

## Speaking Donkey

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Hired (but failing) to curse Israel, enticing them to sin, loving to gain from evildoing, consequently being killed - Balaam's story (Num. 22-24) provides rich grounds for studies and reflections. However, today's focus will be more on the weird "speaking donkey" incident. I'm sure you're familiar with those strange, overly spiritual teachings interpreting the mule's four legs as a picture of the four gospels and things like that. Well, I see the mule incident as plain, simple, straight forward, and surely no metaphor for a deeper, hidden meaning.

- So here is the question: Do we consider this account to be literally true? I mean not like the immediate typical Christian response of "of-course-the-whole-Bible-is-true" type of thing. No, I am talking about a deliberate, honest, elaborated, unshakeable conviction. Do we truly believe that the donkey had a real audible conversation with its owner that can't be explained away into fairy tale country as Moses' record of Balaam's imagination? Can God make an animal speak to get through to us and to get our attention?
- I know, I know, I know, even considering that, strangely, Balaam didn't seem to be surprised hearing his jackass talking to him, the whole issue sounds ludicrous and bananas. Yet I still do believe it's crucial for us today. No, not that we need a speaking donkey, but the bedrock-belief that the Lord can do anything He chooses to get through to us.

According to Numbers 22 the animal had a literal conversation with Balaam. The Hebrew word used here is "amar" and means "to speak, to say" and V 28 mentions the Lord opening the mule's mouth for that very purpose. So why would God need to use a speaking donkey? Well, sorcery and love for money render anyone spiritually blind, hence hard to get through to. That's also why Jesus unequivocally stated that we cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24). God Therefore needed something special to get Balaam's attention.

- Does the Lord have our attention? Increasing pressures due to our crumbling economies, negatively influencing our business and revenue, employment and income, ministry and support, challenging us to make ends meet no matter the context, moreover ill-affecting our relationships, health, sanity, outlook on the future, etc. - all that bears the danger of making us spiritually blind, too. In our quest for solutions to the unbearable tension we might not resort to outright sorcery but turning to past-time experiences, man's traditions and worldly wisdom, patterns and textbook solutions that are opposing the Kingdom, renders the same result. The solutions we are looking for are not in this world, which is why the Lord exhorts us not to act according to the pattern of this world (Romans 12:2). In conflict situations we are to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).
- The question is, do we hear God? Easily? Are we tuned in to the Kingdom frequency, informing us about His ways, laws, principles, solutions for our problems and challenges? Or are we already spiritually blind and hardened and in need of a speaking mule?
- As brilliant and worth telling a speaking donkey-experience (today's equivalent: a speaking car) would be, as much as we could take heart from the fact that the Lord will surely find a way to get our attention no matter what, I sure hope we're not that spiritually blind and inaccessible for Him having to resort to such drastic measures.
- So how do we hear then and know? Well, God's generally applicable ways, laws and principles are written down in His constitution (Bible) for our lives. So we can know the safe boundaries. As for the more personal related issues, the Lord is even more interested in us understanding Him, than we are in hearing Him. He desires us to become successful in His Kingdom, so He'll make sure to communicate with us personally. We just

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have to stay tuned into His frequency. A friend of mine always asks God to speak in a way he understands. I've started that too, hoping to avoid the speaking donkey.