

How Your 'Talking Donkeys' Can Steer You Away From Total Disaster

I can remember the first time that I heard the story of Balaam and his donkey. I remember my first thought was not *How can a donkey talk?* I was not nearly as curious about the donkey speaking as I was that Balaam doesn't even seem to flinch when the donkey does talk.

As we read in the verse below:

Then Adonai opened the donkey's mouth and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?" Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you've made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you now!" The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey which you have ridden as always to this day? Have I ever been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said. Then Adonai opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of Adonai standing in the road with his drawn sword in his hand. So, he fell on his face (Num. 22:28-31, TLV).

Notice in verse 28, the donkey speaks, and in verse 29, Balaam simply responds. No hesitation, no concern and no wondering how the donkey was speaking. What Balaam just says explains his anger.

The donkey then explains his actions. Like I said above, I can still clearly remember the first time I heard this story in Hebrew school, and while everyone was shocked that a donkey spoke, I was shocked that the man riding the donkey didn't freak out. Not even a little bit.

Not only did the donkey speak, but he spoke in order to save

Balaam's life. What an unusual event this was. Ever since that day, I have paid attention to the times in my life when unusual events took place, things that were so out of the ordinary that they drew my attention.

Some were events that would be considered miraculous, while others just seemed super weird. Because the more of these events takes place in my life, the more I realize the many times that G-D protected and preserved my life.

Before I started paying closer attention to these curious moments I would react just like Balaam. I would simply respond as if the unusual was usual. Sometimes I would respond by getting angry because the event slowed down my progress or kept me from accomplishing a goal. I would be lost to the truth that something miraculous was taking place because I was blinded to the miracle by my commitment to achieve my goal.

Then one day I stopped for a moment and started looking at the talking donkeys in my life as miracles of their own. I started paying attention to their voices and immediately looking for whatever it is that G-D is trying to get me to see.

Since I started being thankful and listening to the donkeys, I have been amazed at how many catastrophic events I have been saved from, both physically and spiritually.

Rabbi **Eric Tokajer** *is author of* With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity, OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry, #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer, Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians, *and* Galatians in Context.