skinner, speaking of the joining of the two sticks, "which is too simple to require any such illustration, but rather to indicate the completeness of the union and the divine force needed to bring it about."<sup>16</sup> But is this not also "too simple to require an illustration" that has the sticks united now in one bundle, now in another, and variously brought together in the hands of Ezekiel, Joseph, Ephraim, Judah, David, and the Lord? The passage "seems to be filled out with explanatory notes which spoil the balance and harmony of the clauses," according to Cooke, who to restore balance and harmony will strike out whatever seems clumsy.<sup>17</sup> Yet as Housman so emphatically observes, it is just such clumsiness that is the surest sign of genuineness in an ancient text. "Even the great Bentley," says Housman, "forgot that counterfeit verses are not wont to be meaningless . . . and that the aim of interpolators is not to make difficulties but to remove them,"<sup>18</sup> i.e. that if an ancient text displays that "balance and harmony" which our critics crave, it is probably because earlier critics have tidied it up. When all the manuscripts at our disposal display signs of confusion, "those MSS are to be preferred," Housman reminds us, "which give the worst nonsense, because they are likely to be the least interpolated."<sup>19</sup>

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Let the nineteenth verse of the thirty-seventh chapter illustrate the real complexity of Ezekiel's account, upon which scholars have sought to impose simplicity by simply altering the text. Rendered literally, the verse reads: "Verily I am taking the wood of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim and the *shivte* of Israel his associates, and I shall place them upon it along with (*eth*) the wood of Judah, and I shall make them for one wood, and they shall be one in my hand." Three things here complicate the picture.

First, there are the *shivte* of Israel. Now, *shevet* means simply staff or rod: it is cognate with the Latin *scipio*, probably with our own "staff," and certainly with the Greek *skeptron*, whence our word "scepter." Since tribes were anciently identified by rods (Num. 17:2), *shevet* can be read "tribe" in certain contexts. But since in this verse the *shivte* of Israel are to be placed upon or fitted against the stick of Joseph, this is one place where the rendering of *shevet* in its proper sense of rod is particularly appropriate, as Migne observes,<sup>20</sup> since tribes cannot be placed upon another rod, while other rods can. One has the authority of the Septuagint for reading *shivte* here as tribes, but it is clear that the Septuagint has distorted the whole passage, for every time "staff" or "wood" appear in the verse, they are uniformly rendered "tribe," so that the whole ritual of the sticks is completely obliterated. As the passage stands, it describes Ephraim as possessing a number of documents relating to Joseph and members of the House of Israel associated with him; these are to be fitted together with a like collection of documents relating to Judah "and his associates." (V. 16.) This complexity renders the passage "incomprehensible" (*unverstaendlich*) to Guthe,<sup>21</sup> while Jamieson would escape it by changing "them" to read "it."<sup>22</sup> To leave the passage as it stands opens up a number of disturbing possibilities which must be removed at all cost, even if it means rewriting the text or declaring it nonsense.

An annoying confirmation of this seemingly needless complexity is the Hebrew *eth* which we have rendered "along with" and which implies that the stick of Joseph having first been compounded in the hand of Ephraim of a number of "rods" will then be joined to the (compound) stick of

Judah. Read this way, the *eth* makes perfectly good sense, but if one wants a simpler reading "the construction is rather unnatural," as the Cambridge Bible observes.<sup>23</sup> "Jack and Jill went up the hill," etc., is an "unnatural construction" if an editor is convinced that water is found only at the bottom of hills, and so "up" should be emended to read "down." Just so, some editors faced by this *eth* have calmly changed it to *el* and thus removed the offensive word from their sight.<sup>24</sup>

The third rock of offense in this one verse is the statement "they shall

become one in my hand." There have always been scholars favoring the Septuagint reading, "in the hand of Judah."<sup>25</sup> Yet as the Cambridge Bible points out, such an emendation is not permissible, since "there is no trace in the passage of any pre-eminence of Judah over Israel of the north"—which should be obvious to any reader, since the equality of two nations is strongly emphasized in the chapter.<sup>50</sup> Why then do the scholars prefer a reading that is poorly supported by text and context to one that is well supported? Because "in the

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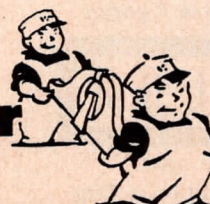
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## THE STICK OF JUDAH

(Continued from preceding page)

hand of Judah" sounds more like history, while "in my hand" is the stuff of prophecy—always more suspect and baffling. Modern scholars, like ancient Targumists, have not hesitated "to modify the language of the prophet . . . and even, in certain

cases, to reverse the plain meaning of the text," when it has served their purpose to do so.<sup>27</sup>

And so our appeal to the experts brings little reward since their work is little more than speculation rather than searching for evidence. Such a search, however, may turn out to be

## "Telling" the Truth

Richard L. Evans

THERE is a sentence from one of the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge that suggests a deeply significant subject: "Veracity," he said, "does not consist in saying, but in the intention of communicating truth."<sup>1</sup> Too often it is assumed that the truth has been told if someone simply says the right words. Too often it is assumed that a person has told the truth when actually he has told a half-truth and withheld the other half. But a person hasn't told the truth when he has deliberately left a false impression, no matter what words he has used or how he has used them. Men may mislead other men by the inflection of their voices, by insinuation and innuendo, by gesture, by what they suggest rather than by what they say, and by what they leave unsaid. They may say so much and imply much more, and then hide behind the literal limits of language. In many such ways men frequently falsify—and often we could not legally prove that they had perpetrated an untruth, yet morally we may know that they intended not to tell the truth. There are those who, as Isaiah indicts them, "Make a man an offender for a word"<sup>2</sup>—those who resort to slick, legal loopholes, those who insincerely rely upon the letter of the law and ignore every intention of honor and honesty. Words can be wonderful, but whatever our words we shall ultimately have to answer for the broad intent of our actions and utterances—and not merely for legal terminology or technicalities, not merely for the letter of the law. The whole intent of a man, what he means to do and what he means not to do, what he means to say and what he means not to say, what he thinks in his heart, what he is in his soul, are all involved in "telling" the truth—for which we are all accountable before our fellow men and before our Eternal Father. God grant that in our time we may hear and know and speak and write and live the truth—and not rely on tricky technicalities or legal loopholes or ambiguous utterance that is a mere mask for falsehood. To close with the words with which we opened: "Veracity does not consist in saying, but in the intention of communicating truth."<sup>1</sup> The mere appearance of truthfulness is not enough.

## "The Spoken Word"

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*.

<sup>2</sup>Isaiah 29:21.

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quite profitable, and if the least be said we cannot well avoid undertaking it.

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup>H. C. Alleman and E. E. Flack, *Old Testament Commentary* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 770; Carl F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh), II, p. 130; J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (N. Y., 1927), p. 515.

<sup>2</sup>*The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, C. F. Eiselen, ed. (N.Y., 1929), p. 740.

<sup>3</sup>Thos. Scott, *Commentary on the Holy Bible* (London, 1850) IV, Ezek. 37.

<sup>4</sup>*Abingdon Bible Commentary*, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Robt. Jamieson et al., *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (1878), p. 220.

<sup>6</sup>H. A. Ironside, *Ezekiel the Prophet* (N.Y.: Loizeaux, 1949), p. 261.

<sup>7</sup>E. Kautsch, Budde, Guthe, etc., *Die Heilige Schrift des alten Testaments* (Tuebingen, 1922) I, p. 975.

<sup>8</sup>Thus Origen, in *Patrol. Graec.* XIV, 64; Raban Maurus, in *Patrol. Lat.* CX, 863; cf. XXV, p. 352.

<sup>9</sup>J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Scripturae Sacrae Cursus Completus* (Paris, 1840) XIX, p. 926.

<sup>10</sup>Keil, *op. cit.*, p. 130f.

<sup>11</sup>*Abingdon Commentary* and Ironside, loc. cit.: "The two sticks are being joined together lengthwise in the hand," G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel* (*International Critical Commentary*, N.Y.: Scribners, 1937), p. 401.

<sup>12</sup>See H. Nibley, *Western Political Quarterly* II (1949), p. 337.

<sup>13</sup>Adam Clarke, *Holy Bible Commentary and Notes* (N.Y.: Abingdon Press) IV, p. 524.

<sup>14</sup>John Skinner, *The Book of Ezekiel* (London, 1895), p. 352.

<sup>15</sup>A. B. Davidson, *Ezekiel* (Cambridge Univ., 1896), ch. 37.

<sup>16</sup>Skinner, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

<sup>17</sup>Cooke, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

<sup>18</sup>A. E. Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomicon* (Cambridge, 1937) I, p. xviii.

<sup>19</sup>*Idem*, p. lxxv.

<sup>20</sup>J.-P. Migne, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup>In Kautsch, *op. cit.*, I, p. 975.

<sup>22</sup>Jamieson, *op. cit.*, I, p. 611.

<sup>23</sup>Davidson, loc. cit. Cases in which *eth* is to be rendered *una cum* (along with) are given in Zorell's *Lexicon Heb. et Aram. Vet. Test.*, p. 90. Raban Maurus renders this *eth* as *pariter cum* (*Patr. Lat.* CX, p. 862).

<sup>24</sup>*Cambridge Bible*, note on Ezek. 37:19.

<sup>25</sup>Kautsch and the Abingdon commentators both favor it, as do Dummelow and Rabbi S. Fisch, *Ezekiel* (London: Soncino Press, 1950), p. 249.

<sup>26</sup>Davidson, loc. cit.; Cooke, *Bk of Ezek.*, p. 401, also favors this reading which "though it sounds surprising . . . is no more than what the preceding part of the verse affirms."

<sup>27</sup>For an excellent treatment of the liberties taken by scholars at all periods with the texts of the prophets, J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford, 1949), pp. viii-xvi.



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# The Stick of JUDAH and the Stick of JOSEPH

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Tally-sticks 600 years old with their original bag and labels. The shorter sticks are the "stocks," the larger ones the "foils" to which the "stocks" were fitted to "become one stick" in the hand of the king's representative upon the completion of payment by either party and the settlement of the account.

(Reproduced from "Archaeologia"  
Vol. 74 (1925), Plate lxxv.)

## II WHAT WERE THE STICKS?

THE theme of the whole thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel is clear to all: it is the great final gathering of the Lord's people into a holy nation, united forever under the scepter of the rightful king, God's anointed, with the sanctuary of the Lord forever in their midst. (Vv. 21-28.)<sup>28</sup> The dry bones of the first half of the chapter represent Israel that has lost hope of ever becoming a nation again, and as Professor Driver observes, Ezekiel shows that "God can restore the dead nation to life and plant it again in its old home."<sup>29</sup> Driver further points out, what most scholars overlook, that the uniting of the sticks to represent (as the prophet explains, vv. 20-22) the reuniting of the nation is a necessary part of the

picture. More recently, Rabbi Fisch has confirmed this basic interpretation.<sup>30</sup> Now the bringing together of tribal rods or staffs marked with the names of tribes was actually practised in Israel when the nation assembled, and indeed commentators have not failed to note the probable identity of the "sticks" of Ezekiel with the tribal rods described in the seventeenth chapter of Numbers. But since the experts have failed to look into the remarkable institution of the tribal rods, it shall be necessary here for us to consider the subject briefly, referring the reader, as much out of necessity as vanity, to studies of our own on the topic.

The great national assemblies of the Israelites, such as that one idealized in Ezekiel 37, had their counterpart in every nation of the ancient

world. For thousands of years and "at hundreds of holy shrines, each believed to mark the exact center of the universe . . . one might have seen assembled at the New Year—the moment of creation, the beginning and ending of time—vast concourses of people, each thought to represent the entire human race in the presence of all its ancestors and gods."<sup>31</sup> The concept of a great and perfect assembly of the whole human race at the throne of a heavenly king is thus the dream and ideal of every nation of the ancient world, and that not by virtue of independent invention or evolutionary development, but rather as the common, though often denatured, heritage from a single lost pattern of church and priesthood.<sup>31a</sup>

Now all who came to these assemblies were represented individual-

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ly and collectively by rods or sticks. Consider first the individual identification rod:

Throughout the northern steppe it was the custom to require all who came to the king's assembly to bring arrows with them, and to present these personally to the king. From these arrows a census was taken, each man submitting but a single shaft, which represented him and bore his mark, for "both in the Old World and the New, the arrow came to stand as the token and symbol of a man." To the arrows used may be applied, for want of a better term, the name "census-arrow." The census-arrow is found among the Scythians, Tartars, Persians, Georgians, Norsemen, and American Indians, and it survived in recognizable form in India, Egypt, and the Far East.<sup>32</sup>

The Greeks and Romans preserved the census-arrow as a simple rod or staff, such as the marked rods that had to be presented by the jurors for admission to the heliastic courts, and the "sections of reed" submitted by all who would participate in the great public feasts in the Eastern Empire.<sup>33</sup> The Arabs always "employed reed arrow-shafts, devoid alike of feathers and heads, but bearing some marks of individual ownership, 'to make division' at their tribal feasts,"<sup>33a</sup> a custom which Freeman refers directly to the "sticks" of Ezekiel, chapter 37.<sup>34</sup> For the use of such identification-sticks on the occasion of the great assembly of Israel is clear from Numbers 17, while in the oldest Christian literary composition, "the Pastor of Hermas (*Simil.* viii, 1-6), all who come to the assembly of the Lord present sections of willow-reed for admission, each receiving his proper place as designated by certain cuts (*schismata*) on his rod."<sup>35</sup>

The rods or arrows submitted by all who came to the feast were often bound together in a ritual bundle to signify the unity of the nation. "Bundles of fifty-two rods, bearing individual and tribal markings . . . represented the full membership of Indian tribes in assembly," as of the Tartar tribes of Asia.<sup>36</sup> Equally common are tribal bundles of seven arrows, such as the holy bundle of the Osage, which "represented the Seven Chiefs, who held the tribe together in peaceful unity."<sup>37</sup> Such tribal bundles are found in the Old World among "the Scythians, Alans, Slavs, and ancient Germans (who also chose their leaders by drawing willow lots), and these have been compared with the Persian Baresma."<sup>38</sup> The Persian king would sit with the Baresma

spread out before him at the New Year, telling the fortunes of the year as he gave away unlimited wealth to all the tribes who came to answer the summons to present themselves before him on that day—the only day of the year on which the veil between him and the outer world was removed.<sup>39</sup> This recalls the king of Babylon "shaking out the arrows" before him in divination at the New Year,<sup>40</sup> and Hoenir in the Far North, holding his holy lottery in the Golden Age.<sup>40</sup> It most vividly reminds one of the ritual feasts of certain Indians of the northwest coast.<sup>41</sup>

The most famous of all tribal bundles, with one exception, was the Roman *fascies*, symbol of the unity and authority of the nation—originally twelve sticks bound together to represent twelve Etruscan tribes.<sup>42</sup> The one exception is, of course, that bundle of twelve rods which, according to the Talmud, were all cut from a single stick, and bound together when Moses laid them up in the ark.<sup>43</sup> What may be the earliest Christian writing after the New Testament thus elaborates on the account in Numbers 17:

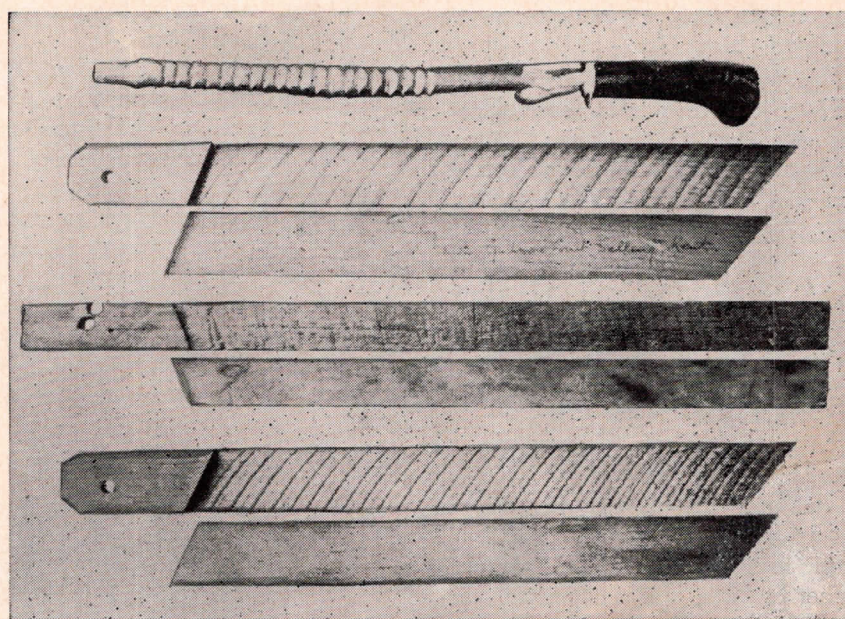
And he took them and bound them together, and sealed [them] with the rings of the leaders of the tribes, and he laid them up in the Ark of the Covenant before the altar of God. And he closed the Ark and sealed the locks, just as he had the rods. Then he said unto them: Men and brethren, that tribe whose rod shall blossom has been chosen of God to be priests and ministers to Him. And when it was

morning, he summoned together all Israel, the 600,000 men, showed the seals to the leaders of the tribes, opened the Ark of the Covenant, and brought out the rods. . . .<sup>44</sup>

A variation on this theme is the very ancient story of "how all the men of Israel were required to attend a great assembly, bringing each his staff, to be handed over to the high priest and used in a lottery for the distribution of brides." It has close parallels among the Bedouins, Scythians, the ancient Turkish, Finnish, Mongolian, and Ossetian tribes.<sup>45</sup> There is a remarkable expression found in the colophon of the oldest known Hebrew text of the Pentateuch (the Aleppo Codex, cir. 930 A.D.), in which the author of the text is designated as "Mar Rab Ahron Mar Rab Asher, may his soul be bound in the Bundle of Life with the righteous and wise prophets."<sup>46</sup> Farther on, the colophon speaks of a group of other venerable doctors: "May their souls be bound in the bundle of Life in the Garden of Eden beneath the Tree of Life. . . ."<sup>47</sup> From these expressions it is apparent that the tribal bundle was actually an ancient Hebrew institution.

It is quite obvious that these customs, found throughout the entire world (we have but skimmed the surface here), are no local inventions, but all go back to a single prototype. When Fowkes compares the holiest possession of the Cheyennes, a ritual

(Continued on page 123)



Modern English tally-sticks. The photograph shows how the sticks fit together to "become one," as well as the manner in which simple rods of willow or other wood could be used to cut primitive tallies.

(Reproduced from "Archaeologia" Vol. 62 (1911), Plate xlviii.)



## The Stick of Judah

(Continued from page 91)

arrow-bundle, with the Jewish Ark of the Covenant,<sup>48</sup> we are faced with a challenge that cannot easily be brushed aside—whence this amazing uniformity in the ways of ancient men the world over? We cannot investigate the problem here: *Why* the ancients chose to be represented individually and collectively by marked rods when they came together at their great national assemblies is a subject I have treated elsewhere; what concerns us here is simply the fact that they did practise such a strange economy, and that the tribal rods of which Ezekiel is speaking are no fanciful invention of his own but something quite familiar to the people to whom he is speaking. The ruin of Moab is represented by Jeremiah as the breaking of his rod (48:17): "... and all ye that know [or recognize] his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, the beautiful rod!" Here the name is recognized written on the rod. Ezekiel himself (19:10ff) depicts the fall of the nation by the breaking of its rods (verse 12): "her strong rods were broken and withered . . ." the rods being (verse 11) "strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule. . ."

It is only natural that an identification-staff should serve as a rod of office or authority. As such it commonly served in ancient times as a message-staff or "summons-arrow."

Throughout the ancient world a ruler was thought to command everything his arrow could touch. Thus whenever a ruler of the North would summon all his subjects to his presence, he would order an arrow, usually called a "war-arrow" (*herör*) to be "cut up" and sent out among them. Upon being touched by this arrow, every man had immediately to "follow the arrow" (*fylga örur*) to the royal presence or suffer banishment from the kingdom. . . . The "cutting" of the arrow was the placing of the royal mark upon it, giving it the force of the king's seal. As often as not the arrow took the form of a simple rod (*stefni*), bearing marks of authorization, while the message was delivered by word of mouth. . . .<sup>49</sup>

Such a use of the message-stick is found everywhere in antiquity—we need not go through the list again but should point out that the institution was also found among the Jews. Thus "the Lord, calling upon a city to declare its allegiance to him, sends his rod to it, and a herald (a man of *tushiah*), seeing the name on the rod, calls out to the people; 'Heed ye the

(Continued on following page)

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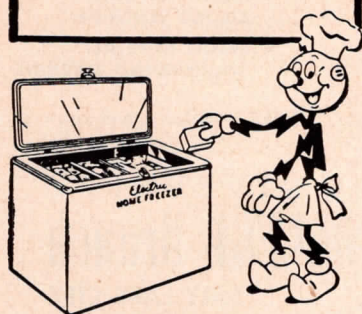
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## The Stick of Judah

(Continued from preceding page)

rod and the one who hath appointed it." <sup>550</sup> (See also Micah 6:9.) In Ezekiel 37:18ff it is evident that the inscribed sticks are to serve as messenger-staves. The prophet is to show them to all the people, and when they ask him what the message is, he is to repeat the words summoning them all to the great assembly: "the Lord Jehovah . . . will take the sons of Israel out of the nations among whom they walk, and will gather them from round about, and lead them into their land. . . ." The prophet is God's herald, sent to gather in the hosts for the last time. Jane Harrison has noted that the herald's staff "is, in intent, a king's sceptre held by the herald as deputy," <sup>551</sup> and few have failed to observe that the sticks in Ezekiel 37 are among other things scepters.

How thoroughly familiar the Jews of old were with the use and significance of various types of symbolic rods may be seen from the wealth of tradition built up around the wonderful Rod of Aaron. This was "the rod that the Holy One . . . created in the twilight of the first Sabbath eve and gave to Adam. He transmitted it to Enoch," from whom it passed down in succession to Noah, Shem, Abraham, and Joseph, from whom it was stolen by servants of Pharaoh, only to be stolen back again by the man whose daughter married Moses who alone of all her suitors was able to grasp the rod without being consumed. <sup>552</sup> According to another account, "Jacob wrested the rod from Esau, and . . . he always kept it with him . . . at his death he bequeathed it to his favorite son Joseph." <sup>553</sup> We are assured that "Aaron's rod is identical with the rod of Judah," and that the same rod was in David's hand when he went to fight Goliath, and that "it will come from hiding in the time of the Messiah." <sup>554</sup> It is this very rod "that the Judean kings used until the time of the destruction of the Temple, when, in miraculous fashion, it disappeared. Elijah will in the future fetch it forth and hand it to the Messiah." <sup>555</sup> For when the Messiah comes, it is by this rod, which bears his name, that he will establish his identity before the people: first of all, we are told, will come Elijah, and to make sure of the identity of the Messiah, the Jews will demand that

he perform the miracle of resurrection before their eyes," instead of which he will "wave the sceptre given him by God. . . . Then the Jews will believe that Elijah is the Elijah promised to them and the Messiah introduced by him is the true Messiah." <sup>556</sup> The Book of the Bee brings this same staff into the Christian system by claiming that "it belonged to Joseph . . . at the moment of the birth of the Saviour, and it served afterwards as one of the planks in the Cross of Christ." <sup>557</sup>

Note that this staff in the hand of a prophet or patriarch is a true herald's staff, "in intent a king's sceptre, held by the herald as deputy." Thus God is represented as promising to Moses in the hereafter: "and one of my many sceptres upon which is engraved the Ineffable Name, one that I have employed in the creation of the world, shall I give to thee, the image of which I had already given thee in this world." <sup>558</sup>

And thus Moses speaks to the Red Sea: "For a whole day I spoke to thee at the bidding of the Holy One . . . but thou didst refuse to heed my words; even when I showed thee my rod, didst thou remain obdurate." <sup>559</sup> When Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron, "Who will believe you when you say that you are ambassadors of God, as you pretend to be?" the credentials they produced were the rod and its miracles. <sup>60</sup> This aspect of the rod as a sign to the world that God has given his authority to the holder is very significant, since it represents the power of priesthood: Indeed, the early Christian Fathers insist that the rod is simply a symbolic representation of the power of priesthood: "The rod of Aaron," says Justin Martyr, "bearing blossoms showed him to be the High Priest. A rod from the root of Jesse became the Christ. . . . By the word God showed himself to Abraham. . . ." <sup>61</sup>

It is exceedingly convenient to have such a message-stick to confirm one's claim to have been sent by some king or by God himself. There are many instances of the usage in the ancient world, and they all seem to go back to the divine pattern. Thus, "the Herald of Zeus goes forth to summon his subjects armed with a golden wand that subdues all creatures with its touch." <sup>62</sup> This is the civilizing and governing rod of Hermes that makes its holder ruler of the world, the golden wand of the two entwined

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA



serpents, the caduseus, the arrow of Zeus in whose name all things are compelled to do obeisance.<sup>22</sup> It was this same caduseus with which Aesculapius presumed to raise the dead—an office reserved to God alone, and to this day the life-giving staff of Aesculapius with its two serpents is the symbol of the medical profession. Strangest of all, the episcopal staves borne by the heads of various ancient Christian churches are still adorned by the two serpents that clearly betray the pagan origin and descent of their emblems of priesthood.<sup>23</sup> Innocent III tells us that the pontifical staff signifies the power of Christ and quotes Psalms II and XLIV to prove it.<sup>24</sup> Yet there are few better-known traditions in the Roman Church than that which reports that the Pope has no rod, because the rod of Peter, the only one he could have, was given by Peter to Eucherius, Bishop of Trier, when he was sent on his mission to the Germans; this rod is said to have raised Eucherius' successor, Maternus, from the dead,<sup>25</sup> just as the rod of Elijah was said to have raised the dead.

The various aspects of ancient rods of office are given here not by way of picturesque diversion, but because we cannot understand the sticks of Ezekiel until we know what such sticks could and did represent. At this point some general observations are in order:

1. The ancients used marked staves for identification. The staff and ring of the Babylonians (Herodotus, History I, 195) recalls the staff and ring by which Tamar identified Judah.

2. A king's staff in the hand of another showed that the other was a delegate of the king, with authority to act in his name. The royal staff is thus a sign of power, a scepter.

3. In referring to the sticks of Joseph and Judah, Ezekiel is using a familiar custom (not inventing fantastic imagery) to illustrate a lesson. The lesson has to do with the establishing of identity and the exercise of divine power, or priesthood, in the days of the restoration of Israel. An important clue to the situation is the peculiar way in which the two sticks "become one."

(To be continued)

<sup>22</sup>"This is the chief passage in which Ezekiel reaffirms the social ideal characteristic of the prophets: an age of peace under the government of a righteous ruler." Cooke, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

<sup>23</sup>S. R. Driver, *Einleitung in die Litteratur* (Continued on following page)

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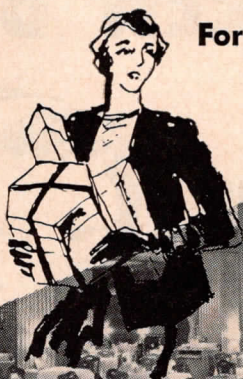
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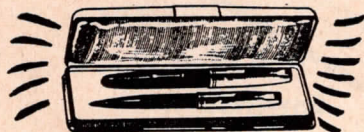
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## The Stick of Judah

(Continued from preceding page)

*des Alten Testaments*, trs. Rothstein (Berlin,  
1896), p. 311.

<sup>30</sup>Fisch, *Ezekiel*, p. 249: "The prediction of  
national resurrection, as symbolized in the  
vision of the dry bones, is followed by the  
symbolic action of the reunion of the two  
kingdoms to indicate that unity is an es-  
sential factor in preserving the life of the  
nation."

<sup>31</sup>H. Nibley, in *Western Political Quarterly*  
IV (1951), p. 226.

<sup>31a</sup>For a general treatment of this subject,  
Lord Raglan, *The Origins of Religion*  
(Thinkers' Library, 1945).

<sup>32</sup>Nibley, *Wstn. Pol. Quart.* II (1949),  
p. 334.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>34</sup>Jas. M. Freeman, *Handbook of Bible  
Manners and Customs* (N.Y., 1877), pp.  
305f.

<sup>35</sup>Nibley, *loc. cit.*

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>37</sup>A. C. Fletcher and F. La Flesche, in  
*Bur. Ethnol. Rept.* XXVII (1905-6), pp. 228,  
242, 274.

<sup>38</sup>Nibley, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

<sup>39</sup>*Loc. cit.*, esp. note 5.

<sup>40</sup>*Poetic Edda, Völuspa* 63.

<sup>41</sup>Like the kings of Persia and Babylon,  
the host among the Kwakiutls gives away  
all his wealth at the New Year, as he sits  
with the staves or arrows of all his guests  
spread out before him, F. Boas, "Kwakiutl  
Indians," *U.S. National Museum Report*  
1895, p. 503f.

<sup>42</sup>Nibley, *loc. cit.*

<sup>43</sup>L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*  
(Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Soc.,  
1909ff), III, 306.

<sup>44</sup>I Clement, *Epist. ad Corinthos*, Ch. 43.

<sup>45</sup>Nibley, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>46</sup>Paul Kahle, *Masoreten des Westens*  
(Stuttgart, 1927) I, pp. 3f.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup>In *Bureau of Ethnol. Rept.* XIII (1891-  
2), p. 116.

<sup>49</sup>Nibley, *op. cit.*, pp. 331f.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>51</sup>Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study  
of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1924), p.  
44.

<sup>52</sup>Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, II, p. 291.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, V, p. 412.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, VI, p. 106.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, III, p. 307.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, p. 234.

<sup>57</sup>Quoted in A. S. Rappoport, *Myth and  
Legend of Ancient Israel* (London, 1928)  
II, p. 366: "When Adam was driven out of  
Paradise, he cut a branch from the fig tree  
which was the tree of Life, and this branch  
served him as a staff all his life. This  
staff he left to his son, and it was trans-  
mitted from generation to generation till  
it came into the possession of Abraham. It  
was with this staff that the Patriarch  
smashed the idols of his father Terah.  
Jacob used the staff as he tended the flocks  
. . . and his son Judah gave it as a pledge  
to his daughter-in-law Tamar." Later it  
was hidden by an angel and found by  
Jethro, who gave it to Moses. "The staff  
then came into the possession of Phineas,  
who buried it in the desert. It belonged  
to Joseph . . . at the moment of the birth  
of the Saviour, and it served afterwards as  
one of the planks in the Cross of Christ."

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<sup>58</sup>Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 430f.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, III, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 335.

<sup>61</sup>Justin Martyr, *Dial. with Trypho*, 86, in *Patrol. Graec.* VI, 680-1: "The cross is the symbol of the wood of Life in Paradise. Moses with a rod was sent to liberate the people; and holding this rod in his hands as commander of the nation he divided the Red Sea. By its power he struck water from the rock, and by throwing it into the waters of Merri he made them sweet. . . . Jacob boasts that he passed through the river on this staff," etc.

<sup>62</sup>Nibley, *op. cit.*, p. 332, with special ref. to the notes.

<sup>63</sup>See the interesting series of photographs in the *National Geographic Magazine* liii (1927), 683-9. For the serpent on the earliest staves of the Western Church, see *Archaeologia*, Vol. 74 (1924), pp. 314-5. Usually the staff of authority is thought to represent the thunderbolt by which the enemies of God are smitten: for extensive identifications see C. S. Blinkenberg, *The Thunderweapon in Religion and Folklore* (Cambridge, 1911); A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1925) II, 1045-9; 473; 574, n. 2; 774; 777; 780; 786-9 (the trident is the lightning.) Thunderbolt, caduceus, plant of immortality, and the lance of St. George are identified by Dougherty in *Annals of the American Schools of Oriental Research V* (1925), 6-8; 19; scepter, "rods" of Israel, and the staff of the inspired poet are identified by Ludw. Deubner in *Archiv fuer Religionswissenschaft* 30 (1932), 82-84; extensive comparisons are given by E. D. Clarke, "On the Lituus of the Ancient Romans," *Archaeologia* 19 (1821), 386-400. On the trident and fleur-de-lis (found on early Christian bishops' staves), W. M. Wylie, in *Archaeologia* 35 (1853) 48-53, and H. B. Walters, "Poseidon's Trident," *Jnl. of Hellenic Studies* 13 (1892-3) 13-20, 11: "In the archaic period . . . Poseidon has, instead of a trident a lotos-sceptre," as does Zeus. Significantly, early bishops' staves were topped with the lotus-sign, G. F. Lee, "Episcopal Staves," *Archaeol.* 51 (1888) 374, the "Finger of God" (*Idem*, 376), or the hunter's sign of St. Hubert, and bore such formidable inscription as "Strike-Spare," (*Idem*, 360). The earliest bishops' staves resemble the caduceus, crowned with double serpents, as can be seen from the photographs in the *National Geographic Magazine* 52 (Dec. 1927), Pl. i-vii, from Savaric's staff (c. 1200 A.D.), see *Archaeol.* 58 (1903), p. 409, fig. 2, Pl. xxvii; p. 412, fig. 5, and the oldest such staff from the north, reproduced in JJA Worsaae, *Nordiske Oldsager i det Kongl. Mus. i Kjöbenhavn* (Copenhagen, 1859) p. 150, Pl. 542; cf. C. H. Read, "A Morse Ivory Tau Cross Head of the 11th Century," *Archaeologia* 58 (1903), p. 409, fig. 2; p. 412, fig. 5. In the oldest pictures Hermes' caduceus is topped by the serpent or the fleur-de-lis, Ed. Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel* (Berlin, 1884) V, taf. 8, nos. 1, 2. In these and many other cases the rods of office borne by Christian bishops can be traced back to the pagan priesthoods of antiquity. Their use in the Christian churches is first met with in the seventh century, and is not general until the eleventh century, L. Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien* (Paris, 1898), p. 383.

<sup>64</sup>In *Patrol. Lat.* CCXVII, 790.

<sup>65</sup>In *Patrol. Lat.* CCXXI, 600.

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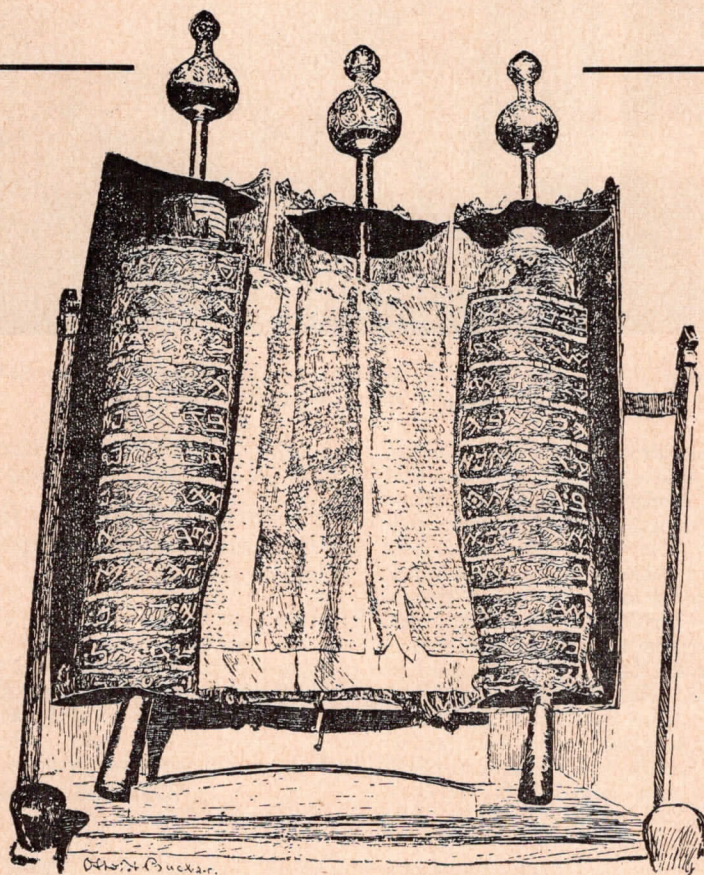
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# The Stick of JUDAH and the Stick of JOSEPH — Part III

by Hugh Nibley, Ph. D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION,  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



The Roll of the Law. Palestine.

## HOW DO THE STICKS BECOME ONE?

THE PROPHET is very emphatic on one point: No matter how many sticks there were originally, they become *one* in the hand of the Lord — “And bring them together to thee for one stick . . . and they shall become one stick, and shall be one in my hand.” What is the strange manipulation by which one and one make one? We are reminded of the miraculous rod of Aaron that ate up the wooden rods of Pharaoh’s priests and still became no larger,<sup>66</sup> but a far more practical explanation is at

hand. First of all, there is, of course, the binding of the sticks into a ritual bundle, by which the many become one: Ezekiel duly explains that as the sticks become one so “I will make them one nation.” The Septuagint of Ezek. 17:7 reads, “and thou shalt fit them together for thyself, into a single staff of tying themselves, and they shall be one in thy hand.” The Greek is as bad as the English, but it is clear that the staves become one by being fitted together first (*synapseis*), and then held fast by tying (*tou desai*). We have already had occasion to note the ritual tying of the bundle; what interests us here is

the *fitting together*, on which Ezekiel lays peculiar stress.

We have noted the Jewish tradition that all the tribal rods were originally cut from a single staff, and that ancient commentators remind us that the rods naturally belong together because they were all shoots from a single stock.<sup>67</sup> Both in the Old World and the New, divination and identification rods “in their original form consist of *split* arrow shaftments, and are marked both inside and out with bands of ribbonings.”<sup>68</sup> What is behind this splitting and rejoining of the stick may be best explained by the example of the ancient institution of *tally sticks*.

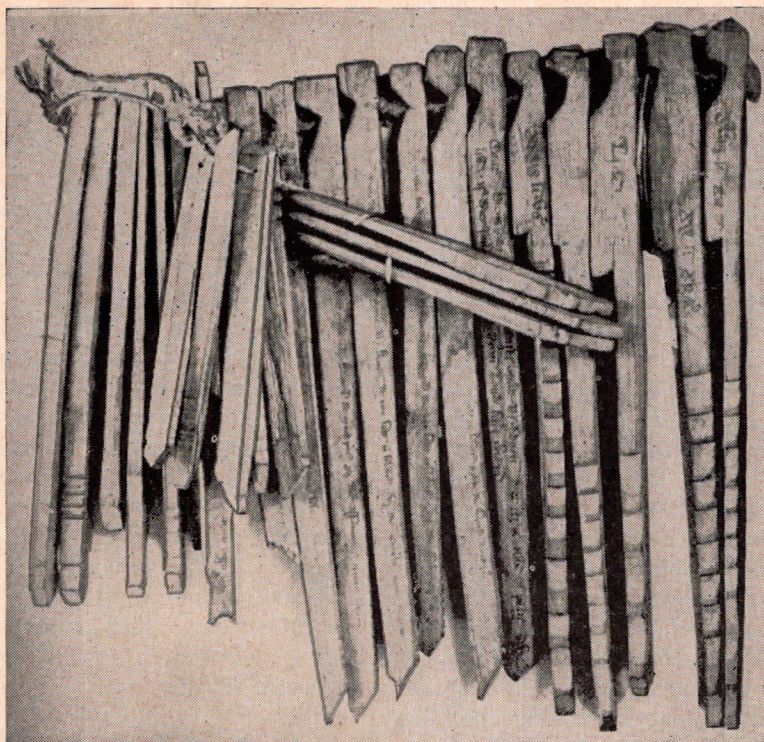
A tally, to follow the definition of the principal authority on the subject, is “a stick notched and split through the notches, so that both parties to a transaction may have a part of the record.”<sup>69</sup> In the ancient world, according to the same source, “the tally-stick, split or unsplit, is widely used: instances of it have been noted all over England and Europe, indeed all over the world, and in all kinds of trades.”<sup>70</sup> In England, where tallies may best be studied, their use was required in all business transactions with the royal exchequer from the twelfth century (though they are much older) to the nineteenth, when their place was taken by paper bills and indentures, though the word “bill,” meaning a stick of wood, still recalls their use,<sup>71</sup> as does *indenture*, meaning a dent in the wood. A rod of hazelwood or willow was cut according to strictly prescribed rules into two parts, one with a notch on the end called a *stock*, the smaller piece being the *foil*.<sup>72</sup> “The stock



went with the payer, the accountant; the exchequer kept the foil."<sup>72</sup> Being cut with scratches and notches *before* the parts of the stick were separated, the tally furnished a foolproof control over both parties, for no two pieces of wood in the world would fit together perfectly to match mark for mark and grain for grain unless at their original marking they were *one stick*. When in 1297 one William de Brochese tried to cheat the king's treasury by adding a notch to his half of the wood, he was promptly detected and sent to prison.<sup>73</sup> The fact that both parties held parts of the tally is fundamental, "implying a check on both rather than a debit on one."<sup>74</sup> Thus while the king held his half as a *foil* on any attempt to cheat him, the other party held the *stock* (stick) by which he could prove his exact status in the contract: from this the word *stock* is still retained in the business world,<sup>75</sup> while the old expression "lot and scot" betrays the original role of the arrow shaft in the transmission of property.<sup>75</sup>

The great advantage of the tally-stick was that it gave parties to a contract a sure means of identification and an authoritative claim upon each other no matter how many miles or how many years might separate them. When, however, the final payment was made and all the terms of the contract fulfilled, the two pieces were joined together at the exchequer, tied as one, and laid up forever in the vaults of the royal building—becoming as it were "one in the king's hand."<sup>76</sup> So great was the heap of such sticks in the basement of the old Houses of Parliament, that when they were ordered burned the ensuing conflagration, "according to the well-known story . . . caused the fire which destroyed the Houses of Parliament in 1834."<sup>77</sup> At any rate "the exchequer exacted a return of the stock at audit," and only when the sticks had been united as one was the standing of the debtor cleared.<sup>76</sup>

The analogy with Ezekiel's story of the sticks is at once apparent. But was the system of tallies really ancient, and did the Jews have them? It is interesting in this regard to note that all exchequer tallies had to be written on in Latin, the official language of the state, with the notable exception of an important class of tallies in which the names, dates, places, etc., are noted down in



Tally Sticks. The shorter sticks are the "stocks," and the larger ones the "foils" to which the stocks were fitted to "become one stick."  
(Reproduced from "Archaeologia" Vol. 74 (1925), Plate lxx.)

Hebrew, while the Jewish Plea Roll furnishes the best evidence for the use of private tallies.<sup>78</sup> Now though a great deal of tally-business was carried on between the king and foreign parties (e.g. the great Flemish merchant Henry Cade), the only foreign language found on the tallies is Hebrew. Not even English is allowed.<sup>79</sup> Had the Jews adopted tallies for the first time when the government did, they would like everybody else have been required to adopt the official method of marking them; so the remarkable exception made in their case, persecuted and unpopular as they were, certainly implies that they had their own tradition of tally marking, which they were allowed to retain.

In this respect, it is strange that the commentators while consistently identifying the sticks of Ezekiel 37 with tribal rods, never refer to the cutting of the rods in Zechariah 11.<sup>80</sup> We have noted that the *breaking* of a rod signifies in Jerusalem and Ezekiel the destruction of a nation; but the *cutting* of a rod has quite another symbolism. Thus Zechariah 11:10: "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, *that I might break my covenant\** which I had made with all the people . . . v. 14: " . . . then I cut asunder mine

other staff, even Bands, *that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.*" When the rod is cut in two, instead of being broken, Judah and Israel are not destroyed but separated; the bond that binds them together (and that is the meaning of the strange name *Bands*) is loosened, and the two go their separate ways. As the tie between nations is broken, so the mightier bond between God and men, the staff Beauty, is broken when the staff is "cut in two." This is the obvious reversal of the process of bringing the two divided sticks together, as described by Ezekiel, to renew the very covenants here broken—those between Judah and Israel, and those between God and "all the people." The technique of the tally-stick as a means of establishing a covenant and bringing parties together in normal contract is here plainly indicated.

We need not establish the antiquity of the tally-stick by working back through the records of the Middle Ages, for the institution is met fully developed in the earliest records of antiquity. This may be illustrated by the archaic feasting-tickets of the Greeks and Romans. Originally little rods, these tokens, which everyone had to present for admission to the great public feasts, took various forms and went by the name of *tesserae*. In

(Continued on following page)

\* (Italics author's)



# THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from preceding page)

the Roman usage, the guest who came to the banquet would be stopped by an official or servant and asked to show his token; this would be fitted against a like token kept at the house of the host, and if the two pieces matched perfectly the guest would be recognized as one who had entered in a contract of *hospitium* with the host and duly admitted to the feast.<sup>81</sup> One is strongly reminded of the "white stone" that is borne by those who "eat of the hidden manna" in Revelation 2:17. The act of placing the two tokens side by side (on which Ezekiel is so insistent) gave the feasting-token among the Greeks its name of *symbolon*, meaning to place (or shoot) two things together. From it comes our word *symbol*. A *symbolon* is by definition something that has value only when placed beside something else to show just what is "symbolized." It is simply a very ancient tally-stick—how ancient may be judged from the use of wooden divining-sticks at the prehistoric Italian shrine of Praeneste and the Greek Delphi.<sup>82</sup>

That the tribal rod, herald's staff, or scepter is a glorified tally-stick appears in its nature an exact copy of God's own staff,<sup>83</sup> and in the provision that it is only on earth as a temporary loan, to be taken back in due time into the hand of God, where it rightfully belongs.<sup>83</sup>

Ezekiel, then, is talking sense when he speaks of the two sticks that become one. It is not merely that the ancients had such sticks, but that they used them specifically in the situation described by Ezekiel for a summoning and gathering of the nation and for the establishment of identity and the renewing of contracts. The scattered tribes of Israel are described as apparently lost for good, smashed, dispersed, forgotten, nay, dead—dry bones. This all looks to a *far future* time, for the *dry bones* show us not a sick nation, not dying one, nor even one now dead, but one that has been dead for a long, long time. That the nations are depicted as scattered far and wide, having lost their identity and disappeared from history, is noted by the commentators—hence the need for a miracle of resurrection, hence the need for a sure means of identifica-

tion, symbolized by the identification sticks. The "extinct" nations are summoned to the Great Assembly by the Lord's herald, who takes their marked rods and places them side by side; they fit together perfectly to become *one stick* as the herald performs the joining before the eyes of all the people. (Cf. Num. 17:9.) Judah and Joseph are thereby recognized beyond a doubt as parties to the original covenant long after separation and the original unity of the Covenant People is thereby restored. The united scepter is then returned to the hand of the king (Ezek. 37:19, 22-44) where it is to remain forever, all outstanding debts, the price of sin and transgression, having at last been paid off and all old scores settled.

## WERE THE STICKS BOOKS?

But now we come to the crux of the matter for Latter-day Saints. Can the sticks of Ezekiel, along with everything else they represent, be understood to be *books*? Strictly speaking, they were nothing else. A book, says Webster, is "specifically: A formal written document; esp., a deed of conveyance of land; a charter." The tribal rods were just that, no matter how brief the writing on them, while the whole Old Testament, in spite of its length and complexity, is a "book" in exactly the same sense: a "testament," a single binding legal document. But the identity of rods and books goes much farther than this.

*Books and Sticks*—From the very

first the significance of message-staffs and tribal rods lay in what was written on them—signs that had to be read and recognized. This cutting and divining of marks led to the reading and writing of books.<sup>84</sup> To this day the word *book* recalls the box- or beech-wood staves (cf. Ger. *Buchstabe*, Oldslav. *buky*, *bukva*, "letter"), or sticks scratched with runes which were the first books in the North.<sup>85</sup> Even the Latin word *codex*, now venerated for its association with books of the law everywhere, means simply a slip of wood, while the classic *liber* means *wood-pulp*.<sup>86</sup> The oldest laws of the Greeks and Romans were kept on tablets and sticks (*axones*), which Freeman actually compares with the sticks mentioned in Ezekiel.<sup>87</sup> "It is noteworthy," says Ginzberg, "that the tablets and the rod of Moses were not only of the same weight (60 *seah*), but also of the same material."<sup>88</sup> The equating of sticks with tablets is, as we have seen, found among early Jewish commentators on Ezekiel 37, and is explained by Keil as a natural result of the emphasis which Ezekiel places on the *writing* on his sticks. The celebrated rod of Moses might well be taken for a writing tablet, for it had engraved on it "in plain letters the great exalted Name, the names of the ten plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians, and the names of the three Fathers the six Mothers, and the Twelve Tribes of Jacob," in other words, for every function it performed, it had to bear a specific writing, making a total of no less than thirty-two separate inscriptions in all.<sup>89</sup> How many words does it take to make a book? In the ancient world, length was no object, and a single word could contain a whole sermon in itself. This is seen in the early use of the words *logos* and *logographoi*, which refer to a writing of *any* length as a separate opus or book.

Many commentators are convinced that the text of Ezekiel contains the actual words that the prophet was ordered to write on the sticks. Thus Kautzsch translates in his critical edition: "Take for thyself a staff of wood and write upon it: 'Judah and the Israelites that are Associated with Him,'" the last phrase being the actual words put upon the staff. Cooke

## YOU HAVE A FRIEND

By Georgia Moore Eberling

SOMEWHERE along the journey of the years  
Each soul will find a lonely, shaded, road  
That he must walk, pursued by grief and fears,  
Cast down beneath the burden of life's load.  
Remember then, you have a Friend at hand.  
If you but call upon him, he will speak  
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He offers might and courage to the weak.  
God has not promised man an easy way,  
But there will be a rock and cooling spring,  
And always strength sufficient for the day,  
While in the midnight hour you hear hope sing.  
God said, "I will not leave you comfortless,"  
His love abides to succor and to bless.

(Continued on page 159)

THE IMPROVEMENT ERA



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(To be concluded)

## The Stick of Judah and the Stick of Joseph

(Continued from page 152)

simplifies this to the bare names of "Judah" and "Joseph."<sup>90</sup> But such a rendering completely ignores the preposition *I-*, "to" or "for," which precedes the names of Joseph and Judah every time the writing is mentioned: "take a staff of wood and write on it *for* Judah," etc.<sup>91</sup> The *I-* means that Ezekiel was not to write simply "Joseph" or "Judah" on the stick, but that he was to write something to or for them. It was to be a writing that somehow concerned them. No more obvious means of connecting Joseph and Judah with the sticks could be imagined, of course, than that of simply putting their names on the wood. But that is just the point: why in such an obvious situation does Ezekiel not do the obvious thing and put the names on the sticks? That is the way it was normally done: "write thou every man's name upon his rod," "write the Ineffable Name upon it," "write thy name upon it," etc. But what Ezekiel writes on the rods is not "Joseph" or "Judah," but "for Joseph" and "for Judah," or, according to some interpreters, "Joseph's" and "Judah's." The wide variety of translations shows that we are not concerned here with a mere writing of names. Property is not marked this way: Names found on ancient seals are in the nominative case, not in

(Continued on following page)

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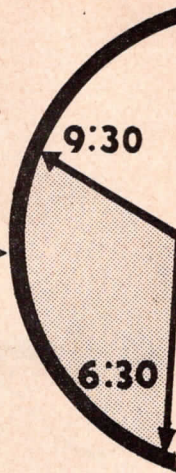
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## The Stick of Judah and the Stick of Joseph

(Continued from preceding page)

the genitive. When Kautzsch wants to make it appear that the names of Joseph and the others were actually written on the rods, he must render the inscription in the nominative, which Ezekiel conspicuously avoids. Hebrew uses no quotation marks, and so when the text reads "write on the wood for Joseph," it should be left as it stands, for when we introduce our own punctuation and translate, "write on wood, 'For Joseph'" we are employing a type of inscription that was used to dedicate votive offerings to deities but not to denote possession.<sup>92</sup> Ezekiel tells us of a writing for Judah and another for Joseph, both writings to perform certain important functions; but he does not, as some suppose, give us the text of the writings.

However eloquent or informative the single rod or staff may have been, it presented serious limitations of space when a lengthy communication was in order. The obvious solution to this problem was simply to add more rods, and it is in this multiplication of sticks to form a ritual bundle that Culin sees the origin of the book in some parts of the world. "The ancestry of the book in Eastern Asia," he says, "may be traced, not only to the engraved strips of bamboo (Chinese *ch'ak*), but, in the opinion of the writer, to the bundle of engraved or painted arrow-derived slips used in divination. The folding fan of China and Japan is not unlikely to have originated from these *tanzaku* or writing slips, which the nobles carried in order to make memoranda when in the presence of the sovereign."<sup>93</sup> The Orientals would cut a piece of wood into strips notched on the sides like tally-sticks, which could be "fanned out" to present a larger writing surface, and when not in use folded together perfectly to make "one stick" in the hand of the nobleman who inscribed upon them the words of majesty. The method recalls the legendary cutting of the twelve rods of Israel from a single stock, but more important is the use of the bundle of twelve rods to determine the fortunes of the nations. These tribal bundles of which we spoke above, were always used as books of divination from which the past and present and fu-

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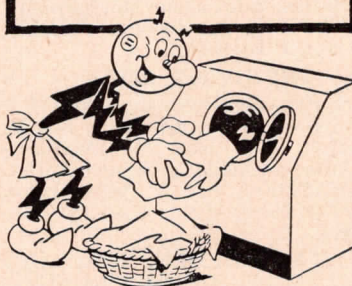
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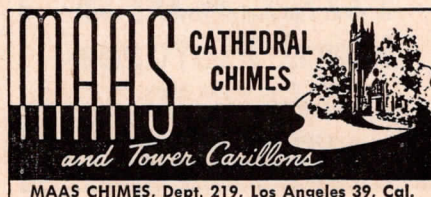
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ture history of the people was determined. As census-books they made up a "Book of Life" "opened at the foundation of the world" to tell the history of the coming age: if one's name were missing from this book, he was "cut off from among the people" and had no part in the life of the race.<sup>94</sup> The modern card deck is derived from a bundle of tribal rods, fifty-two in number, used in divination all over the world: Individually each token has a message; together they make up a book which is read by the adept with as much confidence as if it were in writing.<sup>95</sup> It is thus quite possible for the staves of "Judah and his associates," as well as "Joseph and his associates" to represent books containing the census and history of these nations.

*Sticks and Scrolls:*—When a rod or staff serves as a token of authority and identification, it is important

#### WEATHER RETORT

By Leonard K. Schiff

*Somehow I can't be debonair*

*When, after battling snow and sleet,*

*I'm greeted with an icy stare*

*And asked if I have wiped my feet.*

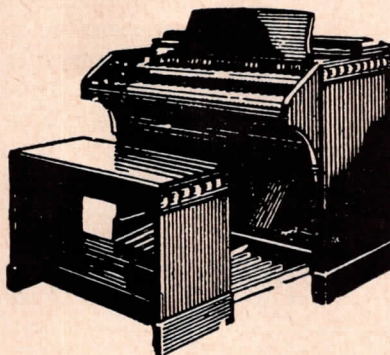
that no copy or duplicate of it be allowed to circulate.<sup>96</sup> In that case the multiplication of message-staffs is impossible. What is to be done if a longer message is to be sent? This problem and its solution are actually met in the ancient North, where only one royal summons-arrow was legal, and no others could be cut.<sup>97</sup> To make room for a long message, a piece of parchment was attached to the staff and was rolled around it.<sup>98</sup> To this day in Tibet the summons-arrow is sent out exactly as it once was among our northern ancestors: "A mobilization order is sent on a piece of red cloth attached to an arrow. The arrow is dispatched by a special rider who gallops to the nearest headman and hands it over to him. The headman takes note of the contents of the order and immediately dispatches a fresh rider to another headman."<sup>99</sup> On festival assembly days the ancient Japanese warriors would bind strips of holy

(Continued on following page)

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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from preceding page)

paper bearing written texts on their arrows, "inscribed sacred paper for the gods."<sup>100</sup> The Ojibwa may substitute for the painted rod or arrow shaft, that serves as an invitation-stick "a piece of birch-bark bearing characters."<sup>101</sup> Here we have a natural scroll, as anyone who has tried to write on tough, curling birch-bark can attest, and we are reminded that the word *birch* is closely related to *beech*, *box*, and *book*, and also

that *liber* originally meant *bast* or *bark*.

Whether the ancient scroll originated in one or many places, its attachment to a *stick* certainly betrays its origin; for the stick is by no means necessary to a scroll—it is in fact an inconvenience, used by the ancients only in ritual and very valuable literary text, a quaint, old-fashioned survival.<sup>102</sup>

Latter-day Saints often interpret the word *stick* in Ezekiel 37 to refer to

the stick or rod around which a scroll was wrapped. The interpretation is perfectly possible. As Gregory the Great observed long ago, the Hebrew word *etz* *wood* can mean almost anything in the Old Testament, depending entirely on the context in which it is used.<sup>103</sup> Sometimes *etz* must be translated as *tree*, sometimes as *branch*, *image*, *musical instrument*, *framework*, *idol*, *house*, *ax*, *plow*, *spear*, *beam*, *stalk of flax* (!) *rod*, *gallows*, etc., etc.<sup>104</sup> When one tills with wood, it is rendered not *wood* but *plow*; when one plays music on it, it is no longer mere wood, but an *instrument*; when one worships, it is an *idol*, and so forth. Now what is the specific use to which the wood is put in Ezekiel 37? It is used, as Keil insists, to be written on, and for that purpose only. It is hence not surprising that the early Jewish commentators on the passage rendered *wood* here as *tablet*, but Keil cannot accept this because the sticks in Ezekiel are not treated at all as tablets would be. On the other hand, Keil finds it very significant that the prophet deliberately avoids calling the sticks *rods* or *staves*, as if that, too, would give the wrong impression.<sup>105</sup> How can a *stick* be a *book*?

(To be continued)

### REFERENCES

<sup>100</sup>Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, III, 335.

<sup>101</sup>Medieval commentators unite everything in the Rod of Aaron: Mary is the Rod of Aaron (PL CXLIV, 721, 760; CLXV, 883), the flowering rod from the root of Jesse (Tertullian, PL II, 788); Christ is also the Rod of Aaron (PL CXLIV, 730), as well as the Rod of Moses (PL CLXXI, 686; CXCV, 1061). The rod of Moses represents the Cross of Christ and his power (PL CLXVII, 641). It represents also the congregation of the righteous (PL CXII, 1081), and even the whole human race (PL CXCI, 684). The blossoming rod is the humanity of Christ, who is the blossom on the rod from the root of Jesse (PL CLXVII, 584). The rod is naturally the symbol of divine judgment (PL CLXX, 339) and of dominion (L, 738).

<sup>102</sup>S. Culin, *Games of the North American Indians* (Washington, 1907), p. 46.

<sup>103</sup>Hilary Jenkinson, "Exchequer Tallies," *Archaeologia* LXII (1911), p. 367.

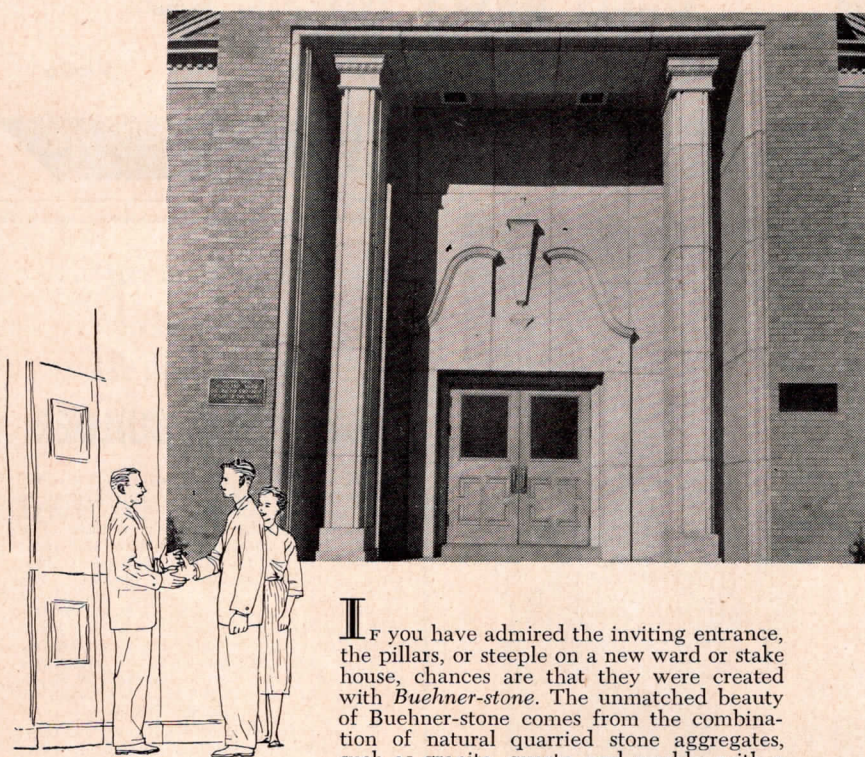
<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>105</sup>H. Jenkinson, "Medieval Tallies, Public and Private," *Archaeologia* 74 (1924), p. 305.

<sup>106</sup>Jenkinson, *op. cit.*, 1911, pp. 373f, 370. The foil is sometimes called the *contratallia*, the counter-tally, p. 374.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 374.

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<sup>74</sup>Jenkinson, *op. cit.*, 1924, p. 318.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 292; on "lot and scot," Nibley, *op. cit.*, pp. 331f, 334, where the technical term for marking an arrow (*skera ör upp*) is the same as that for marking tallies, Jenkinson, *loc. cit.* The length of the tallies is determined exactly as the Indians determine the length of gaming-sticks cut from arrow shafts, by measuring from the tip of the forefinger to the tip of the extended thumb.

<sup>76</sup>Jenkinson, *op. cit.*, 1911, p. 374; 1924, p. 315.

<sup>77</sup>*Idem*, 1911, p. 369. So complete was the destruction that all knowledge of the institution of tally-cutting was completely lost in England after the fire, *ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>78</sup>*Idem*, 1911, p. 378; 1924, pp. 313f, 293.

<sup>79</sup>Of all the surviving tallies, only two bear writing in English, *idem*, 1924, p. 314.

<sup>80</sup>The one exception is G. A. Cooke, *Book of Ezek.*, p. 400: "The symbol evidently made a lasting impression, for it is imitated in Zechariah 11:7, where, however, the two staves (a different word) are given names but not inscribed."

<sup>81</sup>The operation has been studied by Theod. Mommsen, *Römische Forschungen* (1864) I, 338-348, and in the *Historische Zeitschrift* I, 339-342, cited by Nibley in the *Classical Journal* XL (1945), p. 538.

<sup>82</sup>Nibley, *op. cit.*, pp. 537f. The oldest known symbolon was the messenger-staff given by Apollo to his missionary Abaris; Abaris used it as a feasting ticket and sign of authority wherever he went, Nibley *Wst. Pol. Qt.* II, p. 332.

<sup>83</sup>"It is the arrow of the *summus deus*, held on loan by an earthly king as a gage of divine support, that everywhere gives the latter his earthly power and authority," Nibley, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 338f.

<sup>85</sup>See *Oxford Dictionary*, article "book."

<sup>86</sup>Frdr. Blass, in Ivan von Mueller's *Handbuch der kl. Altertumswissenschaft* (Munich, 1892), Vol. I, 334: "In Italien muss in alter Zeit vielfach auf Bast geschrieben sein, da das Wort liber noch bei Vergil dies bedeutet. . . . Der Gebrauch des Holzes aber ist in beiden Laendern alt. Im Lateinischen stammt daher das Wort codex = caudex."

<sup>87</sup>Freeman, *Handbook of Bible Manners*, etc., No. 583.

<sup>88</sup>Ginzberg, *Legends*, etc., VI, 54.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 19.

<sup>90</sup>"The prophet is . . . to inscribe one with the name Judah, and the other with the name Joseph," p. 400.

<sup>91</sup>"For Judah . . . his companions." The stick, emblem of the royal sceptre, was to be inscribed with those words." Fisch, *Ezekiel*, p. 249.

<sup>92</sup>Numerous examples of seal inscriptions and dedications may be found in A. Deimel, *Sumerische Grammatik* (Rome, 1924), and in H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London: Macmillan, 1939). Publications of collected Oriental seals are very numerous.

<sup>93</sup>S. Culin, in *National Museum Rept.*, 1896, p. 887.

<sup>94</sup>Nibley, *Class. Jnl.* 40 (1945), 536ff.

<sup>95</sup>Nibley, *Wst. Pol. Quart.* II, 337. Even

in Egypt the 52 arrow shafts of divination "drifted down to the vulgarity of playing-cards," according to W. M. F. Petrie, *Scarabs and Cylinders with Names*, etc. (Univ. of London, 1917), p. 4.

<sup>96</sup>W. H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* (Washington, 1910), pp. 3ff.

<sup>97</sup>The only time that two arrows were sent was when one (a wooden shaft) went by land and the other (of iron) by sea, according to Q. Weinhold, in *Sitzungsbericht d. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin* 1891 (Phil.-Hist. Kl.) XXIX, p. 536.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>99</sup>G. N. Roerich, *Trails to Inmost Asia* (Yale Univ., 1931), p. 352.

<sup>100</sup>*Japanische Volksmärchen* (Jena: Diederich, 1938), p. 43; see my note on documents of this type, *Wst. Pol. Qt.* II, 342, n. 80.

<sup>101</sup>G. Mallery, "Picture-writing of the American Indians," *Bur. Ethnol. Rept.* X (1888-9), 367, fig. 375.

<sup>102</sup>Blass, in von Mueller's *Handb. d. Aw.*, I, 335. The first genuine ancient scrolls ever to be discovered intact are the Dead Sea scrolls, none of which have sticks to them.

<sup>103</sup>In *Patrol. Lat.* LXXV, p. 394.

<sup>104</sup>Zorell, *Lexicon*, p. 618.

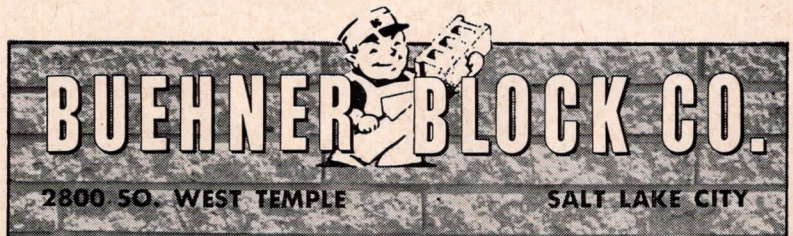
<sup>105</sup>Keil, *Commentary on Ezekiel* II, 130.

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# The Stick of JUDAH<sup>574</sup> and the Stick of JOSEPH

## Part IV

by Hugh Nibley, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION,  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

THE sticks around which the scrolls of the law were rolled were always regarded as holy and treated as scepters.<sup>106</sup> It will be recalled that nearly all commentators point out that the sticks of Ezekiel are in some way or other scepters. The scrolls of the Law were used by the kings of Judah as other kings used scepters, being "kept near his throne and carried into battle."<sup>107</sup> "The scroll itself," we are told, "is girded with a strip of silk and robed in a Mantle of the Law," while the wooden rod had a crown on its upper end, like the mace or scepter of a king. "Some scrolls," says the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, "have two crowns, one for each upper end."<sup>107</sup> These honors show the Jewish scrolls of the Law are the same given to the royal herald's-staff or scepter in other parts of the world. "At the feast of the Oschophoria," at Athens, for example, "the herald's staff was crowned with garlands, but not the herald himself."<sup>108</sup> As in the ancient North, "the staff was a willow bough always cut from a living tree, and was never allowed to wither or dry up"—which exactly recalls the blossoming rod of Aaron, which withered when Israel fell from grace.<sup>108</sup> Among our Norse ancestors this rod was taken from place to place, and at each place to which it

went, a roll-call was taken and a notch cut on the rod, which was the king's own staff. "The king was represented by the bailiff of the Hundred carrying a ward-staff. It was the staff (not the bailiff) which represented majesty and received the honours."<sup>108</sup>

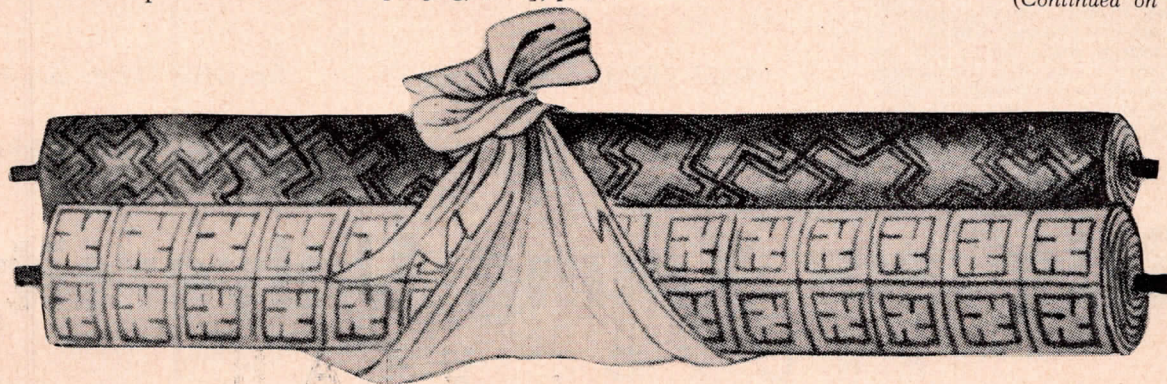
The peculiar honors bestowed upon the sticks of the Jewish Law-scrolls show by their nature that the sticks themselves were regarded originally as the bearers of the law. But once parchment had been rolled around these sticks (and the antiquity of this custom may be surmised from the fact that all official scrolls of the Law should be on the skin of *wild* beasts),<sup>109</sup> could they still be brought together like tallies to make one stick? The accompanying illustration shows an actual application of this idea: to an edict of the Empress Wu, her successor, the Emperor Tai Tsung (763-779 A.D.) wished to add a supplement of his own, incorporating it in the original law. The two rolls, each with one stick in it, are here seen placed side by side and bound

The two rolls, each with one stick in it, are here seen placed side by side and bound together as one by a silken cloth, just as the roll of the Jewish Law with its two sticks is "girded with a strip of silk."  
(After J. Lechler, *Vom Hakenkreuz* [Leipzig, 1934], p. 74.)

together as one by a silken cloth, just as the roll of the Jewish Law with its two sticks is "girded with a strip of silk" when it is rolled up to be put into the tabernacle.<sup>110</sup> There are two rolls having different designs on them and of different colors, showing that originally the scrolls do not have two sticks to them, but only one apiece.<sup>110</sup> This suggests the origin of the scroll in the single message-stick with the message-scroll wrapped around it, as well as the probability that in Ezekiel's day the scrolls were still of the primitive one-shaft variety. That the scroll-sticks of the Greeks and Romans were derived from message-arrows is indicated by a number of things. Instead of having convenient handles at the bottom and smooth knobs at the top, the roll-sticks had points at both ends which made them resemble the well-known double-headed thunderbolt, the scepter of Zeus and the best-known of all rods of office.<sup>111</sup> That the resemblance is not accidental appears not only in the impractical arrangement of the thing and the identification of scroll-rods with scepters, but likewise in the name given to the points, *koronis*, Latin, *cornua*, usually explained as referring to the shape of the sharpened ends. But these do not resemble horns, and the name probably has the same origin as that of the little arrow-marks often used in the marking of scrolls by their makers, called *ceraunia*, "little thunderbolts."<sup>111</sup>

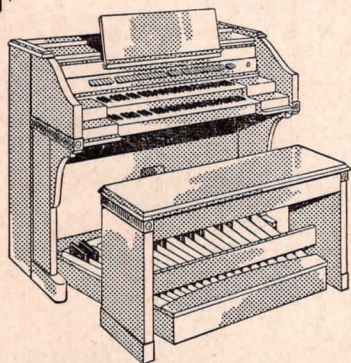
We have seen that the heroes of Israel identified themselves as emissaries of the Most High by bearing his rod before the eyes of those to whom they were sent, Jew or Gentile. In this connection the rod is also interchangeable with the scroll, for in the Middle Ages every Jew was required by Jewish law to carry a scroll of the Law with him at all

(Continued on page 267)





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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from page 250)

times as his identification and passport.<sup>112</sup> The connection between staff and book is here not far to seek—the staff is a mark and token, symbolizing that by which the Jew is known to the world; the scroll is a step closer to home—it is almost the thing itself. The scripture, says Clement of Alexandria in an eloquent

discourse on the subject, is the rod by which God teaches his people.<sup>113</sup> The double function of the rod, says Gregory of Nyssen, is that of consolation and direction, which are the offices of the scripture for all believers.<sup>114</sup> If the rod is the symbolic means by which Judah is identified and set apart from the rest of the world (and the use of such a

## Lost Intervals

Richard L. Evans

THERE are many circumstances and situations in which we may feel that we are marking time—or worse—wasting time. There are times when we are waiting for people and appointments when we feel cheated as we think of what we might have done with the time we waste in waiting. There are times of routine travel, of commuting between places when the interval may seem more or less lost. There are times when we are pressed into pursuits not of our own choosing, on detours from our intended destination—as for example time spent in making a living at uninteresting routine work, or while preparing for other pursuits, or time spent by young men in military service when they are eager to settle down to other purposes. In these unavoidable interruptions, on these side trips on side roads, there is often much more that can be salvaged than is sometimes supposed. Wherever a man is, he has his mind with him. Wherever he is, he can think and plan and pursue, in blueprint at least, constructive purposes. Almost wherever he is, he can arrange to read—not trash or trivia but from the best books. It isn't always so, but it can often be so. Almost wherever a man is, he can write. It takes only simple tools to write—and some significant writings have come even from within prison walls. Some interesting and profitable activities have been pursued from the bedsides of shut-ins, by those who couldn't go out from where they were but who have reached out with what they had, with some wonderfully useful results. A man may be immobilized without immobilizing his mind. Some of the most successful people have learned what to do with odd moments, with the in-between times that so many of us waste—sometimes just sitting, sometimes just waiting, sometimes with impatient pacing. Almost wherever a person is he can find some constructive purpose to pursue, without wasting time in shoddy or trivial or tawdry pursuits. In a sense we can't "save" time as we can save water that would otherwise run away. But often when we are diverted from our intended course, we can make time serve as water that runs into a reservoir—a reservoir of preparation, of stored knowledge, of acquired skills—to be used for a better purpose at a better time and place rather than let it run downstream at the wrong season.

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symbol was regarded by the early Christians as a thing of great significance and secrecy), what is the means by which Judah is actually thus distinguished, i.e., what is the real equivalent of the rod? It is the Bible, of course. In figurative language the Jews will recognize the Messiah by examining the rod; "search ye the scriptures," said the Lord, "for they it be that testify of me."

The identity of staff and scripture was noted by the earliest and best informed of the Christian historians. For the great Eusebius the sticks of Ezekiel represent the Old Testament and the New Testament.<sup>115</sup> A century and a half earlier Irenaeus speaks of the (hidden) meanings of the sticks as "hidden from us, for," he says, "since by the wood we rejected him, by the wood his greatness shall be made visible to everyone, and as one of our predecessors has said, by the holy reaching out of the hands the two people are led to one God. For there are two hands and two nations scattered to the ends of the earth. . . ."<sup>116</sup> There is every indication that the Saints of the early Church regarded the teaching of the sticks and the gathering as of great secrecy and great significance, the meaning of the whole thing being later lost.<sup>117</sup> The later Fathers took the usual allegorical liberties in dealing with Ezekiel 37.

(To be continued)

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>100</sup>Jewish Encyclopedia, s. v. scroll.  
<sup>107</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>108</sup>F. S. Burnell, "Staves and Sceptres," *Folklore* LIX (Dec. 1948), p. 165.  
<sup>109</sup>Jew. En cycl.  
<sup>110</sup>J. Lechler, *Vom Hakenkreuz* (Leipzig: Kabitzsch, 1934), p. 74, fig. 6.  
<sup>111</sup>F. Cabrol & H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'Archeologie Chretienne et de Liturgie*.  
<sup>112</sup>Jewish Encl., loc. cit.  
<sup>113</sup>Clement Alex., *Paedog.* I, in *Patrol. Graec.* VIII, 324.  
<sup>114</sup>In *Patrol. Graec.* XLIV, 1031 and XLV, 1250.  
<sup>115</sup>Eusebius, *Demonstr. Evang.*, in *Patrol. Graec.* XXII, 745.  
<sup>116</sup>Irenaeus, in *Patrol. Graec.* VII, 1171.  
<sup>117</sup>Though modern critics fail to detect anything of great importance or mystery in the rods of identification, for the earliest writers of the Church they were regarded as objects of great symbolic significance, conveying a message of real, if hidden, importance: Migne, *Patrol. Graec.* VI, 681, n. 43.

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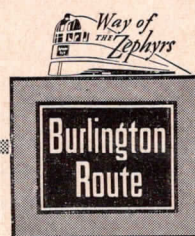
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# The Stick of JUDAH and the Stick of JOSEPH

CONCLUSION

by *Hugh Nibley, Ph.D.*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HISTORY AND RELIGION,  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

CYRIL of Alexandria notes that "everywhere life is by the wood," as sin came by the wood, so also redemption comes by the wood, and he cites the rod of Moses and the cross of Christ.<sup>118</sup>

Jerome says the two rods of Ezekiel are the church and the synagogue,<sup>119</sup> while the two rods of which Isaiah speaks are the congregations of the Jews on the one hand and the Gentiles on the other;<sup>120</sup> and again, "the two rods are the covenant of God with men twice entered upon," i.e., the Old and the New Testaments,<sup>121</sup> the joining of the two to make one scepter signifies that which is joined together in the baptism of Christ, united "to make one new man."<sup>122</sup>

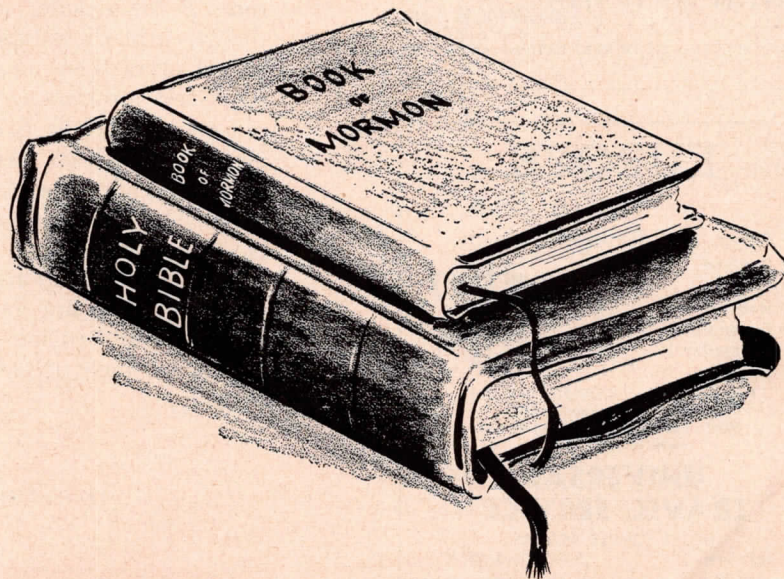
Why are not these interpretations accepted by the Christian commentators of our day? Because while the Old Testament conspicuously satisfies all qualifications for the Stick of Judah, the New Testament is not a whit less the property of Judah, having on the other hand no special affinity for Joseph, with whom in fact neither the Gentile congregation for the Christian Church have any direct connection. The license of allegory, all but unlimited throughout most of the scriptures, is peculiarly checked in Ezekiel 37, and the scholar or churchman who would make an arbitrary "spiritual" interpretation of the chapter finds his usual liberty severely curtailed, for Ezekiel employs concrete symbols to illustrate an historical event. The terms he uses are specific; the names of Israel, Joseph, and Judah are not mysterious, and the great events to which he refers are those to which the chosen people have been instructed to look forward for centuries, and for which the Christians have yearned no less. In Ezekiel's prophecy Joseph does not absorb Judah, as the church

is supposed to have absorbed the synagogue; Joseph is not a Gentile, but as authentically of Israel as Judah is; it is Israel that triumphs, not the Gentiles; the sticks represent covenants between two nations that are contemporary, not as Jerome suggests, the making of a single covenant with the same nation at two different times; both nations are to be brought back home again after having been scattered from a common center, and hence no Gentile nation qualifies for the promise—"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." The whole situation is clearly set forth in Ezekiel 37: The chapter is speaking of the scattering and gathering of Israel and the resurrection;<sup>123</sup> there cannot be the slightest doubt as to what is meant by Joseph and Judah, and while the *New Testament* might conceivably be described as the stick of Judah, by no effort of the imagination can it be interpreted as the stick of Joseph. It is on the Stick of Joseph that every attempt to interpret the passage breaks down hopelessly.

It is as if we were completing a jigsaw puzzle. There is a peculiarly shaped blank which calls for a missing piece designated as the Stick of Judah. The Old Testament fits easily into the gap. Then there remains an adjacent blank space to be filled by a missing "Stick of Joseph." Naturally the first thing we do is to try to slip the New Testament into it. But turn it and push it and force it as we will, the New Testament simply does not belong there, for it is not the story of "Joseph and his associates" in contradistinction to that of "Judah and his associates," which makes up the Bible—if anything it belongs to the latter class, to the Stick of Judah. Since the missing piece refuses to be found, the skilful jigsaw artist simply goes ahead and completes the rest of the picture, and then if the missing piece is still lost, he can infer from the shape of the last empty space and from the design and color of the surrounding areas almost exactly what the missing piece should be. This is what we are attempting here. When the Bible commentators failed to supply the missing piece or to agree on what it should look like, we simply continued to work out the puzzle, putting into position every piece we could find that had to do with sticks and covenants. As a result we are now in a position to make some pretty near guesses as to the shape, size, and color of the missing piece to our puzzle—the baffling "Stick of Joseph."

Let us read the text again, sticking as close to the Hebrew as possible:

Ez. 37:16: And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, And thou, son of  
(Continued on following page)





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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from preceding page)

man, take to thyself one (piece of) wood and write upon it for Judah and for the children of Israel his associates, and take one wood and write upon it for Joseph wood of Ephraim and all the house of Israel his associates (17) And approach them one to (the) other for thee for one wood so they shall become for single ones in thy hand (18) And when they say to thee the sons of thy people, wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by this? (lit.:

what these are to thee?) (19) Say to them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I will take the wood of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim and the staves (or sceptres) of Israel his associates and I shall place them upon it along with (or alongside) the wood of Judah and I shall make them for one wood, and they shall be one in my hand (20) And the woods which thou hast written upon (shall be) in thy hand before their eyes (21) So say to them, Thus

(Continued on page 334)

## Without Higher Help

Richard L. Evans

WHEN we think of America's patriots of the past, there are two who almost unfailingly are mentioned, whom this month we hold in special remembrance. Washington and Lincoln were markedly different in many ways. In some things they were similar—one in particular: in their earnest prayerful petitioning of Providence for help in meeting their grievous problems. We often expect much of men. And there is much that sincere and able and honest men can do. But men, after all, are men. And with so many men thinking and working and planning against so many other men, it is going to be more than men that will determine the ultimate outcome. If we—if any of us—if you (meaning each of us)—if you would wish to convince yourself unforgettably of this solemn fact, suppose for the moment that the world's weighty problems were placed in your hands for some immediate solution. Just what would you do? Suppose that the lives of millions of men, suppose that all we hold dear, suppose that freedom, that civilization itself were to be saved or lost by your word, by your wisdom. What would be your answer? What course would you choose? Which way would you go? (Suppose that only one life depended upon you. Even that would be very weighty.) Remember that you are only a man with the wisdom of a man, even as are all other men. Some are wiser than others; some more able; some have more knowledge of some things. But all have limitations, and all make mistakes. None of them is omniscient. And so suppose you put yourself in the place of those who have grave and grievous problems placed upon them, and think how urgently they need insight and inspiration, how urgently they need our earnest prayers, as well as their own. It is easy to see how such men as have been mentioned, and many others also, have been brought to their knees in acknowledgment of their need for divine direction (even as we know our own need in meeting even our own daily personal problems). Mere men without higher help are woefully inadequate. But by prayer and repentance and by living for the guidance of the Lord God, men and nations have right and reason to expect the answers to their perplexing problems.\*

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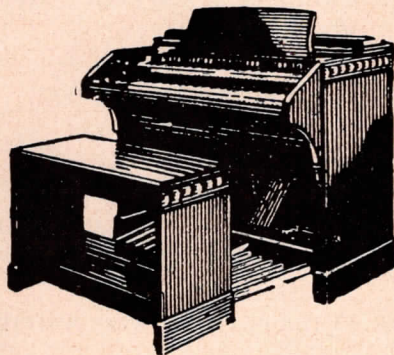
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## The Stick of Judah and The Stick of Joseph

(Continued from page 332)

saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I will take the sons of Israel out of the nations among whom they walk, and will gather them from round about and lead them into their land," etc.

In connection with this must be taken the previous episode: verse 11: "And he said to me Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope has perished; we are destroyed! (12) Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, my people, and bring you to the land of Israel . . ." etc. Here, as Rabbi Fisch notes, "the prediction of national resurrection, as symbolized in the vision of the dry bones, is followed by the symbolic action of the reunion of the two Kingdoms. . . ." <sup>124</sup> That the prophet, referring to the resurrection of the flesh as well was recognized by the ancients—of course this has been too much for the scholars, who even in Terluthan's time were determined to see in this a purely symbolic resurrection. But what specifically is the "wood of Judah"—why does the prophet choose this particular symbol? Because it symbolizes both a writing and a covenant, and the unique means by which Judah is to be recognized and distinguished in the world—it is Judah's tribal staff. All of which says as plain as day—it is the scripture. What, then, is the stick or wood of Joseph? Likewise a writing and a covenant, something written "for Joseph and those associated with Joseph." It is a compound document, like the Bible, but it is not the Bible, for it deals with that branch of Israel concerned with Joseph, not Judah, as the Bible does, and it will be held in the hand of Ephraim. After it has been brought together, it will be placed by the side of the wood of Judah and his associates that has been compiled in a like manner. When this is done, the two will match perfectly, thereby proving the identity and the claims of parties long separated and thought dead and vindicating their former common covenant with God. This will be a great miracle of recogni-

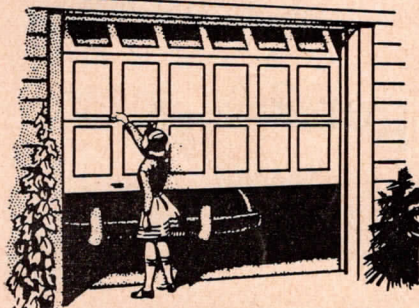
(Continued on page 336)

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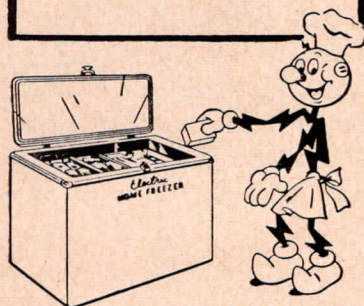
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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from page 334)

tion, of a piece (as Rabbi Fisch observes) with the supreme miracle of restoring the dead nations to life in the fulness of times. The long and complete separation of the two nations is an important part of the story (*dudum separata*, says

Jerome).<sup>125</sup> But there was no such separation between the Jews of the Old Testament and those of the New: the people, like their book, represent, as they proclaim and Jesus admits, an unbroken continuation of tradition and blood from the days

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*A... heart that doeth good  
like a medicine*

Richard L. Evans

WE SOMETIMES use formidable words to express simple ideas.

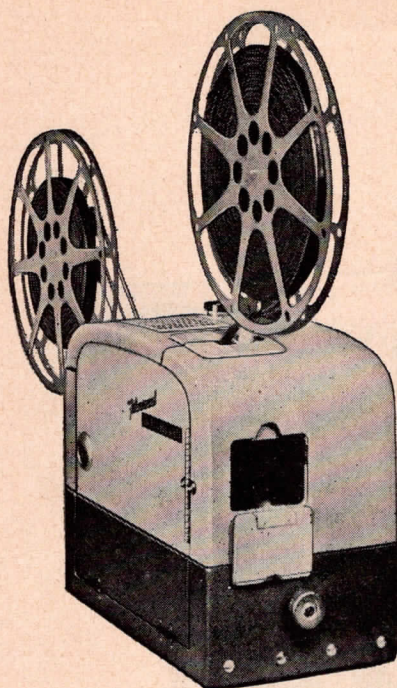
Consider, for example, the word *psychosomatic*. While its common use may be relatively recent, its essential idea of the effect of mind over matter, over happiness, over health, is certainly not new. Many centuries ago a man of much wisdom suggested the sense of the subject in a simple scriptural sentence: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine. . . ." And then he added: "but a broken spirit drieth the bones."<sup>1</sup> It is easy to prescribe, but it isn't always easy to administer the "medicine of a merry heart," for there is often much to make hearts heavy. There are sorrows; there is sickness; there is sin. There are disappointments, cruelty, unkindness; the loss of loved ones, and loneliness. And if we would, we could easily succumb to the negative side and shut out the sunlight and become darkly depressed. But if we did, we would be overlooking one of life's chief purposes and ultimate aims, for the pursuit of happiness is one of the rights that is said to be inalienable, and "men are that they might have joy." This principle hasn't always found understanding or acceptance, but if we will look at the essential facts, we shall see that it is basically so: for we are here on earth as children of a loving Father who has blessed us with the privilege of life and with all else that is ours. And surely the purpose of a loving Father for his children would be sincere happiness. It is true that we sometimes receive (and no doubt sometimes deserve) discipline. It is true that some of us sometimes mar our happiness by our own foolish, strongheaded acts and utterances. And it is true that some of us may sometimes be subject to unhappiness that we don't seem to need or that we don't deserve. But these things we shall sometime understand (as we now understand some of the purposes of our parents which were not so understandable to us in our younger years). And if we will keep faith—faith that our Father intends peace and progress and sincere, sound happiness for his children; faith in the purposefulness of life, which is limitless and everlasting; faith in the purpose and power of God to give to each of us complete compensation—with such faith we can survive the hurts, with a "heart that doeth good like a medicine."

<sup>1</sup>Proverbs 17:22.

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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from page 336)

of the Old Covenant; no identification is needed here—"ye are indeed Abraham's children," etc.

To fill the qualifications of the Stick of Joseph we must have, then,

1) a writing,  
 2) compounded of the doings of the descendants and associates of Joseph, (not Judah);

3) it must be held in the hand of Ephraim, who is of Joseph, not Judah;

4) it must be much like the Bible, the Stick of Judah, so much so that the two will fit together perfectly like two parts of a single tally-stick;

5) it must be brought forth *long* after the scattering of Israel, at a time when "the whole house of Israel" shall say "our bones are dried, and our hope has perished; we are destroyed!"

6) it must go forth as a summons "before their eyes" at that time when the Lord sets his hand to "take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone. . . ."

7) the bringing together of the two documents will reverse the process described in Zechariah, by which covenants between these two nations and God were broken when two rods were "cut in two," for as all commentators agree, the joining of the sticks means the re-establishment of the old covenants between them.

In the Book of Mormon we have a document that fulfils all these qualifications, and even the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price may enter into the picture, for they are all of Joseph, are all given into the hand of Ephraim to propagate and defend, and are all bound together as "one stick" with the Book of Mormon. All of which would plead strongly for the claims of the Book of Mormon even in a field of competitors. But where are the competitors? We have seen that the doctors do not agree for a minute on what the sticks of Ezekiel were or how they were joined together; we have further seen that they try to whittle away Ezekiel's full account by diligently altering the text. They might save themselves the trouble, for the Book of Mormon offers an explanation which (1) leaves the text *almost* as it stands, (2) offers literal fulfilment of a prophecy which all will admit Ezekiel meant should be literally fulfilled, and (3) sees in the "mystery" per-

formed by the prophet with the sticks a familiar and established institution and not a wild and unbridled fantasy of the prophet which would have meant nothing to his hearers.

Against the Book of Mormon explanation there is just one objection. It assumes that Ezekiel actually was a prophet. For the scholars, that spoils everything. In criticizing historical texts it is essential to recognize that a man cannot possibly talk about events that occur after his death. Only this fundamental principle of historical criticism cannot be applied to prophetic writings: When the purpose of an investigation is to test the validity of a revelation, we can hardly take as our basic rule of criticism the proposition that revelation is impossible! Yet this is exactly what the scholars have done. Thus the celebrated Eduard Meyer can report of Ezekiel: "That the visions and symbols are literary fictions is obvious; and the same goes for all the other accounts."<sup>126</sup> By what gift of divination is this obvious? "The prophetic apparatus," he continues, "has sunk to the most literal forms. Ezekiel is a literary grind, he does not work through the living word, struggling for expression from the depths of the soul as with Isaiah and Jeremiah . . . but he simply gives us the contents of a book which he is supposed to have swallowed in a vision. . . . Ezekiel is narrowminded, limited, without sweep or power, completely devoid of creative imagination "Phantasie" and hence marked by unendurable pedantry and monotony."<sup>127</sup>

Interestingly enough, these are the same charges that the same Eduard Meyer brings against Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Whereas, he tells us, Mohammed, like a true religious hero, sweated blood to produce the Koran, and went through those long and terrible periods of doubt and inner struggle through which every proper religious founder should fight his way to growing self-realization, etc., etc., Joseph Smith showed the unpardonably bad taste never to have betrayed the slightest doubt as to his calling: "It is very significant in the case of Joseph Smith," we are told, "that the question of such doubting never arises,

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THE IMPROVEMENT ERA



## The Stick of Judah and The Stick of Joseph

(Continued from page 338)

however readily he questions the vision and inspirations of others when they do not please him. . . . Thus Mohammed's revelations are higher than Joseph Smith's because in them we feel, at least in the earliest Suras, something of the power of a conviction won by a truly strenuous spiritual struggle, and at times we sense even a poetical exhilaration."<sup>128</sup> Neither Joseph Smith nor Ezekiel is the kind of prophet (as Mohammed is) to please a German professor; both are guilty of the "crassest literalism." While Mohammed's book remains decently invisible in the hand of the angel, Joseph Smith, without the slightest feeling for drama, mystery, or the usual religious amenities, actually copies out the characters of his holy book for circulation!<sup>129</sup> Poetry, "Phantasie," inner struggle—such are the stuff of prophetic experience for Eduard Meyer and the lesser pedants, and any thought that a prophet might really be a prophet and not merely a poet, thinker, or moralist is quite out of the question. And so in criticizing the modern Joseph and the ancient Ezekiel in identical terms one of the greatest modern scholars bears unintentional witness to the existence of a class of prophetic experience totally beyond the ken of the academician. Needless to say, when such prophets speak the doctors are not equipped to judge them. Whether Ezekiel was really prophesying or not does not depend on whether this or that scholar thinks prophecy is possible. The whole account of the Stick of Judah and the Stick of Joseph should serve to admonish us that there are many things hidden from the wise and prudent which are known to the prophets of the Lord and shared by them with his people. In due time these things come one by one to the knowledge of the outside world but in the meantime we may rest assured that the Saints are under no obligation to accept every conjecture that engages the fancy of the Scribes and Pharisees.

(The End)

### REFERENCES

<sup>128</sup>In *Patrol. Graec.* LXXI, 129.

<sup>129</sup>In *Patrol. Lat.* XXII, 683.

<sup>120</sup>*Patrol. Lat.* XXXV, 518; cf. CLXVIII, 786.

(Continued on page 344)

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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Continued from page 341)

<sup>121</sup>Patrol. Lat. CLXVIII, 786.

<sup>122</sup>Patrol. Lat. XXV, 353.

<sup>123</sup>Tertullian, *de Resurr.* c. 29, cites Ezekiel 37 as proof of an ancient belief in the resurrection, and notes (c. 30), that whereas heretics say it refers to the restoration of the Jews to their land, it nonetheless shows

that the resurrection had been revealed earlier to the Jews. What settles the argument in favor of a real resurrection is the very frequent reference to the resurrection of the flesh in early Jewish Apocryphal writings. Thus in the very early *Life of Adam and Eve* li, 2, Michael appears to Seth and

(Concluded on following page)

### "Little Brass Nails..."

Richard L. Evans

PERHAPS all of us pursue some things which, after we acquire them, seem somewhat shallow or shoddy or at least unessential. And then we wonder why we wished for them so much and worked for them so hard, and passed by more worth-while things we might have had. There is a parable by John Ruskin that has much to suggest concerning this subject. He said it was a dream, but we rather surmise it was a dream he deliberately dreamed for the purpose of putting over a point: "I dreamed," he said, "that I was at a child's . . . party, in which every means of entertainment had been provided . . . by a wise and kind host. . . . The children had been set free in the rooms and gardens, with no care whatever but how to pass their afternoon rejoicingly. . . . There was music . . . all manner of amusing books . . . a workshop . . . a table loaded with everything nice to eat . . . and whatever a child could fancy . . . but in the midst of all this it struck two or three of the more 'practical' children that they would like some of the brass-headed nails that studded the chairs, and so they set to work to pull them out. In a little while all the children, nearly, were spraining their fingers in pulling out brass-headed nails. With all that they could pull out they were not satisfied; and then everybody wanted some of somebody else's. And at last the really 'practical' and 'sensible' ones declared that nothing was of any real consequence that afternoon except to get plenty of brass-headed nails. . . . And at last they began to fight for nail heads, . . . even though they knew they would not be allowed to carry so much as one brass knob away with them. But no! it was, 'Who has most nails? . . . I must have as many as you before I leave the house or I cannot possibly go home in peace.' At last they made so much noise that I awoke, and thought to myself, 'What a false dream that is of children. . . . Children never do such foolish things. Only men do.' " And so ended Ruskin's dream of the children and the little brass nails. One of the greatest gifts of God is a sound sense of values. It is a gift of inestimable worth, for those who have a limited time to live—which, so far as the limits of this life are concerned, includes all of us. And yet, even as the foolish children referred to, it would seem that much too much of our time may be taken in struggling for little brass nails, which we cannot take home with us at the end of the day.

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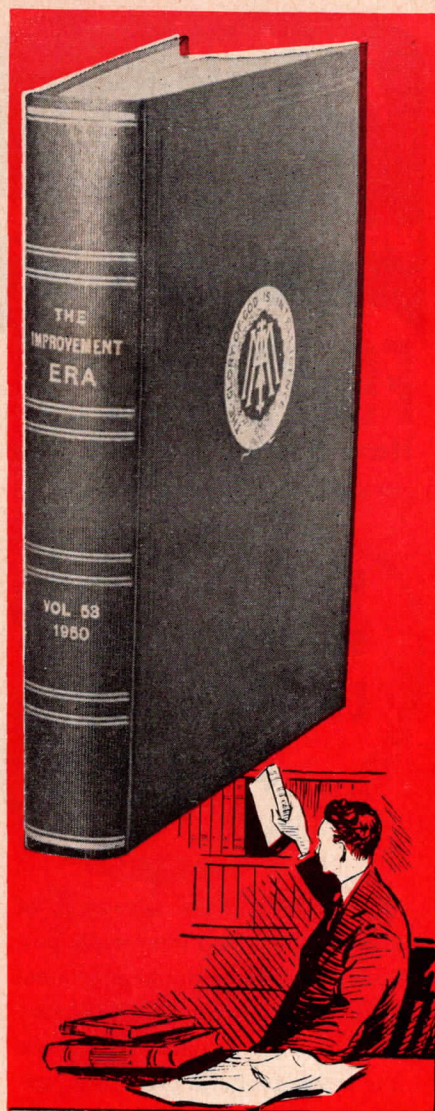
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## THE STICK OF JUDAH AND THE STICK OF JOSEPH

(Concluded from preceding page)  
 says: "Man of God, mourn not for thy dead more than six days, for on the seventh day is the sign of the resurrection, and the rest of the age to come." Such expressions are common in the earliest Christian fragments. The ancient Jewish belief in the resurrection of the flesh is a subject deserving of special treatment, but since there undoubtedly was such a belief, the remarks of Ezekiel regarding dead bones would have been referred before everything else to it.  
<sup>124</sup>Ezekiel, p. 249.

<sup>125</sup>Vere enim in adventu Domini Salvatoris, duae virgae, et ut in Hebraico positum est, duo ligna in unum juncta sunt sceptrum, et in baptisate Christi dudum separata sociantur: ut fiant in unum novum hominen. Comment. in Ezech. xi, ch. 37, in Patrol. Lat. XXV, 353.

<sup>126</sup>Geschichte des Altertums IV, 1. 167, n. 1.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., pp. 168, 170f.

<sup>128</sup>Ed. Meyer, Ursprung u. Gesch. der Mormonen (Berlin, 1904), p. 80ff.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., pp. 81f.

## ...men in the making

Richard L. Evans

AS WE see a new home, finished and landscaped and lovely, we may partly forget the process by which it was brought into being. There was dirt to be dug; and rough materials to be shaped and put in place—and littered plaster and sawdust and shavings and much noise along with all else. And while it was in the making, we had to have perspective, and we had to have faith—faith in the plan, in the blueprint, in the materials, and in the men who made it. We had to believe that it would someday be what it promised to be. This is true of other things also. Paintings and portraits look anything but lovely when the artist first begins to daub. The pottery we see and buy and much admire begins as mud—a special kind of mud to be sure, but mud nevertheless. When we see a boy in adolescence, we have to have faith, or a boy first learning to play the piano, or a girl first fingering the violin. The first hesitating notes, the first unsure sounds are not the finished product, but they are the promise of things to come. They are part of the practice and the pain that it takes to arrive at a finished performance. We need to know the ultimate objective and then trust people and principles and proven processes to bring about the ultimate outcome. We have to trust for many things—intelligently—but we have to trust. And we have to overlook the imperfections of many things in the making. We are not perfect, any of us—and to others and to our Father in heaven we must look like pretty crude clay at times in some of our actions and utterances—and perhaps all of us have reason to criticize all of us in the eternal process of reaching for perfection. But if a person shows honest and earnest effort and intent to pursue sound purposes and principles, we should be as long-suffering (or try to be) as our Father in heaven is with us, and not be too quick to judge or criticize or condemn before we see the product in patient perspective.

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