

KING ARTHUR AND MOSHE

by Community Contributor

"This staff you shall take in your hand, with which you shall perform the signs."

We've all heard of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Nevertheless, who was Arthur?

According to the legend, Arthur was the high king of the Britons who united them and drove the invading tribes of Saxons, Angles, and Picts from their shores. He was the son of Uther Pendragon and Ygraine, the Duchess of Cornwall.

The king became sick, and Arthur was raised in secret by Sir Ector, a loyal ally of the king's. When he was fifteen, he proved his right to rule Britain by pulling the famed sword from the stone in a churchyard in Westminster...

In 1938, this legend was published as a novel called *The Sword in the Stone* written by T. H. White. Here's the shortened version of it:

"After baby Arthur was born, Merlin secretly took him to be raised at the castle of Sir Ector, a loyal ally of the King's. There, the young prince was raised as the child of Sir Ector's, and no one, not even Ector himself, knew the boy's true identity. But Ector also had a son, named Sir Kay. And because young Arthur was thought to be a child, Sir Kay and his friends teased and taunted him, and his adopted parents looked down on him. The poor boy grew up in shame of his birth, never knowing of his royal lineage.

Meanwhile, all was not well with the King. Just months after giving away his only son, Uther Pendragon turned ill and died shortly after. With no heir to lead the kingdom, the country fell into despair. Rival dukes and lords disputed over who was the best fit to rule England.

In the midst of the turmoil, the nobles called on Merlin to find a solution. Having seen to it that baby Arthur was safe, he erected a large stone, on top of which sat an anvil, in a churchyard in Westminster, a region of London. Stuck in the anvil was a sword. An inscription on its blade read:

"Whoever pulls out this sword from this stone will be declared King to all of England."

The sword was magic, Merlin explained, and only he who was fit to rule England could pull it from the stone. Nobles from far and wide came to try and pull the sword from the stone, but not even the strongest of men could accomplish the task. Eventually, the sword became forgotten, and England fell into greater ruin.

As the boy, Arthur grew older, Merlin introduced himself to him. Merlin and the boy would meet after he had finished his chores for Sir Ector, and the two of them became close friends. Merlin tutored the boy in many subjects, always teaching him that knowledge was greater than brute force. For, although Arthur was a small, scrawny lad scarcely capable of lifting a sword from its sheath, Merlin saw in him the potential to be a wise and just ruler who would unite Britain and rescue her from the chaos into which she had fallen. And so, through education and experience, the wizard helped the young prince to realize his full potential: a potential for greatness. The potential to rule with justice and compassion what would become the greatest kingdom ever known.

One day, when Arthur was fifteen, Merlin brought him before the Sword in the Stone. A crowd had been assembled and was waiting anxiously. Arthur's stepbrother, Sir Kay, was the first to try and pull the sword, but it would not budge. Then Arthur tried. It came out as easily as a knife out of butter. The crowd cheered, and Arthur was crowned King of England.

What does this have to do with the *posuk*? The *Ohr HaChayim* explains:

"The staff of *Moshe* was made of sapphire and many people, therefore, wanted it, but it was firmly stuck in the ground and no man could bulge it except for Moshe. The *Medrash* relates that this staff was granted to *Adam* in the *Garden of Eden* and was passed down through the generations until *Yosef*. Upon *Yosef's* death, *Pharaoh* seized all his property including the staff. *Yisro* took it from *Pharaoh* and wedged it into the ground of his own garden and no one could extract it from there until *Moshe* came along and removed it effortlessly. This was the staff that *Moshe* had with him when *Hashem* spoke with him.

Ohr HaChayim: *Yisro* wedged the staff into the ground of his own garden and no one could extract it from there.

The Sword in the Stone: Nobles from far and wide came to try and pull the sword from the stone, but not even the strongest of men could accomplish the task... Arthur's stepbrother, Sir Kay, was the first to try and pull the sword, but it would not budge.

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The *Ohr HaChayim* continues:

The fact that *Moshe* could take the staff in his hand demonstrated that he was the one destined to perform the signs with it...

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Could it be that the legend of *The Sword in the Stone* was based off a *Medrash*?

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