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NEW SEMIOTICS

Between Tradition and Innovation



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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 a linguo-semiotic approach.

1. Messiah’s donkey in Easter story

Why in first century A.D. 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 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, colt, 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 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 short text but let me try to start to answer.

2. The Hebrew terms for English Biblical terms *foal, colt, 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:

male donkey/male ass רֹמָה [hamòr]
 colt רִיעַ [aìr]
 pl. female donkey/female ass תֹּנֹת [atonèt]
 donkey’s foal, **lit.** son of female donkey בֶּן תֹּנֹת [ben atonèt]

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

male donkey רֹמָה [hamòr]
 female donkey וְתֹתָא [atòn]

colt/foal רִיעַ [air]
 male mule/he- wild ass/wild donkey דָּרָפַ [pèred]
 (female form) mule/she-wild ass/wild donkey הַדָּרָפָה [pirdà]
 king's she- mule דָּרָפָה תְּדָרָפָה [pirdàt mèleh]
 wild ass/wild donkey הָרָפָה [père]
 wild ass/wild donkey אָרָפָה [père]
 wild ass/wild donkey דֹרָע [aròd]

What we see in English terms *ass*, *donkey* and *mule* is that female and male individuals are not in 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 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 use another root. In clear words – semantically connected words has different roots. Suppletive forms need special attention – they are seen as “irregular” or even “highly irregular”.

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

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

3. The male donkey רֹמֶה [hamòr]

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

Definition: The root is 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.

The information for the roots is from BibleWorks4.

Male-donkey *Het-Mem-Reish* רמח
 I. ferment, boil, foam; II. be red רמח [hamàr]
 III. smear with asphalt (Exo 2:3, only)
 wine רמח [hèmer]
 bitumen רמח [hemàr]
 cement, mortar, clay רמח [hòmer]
 (he)-as רומח [hamòr]
 roebuck רומח [iahmùr]

(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, pp. 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 συγκέκασται, meaning *burning in fire, suddenly set afire*. According to BibleWorks4 this word is translated into Latin as *comburare*, but st. Jerome (347-420) 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 *побазровело*, BTP *czerwone*, 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 semantizations and only with great difficulty could be taken as macro-light version of red. From the root of *male donkey* [hamòr] is also formed the word *roebuck* [iahmùr], where the internal motive clearly follows the line of reddishness.

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

The word [hamòr] is used frequently and every time the divine commandments are verbalized in the Exodus and Deuteronomy. There are more than 10 uses – Exodus 13:13; 20:17; 21:33; 22:4; 22:9; 22:10; 23:4 23:5 23:12 34:20; 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 it 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’ and ‘material’. 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 semantization of the *male donkey* is ‘a symbol of the material’

An important distinctive feature of the word for *male donkey* רוֹמָה [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’ חֶמֶר [hòmer], as well as the word ‘foam’ and the outdated *smear with asphalt* חֶמָר [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 Ari 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, in his book „Messiah’s Donkey” (Rachlevsky 1998) 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 רוֹמָה [hamòr] and the related words *matter*, *material*, *substance* חֶמֶר [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 רוֹמָה [hamòr] and *matter*, *material* חֶמֶר [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 “don-

key” 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* רִינֵעַ [aìr]. 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” (וּבֵן תֶּאֱרוֹן) [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 word-derivation point of view the he-donkey רוֹמָחַ [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, Chronicles and Kings (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 וִיתָא [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 descendents of Judah are the only tribe which returned from Mesopotamia and the New Testament indicates Jesus Christ as a descendent 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: Genesis 49:11 (KJV)

foals of a donkey, lit. *sons of female donkey* יִנְבּ וּבֵן תֶּאֱרוֹן [bnèi atonò];

binding his foal וְרִינֵעַ יָרָס אֵרֶס [osrì irò]

binding his ass’s colt וְרִינֵעַ יִנְבּ יָרָס אֵרֶס [osrì bnèi irò]

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.

Judges 5:10 „You who ride on **white donkeys**, You who sit on *rich* carpets, And you who

travel on the road – sing! Judges, 5:10 (NAU)

Judges 5:10 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* אתן, 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, from this common, non-developed root derives the Hebrew word *ass* אָתוֹן [atòn] (Gesenius, 1996, p. 95). 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 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, 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 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* אָתוֹנוֹת [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* רָחַץ. In the English and Bulgarian translations, however, *white donkeys* תּוֹנוֹת תְּחֹרֵת [atonòt tzechorèt] and *white wool* תְּחֹרֵת רְחֵץ [tzechorèt tzehar] are not translated as *reddish-gray*, *tawny*, but consistently result as *white (female) donkeys* (Bul.

бѣли магаруци).

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

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

reddish-gray, tawny (Ezek 27:18) רָהַצ [tzàhar]
tawny (Jud 5:10) רָהַצ [tzòhar]

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, the origin of רָהַצ [tzàhar] 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* תֹּהַר תֵּצֵר [atonòt tzehoròt] and *white wool* רֶמֶץ רָהַצ [tzèmer tzàhar]. A possible reading of the word *white* is רָהַצ [tzòhar], but here I shall keep to רָהַצ [tzàhar].

Thus, the root relates to active transformations of the idea of light. The singular form of *white*, תֹּהַר [tzehoròt], is רָהַצ [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* רהצ which is close to it. The paradigm of *Tzadi-He-Reish* רהצ provides the *donkeys' color*:

I. noon, midday; II. roof (once, Gen 6:16) רָהַצ [tzòhar]
fresh oil רָהַצ [itzhàr]
press oil רָהַצ [tzàhar]
(TWOT in BibleWords4)

It is important to check whether Bibles in other languages “insist” on the translation of תֹּהַר [tzehoròt] as *white*, Bul. бѣлу, since [tzahòr] denotes *reddish-gray, tawny* and is not the standard Hebrew word for *white*, which is לָבָן [lavàn]).

The Septuagint shows a leveling of two roots that are close, but different:

Tzadi-He-Reish רהצ and *Tzadi-Het-Reish* רהצ, translating the word תֹּהַר [tzehoròt] with the meaning of the paradigm of the word רָהַצ [tzòhar]. Instead of the standard use of the term for white color (λευκός [leukòs]) or the standard word for *light*, Bul. светлина, Gr. φῶς [fos], the Septuagint indicates the word μεσημβρίας [mesembrìas], meaning *noon*. Thus the Septuagint differs from the Slavonic and English translations which use the standard term for *white color* — бѣли, бѣлых, białych, *white*.

The word רָהַצ [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 the St. Jerome (347-420) spent much time in the Holy Land, studying Hebrew and advising local Judaic rabbis. The first occurs three centuries before the New era and the second – four centuries after the New era. 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 ריע [air]

BibleWorks4 distinguishes between two different roots *Ayin-Yud-Reish* ry[, which are spelled the same – ‘yr I и ‘yr II. From the first root derives ריע [ur] rouse oneself, awake, incite, as well as ריע [ir] excitement. From the second root derives ריע [air] he-donkey.

Gesenius provides more information, the most valuable of which is the motive of forming the noun *wild donkey* ריע [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, Gesenius 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 ריע [air] has five aspects, resulting from the colt’s qualities as well as of 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* ריע [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 ריע [ur]. This last aspect transmits linguistic consciousness and sub-consciousness of a journey to exaltation.

6. The wild donkey הקרפ [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 קרפ [pèred]/קרפ [pirdà] and the other is קרפ [père]/קרפ [père]. The term for the royal parade animal is king’s she-mule (Bul. царското муле) קרפ תלמ [pirdàt mèleh].

In this context there are several uses – in Jeremiah, 2:24, Job, 11:12, 39:5. Isaiah, 32:14 – where the second word for wild donkey is used for mule, with the textual semantization ‘wild’, ‘natural’, uncivilized’, ‘non-monotheistic’ and ‘absence of people’.

BibleWorks4 indicates the meaning “wild donkey” for the word קרפ [père]/קרפ [père]. The internal form of the term royal donkey/mule קרפ [pèred] is from *run, run fast* קרפ [perà]. On the other hand, the same root, according to Gesenius, comprises the verb *carry weight, support, carry, bear* קרפ [parà]. This word should not be confused with its homophone – קרפ [parà], meaning *young cow*. The verb קרפ [parà] means *carry, give birth quickly, run*. Clearly, the two

verbs אָרַפּ [parà] and הָרַפּ [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 3 Kings of Solomon’s anointment as king, where the word הִקְרַפּ [pirdà] is used.

Zechariah does not use the lexeme אָרַפּ [père], used in Solomon’s anointment as king in 1 Kings:33; 38; 44 (3 Kings, 1:33; 38; 44), yet on the other hand, 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 term is *king’s mule* תִּדְרַפּ רֵלֶמָּה [pirdàt mèleh]. Solomon’s anointment as king occurs on a *king’s mule* (Bul. царското муле). The word formation *king’s mule* תִּדְרַפּ רֵלֶמָּה [pirdàt 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.

The king said to them, „Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on **my own mule**, and bring him down to Gihon. 1 Kings 1:33 (NAU)

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, p. 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 [pirdà]. Solomon’s anointment as king with such a female mule changes the spectrum of semantizations 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.

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

The word occurs in Job 39:5.

According to Gesenius, the word colt רֵיעַ [air] has an Aramaic origin, from the root *Ayin-Yud-Reish* and is an element of the paradigm of macro-red – macro-light רֵיעַ [ur] *to be hot, ardent, rouse oneself, awake, incite* רֵיעַ [ur]; *to make hot, to heat* רֵיעָה [heir]; רֵיעַ [ir] *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* דוֹרֶע [aròd], which is next to the Hebrew word אָרַפּ [père] in Job 39:5.

Usual explanation for the many non-Hebrew words in the Book of Job, including the couple דוֹרֶע [aròd] – אָרַפּ [père] is that the use of non-Hebrew words serves poetic manipulation (Greenstein 2003; Ginsberg 2007).

The Bulgarian translations of this word and the poetical parallelism of the Aramaic and Hebrew words for *wild donkey* are illustrations of the correctness of Greenstein’s claim.

8. Conclusions

— There are five different Hebrew roots for terms for English Biblical *foal*, *coat*, *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* חמור [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 because it relates 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’, following the derivation of their semantics from the root, 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 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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NRS – The New Revised Standard Version NRSV (NRS) of the Bible. The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, Copyrighted 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

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