



BIBLICAL DONKEY

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Abstract

The donkey is charged with a rich, important biblical symbolism. Usually the kings choose a strong and combatant animal for ceremonies – a thoroughbred horse, an imposing elephant or even a camel. David has a “royal she-mule”, Solomon is anointed as king on a “wild donkey”. And what does Solomon’s wild donkey signify? Christ enters Jerusalem on “the foal of a she-ass,” as the king of the Jews. How do we account for the fact that in Hebrew the ass’s foal is not a diminutive of the word ‘donkey’, as well as the fact that the she-ass signifies ‘slow pace’ and has nothing in common with the jackass? The paper replies to these curious questions and to the riddle as to why the king of the Jews rides “the foal of a she-ass” and the king is of the tribe of Judah, of whom Jacob/Israel prophesies that he will untie his donkey, just as the apostles set free the ass’s foal for which Jesus Christ sent them. To decode these biblical symbols I use linguo-semiotic approach.

1. Messiah’s donkey in Easter story

The abundant literature dedicated to the donkey indicates biblical facts regarding this animal: the donkey is forbidden food; the donkey and the ox have to rest on Saturday; the first donkey is not subject to destruction in the Egyptian punishments. In addition to these general data, the donkey is charged with a rich, important biblical symbolism. Why does in the first century A.D. the Jewish population of Jerusalem decode as the king of the Jews and the Messiah a stranger who enters the town “riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”; and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass (KJV)?

John and Matthew use a quote from the Old Testament:

as it is written: “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!” John 12:14-15 (NRS)

to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, “Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Matthew 21:2-7 (NRS)

People in Christian culture are so accustomed to the Easter story that they did not realize how strange and unusual is that act. To understand its cultural significance, we must remember the following facts:

- The New Testament was written by Jews for Jews, first.
- The New Testament is a type of Judaism based on the culture and customs brought from the Old Testament.
- Therefore, we should know well the Old Testament.

Subquestions can help us:

- What are the Hebrew terms for *foal*, *coat*, *mule*, *she-ass*, *he-ass*, *donkey*?
- Why the king of the Jews rides “the foal of a she-ass”?
- What is the symbolism of the royal Jewish animal in the case that usually the kings choose a strong and combatant animal for ceremonies – a thoroughbred horse, an imposing elephant or even a camel?

It is impossible to give complete and satisfactory answers to these questions in a short text but let me try to start to answer.

2. The Hebrew terms for English Biblical terms *foal*, *coat*, *she-ass*, *he-ass*, *donkey*

John and Matthew quoted Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble **and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.** (NRS)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and **riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.** (KJV)

2.1. The Old Testament prophecy about the ass's foal of the Messiah and donkey-terminology

In Zechariah 9:9 the terms are:

חֲמוֹר [hamòr] male donkey/male ass

עֵיר [air] colt

אֲתוֹנוֹת [atonòt] *pl.* female donkey/female ass

בֶּן-אֲתוֹנוֹת [ben atonòt] donkey's foal, *lit.* son of female donkey

The Messiah's foal is situated in the context of the particularly well-developed terminology in the Old Testament:

חֲמוֹר [hamòr] male donkey

אֲתוֹן [atòn] female donkey

עֵיר [air] colt/foal

פָּרָד [pèred] male mule/he-wild ass/wild donkey

פִּרְדָּה [pirdà] female mule/she-wild ass/wild donkey

פִּרְדַּת מֶלֶךְ [pirdàt mèleh] king's she-mule

פָּרָה [père] wild ass/wild donkey

פָּרָא [père] wild ass/wild donkey

עָרוֹד [aròd] wild ass/wild donkey

What we see in the English terms *ass*, *donkey* and *mule* is that the female and male individuals are not in a relationship of suppletion. We need to add to the same word the pronouns *she* or *he* as formants in a compound. But in Hebrew *she-donkey* and *he-donkey* are suppletive, i.e. they have different roots. In addition, a *young donkey* is a one-word-term derived from a third root and more terms are used by the prophet. Suppletivism (‘adding’, ‘exchange’) is a way of expressing grammatical meanings of a word in which a relevant grammatical word form uses another root. In other [clear] words – semantically connected words have different roots. Suppletive forms need special attention – they are seen as “irregular” or even “highly irregular”.

Examples for suppletive facts are *good-better-best*; the Bulgarian terms for *мъж* (‘man’) and *жена* (‘woman’) are also suppletive.

We needed this definition for a better orientation in Hebrew terms. In addition, there are some features of the Hebrew language and alphabet unknown to Europeans: In Hebrew the root consists of consonants and no vocals. In the Hebrew Alphabet, there are no letters for vocals. The vocals are written with diacritics - dots and dashes.

3. The male donkey חָמוֹר [hamòr]

3.1. Additional information from the extended semantics of the roots (logic, associations, and contexts)

Definition: The root is a morpheme that carries the mutual semantic features among all word-derivates from that root. For example, there is something common between *book*, *booklet*, *book-shop*, *booking* etc., including literal and figurative meanings.

Male-donkey *Het-Mem-Reish* חמר

חָמַר [hamàr] I ferment, boil, foam

חֶמֶר [hèmer] wine

חֶמָר [hemàr] bitumen

חֹמֶר [hòmer] cement, mortar, clay

חָמַר [hamàr] smear with asphalt (Exo 2:3, only)

חָמַר [hamàr] II be red. The verbal form possibly is found in Job 16:16

חָמוֹר [hamòr] (he)-ass

יְחָמוֹר [yahmùr] roebuck

(Bibliography used in BibleWorks4: Cohon, Samuel, "Ass" in ISBE, I, pp. 287-88. Mccullough, W. S., "Ass" in IDB, II, pp. 260-61. Mckenzie, J. L., "Ass" in Dictionary of the Bible, I, Bruce, 1965, 62-63. G.H.L.)

(BibleWorks4)

From *Het-Mem-Reish* the verb *to be red* [hamàr] is formed, which only appears in Job 16:16 in the form [hamarmerà], meaning *to be reddish*. Classical (Библия, 1940) and current (Библия, 2001; 2002) protestant Bulgarian versions prefer to render [hamarmerà] as "to bloat". Only the orthodox Bulgarian version is true to the original *to become red* (почервения). The Septuagint prefers to render the prototype of macro-red, using the word συκκέκαυται, meaning *burning in fire, suddenly set afire*. According to BibleWorks4 this word is translated into Latin as *comburere*, but St. Jerome does not use it in the Vulgata, preferring instead the word *intumuit* ('to bloat'). The Slavonic translations in Russian, Polish and Czech keep to *reddening* – RST *побагровело*, BTP *czzerwone*, BKR *oduřavěla*.

It becomes clear that the denotation of the *male donkey* comprises associations with macro-red and this type of macro-red is not loaded with positive semantisations and only with great difficulty could be taken as the macro-light version of red. From the root of *male donkey* [hamòr] is also formed the word *roebuck* [jahmùr], where the internal motive clearly follows the line of reddishness.

3.2. The divine commandments and the male donkey הַמֹּר [hamòr]

The word [hamòr] is used frequently and every time the divine commandments are verbalized in the Exodus (13:13; 20:17; 21:33; 22:4; 22:9; 22:10; 23:4 23:5 23:12 34:20) and Deuteronomy (5:14; 5:21; 22:3; 22:4; 22:10; 28:31).

3.3. The other meanings of the root *Het-Mem-Reish*

The meanings *wine, bitumen, asphalt, cement, mortar, clay* of the root of the word for the male donkey, *Het-Mem-Reish*, are derived from the semantic features 'red' and 'material', available in the original Semitic root semantics. There are also other roots for these same words in Hebrew, but in Genesis 11:3; Exodus 2:3; Job 4:19; Psalms 40 are used for derivations precisely from this root. Similarly, the non-standard word for *wine*, formed from the same root - *wine* [hèmer]. Hence, in Deuteronomy 32:14 and Ezra 6:9 a word from this root stands for the *wine* [hèmer]. According to BibleWorks4, two different roots should be considered here (one with the paradigm, *become red, donkey* and the other with *wine, mud, clay, tar, mortar* and *stole*), despite their complete concurrence.

3.3.1. bitumen/asphalt [hemàr] and mortar [hòmer]

Genesis 11:3 narrates the building of the tower of Babylon.

They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used **tar** for **mortar**. (NAU)

Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had **asphalt** for **mortar**. (NKJ)

In this Genesis 11:3 *tar/asphalt* translates [hemàr], whereas *mortar* translates [hòmer]. Exodus 2:3 tells about the basket in which Moses is left to swim on the river – *daubed it with slime* (KJV); *covered it over with tar and pitch* (NAU); *daubed it with bitumen* (RSV); *plastered it with bitumen* (NRS); *daubed it with asphalt* (NKJ). In Exodus 2:3 from the root of *male donkey* is the verb *daubed with* [tahmerà]. Job 4:19 uses the word [hòmer] in the expression *houses of clay* (Bul. *къщи от кал*) [batèi hòmer].

3.3.2. wine [hèmer] – Deuteronomy 32:14

Curds of cows, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs, And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the finest of the wheat – And of the blood of grapes you drank **wine**. (NAU)

Ezra 6:9 “Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, **wine** and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, *it* is to be given to them daily without fail, (NAU)

3.4. Red and white donkeys. The meanings *wine*, *bitumen*, *asphalt*, *mortar* and *clay* indicate the exclusivity of the white donkey, because the usual meanings of the root for the male donkey [hamòr] are realized in the paradigm of the meanings ‘red’ ‘material’, ‘black materials’. If the meaning ‘wine’ can be regarded as a denotation of a sacral element, then the meanings of ‘bitumen’, ‘asphalt’, ‘mortar’, ‘clay’ can be considered as an indication of a realization of the root inverse to the sacral – toward ‘dark’, ‘earthly’, ‘low’, ‘material’, ‘transient’ and even ‘hellish’. Precisely these meanings are used when Moses is hidden in the resin basket, so as not to drown in the river of life, full of ‘Nile’s crocodiles’. In a figurative sense, Moses remains hidden under this symbolic cover of resin, symbolizing ‘earthly’, ‘low’ and ‘transient’ until that moment in his life when he leaves the Pharaoh’s family.

3.5. The lexical semantisation of the *male donkey* is ‘a symbol of the material’

An important distinctive feature of the word for *male donkey* הַמֹּר [hamòr] is that *male donkey* easily becomes a symbol of the material, because in contemporary

Hebrew the word 'material' is formed from the root of 'substance' הָמֵר [hòmer], as well as the word 'foam' and the outdated *smear with asphalt* הָמַר [hamàr]. Traditional and contemporary rabbinic thought confirm the idea that "the Judahic Messiah riding a horse, controls the material and physical" (Zohar, Bamidbar, 3:207a). Rabbi Kahn (Kahn), a professor at the Univeristy of Bar-Ilan (Israel), recalls Zohar's commentary in his popular lectures.

Moreover, in contemporary Israelite society, the idea of the relation 'material - the Messiah's donkey' - has various manifestations. For instance, Sefi Rachlevsky (1998), in his book „Messiah's Donkey" sustains the claim that the national religious movement attempts to replace the democratic Hebrew state by a religious theocracy, using the term "straddling" the institutions of the democratic state. The author shows that the religious Zionist Rav Kuk discusses laic pioneers and politicians who established and built a democratic Hebrew state, as the Messiah's donkey. "Materialists" (there is a word-play with donkey הָמוֹר [hamòr] and the related words *matter, material, substance* הָמֵר [hòmer]) have done the dirty work, so to speak, so that now the nationalist religious movement is designated by God to take over the state institutions in order to transform them into the nationalist religious ideal – the "essence of the Messiah". Rachlevsky's book crystallized secular Israel's fear of ultra-Orthodox power. [...] from a religious community bent on destroying Israel's democracy.

The material is precisely related to the word for male donkey, insofar as *male donkey* and הָמוֹר [hamòr] and *matter, material* הָמֵר [hòmer] are derivatives of one and the same root. This kind of commentary, however, expresses the general idea based on only one of the three "donkey" terms used in Zechariah 9:9. This type of commentary omits details such as the element of elevation originating in Zechariah's use of the word *donkey's foal* עֵיִר [èir]. The semantics of 'elevation' and 'soaring' is carried by the entire semantics of the root of the word *donkey's foal*. The other omission is Zechariah's elaboration that the donkey is "the foal of donkeys" (אֲתוֹנוֹת בֵּן [ben atonòt]). Briefly, this kind of religious nationalist claim (to put it mildly) "conveniently" omits the context of Prophet Zechariah's words in this verse.

3.6. Denotative and connotative aspects

From a word-derivation point of view the he-donkey הָמוֹר [hamòr] expresses the macro-red and macro-black in terms of Witkovski and Brown 1977; 1978; 1982, Wierzbicka 1996, Borg 2007.

From contextual, storyline point of view he-donkey is a marker for decisive moments of the life of tribes of Issachar and Judah (Genesis 49:11), of Abraham (Genesis 22:4); Joseph (Genesis 42:27; 44:13); Moses (Exodus 4:20; Numbers 16:15); The conquest of Jericho (Joshua 15:18); The tribe of Judah takes possession of the

Holy Land (Joshua 15:12-20; Judges 1:10-16); One of the first punishments for disobeying the Torah in the Holy Land (Judges 6:15); Gideon and Samson (Judges 15:15-16); The beginning of the end of the epoch of the Judges (Judges 19-21); The beginning of the monarchy (1 Samuel 12:1-3); Death of the nameless prophet (3 Kings 13:13; 23-24; 27); king David (1 Samuel 16:20; 25:18-25; 40-44; 2 Samuel 16 1-4; 17:23); king Solomon (1 Kings 2:8-10; 36-44); The actions of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 4:22); The narrator is prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 22:19; 2 Chronicles 36:6; 2 Kings 24:6); The narrator is prophet Nehemiah (Nehemiah 7:65-68), Isaiah.

4. The Female Donkey אֶתוֹן [atòn]

Historically, the female donkey was preferred to the male because of its milk and because it was better for riding. In BibleWorks4 it is shown precisely why the donkey is related to the tradition of pacification and the Messiah, as told already by Jacob. This is said in Genesis 49:11, where chapter 49 is dedicated to Jacob's legacy to his twelve sons. Verses 10, 11 and 12 are dedicated to the tribe of Judah, from which David is a descendant. The descendants of Judah are the only tribe which returned from Mesopotamia and the New Testament indicates Jesus Christ as a descendant of King David. In Jacob's legacy in Genesis 49:11, for the first time, key terms *ass's colt*, *foal* are used which are also inherited by the New Testament:

Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: (KJV)

בְּנֵי אֶתוֹן [bnèi atonè] *foals of a donkey, lit. sons of female donkey*

אֶסְרֵי עִירוֹ [osrì irò] *binding his foal*

אֶסְרֵי בְנֵי אֶתוֹן [osrì bnèi atonè] *binding his ass's colt*

4.1. The prototype of the Messiah's white donkey

The **white she-donkeys** in Judges 5:10 are a highly significant symbol because it relates to the prophecy that the Messiah will enter Jerusalem on a donkey:

"You who ride on **white donkeys**, You who sit on *rich* carpets, And you who travel on the road – sing! (NAU)

Speak, ye that ride on **white asses**, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. (KJV)

The important notion in regard to the New Testament is “binding the ass’s colts”, where it is tacitly understood that there are “tied asses”.

4.1. Lexical and root information. The root of the word אָתוֹן [atòn] is not mentioned in BibleWorks4. According to Gesenius, however, in Arabic there is a non-developed root *Alef-Tav-Nun* אָתַן, meaning, ‘to walk with small steps’ which, with a preposition, can also mean ‘stand stable’, ‘stand firm’, ‘sustain’. This verb is close to the Arab verb ‘refuse’ and, according to Gesenius (1996: 95), from this common, non-developed root derives the Hebrew word *ass* אָתוֹן [atòn]. In full agreement with Gesenius, the *Easton Bible Dictionary* (EBD) asserts that the *ass* is called אָתוֹן [atòn], because of its slow gait.

According to the *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE), the word has a different origin:

‘Athon, Assyrian ‘atanu and Aramaic ‘atana’, is derived from ‘atha’ “to come,” “go,” etc. (Furst suggests that it may be derived from ‘athan’, Aramaic ‘adhan’, “to be slender,” “docile,” etc.) (“Ass” – ISBE)

Leaving the passage indicated in BibleWorks4 and to conclude, we should note that the donkey expresses the idea of ‘peace’ and ‘ordinariness’, as well as ‘God’s omnipotence who, if he wants to, makes something great of the most ordinary thing’. This is the sense commented in BibleWorks4, in the case of Numbers 22:21-28, where the donkey speaks to Balaam and becomes the carrier of divine providence. Let us recall that the idea of ‘ordinariness’ includes the most popular qualities of that animal - ‘stupidity’, ‘stubbornness’, ‘strong sexuality’.

Gesenius (1996: 95) adds the meanings ‘walk with small steps’, as well as ‘refuse’, which have the potential to develop as ‘stand stable’, ‘stand firm’ and ‘sustain’. According to the ISBE-interpretation (“ass”-ISBE), the function of movement ‘going’, ‘coming’ is confirmed for denoting the female donkey.

We should note the interest in the term “white asses”. Dr. Thomas McDaniel (2003) dedicates an entire monograph to this topic, including his interpretation. The book shows an impressive erudition in Semitic philology, knowledge of English translations and the Septuagint. The asses are not the focus of attention, but interestingly, McDaniel (2003: 94) gives a completely different translation of Judges 5:10, omitting the female gender of the donkey and the “sitting ones” do not sit on rugs but on mules: *Riders on young donkeys, those sitting on mules, and those walking along the way*. The eccentricity of this translation may explain why the book

was published by the author himself. In addition, the author has a series of original ideas.

The word *donkeys* אַתְנוֹת [atonòt] is in the feminine plural.

The term *white* is not expressed by the standard Hebrew term for white color (לָבָן [lavàn]), but by a word from the root *Tzadi-Het-Reish* צָהַר. In the English and Bulgarian translations, however, *white donkeys* אַתְנוֹת צְהָרוֹת [atonòt tzehoròt] and *white wool* צֶמֶר צָהָר [tzèmer tzàhar] are not translated as *reddish-gray*, *tawny*, but consistently result as *white (female) donkeys* (Bul. *белу магаруцу*).

4.1.1. White she-donkeys, the root *Tzadi-Het-Reish* צָהַר and the closely related root *Tzadi-He-Reish* צָהָר

The Hebrew word for *white* is צְהָרוֹת [tzehoròt] and the word's root is *Tzadi-Het-Reish* צָהַר. The root *Tzadi-Het-Reish* צָהַר according BibleWoks4 has following meanings:

צָהָר [tzàhar] reddish-gray, tawny (Ezekiel 27:18).

צָהָר [tzòhar] tawny (Judges 5:10)

The word *white* designated by words formed from that root appears only twice in the entire Old Testament. The first time is in Judges 5:10 and the second – in the word-combination *white wool* in Ezekiel 27:18. Such a rare usage is significant in itself. In order to orient ourselves in regard to this meaning, we have to examine the full semantics of the root.

According to Gesenius (1996: 707), the origin of צָהָר [tzahòr] derives from an unextended root in the language, meaning *bedazzle, knock, shine, blinded by bright light*. The paradigm of such a denotation of white in the Old Testament comprises only two cases – *white she-donkeys* אַתְנוֹת צְהָרוֹת [atonòt tzehoròt] and *white wool* צֶמֶר צָהָר [tzèmer tzàhar]. A possible reading of the word *white* is צָהָר [tzòhar], but here I shall keep to צָהָר [tzàhar].

Thus, the root relates to active transformations of the idea of light. The singular form of *white* צְהָרוֹת [tzehoròt], is צָהָר [tzahòr] and the main signification of that word is *reddish-gray, tawny*.

Consequently these translations depend on the tradition and on the amalgamation of this root with *Tzadi-He-Reish* צָהָר which is close to it. The paradigm of *Tzadi-He-Reish* צָהָר provides the *donkeys' color*:

צָהָר [tzòhar] I noon, midday

צָהָר [tzòhar] II roof (Gen 6:16)

יִצְהָר [itzhàr] fresh oil

צָהָר [tzàhar] press oil

(BibleWords4)

It is important to check whether Bibles in other languages “insist” on the translation of צָהָר [tzehoròt] as *white*, Bul. *белу*.

The Septuagint shows a leveling of two roots that are close, but different: *Tzadi-He-Reish* צָהָר and *Tzadi-Het-Reish* צָהָר, translating the word צָהָר [tzehoròt] with the meaning of the paradigm of the word צָהָר [tzòhar]. Instead of the standard use of the term for white color (λευκός [leukòs]) or the standard word for *light*, Gr. φῶς [fos], Bul. *светлина*, the Septuagint indicates the word μεσημβρίας [mesembriàs], meaning *noon*. Thus the Septuagint differs from the Slavonic and English translations which use the standard term for *white* color - *белу, белых, białych, white*. The word צָהָר [tzòhar] is used once as a term for the *window* of Noah's Ark (Genesis 6:16). That which allows the seventy translators to treat the two roots as synonyms, are the semes ‘light’, ‘noon-light, as something positive’ and ‘ritual purity’. This is how the window of Noah’s arc and the white donkeys from Judges 5:10 turn out to be in a common paradigm, suggesting ‘light’ and ‘purity’.

The Vulgata uses the word *nitēns*, meaning ‘shiny’ and not one of the standard words for *white* or *light*.

All translations maintain the whiteness, lightness and shininess of the donkeys. In this regard, it is particularly significant that the legend of the Septuagint attributes a rabbinic authorship to the Greek translation, and that St. Jerome spent much time in the Holy Land, studying Hebrew and consulting, learning from local Judaic rabbis. In this way, the tradition consistently confirms this translation.

Of the same order is the riddle why the kings David and Solomon choose foals which are “children of the she-donkey” as the royal animal and not the horse. Judges 5:10 shows that the use of donkeys or foals as animals for riding and expressing abundance, power, influence etc., is a tradition in the Near Eastern Israelite monotheistic culture.

White she-donkeys from Judges 5:10 are related to the Messiah and his foal of a donkey, lit. *sons of female donkey*, from Genesis 49:11.

5. The colt עֵר [aìr]

BibleWorks4 distinguishes between two different roots *Ayin-Yud-Reish* עיר, which are spelled in the same way - 'yr I ו 'yr II. From the first root derives עור [ur] rouse oneself, awake, incite, as well as עיר [ir] excitement. From the second root derives עיר [air] he-donkey.

Genesius (1996: 624-625) provides more information, the most valuable of which is the motive of forming the noun *wild donkey* עיר [air] - "The notion of being hot is applied in various ways: 1. to *an ardent rapid course*, or running; a wild ass, so called from its rapid unrestrained running". Interestingly, Genesius does not indicate the meaning of the root *rouse oneself, awake, incite*.

From this review of the root in BibleWorks4 and Gesenius, we can draw the following complex conclusion:

The cognitive, sub-consciously flowing relation of the word *colt* עיר [air] has five aspects, resulting from the colt's qualities as well as the extended semantics of the word's root. The first aspect is that the colt lacks the association with strong sexuality, typical of mature donkeys, i.e. here the 'lack of strong sexuality' is at hand. The second aspect is a complete onomatopoeia with *town* עיר [air]. The third aspect relates the colt to 'flaming', 'ardent', since they form the meanings 'speed' + 'peace'. The fifth aspect is the relation with the verbs rouse oneself, awake, incite עור [ur]. This last aspect transmits linguistic consciousness and sub-consciousness of a journey to 'exaltation'.

6. The *wild donkey* פִּרְדָּה [pirdà] is the royal animal

In the Hebrew world-view, the wild donkey is differentiated from the domestic one with quite different words. There are two denotations for wild ass/wild donkey. One is פִּרְדָּה [pirdà]/פִּרְדָּה [pirdà], and the other is פִּרְא [père]/פִּרְה [père]. The term for the royal parade animal is *king's she-mule* (Bul. царското муле) פִּרְדַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ [pirdàt ha-mèleh]. In this context there are several uses - in Jeremiah 2:24; Job 11:12; 39:5. In Isaiah 32:14 the second word for wild donkey is used for mule, with the textual semantisation 'wild', 'natural', 'uncivilized', 'non-monotheistic' and 'absence of people'. BibleWorks4 indicates the meaning "wild donkey" for the word פִּרְא [père] / פִּרְה [père].

The internal form of the term *royal donkey/mule* פִּרְדָּה [pèred] is from *run, run fast* פָּרָא [perà]. On the other hand, the same root, according to Gesenius (1996: 687), comprises the verb *carry weight, support, carry, bear* פָּרָא [parà]. This word should not be confused with its homophone - פָּרָה [parà], meaning *young cow*. The verb פָּרָה [parà] means *carry, give birth quickly, run*. Clearly, the two verbs פָּרָא [parà] and פָּרָה [parà] are close enough - in sound and meaning.

Besides signifying ‘wild’, ‘natural’, ‘uncivilized’, ‘non-monotheistic’, the wild donkey is also a sign for ‘nobleness’ and ‘royalness’. This appears in the different descriptions in of Solomon’s anointment as king (3 Kings 1:33; 38; 44), where the terms *children of “pirda”* בְּנֵי עַל־הַפְּרָדָּה [bnei al-pirdà] (verse 33), *king’s mule* הַמְּלֶךְ הַפְּרָדָּה [pirdàt ha-mèleh] are used.

In the New Testament the apostles indicate that Christ entered Jerusalem as a Jewish king, riding a *mule* (Bul. *осле*). The founders of the Hebrew monarchy - David and Solomon - prefer the mule as their ceremonial animal. The word formation *king’s mule* הַמְּלֶךְ הַפְּרָדָּה [pirdàt ha-mèleh] is a smihut-form which unequivocally indicates that the royal mule is female. The term is used in three verses telling about Solomon’s anointment as king, done while David is still alive - 1 Kings 33; 38; 44.

According to the Bulgarian explanatory dictionary, *муле* (‘mule’) as a general term is a cross between a donkey and a horse. The dictionary distinguishes between the concrete terms - a mule is born of a she-ass and a horse, whereas a hinny is born from a donkey and a mare (BED 1963: 423). In the context of the Messiah and his genealogical tree related to King David, the question of the “royal mule”/ “David’s mule” is not without significance, as well as the term “colt, born of an ass”. This term is used both in the Old and the New Testament when it needs to be specified.

All of David’s sons ride she-mules פְּרָדָּה [pirdà] (2 Kings 13:29). Solomon’s anointment as king with such a female mule changes the spectrum of semantisations of this word: from the usual animal ridden by the king’s sons in times of peace, this kind of donkey is transformed into a royal animal.

- פְּרָדָּה [pèred] male mule
- פְּרָדָּה [pirdà] female mule
- הַמְּלֶךְ הַפְּרָדָּה [pirdàt mèleh] king’s she-mule
- פְּרָה [père] wild ass/wild donkey
- פְּרָא [père] wild ass/wild donkey

7. The Aramaic *wild donkey* עָרוֹד [aròd]

The word occurs in Job 39:5.

According to Genesisius, the word colt עֵיר [aìr] has an Aramaic origin, from the root *Ayin-Yud-Reish* and is an element of the paradigm of macro-red - macro-light עור [ur] *to be hot, ardent, rouse oneself, awake, incite* עור [ur]; *to make hot, to heat* הָעֵיר [heìr]; עיר [ìr] *excitement*.

Job's poetic style is distinctive due to his brilliant command of Hebrew, as well as the large number of loan-words. Thus we can find the Aramaic word next to the Hebrew word in one and the same verse. This is precisely the case with the Aramaic word for *wild donkey* עָרוֹד [aròd], which is next to the Hebrew word פָּרָא [père] in Job 39:5.

Usual explanation for the many non-Hebrew words in the Book of Job, including the couple עָרוֹד [aròd] – פָּרָא [père] is that the use of non-Hebrew words serves poetic manipulation (Greenstein 2003; Ginsberg 2006).

The Bulgarian translations of the Aramaic and Hebrew words for *wild donkey* are illustrations of the correctness of Greenstein's and Ginsberg's claim.

8. Conclusions

- There are five different Hebrew roots for terms for English Biblical *foal, coat, mule, female donkey, he-ass*.

- Logical and associative relations in Hebrew, established by the polysemy of different roots of names for the donkey are untranslatable into Indo-European languages.

- From color point of view, the *he-donkey* חָמוֹר [hamòr] is in the area of macro-red and macro-black, while the *foal* of the Messiah is macro-white.

- The *white she-donkeys* in Judges 5:10 are a highly significant symbol relating to the prophecy that the Messiah will enter Jerusalem on a donkey. In this sense, the word denoting the color of the donkey is significant.

- White donkeys are related to the meanings 'light', 'noon-light as something positive', 'ritual purity'. These meanings follow the derivation of their roots, as well as from the biblical context. That is why they are the prototype of the Messiah's donkey.

- Zechariah's prophecy is incarnate in the gospels of the New Testament, is cited with precision by the apostles and Jesus enters Jerusalem as a Hebrew king, on a white colt, the ass's foal.

- Kings ride mules with difficulty, but apparently this is not the case of the most important Judaic kings who are not worried to express 'peace' by means of this symbol.

- Kings David and Solomon choose colts "the ass's foals" as royal animal and not the horse. From Judges, 5:10 it is clear that the use of donkey or colt as an animal for riding expresses wealth, power, influence etc., but not 'solidarity with poverty', 'simplicity'.

- The analysis of the extended semantics of the proto-image of Christ's white colt – the white asses from the call to Court by Debora; the lexemes of Zechariah's prophecy; the symbols of Jacob's legacy for the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49; the tradition established by David and Solomon that kings should ride mules – show different levels of the relation between the New and Old Testaments.

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