

Listen: The Ass Speaks

March 27, 1983

My name – which has only recently fallen into disrepute (for no good reason) – is really quite aristocratic (in Latin;) Equus Asimus. A noble creature, we trace our ancestry back 3000 years (what about your family tree?) We served the ancient Pharaohs in Egypt. They remain only in museum mummy cases – but we are quite alive. We serve in every corner of the world today. So, when Equus Asimus, the jackass, speaks – you should listen. Why? We've survived – that's why. Outlasted over 20 of your vaunted civilizations. So pay attention to your elders. (Especially your own survival is ... eh ... in doubt.)

(1) We have survived because we're strong. We may be older + smaller + uglier than our relative, the horse – but we can outlast him every day. We can + we do carry much heavier loads than he + go much longer without food + water. Even the camel is a silly beast compared to us. We are far more sure-footed than any clumsy dromedary + can travel rough, high ground where that stupid creature – with his lofty humps – would fall right down.

So listen: in this world – you have to be strong to survive. You humans seem to be getting too soft, we think, too weak, too effete. We donkeys we exercise + we watch what we eat. Who ever saw us laying around all day or a donkey dancing 'till dawn – stuffing sweetmeats and swilling what you swill? + Whoever saw a burro (if you must use that Sp. name for us) smoking ... whatever. We eat grass + don't smoke it, for goodness sake. Maybe the world should laugh at you instead of us – + call you the dumb donkey. So we're a lot smarter than you think which brings us to the second point.

(2) We Asimus' have survived because we are smart. One of my O.T. ancestors "Balaam's ass" was said to have talked to the man – and the man listen too! And you remember Samson defeated the Phil's with the "jaws bone of an ass." – Afterwards we became the symbol of politicians, parsons + other talkers – though I cannot explain that.

And we're still smart – smart enough as I said – not to eat too much, drink too much. You won't find us dying of overindulgence. And smart enough to rest when we are tired. The horse will fall from exhaustion. But no jackass was ever driven to his death. We know when to quit + when we quit, we quit. You can't drive us beyond our strength, not even with a stick! So when the Asimus the donkey speaks – you better listen. For we're not only strong, we are smart.

(3) Which I guess brings us to our 3rd point: we're stubborn. We are stubborn enough to be simple and sincere. We know we are not as pretty as a horse so we never pretend to be one. We know we don't look good all gussied up in parades. Who ever saw a jackass strutting in pomaded splendor like a war horse on parade? We don't go into battle with bugles blowing. No. We're strong enough + smart enough + stubborn enough – not to be tricked into pretending we're "something we aren't" (if you'll forgive the grammar) – we prefer simplicity and sincerity to splendor → Some called it humility. Something you may not have caught onto yet.

(4) That may – just be the reason in the 4th + final place – we serve steadfastly. A loving and loyal donkey is a loving and loyal breast till he's dead. None of this on-again off-again – a friend one minute who won't speak to you the next. In short we are lasting. We may sing off key, but our loud bray has saved many a sleeping family from a fire – our sharp teeth and strong kick has saved many a

lamb from the wolf. We've borne your burdens + we have even taken your jives and jokes at our expense and haven't complained.

One of us bore Mary, the mother of our Lord, to his birthing place. Another took the Christ-child safely on his back to Egypt, out of Herod's murderous reach. That was a long hard journey. But that little donkey made it – because we are a strong breed + smart + stubborn. We don't give up. + We serve steadfastly.

May be – that's why – when Jesus became a man – he choose me, not a Roman war horse – but me – a little donkey – as the prophet said he would – to bear him safely into Jerusalem. It was his last journey and I – Equus Asimus his lasting friend. So may be – that is why – when I speak you should listen. –

and be more like your Lord – he was no warlord but he was a strong + humble man + served steadfastly.

May be that is why he too has survived and will be with you till the full end.

Aman.