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THE DONKEY OF REDEMPTION

From the Talks of
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1.

The Donkey Singled Out

{On the verse}:

And Moshe took his wife and his sons, mounted them on the donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt; and Moshe took the staff of G-d in his hand.¹

Rashi comments on the words “on the donkey”:

The distinguished donkey — it is the {same} donkey that Avraham saddled for the binding of Yitzchak,² and it is the one which the King Mashiach is destined to be revealed upon, as it is said {referring to Mashiach}, “humble, and riding on a donkey.”³

On the simple level, Rashi’s intent is to explain the phrase “on **the** donkey” (*hachamor*), which is written with the definite article⁴ (*Hei Hayedi’ah*) — which proves that the reference is to “the distinguished donkey.” Rashi then spells out what sets this donkey apart: “it is the donkey that Avraham saddled... {and the one *Mashiach* will ride}.”

Yet this requires explanation:

- a) To convey what sets this donkey apart, it would seemingly have been enough for Rashi to say “it is the donkey that Avraham saddled” and no more — for that alone already makes it a “distinguished donkey.” Why, then, must he add that the donkey Avraham saddled was for the binding of Yitzchak (considering that we do not find anywhere in Scripture that Avraham saddled a donkey at any other time or for any other purpose)? And why add further that this donkey “is the one which the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon” — a wondrous thing and an exceedingly great miracle, that the donkey should remain alive and in existence for thousands of years!⁵ This is all the more puzzling since it is not relevant to understanding the {literal meaning of the} **verse**.
- b) Why does Rashi include the word “on {the donkey}” in his heading — when, by the above understanding, he is explaining only “the donkey”?

1) *Shmos* 4:20.

2) *Bereishis* 22:3.

3) *Zechariah* 9:9.

4) See the commentators on Rashi here — *Kitzur Mizrachi*; *Be'er Mayim Chaim* (by the brother of the Maharal); *Devek Tov*; and others.

5) In *Gur Aryeh* here, at the end (and likewise in *Gevuros Hashem*, ch. 29): “The meaning is not that the donkey lived so long.” Rashi, however, does not say this; on the plain level it appears simply that it is the very same donkey. See Rashi, *Bereishis* 22:13, regarding the ram Avraham used for the *Akeida*: “It had been prepared for this since the six days of Creation.”

2.

One Donkey for the Whole Family

Now, the *Gemara*⁶ relates that this verse is one of those altered by the seventy-two Elders when they translated the Torah for King Talmai.

They wrote, “And he mounted them upon a carrier of people” — which, as Rashi explains:

This implies a camel, {they did so} so that one should not say that Moshe had neither horse nor camel.⁷

Ibn Ezra on our verse, explains further:

Because it is demeaning for the wife of the prophet and her two sons to be riding on a single donkey.

Based on this, we can suggest that Rashi’s intent is also to resolve the questions implied above — why Moshe mounted his wife and two sons (and, presumably, their belongings as well) on a single donkey — rather than mounting them on a horse or a camel, or several donkeys. Rashi therefore explains that this was no ordinary donkey but “the distinguished donkey,” the very one “that Avraham saddled... {and the one *Mashiach* will be revealed upon}.” That being so, it is no wonder that such a miraculous donkey⁸ had the power to bear an unusually heavy load, one beyond what nature allows.

[In light of this, one can argue that Rashi alludes to this being his intent, by citing the word “on” from the verse as well — to emphasize that his comment comes to explain and resolve how so much was mounted and loaded “**on** the donkey.”]

However, this itself requires explanation: Why did Moshe need to take a distinguished donkey and mount upon it his wife, his two sons, and all their belongings — rather than simply taking enough donkeys, or a horse and a camel, and the like?⁹

6) *Megillah* 9a.

7) Rashi, s.v. *Nosei*.

8) By this point in time, the donkey was already nearly four hundred years old, dating back to the days of Avraham. Its miraculous nature is even more apparent from the continuation of Rashi’s comment, which states that this same donkey will be used by *Mashiach*.

9) Were Moshe to ride this donkey himself, the reason would be understandable: since this donkey

was designated for lofty and important matters — Avraham saddled it for the binding of Yitzchak, and it is the one which the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon — it would be fitting that Moshe too (the first redeemer) ride upon it on Hashem’s mission to redeem the Jewish people from Egypt. But the verse says, “And Moshe took (only) his wife and his sons and mounted them on the donkey” — so why did Moshe use the distinguished donkey, the one Avraham saddled for the binding of Yitzchak? See also footnote 22 below.

3.

A Donkey Meant for Redemption

A further point also requires explanation:

The source for this teaching of Rashi is in *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*.¹⁰ There, however, it is prefaced with the statement, “It is the donkey — the offspring of the she-donkey created at twilight {of the first Friday evening of creation}” — a detail that Rashi omits.

True, even when Rashi draws on the *Midrashim* it is not his way to cite them in their original wording and form, but to bring only what pertains to the plain meaning of the verse, as has been explained on several occasions. (This is all the more so in the case at hand, where in *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* the exposition is brought on the verse {in *Parshas Vayeira*} concerning Avraham, whereas Rashi here brings it to explain the verse in our *parshah*.) Nevertheless, since the very point of Rashi’s comment is to explain what sets this donkey apart, he ought to have brought the detail by which the donkey was **already** distinguished and **known** — that “it is the offspring of the she-donkey created at twilight.”

The detail {Rashi does add} — that it is the donkey “which the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon” — refers to an event that will happen {only} at the End of Days, and it is hard to see how this fits with the **plain** meaning of Scripture.

We must therefore conclude that Rashi’s intent here is to explain not (merely) what sets this donkey apart **in general** (as in *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*), but primarily what sets it apart in relation to **our context** — Moshe’s journey from Midian to Egypt in order to redeem the Jewish people. This is why Rashi included the detail that “it is the one which the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon” — highlighting that this donkey was designated for the redemption of the Jewish people. After all, Moshe’s journey with his wife and sons to Egypt was in order to redeem the Jewish people from the land of Egypt.¹¹

But following this logic {that Rashi is coming to explain the uniqueness of the donkey as it is relevant to our context — the redemption}, we now face the opposite question: the detail that “it is the donkey that Avraham saddled for the binding of Yitzchak” seemingly bears no connection to our case.¹²

10) Ch. 31.

11) See *Abarbanel* here (and others) on Moshe’s reason for taking them along as well — in order to strengthen the hearts of the Jewish people. Note also Rashi on *Shmos* 18:2.

12) It is very difficult to say that it is regarded as the distinguished donkey and called “**hachamor**” using the definitive article, only on account of what will happen in the future (“it is the one which the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon”).

4.

The Answer Hidden in the Donkey

We can offer the following explanation:

In his comment here, Rashi seeks to explain the seemingly superfluous wording of our verse: “mounted them on the donkey.” On the surface,¹³ it is not clear why the Torah needs to specify the manner of Moshe and his family’s journey to Egypt — rather than stating it briefly, “And Moshe took his wife and his sons and returned to the land of Egypt.” Through Rashi’s comment, the connection of this detail to the *parshah* as a whole falls into place, as we will see.

In the exchange between Moshe and Hashem, concerning his mission to redeem the Jewish people, Hashem commanded him, “Come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and take My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”¹⁴ Moshe, however, declined to accept the mission. At the end of the seven days during which “the Holy One, blessed be He, was enticing Moshe at the thorn bush to go on His mission,”¹⁵ Moshe responded, “Send now, with whom You would send.”¹⁶

According to Rashi’s interpretation, Moshe’s reply contained two objections:

- a) {Since} “he did not wish to take a higher position than his brother Aharon, who was his senior and a prophet,”¹⁷ Moshe said, “Send now, with whom You would send” — meaning “with the one You are accustomed to send, namely Aharon.”¹⁸
- b) “With another whom You wish to send, for I am not destined to bring them into the Land [of Israel] and to be their redeemer in the future.”¹⁹

Ultimately, however, Moshe did take the mission upon himself to bring out the Jewish people, and Rashi indicates that this was because “[Hashem’s anger] flared at him, and he accepted it upon himself.”²⁰ Yet the Torah does not spell out by what means and how Moshe’s aforementioned objections were removed. [True, the verse continues, “Is there not Aharon your brother, the Levite? I know that he will surely speak, and behold, he is coming forth toward you, and when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart.”²¹ As Rashi explains, {Hashem was telling him}: “Not as you think, that he will resent your rising to greatness.” {While this seems to address Moshe’s first concern}, it does not fully resolve it,

13) See *Be'er BaSadeh* on Rashi here.

14) *Shmos* 3:10.

15) Wording of Rashi, *ibid.*, 4:10.

16) *Ibid.*, 4:13

17) Wording of Rashi, *ibid.*, 4:10.

18) Rashi, *ibid.*, 4:13.

19) *Ibid.*

20) Rashi, *ibid.*, 4:10.

21) *Ibid.*, 4:14.

for Moshe's refusal was not only on account of Aharon's resentment, but because he {simply} did not wish to take a position of greatness over his brother Aharon, who was greater than him.]

We may therefore suggest that when Moshe agreed to carry out the mission of Hashem, the answer to his objections was hinted at by Hashem orchestrating that the journey to fulfill the mission take place on the “distinguished” donkey — the one “that Avraham saddled for the binding of Yitzchak, and the one which the **King *Mashiach*** is destined to be revealed upon.” This specific choice resolves both of Moshe's objections, {as follows}:²²

At the binding of Yitzchak (when Avraham saddled his donkey) he was commanded, “and bring him {Yitzchak} up there for a burnt-offering.”²³ Yet Avraham did not hesitate for a moment to fulfill Hashem's command; on the contrary, “he **hastened** to perform the commandment,” to the point that he saddled his donkey “himself, and did not command one of his servants.”²⁴

From this we can understand all the more so in our case {where the mission is not as extreme as sacrificing one's son} — that although it entails taking a position of “greatness” (and beyond the taking of greatness itself — it might give rise to resentment on Aharon's part, or, at the very least, he might not be appeased and accept it wholeheartedly) — nevertheless, the fulfillment of Hashem's command must be complete, joyous, and wholehearted.

As for the second objection — “for I am not destined to bring them into the Land [of Israel] and to be their redeemer in the future” — Hashem intimated an answer to him {through the donkey, which is} “the one which the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon.” This indicates that these are not two separate matters and redemptions; rather, the future redemption through *Mashiach* is a continuation of this redemption from Egypt brought about through Moshe, and the future redemption and the revelation of *Mashiach* depend on the power of Moshe²⁵ and his action in the redemption from Egypt.

22) We can now suggest that this is why the verse states that Moshe mounted only his wife and sons on the donkey and he himself did not ride it (see above, footnote 9): for it is precisely through such an unusual manner of riding — mounting his wife and sons (together with their belongings) on a single donkey — that the verse emphasizes that this was a special matter connected to his journey to Egypt. Were the verse to say that Moshe himself rode on the donkey, we would have understood this to be because this donkey will be used by *Mashiach* and is connected to the redemption, and that Moshe

therefore also rode upon it on his way to Egypt in order to bring out the Jewish people, as above. This still requires further examination.

23) *Bereishis* 22:2.

24) Rashi, ad loc., verse 3.

25) As is known regarding Moshe, that he is the first redeemer, and he is {also} the final redeemer. See *Shemos Rabbah* 2:6; *Zohar*, vol. 1, 253a; *Shaar HaPesukim*, *Parshas Vayechi*. See its elucidation in

5.

Rashi's Deliberate Wording

Based on the above, several nuances in Rashi's wording can also be understood:

- a) In Rashi's first point he wrote, "it is the donkey that Avraham **saddled**," adopting the language of the verse ("and he **saddled** his donkey"); whereas in the second point he deviated from the wording of the verse, "**riding** on a donkey," and wrote, "it is the one which the King Mashiach is destined to be **revealed** upon." Seemingly he should have also written "and it is the one which the King Mashiach is destined to **ride** upon" (similar to the wording of Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer)?
- b) In *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* it reads, "that **Ben David** is destined to ride upon it," whereas Rashi changed this and wrote, "**King Mashiach**."

The explanation for these changes is as follows:

As noted above (sec. 3), in *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* the intent is to enumerate all the virtues of the donkey that Avraham saddled for the binding of Yitzchak — "it is the donkey, the offspring of the she-donkey created at twilight... it is the donkey that Moshe rode when he came to Egypt... it is the donkey that Ben David is destined to ride upon." It therefore suffices with the language of the verse in which it is stated, "humble, and riding on a donkey," and it calls him by the name "Ben David."

By contrast, Rashi's intent here is to explain the connection of this donkey to **our context** — that through this distinguished donkey, Hashem is hinting at the answer to Moshe's {original} refusal. This can explain the precision of Rashi's wording in both details:

Regarding the first detail, Rashi wrote, "it is the donkey that Avraham **saddled** for the binding of Yitzchak," because through this he seeks to explain that the fulfillment of Hashem's command must be without calculations; and this is emphasized primarily by the fact that Avraham himself **saddled** the donkey for the binding of Yitzchak {without asking a servant}, which indicates his alacrity and joy in fulfilling the command of Hashem (in Rashi's words: "love disrupts the natural order"²⁶).

As for the second detail — where his intent is to emphasize how the future redemption is a continuation of this current mission to redeem the Jewish people from Egypt — it is not enough to say simply "that Ben David is destined to ride upon it," for this phrasing carries no special significance in connection with the **redemption of the Jewish people**. After all, it could mean that Ben David would ride upon it in some ordinary

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 11, p. 8ff.; *Sefer HaSichos* 5752, Vol. 1, p. 98ff.

26) Rashi, *ibid.*, verse 3.

capacity — not in his capacity as the redeemer of the Jewish people. For although this too indicates that it is a special donkey — that Ben David rides this particular one — it does not relate specifically to the redemption.

Accordingly, Rashi deliberately {alters the wording and} writes, “**the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon it**,” meaning that the donkey pertains to him (a) in his capacity as “King *Mashiach*” (and not merely as “Ben David”), and, moreover, (b) in connection with the act of redemption — “to be revealed upon it” (and not merely “to ride upon it”).

6.

The Merit of “Who Am I?”

We can further suggest {that the second point in Rashi} — “the King *Mashiach* is destined to be revealed upon it” — responds not only to Moshe’s {second} objection, that he was not destined to bring the Jewish people into the Land and to be their redeemer in the future, but also to his first (and primary) objection, with which he began his refusal: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?”²⁷ — namely, that he did not wish to take a higher position than his brother Aharon, who was greater than him.

{To explain this we need} to preface with analyzing another nuance in Rashi’s wording: when citing the verse {about *Mashiach* riding on a donkey, he specifically quotes the phrase,} “**humble**, and riding on a donkey.” Seemingly, why did Rashi cite the word “humble” at all? If Rashi’s intent were to cite the part of the verse indicating that it refers to *Mashiach*, he ought to have cited the earlier phrase, “your king shall come to you, just and victorious...” One must therefore conclude that his intent is merely to indicate the verse where it is explicitly stated that *Mashiach* will be riding on a donkey. If so, what is the purpose of including the word “**humble**” as well, especially since it seemingly contradicts his description of him as “**the King *Mashiach***”?

The explanation is as follows: In commenting on the verse “humble, and riding on a donkey,” Rashi explains, “‘humble {*oni*}’ means a humble person {an *anav*},” and, “‘riding on a donkey’ — this is a mark of his humility.” This is because any mission from Hashem — even though the essence of the mission is to be the redeemer of the Jewish people — depends specifically on his humility and complete self-nullification (*bittul*). It is precisely through this that the kingship of Hashem is drawn down and comes to rest upon him, as the verse states, “With the lofty and the holy ones I dwell, and yet {I am} with the crushed and humble in spirit.”²⁸

27) *Shmos*, 3:11 and Rashi ad loc.

28) *Yeshayahu*, 57:15.

With this {that Rashi cites the word “humble” — teaching that a G-dly mission depends on the person’s humility}, he hints at the response to Moshe’s argument — in which he did not wish to take a position of greatness — saying, “Who am I?” i.e., “of what importance am I?” This very argument reflects his humility, so — on the contrary — this is exactly what he needed to be fit for this mission; for Hashem chose Moshe to redeem the Jewish people precisely on account of his feeling “Who am I?” — “of what importance am I?”

7.

The Donkey as Materiality

The inner dimension — “wine of Torah” — within Rashi’s comment:

Based on the above, we find a distinction between {the three donkeys brought in Rashi, namely}: the donkey of Avraham, the donkey of Moshe, and the donkey of *Mashiach*. Regarding Avraham’s donkey, it is stated that Avraham **saddled** the donkey; regarding Moshe’s donkey — “and he **mounted them** on the donkey”; whereas regarding *Mashiach*’s donkey, Rashi says, “the King *Mashiach* is destined to be **revealed** upon it” (even though the verse states, “riding on a donkey”).

We can suggest that these differences in wording correspond to the three stages and levels in the drawing down of holiness into the world, during the three eras of Avraham, Moshe, and *Mashiach*.

To explain:

The commentaries teach²⁹ that “*chamor*” (donkey) alludes to and signifies “*chomer*” — the materiality of the body and the physicality of the world in general. [As is well known, the Baal Shem Tov likewise interprets the verse “If you see your enemy’s **donkey**...”³⁰ as referring to the materiality of the body.³¹] This explains the connection between the redemption and a “donkey” — which is why both Moshe (the first redeemer) and *Mashiach* (the final redeemer) will ride on a donkey — for the inner, essential point of the redemption

29) See *Gur Aryeh* here (and in *Gevuros Hashem*, ch. 29); *Minchah Belulah* here; *Panim Yafos*; et al.

30) *Shmos*, 23:5.

31) *HaYom Yom*, 28 Shevat; *Kesser Shem Tov*, Hosafos (Kehot ed.), sec. 16, and the sources cited there. {The Baal Shem Tov interprets this verse as follows: “If you see *chamor*, a donkey” — when you carefully examine your *chomer* (materiality), your body, you will see — “your enemy” — for it hates your Divine soul, which longs for G-dliness —

“lying under its burden” placed upon it by G-d, namely, that it be refined through Torah and *mitzvos*, which the body is loath to fulfill.

It may then occur to you “to refrain from helping it,” following instead the path of self-affliction to break the body’s materiality. However, not in this way will the light of Torah rest. Rather, “you must surely aid it” — purify the body and refine it, but do not break it.}

is the revelation of G-d's holiness {in the world}, which requires the breaking and refinement of the material {*chomer*}: both the material substance of the body of the individual Jew in particular, and the physicality of the world in general. As the Alter Rebbe (whose *hilula* is on the twenty-fourth of Teves)³² writes in *Tanya*, the purpose of the creation of the world will be realized in the era of *Mashiach*, “when the materiality of the body and the world will be refined, and they will be able to receive the revelation of G-d's light.”³³

Now, in a person's *Avodah* of refining and purifying the materiality of the body, there are three levels:

- a) A person's primary task is to reveal the light of his soul, which is hidden and concealed within the materiality of the body — for “man is born a wild donkey,”³⁴ and by nature follows the desires of his body. His task is to work upon himself so as not to be drawn after these desires, but rather to engage in Torah and *mitzvos*. On this level, the *Avodah* is one of conquest and **control**: the person rules over his body and animal soul, subduing the materiality of his body so that it does not conceal and obscure the light of his soul.
- a) A higher {level} is the *Avodah* of refining the materiality of the body itself, so that the body itself becomes a servant of Hashem. This is achieved by changing one's natural character traits, so that one no longer desires the pleasures of the world, and so forth.³⁵

Within {this method of} refinement and purification of the materiality of the body itself, however, there are two levels:

- b) The refinement and purification of the body that comes through the light of the soul. That is, his devotion to matters of holiness is so intense that the abundance of holiness within the soul affects his body as well, refining and purifying it. On this level, the holiness within the person {remains} the holiness of his **soul**; the body, being refined and purified, serves merely as a vessel for the light of the **soul**.

32) Note that this year (5749) {i.e., the year this *sichah* was originally published} falls out with the same calendar configuration as the year of his *histalkus*, 5573: “*Motzaei Shabbos Kodesh of [Parashas] Shmos*, the 23rd — eve of the 24th of Teves — at about half past the eleventh hour”.

33) Ch. 36.

34) *Iyov* 11:12.

35) The difference between these levels will also be apparent in the way one treats the body. Where on the first level a person may fast etc. to bring pain and break the materiality of the body, not so in the second level, where the goal is to work with the body in refining it.

- c) The purification of the body in its own right. That is, the person works with his body until the body itself, **of its own accord**, is transformed into an entity of holiness (*cheftza shel kedushah*).³⁶

Now, just as {there are these three levels} in a person's own *Avodah* {of refining his body}, so too there are three levels in refining and purifying the materiality of the world, through which Hashem's holiness can be revealed in the world:

- a) Subduing and nullifying the coarseness and materiality of the world that obstructs holiness from resting {within it}. Breaking the materiality makes it possible for holiness to be revealed in the world {even though the materiality itself has not yet been refined at all}.
- b) Refining and purifying the physicality of the world until it becomes a **vessel** for the revelation of holiness.
- c) {Achieving} the ultimate perfection in the refinement of the world — when the **physicality itself** becomes holy. This will be realized in the era of *Mashiach*, when the prophecy will be fulfilled: “And the glory of G-d shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see that the mouth of G-d has spoken.”³⁷ At that time, the very nature of “flesh” will become so refined that the flesh itself will be able to see that “the mouth of G-d has spoken.”³⁸

8.

When Matter Reveals the Divine

This is the difference between the three eras of Avraham, Moshe, and *Mashiach*:

In the time of Avraham, when “the Torah had not yet been given... the materiality of the world had not yet been refined and purified,”³⁹ Avraham's task was to nullify, subdue,

36) These three levels in a person's *Avodah* are: (a) the *Avodah* of Torah and *mitzvos*, which in general is *Avodah* in matters of holiness, but which affects the body so that it does not interfere with one's *Avodah* in the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvos*; (b) the *Avodah* of “all your deeds shall be for the sake of Heaven” (*Avos* 2:12; *Rambam, Hilchos Deos*, end of ch. 3), in which one engages in bodily matters (“your deeds”) so that they be for the sake of Heaven; (c) “know Him in all your ways” (*Mishlei* 3:6; *Rambam*, *ibid.*), in which “**your ways**” — one's bodily matters — **themselves** know Hashem (not

merely that one does them “**for the sake of Heaven**”). See at length *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 10, p. 103ff. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, p. 63ff., and the sources cited there regarding the three matters of Torah, *mitzvos*, and *teshuvah*.

37) *Yeshayahu*, 40:5. See also *Shaar HaEmunah* of the Mittler Rebbe, ch. 25.

38) See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 94, and sources cited there.

39) *Torah Or*, *Yisro* 74a.

and break the materiality of the world so that it would not obstruct the revelation of the light of holiness.

This is reflected in Rashi's precise wording, "it is the donkey that Avraham **saddled**" — for the "saddling" of the donkey signifies the **subjugation** of the materiality {*chomer*}.⁴⁰

In Moshe's time, once the "iron furnace"⁴¹ of the Egyptian exile had completed its refinement — "which refined the Jewish people through the harshness of the bondage with mortar and bricks... and when the Jewish people were refined, the world, with its physicality and materiality, was also refined"⁴² — the world reached a state in which its physicality could be a **vessel** for the light of holiness.

This is why the verse states regarding Moshe, "and he **mounted** them on the donkey" — for the work of "saddling" the donkey had already been accomplished by Avraham, so that it was now possible to "**ride**" the donkey: that the light of holiness could be drawn down within the materiality of the world.

However, at that stage it was still in the manner of "and he **mounted them on** the donkey" — meaning that the light of holiness "rides" upon, and shines through, the materiality, yet the revelation of that light is attributed not to the "donkey" itself, but to the rider {since the materiality itself was not yet refined}.

By contrast, the purification of the physicality and materiality of the world in the time to come will be in the manner of "the King *Mashiach* is destined **to be revealed upon it**": the revelation of *Mashiach*'s light will be through the "donkey" itself — for the materiality will become so refined that it itself will reveal the light of holiness in the world.

On this basis, we can explain the deeper reason for another distinction among the three accounts involving the donkey of Avraham, Moshe, and *Mashiach* respectively: regarding Avraham, the verse implies that the donkey carried only the wood and the knife, while he and Yitzchak (along with his two attendants) did not ride on the donkey but went on foot; regarding Moshe, {although the verse} states that he mounted his wife and sons upon it, it does not say that he himself rode upon it; whereas regarding *Mashiach* it is stated explicitly, "and riding on a donkey."

In light of the above, the reason for this can be understood: during Avraham's time, when "the materiality of the world had not yet been refined and purified," there was no

40) With all this in mind, we can also explain why Rashi did not bring from *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* that: "it is the donkey, the offspring of the she-donkey created at twilight". Rashi's emphasis is on the "donkey" that requires *Avodah* to be refined, and not a "donkey" that is a creation from heaven, which

is higher than materiality and is refined in its own right.

41) Wording of the verse, *Devarim* 4:20.

42) *Torah Or*, *ibid.*, 74b.

connection between the “donkey” and Avraham himself (or Yitzchak) — {so they did not ride it}.

By Moshe’s time, when, {as a result of the exile}, “the world, with its physicality and materiality, had already been refined” so that it could now serve as a vessel for the light of holiness, he mounted his wife and sons on the donkey. However, since the materiality of the world **itself** had not yet become holy (the refinement consisted only of its becoming a vessel for the light of holiness shining from above), there was still no “connection” between the “donkey” and Moshe himself.

Specifically in the era of *Mashiach*, when the materiality of the world itself will **reveal** the light of holiness — “the King *Mashiach* is destined **to be revealed upon it**” — will *Mashiach* himself ride upon it. For it will then be revealed, in the manner of “as the waters cover the sea,”⁴³ that the true existence of every created being is “the truth of His Existence”⁴⁴; as the Mittlerer Rebbe puts it,⁴⁵ at that time it will be revealed that the “created existence” (*yesh hanivra*) is one with “the True Existence” (*yesh ha'amiti*).

From Sichos delivered on Shabbos Parshas Shmos 5747; Yud-Tes Kislev 5718

43) *Yeshayahu*, 11:9; *Rambam*, conclusion of *Hilchos Melachim*.

44) *Rambam*, beginning of *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*.

45) *Biurei HaZohar*, *Beshalach* 43c.