

THE LITTLE STABLE BOY

By Cindy Taft

Long ago, in a small town called Bethlehem, there lived a little stable boy named Malachi. During the day, Malachi was a shepherd caring for his family's sheep, but when his father took over the night watch, Malachi would help at the stables. He loved to help feed and care for the animals. One of his many duties was to draw water from a well in the middle of town and carry the heavy buckets back to the thirsty animals. Malachi did not mind the long walk. He loved being a stable boy.

One day while in the fields tending the sheep, an amazing sight appeared in the afternoon sky. A star was seen shining as brightly as the sun. As Malachi stared at the glittering star, he noticed its light shone down on the stables, creating a soft, golden glow. It made the old, dusty stables look beautiful.

Later that day, Malachi was walking along the path leading to the stables, kicking a stone along the way. Coming around a corner he saw a man leading a tired looking donkey. On the donkey's back rode a young woman who also looked very weary. The man called to him.

"My young friend, could you please tell me where I might find the stables?" Malachi hurried over to the little donkey.

"I am on my way to work there, sir," Malachi said, stroking the donkey's soft nose. "I would be happy to show you the way."

"Thank you for your help," the man quietly replied. "The inn is full and we need a place to stay."

"Please follow me," said Malachi.

As they slowly made their way down the path, Malachi continued to pat the donkey.

"You have a very nice donkey," Malachi said. "Does he have a name?"

"I call him Shiloh."

"I like that name," said Malachi.

"And what is your name, my little stable boy?" asked the man.

"My name is Malachi."

"Very nice to meet you, Malachi. I am Joseph and this is my wife, Mary." The woman smiled and nodded to Malachi.

When they reached the stables, Malachi led Joseph and Shiloh into one of the empty stalls. He quickly filled the manger with fresh hay and

grabbing his two water buckets, he set off. Returning, he filled the animal's water troughs. Then he removed a ladle hanging on a nail and, carrying the remaining water over to Mary, he offered her a drink. With a soft voice, she thanked him most kindly. Finished with his chores, Malachi headed for home. On his way, he thought to himself, "I will return with some food for my new friends. They look very hungry."

Arriving home, Malachi found his mother and sisters preparing the evening meal.

"How was your day, my son?" his mother asked.

"Great!" Malachi shouted. "Have you seen the star, mother?"

"Yes, I have," she said. "I believe it is a sign of something magnificent about to happen."

"Mother, I have met a couple of travelers, a man named Joseph and his wife, Mary. They are staying in the stables. They have no where else to go. When our meal is finished, may I take them a couple small loaves of bread and maybe an apple for their donkey?"

Malachi's mother smiled proudly at her son. Since he was a small boy, he had brought home every lost and injured animal he could find. Caring for helpless and needy creatures made him happy.

"Yes, you may take them some food," his mother replied, "but do not be gone too long."

"I won't," answered Malachi as he hurried off into the night.

As he approached, Malachi noticed a small gathering of people standing near the stables. A few shepherds stood near three camels loaded down with heavy packs. Inside Shiloh's stall knelt three wise-looking men. Malachi stood in the shadows and watched as one by one, each man placed a precious gift before the manger. Who were these gifts for? Malachi stayed quiet until the wise men left and the shepherds returned to their sheep. Then he slowly made his way to the stable.

"Good evening," he said as he handed Joseph the sack. "It's bread if you are hungry and I have an apple for Shiloh. May I give it to him?"

Joseph looked at the generous little boy standing in front of him.

"Thank you, my friend," he replied, accepting the food. "Yes, you may give your apple to Shiloh."

Smiling, Malachi walked over to Shiloh and gave him his treat. When he had finished eating, the grateful donkey gave Malachi a thankful nudge with his nose. That's when Malachi heard it, a small sound coming from the manger. Walking slowly over to the crib, Malachi saw a marvelous sight. A newborn baby lying in the hay was cooing softly. Malachi looked into the

sparkling eyes staring up at him and some how he knew, this baby was special.

“His name is Jesus,” said Joseph.

“He’s awesome!” cried Malachi, his heart filling with joy.

As Mary watched, Malachi knelt down in front of the manger. Removing his cloak, he gently laid it over Jesus. Seeing this selfless gesture, Mary leaned over to Malachi and gave him a big hug. Then she said to him, “Malachi, of all these wonderful gifts, your gifts of love are the most precious because they come from your heart.”

Malachi’s face beamed. Now he understood the message of the star. His mother had been right. Something magnificent had come into the world. It was this tiny baby, Jesus who would be the light in the dark, shining the way. He would bring hope to a waiting people and spread love to all the ends of the earth.
