



## A DONKEY'S TALE

**Synopsis:** Reader's Theater retelling of the story of Balaam's chat with his own donkey from Numbers 22. Balaam swears he won't do Israel any harm unless God allows it, but is tempted by the promise of a big payoff.

**Topics:** Money, Riches, Temptation, Anger.

**Time Requirements:** 7 minutes

**Characters:**

- 1- Narrator, The Donkey
- 2- General Narrator
- 3- Narrator, God
- 4- Narrator, Balaam

**Props:** Scripts in folders, Stools

**User's Guide**

**Stage Setup:**



**Script**

0 minutes



**Discussion Point:**

What's the first thing you would do if you won the lottery? How about the second and third?





*Author's Note:*  
 Scene opens on 4 readers on stools with scripts in black folders.



**Blocking:** Reader's Theater has no conventional stage movement. But the actors should still use gestures and normal upper body expressions (leaning forward or sideways, for instance).

- 1: Once upon a time there was a man named Balaam.
- 2: A very rich and powerful man, with a stellar reputation for divination.
- 3: Divin-what?
- 2: Divination. It's like... I don't know...
- 4: A witchdoctor?
- 2: Sort of.
- 3: A prophet?
- 1: Sort of.
- 4: A fortune-teller?
- 2: Yes, that's basically it. A fortune-teller.
- 1: A very famous fortune-teller.
- 2: He would consult the gods and then tell people their advice.
- 1: But always for a price. In fact, he made a fine living selling the words of God.
- 2: So one day he's sitting in his lounge chair, sipping some lemonade, waiting for his next gig.
- 1: When some messengers arrive from a faraway land.
- 3: Um... lookin for a certain Balaam. Son of Beor. Supposed to live here near the river.
- 4: Um... that would be me.

 *Author's Note: Although this is written in Reader's Theater, it could, as another option, be acted out with an actual set, separate characters, and stage movement. Besides at least two narrators, you'd need Balaam, God's voice, a Prince, and the Donkey as separate actors.*

 **Blocking:** Remember that in Reader's Theater, all these lines are delivered out to the audience, not to each other. It gives the audience a front row seat for every line. Act with your voice, your face, and your gestures. Most importantly, deliver your lines looking up. Don't have your face buried in the script.



**Discussion Point:**

Have you ever heard this story about Balaam before? What did you think was the point of the story?

- 1: Well, we got a job for you, Oh great diviner.
- 2: A really good job.
- 3: So pack your bags, big guy. We're headed down to Moab.
- 4: Well now wait just a minute.

1 minute

- 2: The big guy replied.
- 4: I can't just head off at the drop of a hat.
- 2: Why not?
- 3: Why not?
- 1: Why not?
- 4: Because... don't you get it? I'm a sort of a big deal around here. I don't just go running off to... where did you say you were from?
- 3: Moab.
- 4: To Moab just because you show up.
- 3: We have money.
- 4: Step inside. I just happen to have an opening this week.
- 1: So Balaam began the negotiations.
- 2: And after thinking a while, he concluded,
- 4: So you want me to go down and curse your enemies? These... who are they again?
- 3: We don't know. They're from Egypt.
- 1: Thousands of them.
- 2: Millions of them.
- 3: They sweep up everything in their path.
- 2: And uh... we're next on the path.
- 4: Well, I have to say... I can't promise you I'll come.
- 2: Did we mention we have money?
- 4: Yes, I noted that. But you have to understand... cursing people... it's very dangerous business. Very dangerous.
- 3: So you want more money?

2 minutes

- 4: I didn't say that. Did you hear me say that? Because that's something I distinctly did not say. What I need to do is consult with God. I don't want to make any enemies if you know what I mean.
- 1: So what are we supposed to do? Our king expects an answer. Are we supposed to go home and-
- 4: You stay here with me. Tonight I'll go into my secret room and ask God. I'll let you know in the morning.
- 2: So the nobles spent the night and waited.
- 1: That night God actually showed up.
- 2: And the two of them had a chat.
- 3: Balaam?
- 4: Uh... yes?
- 3: Who are those guys out there?
- 4: Those guys? Just simple travelers from Moab. No big deal. Nothing to be alarmed about.

3: What do they want?

4: Oh it's something about invaders from Egypt who they think will wipe them out. They want me to come down and do your basic curse.

3: Don't do it, Balaam. Those people from Egypt are my people. Do not go with them. Repeat. Do not go with them.

3 minutes

4: Your people? Really? I had no idea. Ok. Whatever you say.

1: So the next morning Balaam broke the news.

4: Sorry guys, I can't go. God won't allow it. He told me personally.

2: And the princes were very disappointed.

1: They went back to their king empty-handed.

2: And the king was not happy.

1: But instead of giving up, he sent more princes back with even more money.

2: These were your top of the line princes.

1: First string princes.

2: With lots and lots of money.

1: Which they promptly showed to Balaam.

3: So... Balaam, big guy. Do we have a deal?

2: But Balaam was firmly against the idea.

1: Or at least mostly against the idea.

2: Or at least he wasn't ready to sign on just yet...

4: Look guys. I just can't do it. Even if your king gave me his whole palace and filled it with silver and gold, I couldn't do it... Well, maybe his whole palace... but we both know that's not gonna happen. That's not

4 minutes

gonna happen, is it? Do you think that could happen? I'll tell you what... I'll check with God one more time just to make sure he hasn't... you know, changed his mind.

1: So they had another little chat.

4: So whadda ya think? Would a little curse hurt that much?

3: Balaam. You wanna go so bad? Ok. Fine. You may go with them on one condition. You do only what I tell you. You say only what I say.

4: Deal. Thank you. I owe you big time. Big time.

1: So Balaam started out.

2: But before he got too far, he encountered a certain... obstacle.

1: Except only his donkey could see it.

2: The angel of the LORD stood in his path, and the donkey wanted no part of that action.

4: Would you just go! Get your flea-bitten carcass moving. I've gotta make Moab by Wednesday.

1: But the donkey wouldn't move.

4: Go, go! What is your problem?

1: But the donkey turned back smashing Balaam's foot against a rock wall.

2: And then she simply laid down and refused to move at all.

5 minutes



### Discussion Point:

If somebody offered you \$50,000 to betray your best friend, would you do it? How can you be sure what you'd do?

### SCRIPTURE LINK:



NUMBERS 22:30-35

THE DONKEY SAID TO BALAAM, "AM I NOT YOUR OWN DONKEY, WHICH YOU HAVE ALWAYS RIDDEN, TO THIS DAY? HAVE I BEEN IN THE HABIT OF DOING THIS TO YOU?" "NO," HE SAID. THEN THE LORD OPENED BALAAM'S EYES, AND HE SAW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD STANDING IN THE ROAD WITH HIS SWORD DRAWN. SO HE BOWED LOW AND FELL FACE-DOWN. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ASKED HIM, "WHY HAVE YOU BEATEN YOUR DONKEY THESE THREE TIMES? I HAVE COME HERE TO OPPOSE YOU BECAUSE YOUR PATH IS A RECKLESS ONE BEFORE ME. THE DONKEY SAW ME AND TURNED AWAY FROM ME THESE THREE TIMES. IF SHE HAD NOT TURNED AWAY, I WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE KILLED YOU BY NOW, BUT I WOULD HAVE SPARED HER." BALAAM SAID TO THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, "I HAVE SINNED."

*Author's Note: Although the New Testament tells us that Balaam was motivated by money, don't play him dastardly. The feeling you get in the Scriptural account is that he wanted to do the right thing, but was tempted by the money. Check out 2 Peter 2:15-16, and Jude 11 for New Testament references.*

1: Needless to say, Balaam was ticked, and began to beat the poor animal.

4: You worthless bag of bones! I wish I'd never-

3: And then it happened.

2: What happened?

4: Yeah, what happened?

3: The donkey began to speak.

1: Hey, hey hey. Wait just a minute here. What have I done to deserve all this?

3: Needless to say, Balaam was a bit surprised.

2: But not too surprised to continue the conversation.

4: You've made a fool out of me! If I had a sword in my hand I'd put you out of my misery right now!

1: Easy, easy big guy,

3: Replied the donkey. Always good at calming people down.

1: Think a minute, Balaam. Have I ever done anything like this before?

2: Balaam had to admit she had a point.

4: No...

1: Well then, speaking of swords, you might wanna look over there.

2: It was then that Balaam saw it.

3: Saw what?

2: The angel of the LORD with a sword.

1: The sword of the Lord?

2: Pointed directly at Balaam.

1: The angel summarized it nicely:

3: All this time you've been beating your donkey, Balaam. While the donkey was saving your life. If it wasn't for that donkey, I'd have used this sword on you.

6 minutes

4: But you said I could go with them!

2: Balaam must have been thinking.

3: Money is a powerful thing, Balaam. Very powerful. When I saw how eagerly you set out to Moab, I knew what was on your mind, and decided to stop you.

4: Alright, you got me,

3: Balaam admitted.

4: I have sinned.

2: And the donkey surely must have agreed.

pause

1: What's the point of this story? Why make a donkey speak?

2: We all have donkeys. Things that get in the way.

3: Things that don't behave as we'd like them to.

4: Things that seem to be hindering our progress, keeping us continually frustrated, behind schedule, even keeping us from the money we think we need.

1: But before you beat the thing that's driving you crazy, be careful.

2: That thing, that "donkey," might just be saving your life... from the power of gold.

3: And if that's true, if you're as driven toward money and power as Balaam was...

4: Then this Donkey's Tale has been pinned on... you.

Lights Out

*Author's Note:*  
 Making a donkey's voice is no easy assignment. You can either play it straight with the humor coming from a donkey talking like your average Joe, or you can experiment with adding a "Hee-Haw" dimension to your voice.



**Discussion Point:**

Balaam really wanted the money. But God was keeping him from it. Did you ever think of being poor as a blessing from God? How could that be? Is it the blessing nobody wants?

Date Performed: \_\_\_\_\_

Actors Used: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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