

14.15–17 Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (Judges 12:8–15)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

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Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 12:8 After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. 9 He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters he gave in marriage outside his clan, and thirty daughters he brought in from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

11 After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years. 12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

13 After him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys, and he judged Israel eight years. 15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Introduction/Review:

In secular history (or mythology) at about this time (around 1200 B.C.) the Trojan Wars (or wars with Troy) took place. Greece [locate] fought against the city of Troy [locate]. After ten long years of getting nowhere in the war, the Greeks constructed a huge wooden horse and hid soldiers in it. While the Greeks pretended to sail away, the people of Troy brought the horse into their city. At night the Greek soldiers in the horse came out, opened the gates of the city, and let in the Greeks, who then destroyed Troy. This story may or may not be true, but the one we will tell you today is true, for it is recorded in God’s Word.

Jephthah, rejected by his brothers in his early manhood, had been asked by those brothers to become the ninth judge. As judge, he drove out the Ammonites, descendants of Lot, but had to fight against his own Israelite brethren, the Ephraimites, upon his return home. What was the problem that caused war between Jephthah and Ephraim? [The men of Ephraim were angry because they had not been called to war against Ammon.] As the Ephraimites struggled to get back to their homes on the west side of the Jordan, they met Jephthah’s men at the river. How did Jephthah’s men discern whether the ones trying to cross the river were friends or enemies? [By asking them to pronounce the word *Shibboleth*, which means stream. If the men said, “*Sibboleth*,” they gave away the fact that they were Ephraimites.]

Story:

Jephthah, the ninth judge, had only one child, a daughter. The tenth judge, Ibzan, had many sons and daughters; so, obviously, he had many wives. His children numbered sixty in all—thirty sons and thirty daughters. The fact that he had so many children but especially that the large number of sons and daughters was equal was remarkable.

Ibzan got spouses for his children from “abroad,” “from outside.” This sounds as if Ibzan looked for husbands for his daughters and wives for his sons ✓outside of Israel or at least outside his tribe or territory. If so, Ibzan might have been trying to cement relationships with other tribes. However, some commentators disagree, saying that ✓he got spouses from outside his own extended family but from his tribe, Judah.¹

Ibzan, whose name means *splendid*,² judged Israel seven years, ruling as other judges did. We do not read that Ibzan fought enemies nor anything about the work he did. When he died, he was buried in his hometown of Bethlehem,³ which means House of Bread [locate]. What other Bible characters had the hometown of Bethlehem? [Ruth and Naomi, David, Jesus.]

Elon

After Ibzan, the eleventh judge was Elon, a Zebulonite. What does that mean? Listen for a tribe name. From what tribe was he? [Zebulon; locate.] This is the tribe from which Barak also came; Barak was the soldier whom Deborah commissioned to fight against the Canaanites.

Although we learn that Elon's ancestors from Zebulon had a family with his name—Elonites—nothing exciting is told us about Elon, not even a tidbit about his children. His time as judge was not marked by fighting an enemy, nor is anything noted about the work he did. Yet, as Matthew Henry, a Bible commentator has said, "The happiest life of individuals, and the happiest state of society, is that which affords the fewest remarkable events. To live in credit and quiet, to be peacefully useful to those around us, to possess a clear conscience; but, above all, and without which nothing can avail, to enjoy communion with God our Saviour while we live, and to die at peace with God and man, form the substance of all that a wise man can desire" (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/judges/12-12.htm>). In other words, our happiest times are when we live in quietness and in peace with God and man.

He judged Israel ten years and was buried in Aijalon in Zebulon. This is a hard question, but what special thing took place at Aijalon when Israel fought for the Gibeonites soon after they entered the Promised Land? [Joshua commanded the sun to stand still here so that Israel could complete its battle.]

"It is remarkable that the two names *Elon* and *Aijalon* are identical in Hebrew as far as the consonants are concerned" (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/judges/12-12.htm>). *Aijalon* means a gazelle.

Abdon

The twelfth judge in Israel was named Abdon. We learn his father's name was Hillel, who was a Pirathonite—a citizen of the town Pirathon [locate]. The Bible states this was a place in Ephraim that was in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Remember the Amalekites? Who were they? They were the people who fought the feeble Israelites soon after their exodus from Egypt. God said at that time that the Amalekites would be destroyed one day for this wickedness. We will hear of them again.

Bible scholars are not sure why this place is called the country of the Amalekites. Perhaps it was ✓"either from the name of the person to whom it belonged, or because the Amalekites formerly dwelt in it; or rather because of some remarkable advantage got over them at this place"

(<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-12-15.html>).

Abdon was another man who had a huge family—forty sons and thirty grandsons. Each of these men had a donkey's colt to ride. So that is our family tidbit.

Abdon judged Israel eight years, died, and was buried at Aijalon. Josephus, the famous historian of Israel says Abdon ✓"had a magnificent funeral" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-12-15.html>).

¹"[H]is daughters he sent abroad, or married them, to persons not of another nation, nor of another tribe, but of another family of the same tribe, and these he dismissed from him to live with their husbands; and he took in daughters of families in the same tribe to be wives to his sons, and who seem to have dwelt together; it being the custom then for sons, though married, to abide with their father, and their wives with them" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-12-9.html>).

²Other meanings given are father of a target or father of coldness. What these meanings might signify is unknown by this author.

³Some scholars think Ibzan's Bethlehem was in the tribe of Zebulun. On the other hand, he is sometimes identified as Boaz, who was from Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Ibzan: Jesus' earthly hometown was Bethlehem; it was here that He was born. But He came from heaven, being God.

Elon: Considering Christ from the quotation by Matthew Henry, we know we have peace in the Lord Jesus Christ if we are His—if He has saved us from our sins.

Abdon: A donkey is the only animal the Bible records that Jesus ever rode. He rode a donkey into Jerusalem the week He was crucified.

- Even though we may never have heard of these three judges, they were important men in their time for a period of about twenty-five years. Although we many not live long nor be remembered in ages to come, God has a place for us and a job for us to do. Let us be faithful to do His will from the heart.

Activities:

- Play dough: Ibzan: man; woman; Trojan horse
Elon: the letters *E L O N*
Abdon: donkeys; men
- Snack: Ibzan: Bethlehem Bread. A recipe for this "House-of-Bread" bread is found at <https://theturquoisetable.com/bethlehem-bread-recipe/>.
Elon: Elon's name sounds a bit like *eggs*. How about deviled eggs for a snack?
Abdon: For treats that are good for donkeys and kids, serve carrots, apples, bananas, or pears.
- Sing the names of the judges to the tune, "Ten Little Indians."
Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah,
Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair,
Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon,
Samson, and Samuel.
- Do a puppet skit about a donkey found below or on the "Extras" page at teachingthebibleto kids.org.
- Review questions: (Game: All games place a letter of the judge's name in a pocket chart after giving a correct answer.)

Ibzan:

1. What was the name of the tenth judge? [Ibzan,]
2. How many sons did Ibzan have? [Thirty.]
3. How many daughters did Ibzan have? [Thirty.]
4. What was Ibzan's hometown? [Bethlehem.]
5. Trick question: What work did Ibzan do, and what enemy did he fight? [None for both questions; no work or enemy is mentioned for Ibzan.]

Elon:

1. Who was the twelfth judge? [Elon.]
2. How long did Elon judge? [Ten years.]
3. Elon was from the tribe of Zebulun. Who was the other judge—well, the soldier who helped Judge

Deborah—and was from this same tribe? [Barak.]

4. Elon was buried in Aijalon. What had happened when Joshua fought there? [The sun had stood still.]

Abdon:

1. What was the name of the twelfth judge? [Abdon.]
2. Locate the place where Abdon lived, Pirathon, on the map. [Near Shechem.]
3. How many sons did Abdon have? [Forty.]
4. What did Abdon's forty sons and thirty grandson ride? [Donkey.]
5. Who were the Amalekites? [The people who fought against the feeble Israelites when they came out of Egypt.]

Memory Verse[s]: (ESV) Choose one or more of the following.

- Ibzan: Micah 5:2—But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.
- Elon: John 14:27—[Jesus said,] “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”
- John 12:15—“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!”

Handwork: Choose one of the following.

- Ibzan: For each student print the clipart of Bethlehem found at <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/ba/3c/d3/ba3cd30ab72a26313ed97ee9c29944e4.gif>. Students will color the picture with crayons or water color paints. If doing the latter, supply smocks to protect clothing.
- Elon: For each student print John 14:27 as found at <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/28/f8/cc/28f8ccbb07178fdee3f63c7e63b3f1a1--uplifting-thoughts-inspirational-thoughts.jpg>. Make a small red heart to glue over the word *hearts*.
- Abdon: Print one copy for each student of the donkey found below. Students will color the picture.













Ibzan

Elon



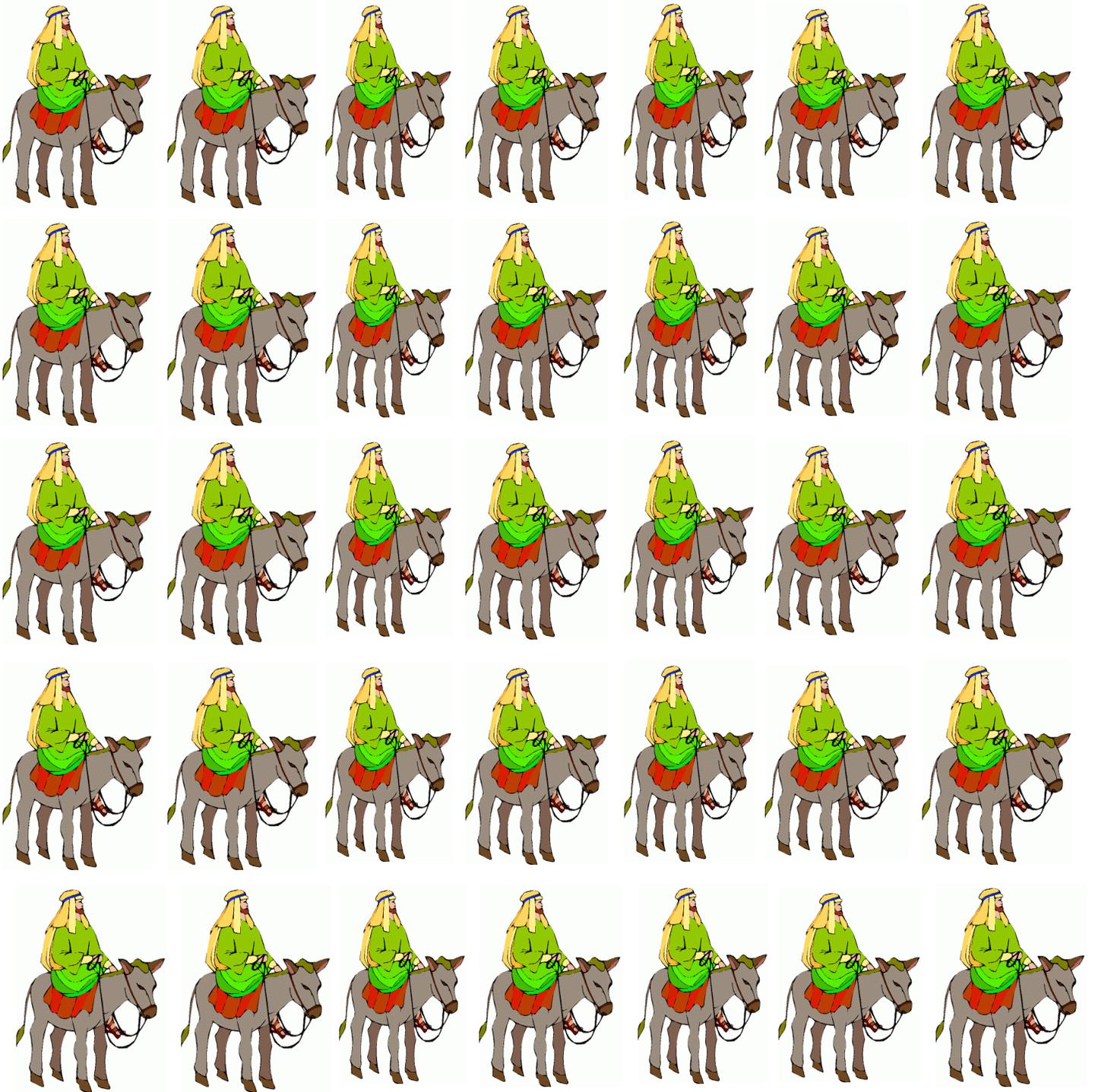
Elon (unknown source)



A Gazelle (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/fc/Slender-horned_gazelle_%28Cincinnati_Zoo%29.jpg/1200px-Slender-horned_gazelle_%28Cincinnati_Zoo%29.jpg)

Abdon





Print this page of 35 men twice to show the 70 total sons and grandsons of Abdon.

Donkey
by Marilyn Alexander

Donkey: Hee haw! Hee haw!

Interviewer: My, aren't you noisy!

Donkey: Yes, I am. It's my nature to say, "Hee haw." I'm a male donkey. I am called a jack.

Interviewer: Does that mean female donkeys say, "Her haw"?

Donkey: Hee naw. The ladies are called jennies. A jenny says "hee haw" just like the jacks.

Interviewer: You kind of look like a horse.

Donkey: Hee flaw! You think so? Well, I think I'm better than a horse in some ways. For example, I'm calmer. I can carry more weight than a horse my size, and I am much more of an all-terrain animal.

Interviewer: We have learned about God's great design for camels. How do you compare to them?

Donkey: Hee ahhh! We compare very favorably. We are excellent at carrying heavy loads for long distances. In fact, in the Bible when Joseph's brothers went to Egypt, their donkeys carried home about six bushels of wheat that weighed about 350 pounds. See how strong I am?

Interviewer: Yes, sir, Jack. How do your feet help you?

Donkey: Hee paw! Oh, I don't have paws; I have hooves. But I am very sure-footed on all kinds of ground—hilly, mountainous, level—you name it. I can use my hooves for stomping on or kicking wild dogs or coyotes, who are my enemies. I can even be a guard animal. Say, how do you like my ears?

Interviewer: Well, I hate to insult you, but your ears are very long and kind of floppy!

Donkey: Hee call! My ears are big for a reason: In the desert I can hear another donkey call from miles away. My ears also help me keep cool.

Interviewer: I have heard that you have a pretty good digestive system.

Donkey: Hee straw! You're right. I love to eat grass, but I can eat even inedible plants and get nourishment and moisture from them. In fact, my body uses 95 percent of what I eat. That's pretty good compared to humans, who average about 40 to 60 percent. Christ, my Creator, prepared my body to conserve food efficiently.

Interviewer: May I ask you a personal question?

Donkey: Hee yah! Go ahead.

Interviewer: Why are you stubborn?

Donkey: Hee stall! Well, it's not exactly that I am stubborn. It's that I don't like to do anything that seems unsafe or is not in my best interest. I am rather intelligent, after all.

Interviewer: Is that so? Prove to me that you are intelligent.

Donkey: Hee crawl! I have an incredible memory: I can recognize places and other donkeys I was with up to 25 years ago. I am very curious. People who work with me say I am pretty smart.

Interviewer: Okay. You have proved your point.

Donkey: Hee law! I want to tell you that we donkeys are one of the earliest- mentioned animals in the Bible, and we're mentioned there over 400 times! One of us was honored to be the only animal the Bible records that Jesus ever rode. He rode a donkey into Jerusalem the week He was crucified.

Interviewer: That is interesting. I never would have guessed that you are such a remarkable animal. You really are wonderful.

Donkey: Hee haw! Thank you for your compliment, but I had nothing to do with being remarkable. My Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the wonderful Maker of all that is good. Praise Him. Hee haw!

Resources:

<http://bibleonkeys.com/?id=131>

<http://www.equest4truth.com/equus-in-the-bible/123-donkeys-in-the-bible>

<http://www.mikesdonkeys.co.uk/facts.html>

<https://www.livescience.com/54258-donkeys.html>

Note: Students thought the donkey to be a braggart.

Names of Ibsan, Elon, and Abdon for review questions game:

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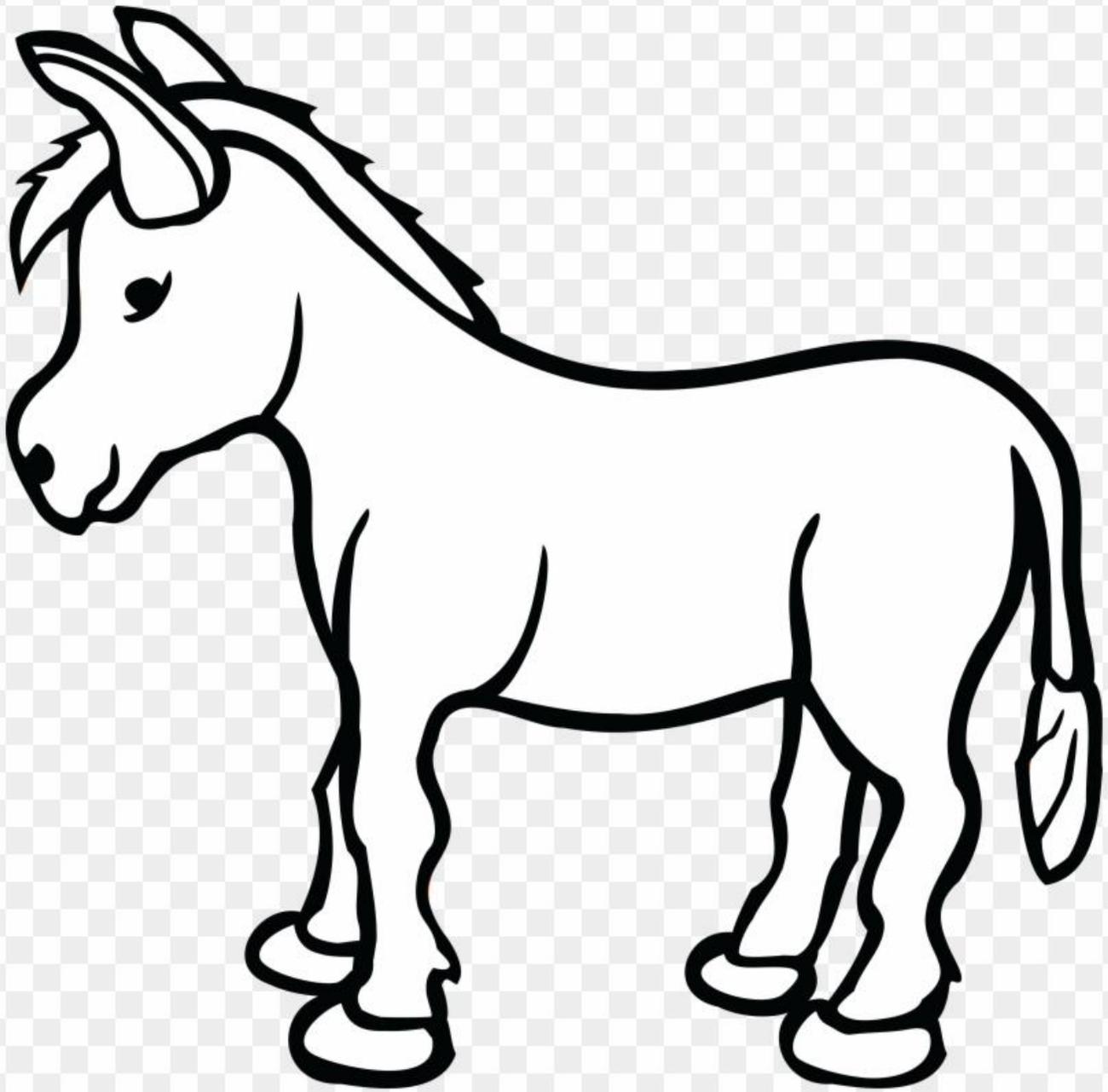
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John 12:15—“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!”