



A Donkey's Tale

B&B in Bethlehem!

Hello, my name is Dathan and I'm a donkey but not quite as ordinary as you may think I have a lot of good news to share so sit back and listen as my tale continues. So far Mary has married Joseph a local carpenter and they are living in Nazareth, things are going well Joseph is busy each day with making and mending furniture and Mary has settled into living in their new home. I like Mary she always brings me a treat a pomegranate or some juicy leaves and I always get a stroke and a pat. One day as Joseph and I were making our way back into the village having delivered Ruben's repaired milking stool to him, I noticed something was happening. Many of the villagers were gathered looking at a door, Joseph stopped and looked himself.

It seems that on the door had been placed a notice that had come from the Romans - nobody really likes them, as they shout, and some have big angry looking horses. We made our way back home, me to my field and stable and Joseph to (sniff, sniff) chicken stew I think...with freshly baked bread, Mary is a good cook and that's Joseph's favourite. Mary is having a baby a very special baby, an angel came and told her the good news, and she told Joseph. I've heard them talking this baby is due to arrive soon and Joseph has made a wooden crib ready for when the baby arrives.

Joseph washed his hands by the well outside and goes to talk with Mary, she looks worried, but Joseph is as calm as ever and I hear him telling her not to worry. I'm glad to be in my field it's been a busy day and I look forward to some hay, cool water and a good snooze in the barn. The next day Joseph is up early and looks concerned, has something happened overnight? He begins to gather traveling things and straps a saddle to my back; next Mary arrives she looks tired and has her traveling clothes on it seems we are off on a journey. The Romans have called a census which means they are counting people and all the men have to take their families back to where they were born, so Joseph has to return to Bethlehem which is quite a journey about ninety miles for all three of us, but especially Mary.

The journey is hard the paths we take are dusty, full of hard stones and ridges we all need to watch our step here. Mary has walked and when she is tired I carry her on my back, I try to be as careful as possible so as not to upset her, by day we follow the sun and the many other people travelling too, by night Joseph finds somewhere for us to

rest and camp as we make our way to Bethlehem. The closer we get the busier it becomes, I've already met a few donkeys who are carrying huge loads on their backs for merchants hoping to sell their wares to the many people who are traveling to Bethlehem. These donkeys look lean and hungry and their masters are mean and tough, and think nothing of beating them if they do not move quick enough, although I feel scarred Joseph seems to understand and gives me a pat to settle me.

The streets in Bethlehem are narrow, filled with people shouting, greeting one another as people arrive and meet their relatives and are welcomed into homes. I wonder where we are going to stay? Joseph knocks on lots of doors but it seems the answer is the same 'Sorry were full, no room left, try elsewhere'. It's getting late, my legs are tired, and Mary looks worn out too. Joseph comes to another door, the answer just the same, except this time he explains about Mary. She is going to have this baby very soon and they really need help. The innkeeper seems a jolly person and is truly very sorry indeed, he stops and seems he's had an idea. Taking a lantern, he leads us all to the back of his home there is a stable. Inside there is a cow and a oxen, quietly munching their straw. Joseph leads me in with Mary on my back. I want to tell Mary not to worry this stable is not too different to my barn, a cosy place. I quietly tell the ox and cow where we have come from and all about Mary, they kindly share their straw with me, and some cool water how kind, I'm so tired I can hardly stay awake.

Joseph makes Mary comfortable and the innkeeper and his wife bring water, blankets, and food for the tired travellers, before long a hush falls upon the stable. It's a clear starry night but thankfully we are all warm in the stable and all is peaceful for now...

Prayer: Dear God - thank you for the kindness of the innkeeper and his wife offering food and shelter to Mary and Joseph, help us to think of those who need our help at this time of year. Amen.

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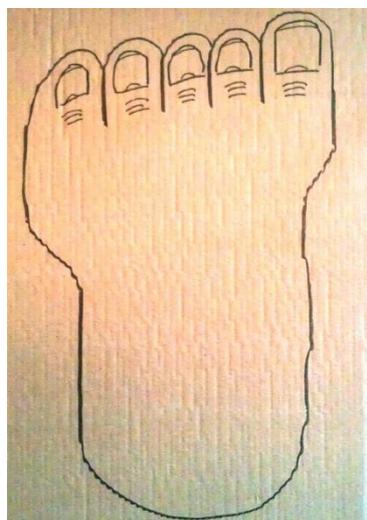
- Mary, Joseph and Dathan had to walk ninety miles do you think you could walk that far?
- Do you think the Innkeeper was kind?
- Have you ever stayed in an unusual place before, if so where was it?

[Little Donkey - YouTube](#) Click onto this link and sing along!

Craft: Picture to colour



- Draw round your feet, colour them in and cut them out. Move them around your home every day to remind you of the journey Mary and Joseph took.



Can you find the right route to the Inn for Mary and Joseph to ask for a room?

