

# Louie the Little Lamb



My name is Eli and I'm just a little boy....

Like you. And you!

I have a family like you. I have uncles and aunts and cousins too. We live in a little village that is so small everyone knew everyone else.

I have uncles and aunts and cousins, too. We live in a little village that is so small everyone knows everyone else.

There's my uncles who lived right next door with their families and my Pop and Nana who have a house on the hill. There are all of my friends who go with me to the school where old Rabbi Joseph teaches us from the Torah, God's book written to all of us Jews.



Not much happens in our town, by the way, and most people who come leave pretty quickly. You see, our family are shepherds and shepherds ... well, we smell like sheep.

Now, mind you, I've never minded smelling like a sheep. My dad and mom smell like sheep. My pop (not so much my nana, who just smells really good) smells like a really old sheep. Even our school kinda smells like sheep because all of us kids have lived with the sheep all of our lives.





Between our house and my Pop's house on the hill are the sheep pens. Every spring, all of my brothers, uncles, cousins and even my pop gather the sheep into the pens and take the wool off of the big rams and ewes.

Its a lot of work but it is also so much fun, because every night, all of our family and friends get together to eat, tell stories and sing songs.

And then, in the summer when school is out, the sheep go out to wander around the hills and valleys. That's where me and my friends are all summer... with the sheep!



Jacob and Matthew, Simon and Josiah... all of us follow the sheep and make sure they don't get into trouble. Oh, our dads are close by, but there are so many sheep that each of us has a little flock that we watch over, especially if a wolf or a bear is close by.

The best part of taking care of sheep is when the mamma sheep have baby lambs. During the spring, the baby lambs are born, and that's the best time to be a shepherd.

When a little lamb is born, the mamma always lets me come close; no one else but me. You see, she knows me. I've taken care of her when she's not feeling well. And, sometimes I have to rescue her when she gets stuck in the rocks or ravines.



So when she's about to have her lamb, she walks out of the flock and just stands there in front of me, and I know she wants me to help her. I find her a nice safe place to lie down and before you know it, a little lamb is born. I take the baby and rub it real nice with my shawl, and if its too cool of a night, I stay there with the mama and baby to make sure they are warm and out of the wind.

Sometimes, we have lots of little lambs to take care of through the summer. It's no wonder that we all smell like sheep.



After the summer is over and all the little lambs start to grow, we start the long walk back to our village. Sheep don't move very fast and they eat all the time. So, my dad taught me to be patient and just walk behind them, keeping them together and watching out for the lambs. And so that is what I do.

By the time I get back to my home, the nights are turning cold, and my mom's soup sure tastes good after all those nights camping out with the sheep.

But I want to tell you a story about one very special lamb and one very special night. I had one old sheep that I loved the most, her name was Maggie, and that year, when all the other mamma sheep were having their babies, Maggie just kept eating and baa-ing like she always did.



But Maggie didn't have a lamb... at least not when she was supposed to. Well, through the summer, I followed my flock all around the hillsides. Maggie always seemed to fall behind. She was getting old and I worried about what was going to happen to her.

Then, one night when I was asleep under the stars, I felt a cold wet nose on my face... it was Maggie and she stood looking at me, telling me what was about to happen. Long after all the other sheep had their babies, Maggie was about to have her own.

All night she struggled and finally, just before daybreak, her little lamb was born. Maggie just looked at me as if to say, "I'm too old to take care of this little lamb all by myself. I need your help!" And so I did. I named him Louie the Lamb, and Louie soon stayed closer to me than to Maggie.



Smaller and younger than all the other lambs, Louie the lamb would get knocked down and hurt way too often while playing with the other older and bigger lambs. As the summer began to change to fall, he would run circles around me and butt me to play with him instead of running off with the others. Little Louie the Lamb thought I was a much better play mate than all the other sheep.



The nights were turning cold when we finally began the long trek back to the village. I could look across the valley and see my cousins and friends herding their sheep towards the village, and day by day we got closer to one another until finally our little flocks grew into one big flock.



The village was now in sight. The flocks passed into the pens where my dad and uncles stood to count them one by one, making sure all the sheep made it home safely for the winter. When I reached the pens, my dad smiled so big at me... he was so proud that I had done my job and brought all my sheep home.

The sheep passed under the watchful eye of my dad and uncles. Finally, all that was left was old Maggie who always walked so slowly behind me. It was then that my heart felt like it fell all the way to my feet. There was Maggie, but little Louie the lamb was nowhere in sight.

"Dad!" I yelled, "Louie is not with his mom! I've got to go and look for him!" My Dad understood. A good shepherd never leaves a lamb alone to find his way home. Every shepherd knows the rule... when a lamb is lost, you leave all the others behind and go and look for him.



The sun was just going down over the hillside and the chill of a cold wind was beginning to pick up through the valley. I bundled my shepherd's shawl around my head, gripped my staff and began to retrace my steps to find the little lamb. Soon, the lights of the village disappeared. The darker it got, the harder the wind seemed to blow... I was scared! And little Louie the lamb was no where in sight.

Then I remembered something that old Rabbi Joseph told us. He told us that Jehovah God was the great Shepherd of Israel. He told us about the children of Israel in the wilderness and how God followed them and protected them... just like a shepherd follows after his sheep.

"O God," I cried out loud over the wind, "would you watch over me and little Louie tonight? Would you help me find my way and bring him home safe?"



Suddenly, as if my dad just closed the door of our home, the wind stopped blowing. The clouds that had made the night so dark began to roll away and fade. It was then that I saw the most beautiful star I had ever seen shining low on the horizon. I sat down under a tree to look at this marvelous star and rest just for a moment, but was soon fast asleep.

"Baaaaa." A cold, wet nose pushed against my face. "BAAAA!" I awoke with a start! It was Louie and he had found me! "Louie, where have you been? I've been so worried about you and so has your mom."

I was thinking so much about getting back home that I didn't even notice that the star was shining so bright now it lit up the entire countryside. "BAAAAAA!" he said back to me and then turned and began to run in the opposite direction of home. "Louie, where are you going!" But Louie never turned around, he just kept running ahead as if he wanted me to follow.

One of the shepherd's began to sing and through the night, the shepherds sang the same songs they sang to the sheep through the dark nights on the hillsides around Bethlehem. But this time they sang to the baby named Jesus who would become the great Shepherd of us all.



*"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

Louie started to jump and baaa like I had never seen or heard and I just stood and stared. I didn't know what to do! I was scared, excited and happy all at the same time. The night was bright as day, the angels were so happy you could see their joy, and the night no longer seemed cold at all. Angels, bright stars and the happiest lamb I had ever seen... wow, what a night!

And so there we were in the middle of the night with angels instead of stars over head. I ran after Louie as fast as I could as he headed towards the bright star on the horizon. All the way, angels were darting through the sky shouting and singing with Louie leading the way! The hills seemed alive with shepherds who had been keeping their flocks who were excitedly running towards the star as well. Brighter and brighter it grew until it seemed like it would touch the ground with its glory.



As Louie and I crested a final hill, the valley below showed the little town of Bethlehem and a single light shining from a run down sheep shed. All of heaven was alive and focused on the tiny light that shined from the stable on that cold night in Bethlehem.

Without a sound, the angels had faded back into the dark sky above and now a peace filled the night that I had never felt before or since. Little Louie was now walking beside me and together we made our way along with the other shepherds to the shelter dug into the hills outside of town.



Something wonderfully strange and gloriously silent filled the starry, starry night and my heart was filled with a peace I had never known before. I felt so safe, so special and I didn't even know what or who was inside the barn we all were walking towards.

All the shepherds made their way into the tiny stable where the baby now lay in the manger. The smell didn't seem to bother Mary and Joseph at all. Other animals were there as well and together we kept the place warm.



All of the other shepherds stopped but I just followed Louie, and when I got to the edge of the stable and looked in, a momma was holding a tiny baby and Louie lay at her feet. And I knew, somehow I knew, that the little baby was both the Great Shepherd of all of us and the Lamb of God that was promised to take away all the sins of the world, just like the angels has said.

Dawn was breaking. The sleepy town began to stir. The shepherds pulled back from the stable while the young parents slept and quietly slipped back to their flocks. Only Louie and I were left to gaze at the little lamb, lying in the manger hay, and finally we too slipped out, leaving the scene I would never forget.



And that is my story. Louie and I were never the same after that night. That silent night would become the night of all nights when Louie the little lamb led me to another Lamb who would become the great Shepherd of all.