

Numbers 17:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
Numbers 17:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of *their* fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.

Numbers 17:3 And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod *shall be* for the head of the house of their fathers.

Numbers 17:4 And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

Numbers 17:5 And it shall come to pass, *that* the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

The LORD determined to once and for all put an end to any question as to Moses' right to lead the people and speak for the LORD and Aaron's right to serve as the high priest. He told Moses to collect a rod from each of the recognized heads of the twelve tribes and write the name of the leader on the rod, including the rod of Aaron. Moses was then to take the rods to the tabernacle and present them before the LORD. The LORD was going to meet with Moses at the tabernacle and prove by an undeniable miracle—the rod of the man He chooses is going to blossom—that Aaron is His choice for the high priest. Such an amazing miracle should finally cause the people to stop complaining about whom God had chosen to lead the people and serve as priest.

Numbers 17:6 And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, *even* twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron *was* among their rods.

Numbers 17:7 And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

Moses did as the LORD had instructed and collected a rod from each of the recognized heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, including Aaron's rod as the head of the tribe of Levi. He then placed the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle.

Numbers 17:8 ¶ And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

Numbers 17:9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

On the next day Moses went into the tabernacle and saw that Aaron's rod for the house of Levi had not only budded but had also produced blossoms and almonds. Moses took the rods out for all the people of Israel to see. Each of the other eleven leaders then took back his rod.

Numbers 17:10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

The LORD instructed Moses to take Aaron's rod back into the tabernacle to be kept as a testimony of his God-appointed priesthood and to put a stop to the murmuring and complaints of the people. The implication is clear that if they didn't stop complaining, He was going to kill them. Moses did as he was told. We know from the writer to the Hebrews that the rod was placed in the ark of the covenant.

Hebrews 9:3–4 "And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;"

Numbers 17:11 And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he.
Numbers 17:12 And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish.
Numbers 17:13 Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

"And Moses did so...so did he" – It is easy to overlook this phrase, but it is important. The man of God should never hesitate to follow the revealed will of God. This is clear throughout scripture. The best way to know God's revealed will is to read His word recognizing it as "the truth"—not just in part, but the whole.

As the people began to process all that had happened and the deaths of many thousands among them, they finally began to understand that they were wrong to rebel against what the LORD had commanded. They voiced their fear of dying if they came near the tabernacle. It had proven to be a place of judgment, and they knew they had been in the wrong.