

The Talking Serpent in the Garden

Commentary for May 15, 2026 — Did Both a Snake and a Donkey Speak?

I have written on this subject before, but I want to focus again on the incident in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent spoke to Eve and lied to her about YHWH's order to her and Adam not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1–5).

First Eve and then Adam sinned and ate the forbidden fruit, disobeying YHWH's command not to do so. Then YHWH pronounced a judgment of doom on the serpent. Finally, YHWH judged and punished Adam and Eve with death. But **first**, He, (quoting Genesis 3:14–17CLV:

“[1] **Then Yahweh Elohim said TO THE SERPENT** [who was Satan]:

'Because you have done this,

[A] **Cursed shall YOU be away** [separated] **from every domestic beast**
And from every animal of the field! On YOUR torso [belly] **shall YOU crawl,**
And SOIL shall YOU eat ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE.

[B] **And I shall set enmity between you and the woman**
And between your seed and her Seed. He shall hurt you in the head,
And you shall hurt Him in the heel.'

[2] **And TO THE WOMAN He said:**

'I shall increase, yea increase your grief and the groanings of your pregnancy. In grief shall you bear children; Yet by your husband is your restoration. And he shall rule over you.'

[3] **And TO ADAM He said:**

'Because you hearkened to your wife's voice and ate from the only tree that I instructed you, saying you must not eat from it, Cursed is the ground on your account; In grief shall you eat of it ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE.'"

Then note what YHWH asked Satan (the Adversary) twice in the Book of Job:

Job 1:7 CLV	Job 2:2 CLV
<p>"Yahweh said to the Adversary [Satan], 'From where are you coming?' Then the Adversary answered Yahweh and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth and from WALKING about in it.'"</p>	<p>"Yahweh said to the Adversary [Satan], 'From where are you coming?' Then the Adversary answered Yahweh, saying, 'From going to and fro in the earth and from WALKING about in it.'"</p>

How did the serpent speak to Eve? It seems that Satan projected his voice via ventriloquism, so his words seemed to originate from the serpent. Much later, a similar event occurred when Moses led Israel from the wilderness toward Moab, east of the Jordan River. YHWH sent an angel, who projected its voice through a donkey.

Balaam's Ass Speaks

A second voice projection occurred when the Israelites traveled through the land of Midian. They were preparing to enter Moab and then cross the Jordan River. A GENTILE "prophet," named Balaam, suddenly noticed that his donkey was speaking to him. This donkey came to be known as "Balaam's ass"

Read the full story in Numbers 22:2 through 24:25; with more information in Numbers 31:8, 16; Deuteronomy 23:4; Joshua 13:22; 24:9; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11; and Revelation 2:14.

Balam tries to use "divination" rituals to learn from spirits how King Balak of Moab could defeat the people of Israel. God told Balam that Moab will not win by war. (Later, Balaam told Balak to seduce Israelite men with Moabite women.) The angel of YHWH projected its voice to make it seem as though the donkey spoke the words. Balaam was a Midianite (like the father-in-law of Moses). He was a false prophet trying to cause evil against Israel. Balaam practiced the occult art of divination, with the intent to learn from demonic spirits information for Balaam to curse God's. He failed.

Conclusion

The judgment of YHWH, pronounced upon the serpent, was actually a death sentence upon Satan, who "spoke" through a mute animal, a serpent. Satan still lives today, but he is doomed to die in the future. Long ago YHWH told Satan with the words "**the days of your life**" (Genesis 3:14), meaning that Satan's life would end. YHWH cursed Satan who "spoke" through the serpent. In Job chapters 1 and 2, Satan comes before YHWH to test the righteousness of Job. YHWH in Genesis condemned Satan — not all serpents — to "walk on his belly" like a snake. This must have caused laughter at the meeting in heaven (Job 1:7 & 2:2) when Satan said he was "**walking about**" the earth.

We know this because of Revelation 12:9–15 and 20:2, Satan is specifically identified as "**the ancient serpent,**" referring to the events in Eden. YHWH in Genesis chapter 3 did not speak to the "serpent," but Satan who spoke through the serpent. Later, when Balaam's ass spoke, it was the angel speaking his words through the donkey.

YHWH pronounced judgment upon the serpent first. He did so because it (Satan) caused man to question and challenge YHWH's authority and commands. No serpent today is intelligent. They cannot understand, reason, or speak. Snakes react to stimuli by instinct. But the serpent in the Garden of Eden **[1]** did speak and **[2]** questioned Eve. How? Satan used ventriloquism, so it seemed the serpent spoke.

Imagine Balaam's surprise when the donkey began to speak, even though spirits spoke regularly to Balaam in his divination rituals.¹ God judged Balam with death after the army of Israel defeated the combined armies of Moab and its allies.

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¹ God spoke to His prophets in several ways. The angel Gabriel spoke to both Daniel and Mary. John the apostle wrote in the Book of Revelation the words of many spirit beings who spoke to him.