

How to Make a Small House into a Large One

Retold by Caroline Feller Bauer

Use plenty of animal sounds, add as many animals to the house as you wish for as long as you have the children's attention. You can have everyone make every noise, or divide the audience into small groups and assign each an animal. Because this is an old Jewish tale, don't let a pig move in; that wouldn't be kosher.

There was once an old man and an old woman who lived in a one-room cottage. It was very tiny. A table, some chairs, a bed, and a stove were the only furniture. One day the man received a letter from his daughter. She and her husband and their baby wished to come and live with their parents. The man was outraged. How could two more people and a baby possibly fit into their small house? The old woman suggested that her husband visit the Rabbi, the wisest man in town, and ask his advice.

The man explained his problem to the Rabbi. Instead of agreeing with the man, the Rabbi said, "That's wonderful! Of course you must write immediately and tell your daughter's family to come. Your house may not be as small as you think."

What could the old man do? No one argued with the Rabbi, the wisest man in town. He went home and wrote a letter to his daughter. In no time at all the daughter, her husband, and the baby arrived. Now the house was very crowded. The baby woke up every morning at six o'clock and cried, "Wah, wah, wah."

The man returned to the Rabbi and asked his help.

"Ah, ha. I see you do have a problem. Indeed, I'm sure that I can help. Do you own a cow?"

Yes, of course, the man owned a cow. Her name was Yasha.

"Go home. Bring Yasha the cow into the house to live with you."

The man was astonished, but no one argued with the Rabbi. He went home and put Yasha the cow into the house. The baby cried, "Wah wah," the cow mooed, "Moo, moo," and, indeed, it was very crowded in the house. Yasha kept swishing her tail back and forth into the man's face. The baby crawled between the cow's legs.

The man returned once more to the Rabbi and pleaded for his help. The Rabbi said, "Here's a thought. Do you own any chickens?"

Yes, of course, the man owned chickens. In fact, he had one rooster, five hens, and twelve baby chicks. The Rabbi said, "Go home. Bring the rooster, the five hens, and the twelve baby chicks into the house to live with you."

The man couldn't believe his ears, but no one argued with the Rabbi. When he got home, he brought the rooster, the five hens, and the twelve baby chicks into the house. What a ruckus!

The baby cried, "Wah, wah, wah."

The cow lowed, "Moo, moo, moo."

The rooster woke up at four o'clock every morning: "Cock-a-doodle-doo."

The hens screeched, "Cluck, cluck."

The hens had no place to lay their eggs. One laid an egg right on top of the man's head. The chicks darted in and out of the woman's path. "Here, chick, chick, chick," called the woman.

In desperation, the man called on the Rabbi again. The Rabbi stroked his long white beard and asked, "I wonder. What other animals do you own?"

The old man said, "We have sheep, ducks, geese, and a horse."

"Bring them all inside," the Rabbi commanded.

What could the man do but obey. No one argued with the Rabbi. He brought the sheep, the ducks, the geese, and the horse into the house. The house was unbearably cramped and noisy. All the animals he owned were now living in the house with him and his wife, their daughter, her husband, and their baby.

"Wah, wah, wah."

"Moo, moo, moo."

"Cock-a-doodle-doo."

"Cluck, cluck."

"Here, chick, chick, chick."

And now the sheep baaed, "Baa, baa."

The ducks quacked, "Quack, quack."

The geese honked, "Honk, honk."

The horse whinnied, "Neigh, neigh."

There was no place for anyone to sleep, work, play or eat. All night long there was nothing but noise.

"Wah, wah, wah."

"Moo, moo."

"Cock-a-doodle-doo."

"Cluck, cluck."

"Here, chick, chick, chick."

"Baa, baa."

"Quack, quack."

"Honk, honk."

"Neigh, neigh."

Haggard with lack of sleep, the man trudged back to the Rabbi's house. "Help us, Rabbi. Our house is bursting and the noise is unbearable."

"Go home," said the Rabbi, "and take all the animals out of the house. Take Yasha the cow, the rooster, the five hens, the twelve chicks, the sheep, the ducks, the geese, and even the horse out of the house."

The old man was relieved. He went home and took all the animals out of the house. It looked enormous without the animals. With only four people and one small baby, the house felt empty. The only noise was the baby making a satisfying crying sound.

So, if you want to make a small house into a big house, now you know just what to do.