

# *Pin the Tale on the Donkey*

PARSHA INSIGHTS - VAYAIRA (5760)

## **TWO INDIVIDUALS MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEAR**

“Avraham returned to his young men, and they stood up and went together to B’air Sheva, and Avraham stayed at B’air Sheva” (22:19). After the dramatic trial of the *akaida* [the command to bind Yitzchok and show willingness to sacrifice him], Avraham returned to his servants. These two helpers were his son, Yishmael (who was fifty years old at the time - *Yalkut* 98), and his faithful attendant, Eliezer (*Rashi* on 22:3 from *Chazal* [our Sages]). The three subsequently journeyed to B’air Sheva, as we are told. In his commentary called *Oznaim L’Torah*, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin asks two questions.

First, why does the Torah omit the fact that YITZCHOK ALSO returned to the young men who awaited the *akaida*? Didn’t the son participate just like his father? If so, why not mention that he accompanied his father back? *Targum Yonasan* takes care of this mystery for us. He records the events as follows. Angels from Heaven took Yitzchok from the *akaida* at *Har Hamoria* [Mount Moriah]. They brought him to the famous *yeshiva* [religious school], the *bais Midrash* [Torah study hall] of Shaim Ben Noach. Yitzchok spent three years there. On the day Yitzchok was transported to the *yeshiva*, Avraham returned to his young men, and the three traveled to B’air Sheva. Since Yitzchok did NOT actually return with his father to the young men, the Torah only says that Avraham did.

A second issue needs clarification. When Avraham and company had arrived at Har Hamoria, the Torah tells us: “On the third day, Avraham raised his eyes and perceived the place from afar. And Avraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here by yourselves **with the donkey** while I and the lad (Yitzchok, who was actually thirty seven at the time - *Yalkut Shimoni* 98) will go a distance; we will worship and we will return to you” (22:4-5). Since the attendants had stayed to take care of the animal, why is there no mention of the creature when Avraham returned from the mountain? It only states that Avraham came back to the young men, but no word is said about the donkey!

This can be solved using the *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* 98. *Chazal* inform us of something quite fascinating. The donkey that Avraham rode to the *akaida* had an extremely impressive career. What was his origin? He was created during twilight of the first *erev Shabbos* [Sabbath eve/Friday night] of *Beraishis* [Genesis]. Awhile after Avraham utilized his services for the *akaida*, Moshe *Rabainu* [Moses our teacher] rode him from Midian to Egypt to deliver the Jews from exile, as narrated in *Parshas Shmos*. And guess who will ride on his back in the future. Yes, *Moshiach* [the Messiah] is forecasted to arrive on this very donkey. Based on verses in *Tanach*, the *Gemara* (especially in *Perek Chailek* of *Sanhedrin*, but in other places also) discusses this in detail. Who knows exactly how things will look in the future? The point is, though, that this was not “just an average donkey”.

Consequently, suggests *Oznaim L’Torah*, the animal was probably “hidden away” right after it aided Avraham in fulfilling Hashem’s will at the binding of Yitzchok. It was not meant to be a regular vehicle for transportation. Thus, it does not state that Avraham returned to that animal and rode it home. It was likely set aside for its next lofty mission, Moshe *Rabainu*’s journey to bring us out of Egypt.

The disappearance of two is now understandable.

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