

## Session 14

# Balaam's donkey

God can do anything ... Just listen to His voice.

**Text:** Numbers 22:22-35

### Supplies:

- ⊗ Pictures of things that can talk, and that cannot talk
- ⊗ Pictures of different animals
- ⊗ Sounds of animals and nature
- ⊗ Plastic toy donkey to add to the sensory bottle
- ⊗ Hand puppet of a donkey / Donkey mask / Donkey ears
- ⊗ Paint, crayons, and/or pencils to colour and decorate the donkey mask
- ⊗ White or black paper
- ⊗ Glue, tape
- ⊗ Black permanent marker
- ⊗ For each child:
  - paper plate
  - copies of the donkey
  - brown paper bag
  - clothing pegs

There are also many videos of animals talking on YouTube that you can use.

## WELCOME

**Play "Red light, yellow light":** Let the children stand side-to-side in one long line at one side of the room or area. Let the facilitator turn their back to the children and shout, "Green light!" All the children then must hop, jump, walk or run in the most creative way possible. The facilitator will then shout "Red light!" and the children must freeze. Continue doing this until all the children have made their way to the other side. This game's point is to reflect on not making a decision too hastily, but that we rather sometimes need to stop and listen for God's voice.

Show the children different **images** (animals, people, objects, and so on) and ask them which can speak, and which can't. Ask them how one can understand these animals. For instance, ask how one knows that a dog is happy – they wag their tails or run to and fro. How do we know dogs see danger? They bark. Use a few other examples of other animals. Ask the children if they know what a dog whisperer or a horse whisperer is – these are people who understand dogs' and horses' behaviour. Ask the children if they really can talk to animals – and of course they can't! No, they make use of body language. Ask the children what body language is – the way that we look, move; or, with animals, the way that they wag their tails, stand, the way they look at you, or the way they move their ears. (You could even get creative and pull a few faces or make movements with the children guessing what you are trying to say.) But today, we will hear a story about a donkey and about how God used it.

## WORSHIP

### Theme song:

The children sit with eyes closed and sing "Trust in the Lord". (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPZJtZzQBB0>).

### Settle down ritual:

Pass the sensory bottle around while the children say Psalms 23:1-3: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me

lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake."

Ask the children to sit calmly, with their eyes closed, and listen to sounds of animal noises. They then should try to recognise the sounds. (There are many such sounds here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8myYyMgIfFE>.)

## **WORD**

*(The narrator could use the donkey mask, ears, or puppet for this.)*

I wonder if some of you have seen movies where animals can talk. Well, you know what? A funny thing happened to me, and that is why I am a crazy donkey who can *really* talk in human language! You see, my master's name is Balaam, and everyone knows he is a prophet. That is where my story begins.

I wonder if anyone can tell me what it means to be a prophet? Yes, it means that God tells that person something, and that person then goes and tells the people what God says. That person is called a prophet, like my master Balaam.

We lived near to the river Euphrates, and one day some people came to visit. I heard that they said that king Balak had sent them. One of them said, "A large number of people, called the nation of Israel, are camping in our land, and our king is afraid of them. These Israelites have already battled against other people, and always win. If the Israelites fought a war against us, they would win, and we would all be killed!"

"What do you want me to do about it?" asked my master Balaam.

The other messenger answered: "King Balak wants you to come and curse the Israelites. We know that if you curse someone, it comes true, and that if you bless someone, it also comes true."

But, my master isn't someone who just does something, unless God told him to do it. So, he invited the messengers to stay with us for the night, so that he could ask God what He wanted my master Balaam to do.

The next morning, I heard how my master Balaam told the messengers that he could not go with them, because the Israelites are God's own people whom He has blessed.

So, the messengers went away, but after a short while, some more men arrived.

They said, "We have brought many presents from king Balak, which are yours if you will just come along and proclaim a curse against Israel. Once you have done it, Balak will give you even more presents."

Master Balaam looked at all the wonderful gifts and presents, but said that no matter how much they give him, he cannot do something that God had not told him to do. But, I saw how his eyes sparkled when he looked at the gifts - he really did want them. So, he invited them to stay the night, so that he could take more time to ask God.

I think it was a very bad thing to do, because he had already talked to God, and God told him he mustn't go! But, maybe he thought God had changed His mind in the meantime.

So, Balaam spoke to God again, and God said that he could go with these men, but could only say what God Himself told Balaam to say.

The next morning, master Balaam put a saddle on my back, and the other two messengers also got onto their donkeys. We went after them. Suddenly, I saw something I had never seen before: in the middle of the road stood an angel of God with a sword in his hand! Believe me, I just wanted to get out of the way, so I turned to the side of the road as fast as I could. Master Balaam could not see the angel, so he thought that I was just being stubborn, so he hit me very hard and forced me to walk down the road again.

Soon, we got to a narrow part of the road, where there were vineyards on both sides and a wall on either side of the road. Again, the angel of God came to stand in the road again. I tried to walk far away from the angel, so I went against the wall on one side, and by mistake I got master Balaam's foot caught between me and the wall. He got very angry, and hit and shouted at me much harder than before.

So, I walked along carefully again, but very soon the angel came and stood in front of me again. There was nowhere to go this time, so I just fell down in front of the angel that only I could see. Master Balaam was so angry he began to hit me with his staff. I was very upset, and suddenly I could speak in his human language!

I asked Balaam: "Why are you hitting me? You have hit me three times now."

He was so angry that he said that he wanted to kill me with his sword right then and there. I told him that I couldn't understand why he was so angry with me - I had always been a good and obedient donkey.

Suddenly, he was able to see what I could see: the angel of God standing with his sword in his hand. He got such a big fright that he fell down too. He said that he should just go home if God wanted him to go home. But then, God told him, "Go along with these men, but only say what I tell you to say."

Maybe the whole trip was just a big waste of time, because Balaam just blessed Israel as God told him to do, and king Balak was not pleased at all. So, the king didn't give any of the presents and gifts that he had brought along to Balaam.

And now I know that Israel were God's people and that as long as they also listen to Him, we will take care of them and bless them.

**The children now get a chance to think about the story:**

1. I wonder how you would feel if your pet started talking to you.
2. I wonder how the donkey felt when Balaam hit him so much.
3. I wonder how king Balak felt when the prophet Balaam blessed the people of Israel, after he had gone through all the trouble of getting a prophet to curse them.
4. I wonder how God speaks to us here and now.

## **WORKING AND PLAYING TIME**

- ◆ Let the children make donkey ears.
- ◆ Make a washing peg donkey and use it in your storytelling. Then let the children make their own and let them tell the story to the people at home.
- ◆ Make a donkey hand puppet out of a brown paper bag.

**Benediction:**

**Close the session with the blessing:** Let the children sit or stand in a circle. Let them stand with their arms stretched out to the sides, with the palms of their hands facing upwards. The palm of each person's right hand is on top of the left hand of the person to their right. Let them practice to forward a blessing: Any person can start by moving their right hand over and lightly tapping the right hand of the person to their left. Move that hand back. Then the person to his left does the same movement and lightly taps the right hand of the person to his left. Go around in the circle: in this manner the blessing is sent around. As soon as everyone gets it right, continue with the movement while they say the blessing:

May the Lord go before you to show you the right path;

May the Lord be behind you to protect you;

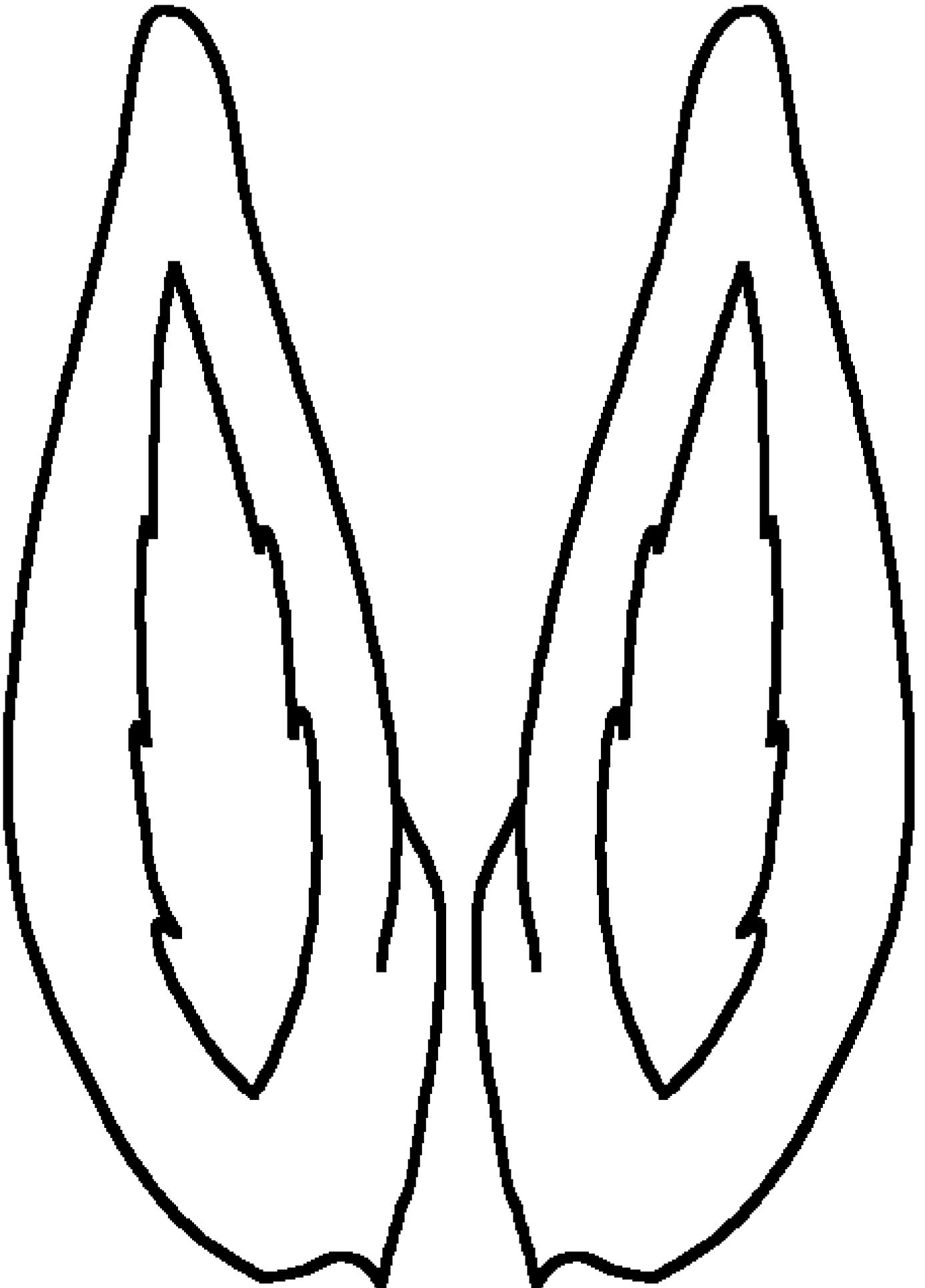
May the Lord be beside you to comfort and embrace you;

May the Lord be below you to catch you when you fall;

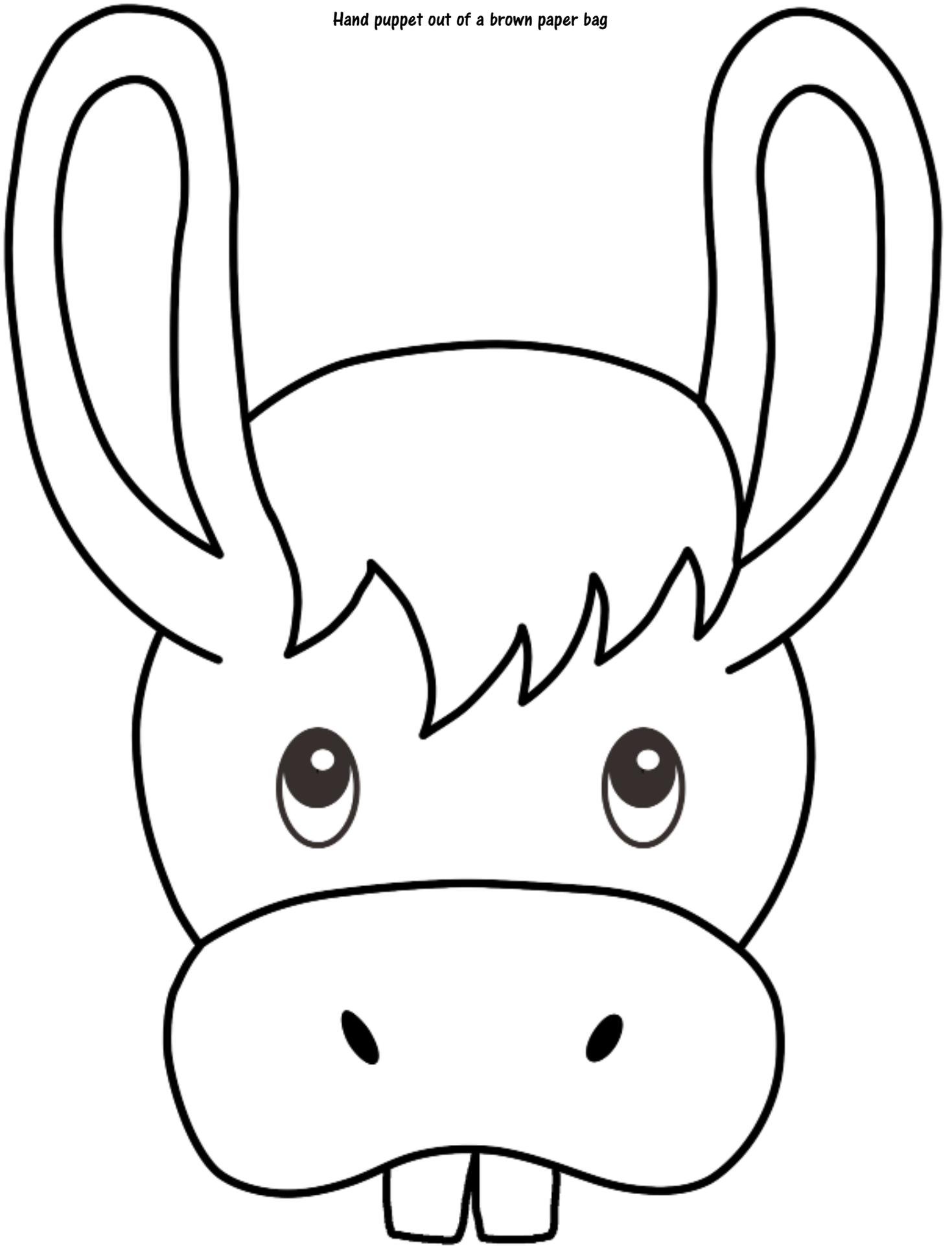
May the Lord be above you to bless you;

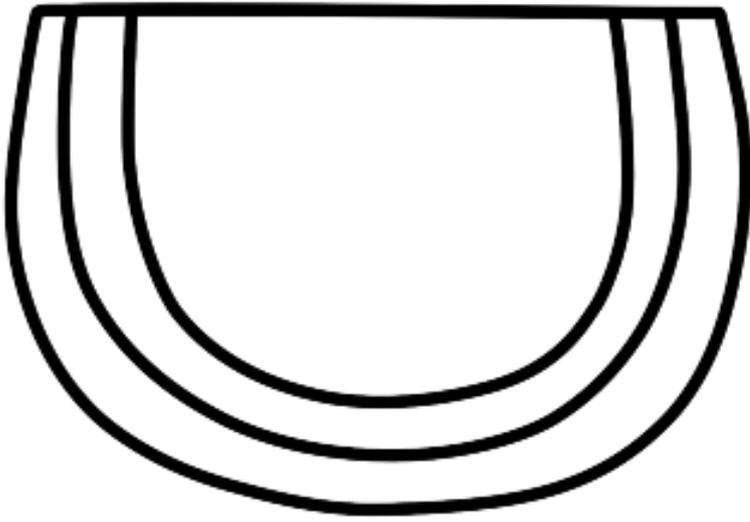
May the Lord be in you to guide you with His Holy Spirit. Amen.

Donkey ears



*Hand puppet out of a brown paper bag*





← Hand puppet out of a brown paper bag

**Washing peg donkey:**

Cut on the dotted lines. Glue a washing peg to the back of the donkey.

