

# Be a donkey for the Good Samaritan

Why are donkeys  
so important in the Bible?

Klaas de Jong



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Waarom schiep God de ezel?

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Front cover: Donkey leading Merino sheep on Free State farm  
South Africa (Istock)

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## Endorsement by Julia Blum

So many books have been written about the Bible and about Jesus, that when somebody surprises us with some new look at the Scriptures, it truly feels like a miracle. The book that you are holding in your hands is indeed such a miracle – because you are about to read the things that you’ve never read or heard of before. Klaas de Jong takes his readers on a wonderful educational journey through the biblical stories – all the while, speaking to their hearts and changing their minds. As a result, this book not only provides some refreshing insights into Old Testament stories and Jesus’ parables, it also offers a very new perspective of our spiritual journey through life. I just haven’t been able to put this book down – and I am sure you will not be able to either!

### **ABOUT JULIA BLUM**

Professor Julia Blum is a teacher at the Israel Institute of Biblical Studies in Jerusalem. Blum wrote several books on the Jewish background of the New Testament.



# Country life in the teachings of Jesus

Often Jesus used images from the rural life of His time. He talked about shepherds, sheep, farmers, fishermen, vineyards and trees. Nowadays that world lies far behind us nor do we think in that Eastern style. But it is this style of thought in which Jesus taught: “Then He taught them many things by parables” (Mark 4:2 NKJV). We were brought up with the Greek logical reasoning. The stories of Jesus do not follow that logic. Jesus calls Himself the good Shepherd and we are His sheep. But at the same time, Jesus is also the Lamb of God. We have no trouble with this illogical image change because we grew up with it. We also don't find it strange that we are sheep because we grew up with that thought as a child.

A large herd of sheep with a shepherd is also a powerful image. Sheep always move around in large groups and they need guidance and protection. With this picture you could also describe a community of believers. But this image of sheep does not fit when work needs to be done. Have you ever seen a sheep carrying a heavy load for its boss? In Biblical times you needed other animals for that. Man's great helper in the Bible is the donkey. Think about it: Abraham was a famous shepherd, but when he had to go to Mount Moriah with his son, he chose a donkey to carry the wood for the burnt offering! Also consider the shepherd Moses who put his wife and children on a donkey to travel to Egypt. Not only the greatest men in the Bible such as Abraham, Moses, and David used donkeys, but even Jesus Christ, the Messiah, chose a donkey for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

In this book I explain a number of stories in the Bible in which donkeys play a role. This study led me to the idea that a believer is not only a sheep but can also be a donkey. Sheep represent the believers as a group while donkeys are about individual work or working in small groups. Donkeys are known to be stubborn but they can also show endurance and perseverance, faithfully serving their boss even when getting sober food and having to work in difficult circumstances.

If you perform tasks in church, the thought that there are many more sheep than donkeys will surely appeal to you. But maybe there are donkeys at work that you hadn't noticed. Remember that the donkey is rather inconspicuous in the Bible. It is not a powerful animal like a horse but a picture of humility.