

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 145

Ezekiel 31

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Episode Summary

Ezekiel 31 is part of the prophet's oracles against Egypt (chs. 29-32). The chapter strikes an analogy between the mighty nation of Egypt and a great cedar tree in Eden, the envy of other glorious trees in the garden of God. The symbol of the "world tree" or "cosmic tree" is well known, not only to scholars of the ancient Near East, but other cultures as well. The cosmic tree represents a mythological pillar or column that unites all elements of Israel's ancient three-tiered cosmology. Its branches reach the heavens; its trunk is fixed to the earth, while its roots descend into the subterranean deep of Sheol. It gives life to everything living thing yet it intersects with the realm of the dead. As with Ezekiel 28, many scholars presume the point of that the great tree is Adam, to whom Pharaoh is being compared and judged for his hubris. This common assumption misses the meaning of the primeval cosmic tree and its associated forest as this episode details.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 145: Ezekiel chapter 31. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. How are you doing, Mike?

MH: Pretty good, pretty good. It's been an interesting week. I've spent most of the week snowed in.

TS: That's fun! I'm down here where it's hot. It's like 80-degrees down here. I'm burning up, so I would gladly trade places with you right now.

MH: Nah... When I left the Midwest, I thought, "This is awesome; I'll never see this kind of weather again." (laughing)

TS: Wrong!

MH: Wrong, yeah! It's been kind of brutal.

TS: Snow days are fun! You get to snuggle up with your pug, read some books, drink some hot cocoa...

MH: We did all that. The thing is, if you want to go anywhere, you're just trapped. I couldn't get out of my driveway; our road doesn't get plowed. No chains, nothing wintery to actually help us out.

TS: You know what a perfect thing to do is on those days is to sit back and listen to the Naked Bible Podcast.

MH: (laughter) There you go—absolutely!

TS: Hopefully your fellow snowed-in buddies are all listening to the Naked Bible Podcast.

MH: So next time we get a little taste of the apocalypse here (the Hoth System, I guess), we'll know what to do.

TS: Favorite one right there, favorite one!

MH: Me, too.

TS: Number 8 is coming at Christmas... So *Empire* is your favorite?

MH: Yeah, it's one of two movies that I've seen double-digit times.

TS: What's the other one?

MH: Prin...

TS: Let me guess, let me guess... Did you already say it?

MH: I said part of it. See if you can guess.

TS: It sounded like "prince" or "pirates" maybe. I was going to say *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, but...

MH: Nope, nope.

TS: That was my guess, so what is it?

MH: *The Princess Bride*.

TS: Oh, *The Princess Bride*. Yeah.

MH: Yeah. Every time it's on TV, I keep moving because if I sit down I'm going to be there for two hours.

TS: Do you know the line, "My name is..."

MH: "Inigo Montoya... You killed my father. Prepare to die." (laughter)

TS: There you go. Perfect.

MH: Of course Wallace Shawn with "inconceivable." Ok, we've got to get off this! (laughter)

TS: Oh my gosh... yeah, that's awesome. That's an awesome movie.

MH: So those are the two I've seen double-digits.

TS: A little Heiser trivia right there. We'll save that for something down the line.

MH: Yeah, something. Somethin'... We'll see.

Well, the week's over and we're getting back to normal. This will help me to feel a little bit more normal to get back in the recording mode. Listeners might be wondering why he said chapter 31. You may have thought it was going to be 31 and 32. Well, so did I. But maybe it's just because I got snowed in that I went a little crazy with the research and I thought there's just so much content here that we've got to stick to 31. So we'll do chapter 31 in this episode and then the next episode we'll hit 32. I don't want to really trim it down because you'd miss some good stuff. So we'll stick with chapter 31.

Listeners may already know what the chapter is about as far as the theme. Scholars like to refer to this as the "Felling of the Cosmic Tree." So this is like tailor-made for the kind of stuff we do. There's a lot of divine council connection that we're going to be talking about with this chapter, but I should sort of issue a warning: this is really dense material. I can say that on the one hand to kind of warn maybe people who haven't listened to too many episodes that we're going to be wading into some dense content here, parts of which may sound foreign or be hard to follow. That's okay. I'm going to give you the resources that you will actually get if you subscribe to the newsletter (some really, really good stuff on the content of Ezekiel 31 and divine council stuff). We're going to get into Mount Hermon today. That ties in with my book that's due out imminently here. So there's a lot of stuff that you can get by listening, but you can get a lot more stuff if you subscribe to the email list. To do that, you just go to drmsb.com, right hand side, sign up for the newsletter email list, and you're going to get the articles that I'll reference here today.

5:00

So on the one hand, it's going to be a little dense, but on the other hand this is a good illustration of how this podcast gives normal people access to high scholarship. That really is part of our mission. My attitude is that even if people aren't trained in grad school programs in Hebrew Bible in the ancient Near East— even though you can't digest it all, you should still be exposed to it. And since a lot of it's not free online, you get it with the newsletter. That's the way I can deliver it to you. So please do that. We're going to be in for a good ride here with the cosmic tree. We're arms-dealers here. We're not afraid to give you content. Believe it or not, I get criticized for stuff I write or even things like the podcast occasionally. "You're exposing people with all this content and they don't really know what to do with it. It's like giving people a gun and they don't know how to use the thing!" Thanks for the analogy. I'm an arms-dealer. I'm a content arms-dealer. This is what we do here. So if you're new to the podcast, this is what you're going to get; this will be a good illustration.

So let's jump in here to the chapter. I'm just going to read the chapter. It's not that long, and there are going to be some things that just pop out to you right away. If you're a frequent listener or if you have read *The Unseen Realm*, you're going to think, "Oh yeah, Mike's going to park on this." Some of it's just that obvious.

In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:² "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude:

Let me pause right here and say that this is not just for Pharaoh. We're going to come back to that point in a moment.

² "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude [the Egyptians]:

"Whom are you like in your greatness?

**³ Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon,
with beautiful branches and forest shade,
and of towering height,
its top among the clouds.**

**⁴ The waters nourished it;
the deep made it grow tall,
making its rivers flow
around the place of its planting,
sending forth its streams
to all the trees of the field.**

⁵ So it towered high

above all the trees of the field;
its boughs grew large
and its branches long
from abundant water in its shoots.
⁶ All the birds of the heavens
made their nests in its boughs;
under its branches all the beasts of the field
gave birth to their young,
and under its shadow
lived all great nations.
⁷ It was beautiful in its greatness,
in the length of its branches;
for its roots went down
to abundant waters.
⁸ The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it,
nor the fir trees equal its boughs;
neither were the plane trees
like its branches;
no tree in the garden of God
was its equal in beauty.
⁹ I made it beautiful
in the mass of its branches,
and all the trees of Eden envied it,
that were in the garden of God.

¹⁰ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, ¹¹ I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. ¹² Foreigners, the most ruthless of nations, have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land, and all the peoples of the earth have gone away from its shadow and left it. ¹³ On its fallen trunk dwell all the birds of the heavens, and on its branches are all the beasts of the field. ¹⁴ All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For they are all given

over to death, to the world below, among the children of man, with those who go down to the pit.

¹⁵ “Thus says the Lord God: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. ¹⁶ I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below. ¹⁷ They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.

¹⁸ “Whom are you thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? You shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below. You shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword.

“This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord God.”

That's Ezekiel 31. There's just a lot of places that we could drill down here, but I just want to draw your attention to a few things and then we're going to get into something that's a lot wider thematically. In this, like other chapters in Ezekiel (like Ezekiel 28), the writer is describing not just Pharaoh here, but the whole nation of Egypt—the Egyptian empire, the might of Egypt. He is casting them by analogy to something. He actually brings Assyria into it, so it's before the Egyptian empire—before they were a big deal. Try to think historically now to Ezekiel's time period. Before the Egyptians were a factor to Assyria in this part of the world in relation to the people of God (and this is really during the monarchy, we'll say), who were the big enemies to the Israelite monarchy? Well, it was the Assyrians. We've talked about the Assyrians before in the podcast in the book of Ezekiel—the "Klingons of the Old Testament." They were feared for lots of legitimate reasons. But historically, their power faded and Egypt became the big stick on the block. But here we have (in this chapter) and we've had other indications in the oracles against the nations in the two earlier chapters that Egypt's time is going to fade and they're going to be dealt with by the new power in the area that God is going to use to judge his own people and Egypt—and that is Babylon.

So we have a reference here to the prophet addressing the Egyptians and saying, "Hey, remember Assyria? Remember how awesome they were? Remember how powerful they were?" He actually compares Assyria to this tree

using an analogy. The point is to determine what precisely is the analogy. What is he comparing Assyria *to* that would make sense to the hearer (to someone from ancient Israel who would read this later on)? They're going to know what Assyria was about, but what's the other point of analogy? Clearly, it has something to do with Eden because Assyria is being compared to this magnificent tree (again, what scholars are going to call the "cosmic tree" or the "world tree," and we'll get into that concept in a moment). Assyria is being compared to it and God is telling the Egyptians, "Look, they were just great, but they fell. Assyria fell because of their hubris. I judged them because of their arrogance, and I'm going to judge you for the same reason." So we're getting a comparison with Assyria, and that's the guts of the warning here. The prophet is describing the downfall of the mighty Assyrians (that everyone was afraid of) in this "cosmic tree" thing going on and then he links it to Eden—this Edenic analogy (whatever it is). He wants the Pharaoh and the Egyptians to listen to this because their fate is going to be the same. "If Assyria was judged, who do you think you guys are? I'm going to bring somebody along to judge *you*." And, of course, we know from other parts of the Old Testament and the prophets that Babylon is going to get judged, too. We don't get that in the book of Ezekiel, because in Ezekiel the Babylonians are God's instrument of justice against the nations and to judge his own people. For instance, take a book like Habakkuk. This is what the book of Habakkuk is about. Habakkuk says, "Hey... what about the Babylonians? They're worse than we are. They're just awful. Aren't you going to judge them, too?" And God says, "Yeah, I'll get to them."

15:00

So we get that in the Old Testament, but here we are in Ezekiel 31 and we need to start thinking about what the chapter actually says and who are the points of analogy. It's not just one guy. It's not just Pharaoh. And I'm bringing that up because there are a lot of scholars (just like in Ezekiel 28) that will read Ezekiel 31 and say, "Just like Ezekiel compared the prince/king of Tyre to Adam and said 'Adam fell and you're going to fall, too' so now we get Ezekiel telling Pharaoh that you're going to fall just like (believe it or not) Adam." You might say, "We just read the whole chapter... Where's Adam in there?" He's not in here. But scholars put him there because of the reference to Eden and they put him there because of what they do in Ezekiel 28 to get Adam into the text. We talked about that in a previous episode. If you haven't listened to that episode yet, I recommend doing that. But they're going to treat Ezekiel 31 the same way. From the get-go, from the very beginning of the chapter it tells you that this is just misguided. It says:

"Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt *and to his multitude...*"

This is not about Pharaoh. This is about the Egyptian empire, and that's why it's being compared to the Assyrian empire. So right away, if you're looking at this passage and thinking this is about Pharaoh and that the right analogy for Pharaoh would be a guy in Eden—and the only guy in Eden was Adam—you're

already down the wrong path from the get-go. But that's where a lot of people are.

I want to go back and unpack a lot of this and you're going to see how problematic this is. I also hope you see how cool what's actually going on is—what the point of analogy is. What's the other side of the analogy? Questions like: Why even bring Eden into the discussion? And when you do, why are you associating Eden with Lebanon? Lebanon (if you're familiar with your biblical geography) is going to be to the north. Here we go already with the "cosmic north" idea. If you've read *Unseen Realm* this is going to be familiar territory. But we've got Lebanon in the north. We know where Lebanon is in modern times in the Middle East, and it's the same place—same country so to speak. So you have Lebanon to the north and there are going to be a couple of mountain ranges. Lebanon is going to be known for its cedar forests, and that's part of this chapter. But then it gets lumped in with Eden and you think, "What in the world is Ezekiel doing? Why is he comparing Eden (the garden of God) with Lebanon? Because if we go read Genesis and the four rivers there of Eden, the Tigris and Euphrates are nowhere near Lebanon! What is he doing?" It's about the cosmic abode of God, or the cosmic abode of the gods. That whole "cosmic mountain" concept that you're going to have to have in your head to be able to track with this. Hopefully you've read *Unseen Realm* and you've listened to the episode on Ezekiel 28 because you're going to draw on things in both of those. But it's really, really cool. There's going to be sort of a content surprise or two that we're going to hit on today.

So let's go back to the passage. We have there:

² **"Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude:**

"Whom are you like in your greatness? [MH: who do you think you are?]

³ **Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon...**

Well, the Assyrian empire wasn't in Lebanon, and why would you compare it to a cedar? If you're going to compare it to a tree, why a tree in this place called Lebanon? Right away, we're like, "What in the world is going on?" And then you get this whole description. Did you notice how frequently in the description of this Lebanon-place we get references to forestry and we get references to a well-watered place? Verse 3 has "forest shade," "beautiful branches"... he's talking about this tree, the great cedar of Lebanon. In verse 4, "the waters nourished it," "the *deep* made it grow tall." Guess what the word is there: *tehom*, the primeval deep that you get from Genesis 1. The deep is part of Israelite cosmology. Think of Israelite cosmology with a three-tiered universe: you have the earth (that's the middle tier where people dwell), above it you've got this firmament dome and God lives above it ("the waters above the firmament" and all that stuff), and then below you have the waters below—that's Sheol. Sheol, the underworld, is described as a watery abyss. This should be familiar, and if you're listening to

this podcast or you've read *Unseen Realm* or a lot of my other stuff, you're going to know about Israelite cosmology. That's going to become a big deal here, because the idea of a cosmic tree is part of ancient Israelite cosmology and the three-tiered universe.

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Back to verse 4, we get a reference to the waters, we get a reference to the deep (*tehom*). We also get a reference to rivers and streams. In verse 5 there's a reference to "abundant water" and then we get the description of how magnificent the tree is. Then verse 7: "abundant waters." Verse 8: "the cedars in the garden of God could not rival it" and "no tree in the garden of God." Verse 9: "all the trees of Eden envied it that were in the garden of God." Again, you have abundant references to trees, forests, and a well-watered place. Just store that away for now. The impression is that this has something to do with Eden. But how is this possible?

Well, let's start with how this language is usually interpreted by scholars. Scholars typically will note (if you have a good commentary, something that tries to take the text seriously and gets into the text) that the passage obviously draws on this notion/idea/concept of the world tree or the cosmic tree. You have to conceive of this and it's hard for us because we're modern. You have to think of a giant tree whose boughs reach to the heavens—the very heights of the heavens, even beyond the sky. It's planted on earth, though, so the tree is as tall as the sky is. And then its roots descend into Sheol to draw up this water. It's watered by the abyss—by the deep. So this tree is like a pole or a column that runs right through the earth. Again, if you're thinking about Israelite cosmology... To the Israelite and other ancient people it's a very typical worldview that the earth was a round, flat disc. It's set on top of pillars. It's surrounded by water. Underneath it is water in the underworld. It's covered by the dome that meets the edges of the horizon where light and dark are separated (that's Proverbs 8). There are lots of references to this. I have a whole lecture that's online about Israelite cosmology. But running right through the center of this is this gigantic, enormous tree whose branches go to the heavens and whose roots go down to Sheol.

By the way, that's something that the flat-earthers won't tell you about, will they? They make a big deal that Heiser and others talking about Israelite cosmology... "Well, we have to believe that the earth is flat because 'that's what the Bible says.'" Well, the Bible talks about the world tree, too. And I don't know about you, but we ain't running into a giant tree whose branches extend to the heavens and whose roots go down to Sheol. So the flat-earthers conveniently forget that part of ancient Israelite cosmology. Believing this in the modern world is as dumb as it sounds, but the language, the YouTube videos, whatever you get on "the earth is really flat"... none of them touch this. They just don't. They're either ignorant of it or they just conveniently forget it. But it's part of biblical cosmology.

Allen in his *Word Biblical Commentary* (the second volume on Ezekiel) on pages 124 and 125 puts it this way:

After the direct rhetorical question of v 2b, the story is told of a magnificent tree, a mythological cosmic tree. From v 10 the story takes a sinister turn as the tree is accused of pride and wickedness, and Yahweh describes how he had it cut down and humiliated. In vv 15–17 the ritual mourning for the tree and its descent to Sheol are related, while v 18 returns to the present and to direct address in a threat of future punishment that echoes the language of Sheol used earlier. V 18 has a summarizing role, presenting the chapter in a nutshell and with greater clarity. . . . The motif of the cosmic tree is well attested in ancient mythology. It presents the living world as an enormous tree with its roots in the subterranean deep and its top in the clouds, a shelter for every living being. It is a separate motif from that of the tree of life [MH: **so we're not talking about the tree of life—that's something different**], although the two were often linked, as later in this poem. The motif came to greatest prominence in Indian [India] and Scandinavian mythology. There is some evidence of it in Sumerian and Mesopotamian literature (cf. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Literature* 271–73; Gowan, *When Man Becomes God* 103–5; Zimmerli 146), and it must have been from Mesopotamian culture that Ezekiel became aware of it and utilized it for the allegory.

Now Block says this:

25:00

Ezekiel's description of Assyria as *a cedar in Lebanon* is remarkable, especially since ancient reliefs usually associate Assyrian kings with the date palm. But the cedar was a well-known ancient Near Eastern symbol of majesty. Referred to as "the glory of Lebanon" (Isa. 35:2), from the 2nd millennium the cedar was especially valued for the construction of palaces and temples. . . . The source of Ezekiel's dendritic [tree] imagery has evoked a great deal of discussion. The resemblance to the majestic *mēsu* tree described in the Babylonian Erra Epic is striking:

We're going to talk about the *mēsu* tree and go back to a little bit about what Block says about it. I'm doing this for a reason. When I talk about Ezekiel 31 here and that it has something to do with the cosmic tree, I'm not making something up. This is well-known in ancient Near Eastern Hebrew Bible scholarship. It might not be known... you're not going to hear this in church. The flat-earthers aren't going to tell you because they want the earth to be flat and they don't want a big tree running through the axis of the earth all the way up to the sky and down to Sheol because that kind of ruins their view. You'd see that if it was there. So you're not going to get it there, but this is well-known. This isn't idiosyncratic to Mike. This is well-known. Back to Block:

Foremost, Ezekiel's allegory is a political rather than mythological statement.

We'll see. Those of you who have read Amar Annus' article on the origin of the Watchers and *Unseen Realm*, you're going to detect pretty soon here how old Block's commentary is. It's over twenty years old, and he's really missing a lot of information here. But I'm going to read what he says anyway.

Allusions to the gods are missing entirely [MH: They are but the abode of the gods is there.], and the appeal to the garden of God/Eden carries little if any mythological baggage [MH: We're going to find out in a moment how wrong that is.] Because the tradition of Gen. 2 would have been familiar to Ezekiel's audience, it provides a useful standard by which the glory of Assyria (Egypt) could be measured. For Ezekiel the superlative cedar of Lebanon represents simply the foremost political force of the day...

Block wants to drift away from seeing too much ancient Near Eastern mythology here. Why? Because he's with a lot of the other scholars that don't want this to be about the divine council and the abode of the divine council. He wants it to be about Adam. Both for that reason and also because he's writing 20 or 25 years before material like Annus ferreted out for us (that I was able to take advantage of in *Unseen Realm*). It's dated material. He also says:

Ezekiel's allegory finds its closest analogue in another biblical story, Dan. 4:7–9.

Remember the big tree there with Nebuchadnezzar and all that? That's a problem, too, because that is *clearly* mythological material. It's not just about Nebuchadnezzar, just like this isn't about Pharaoh. There's a clear Mesopotamian connection with both Ezekiel 31 and Daniel 4. It's the same connection. Block seems unaware that the *mēsu* tree gives the account in Daniel 4 and in Ezekiel 31 a distinct mytho-poetic/mythological flavor and that the tree in Daniel is, in fact, related to the *mēsu* tree. So it's far more than political. This isn't just a political analogy. There's something a whole lot bigger going on.

If you subscribe to the newsletter, I'm going to put an article (in the folder that I use for podcast articles that I reference here) by Silviu Bunta. It's called "The Mēsu Tree and the Animal Inside: Theomorphism and Theriomorphism in Daniel 4." It's a journal article. "Theomorphism" refers to how God's form or shape is described. "Theriomorphism" is animal form. That's just what it means; it's kind of an odd academic term. But if you read that, you're going to see that we do have a lot going on in Daniel 4 that most people don't realize and we've got the same kind of thing going on in Ezekiel 31. And it ain't just political. This is theological messaging through the use of ancient Near-Eastern religious thinking. It is all over this chapter and all over Daniel 4. The cosmic tree is not symbolizing just a man. This is where Block and others want to go because they're thinking that

30:00

Ezekiel 28 is just about comparing the prince of Tyre to Adam. Let's not have the divine council in there. Let's not have a divine rebel in there. Let's not have council rebellion in view. That is quite misguided. If you go back to Ezekiel 31 here, the text never says it's about Pharaoh—it's about the nation, the empire. It's about Pharaoh and his multitudes. That empire with its hubris is analogized with a great tree. A *man* isn't the point of the analogy. The might of Egypt collectively (and the hubris that goes with it) is the point. It will fall just like Assyria did, and when we get to Daniel 4, the message is the same. Nebuchadnezzar (whom God will use in the time period of Ezekiel to judge Egypt) will be subject to the same judgment. And he gets the same imagery, the same messaging. Look at verses 15-17 and ask yourself if the description there fits with only one person (Pharaoh). I'm belaboring this because this is how the chapter is typically talked about. So we're talking about Pharaoh here so we can justify isolating the discussion of the prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 to the man in the garden—to Adam. Again, I'm saying that's just misguided.

But let's try to stick with Ezekiel 31. Here's verses 15-17:

¹⁵ **“Thus says the Lord God: On the day the cedar [MH: the Hebrew actually says “it” instead of “the cedar”] went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. ¹⁶ I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below. ¹⁷ They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.**

Here's are some questions. Why would Lebanon mourn for Pharaoh? It wouldn't. It's actually mourning for one of its own, remember? The analogy is about the tree, so Lebanon/the forest in Lebanon... they're not mourning because of a man. They're mourning because of one of their own. The tree—the great tree—has fallen. I'll just telegraph where we're going to go with some of this. The trees here are not representative of people in the garden of God. The trees are representative of divine beings in the abode of God, the headquarters of the divine council. They are mourning. The point of the original rebellion incident (the original problem, the original tragedy) is not the fall of a man. It's disloyalty in the council. Lebanon would not mourn for a man. The divine council would not mourn for the man because God is going to redeem the man. They will mourn for one of their own. They mourn for the great tree who has fallen.

Another question: Did Adam get cast down to Sheol, to the pit? Did Adam "lie with the uncircumcised" (which is Old Testament language for being buried or going to the realm of the dead with people who are not the people of God—the Gentiles, the uncircumcised—and not your family)? Is that what happened to Adam, or was Adam redeemed? This does not fit Adam; that's the point. It doesn't fit it in any way, shape, or form. But you will have scholars consistently try to make this about the man in the garden. It is not about the man.

35:00

What about the line where the other trees were comforted by the great tree's trip to Sheol? Well, the verb here in the Hebrew is in the Niphal stem, and it can also be translated "they were filled with regret." That's a very common translation for this lemma in the Niphal. I would suggest to you that this makes a great deal of sense and that the ESV has sort of missed an opportunity here to have the passage make sense. Again, every translation has its problems. It's not a crime, just an observation. But the other trees are mourning for one of their own and they are filled with regret. The other trees of Eden joined in this lament. Maybe the point is that this great tree (and others like it)... maybe when we bring Assyria into the picture, maybe we have other divine rebels. Remember the gods over the nations, the gods assigned/allotted to the nations in Deuteronomy 32? (If you're new to the podcast I can't go over all this information for you. You have to read *Unseen Realm* or watch the videos on the podcast site where it says "start here." This is why they're there.) Remember the gods who were allotted to the nations? They become corrupt and they fall. Maybe the point here in an extended way is that we've got lots of problems here with rebellion in the council. Others like the original great tree cast down to the pit, that's their destiny. Maybe that's the point. Some of these trees were originally loyal; they were originally part of the forest in Lebanon—they were originally part of the council. It's not just the great tree that ends up in Sheol, but there are others that will end up in Sheol. There are others that will go down to the pit. And there's regret.

Just to belabor the point, it's just not about the man in the garden. This is about a divine rebel cast down to the pit and other rebels like him are going to be cast down, as well. Now, it could be (and it's difficult to tell because it's poetry)... Hebrew stems in conjugations don't have ways of specifically plotting out their time in the chronology. This might be the only place that I know of where you could suggest that when the great tree fell—the original divine rebel who is the *nachash* in Genesis 3 and *helel ben sachar* in Isaiah 14 (the shining one, son of the dawn)—when they go bad, others went bad with them. We don't have a reference here to a third of the trees; we don't have a third of the angels and all that stuff, but it's possible (I'm not convinced of it) that there may have been more than one if we press the analogy to that level, as opposed to others proleptically. Ezekiel's writing in the sixth century B.C. What happened at Babel is long ago history. The gods are allotted the nations and they go bad. That could very easily be (and I think it is) a reference to what's going on here, but you could press the analogy to make the other point. The point is that this is not about a man in Eden. This is about the forest itself, the members of the divine council. One of them

falls and they mourn. So the original ancient point of the analogy is divine rebellion again. We saw this in Ezekiel 28.

Now in that Bunta article that I referenced about the *mēsu* tree, he confuses this, as well. I want to say something about him for those of you who will read that article. He wants the *mēsu* tree material to be about Adam. And you say, "Well, how in the world does that work?" Well, we're definitely dealing with a divine council in the context, just like Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and Genesis 3. There is a man in Eden—we obviously can't deny that there's a man in Eden. But I am denying that this story is about his fall because he doesn't go to Sheol. He's not unredeemed. He doesn't lie with the uncircumcised. None of this stuff fits. But nevertheless, Bunta and others still want to look at this as Adam. Ezekiel 31 shares obvious elements with Isaiah 14 (these references to Sheol). Taylor writes this:

The use of a cedar of Lebanon as an allegory for a mighty nation is no new thing. Ezekiel used the same idea in 17:1–10, 22–24, and other echoes of the language of this chapter may be found in 19:10–14; 26:19–21; 28:11–19. Isaiah's description of the descent of the king of Babylon into Sheol has distinct similarities (Isa. 14:4–21), and Daniel's description of Nebuchadnezzar's dream uses much the same imagery (Dan. 4:1–12, 19–27).

Yeah, that's all true. But ask yourself the question (or just make the observation): There's no way to get Adam in Isaiah 14. It's not like Ezekiel 28, when you can appeal to the Septuagint and you can just put him there because of what a translation does with difficult Hebrew. You can't do that in Isaiah 14 and you can't do that in Daniel 4, either. The only way to view all of these chapters that have shared imagery between all of them... the only way that they can all be consistent in the same way is to opt for a divine rebellion being at the heart of the imagery—the awfulness and the pinnacle of *unthinkableness* of such hubris that one among the council would go astray. If you look at all of the passages through that lens, not just pulling one out and pulling another one out and saying it's about a man... if you look at all of them that way, they are consistent with each other. Again, that's what I'm suggesting here.

40:00

Back to Bunta, he'll latch onto the description of the *mēsu* tree as the "flesh of the gods." This tree was the flesh of the gods—the stuff from which an insignia or symbol of the gods is made. Which, of course, sounds like idolatry, and that's the way it's treated in Mesopotamian stuff. People take the wood from the *mēsu* tree and they make an idol. Here's how Bunta and others think this is about Adam: "Well, humans are the image of God, just like idols were the images of the gods to other people. So therefore, the analogy of the *mēsu* tree must be to the man, (the human), to Adam." We have some problems with that, too. The *mēsu* tree accounts never have humans as being created in the image of the gods or a single God. The tree is only said to represent the god (whoever that is) and the

idol represents that god. So arguing for Adam is to use the metaphor of the ancient Near Eastern material in a way that the metaphor isn't used in that material. The *mēsu* tree also isn't the tree of life for humans, so we have to wonder why we are connecting it to humans at all. Again, the metaphor can be understood in different ways—that's just what metaphors are. There are different ways to see the analogy. Sure, the *mēsu* tree is an idol; you can make an idol from it in the Mesopotamian material. And it's associated with the god, or a particular member of the divine council. One could therefore say that since in Ezekiel 31 the analogy is made not just to Pharaoh (generic humans) but to Egypt collectively, the tree that was Assyria/Egypt represents the whole disinherited nations, its people, and its gods. Okay, why not go that direction? Why not say that the *mēsu* tree represents the whole nation? In other words, you have these gods in the council and they go astray. They're allotted to the nations and they go astray, and so one of the trees in the council is assigned to people and the people represent that deity and he represents them. Why not go for that? Why do we have to say it's about Adam? Why not apply the metaphor in a different way to the relationship of the gods to their nations? I'm just suggesting it; I'm not saying it's the way we should... I'm just saying that we *can*.

To flesh this out (pardon the pun there), it's worth noting that the Mesopotamian *mēsu* tree wasn't unique. It wasn't just one tree. In Mesopotamian material when it talks about the *mēsu* tree, it's not just talking about one tree. So we're not talking about one tree that has to symbolize or be linked to one human (to Adam). In Amar Annus' article on the origin of the Watchers (which is already in the folder that I've mentioned many times), he notes on page 310 that:

In the Mesopotamian *Utukku Lemnutu* incantations, some demons are compared to devastating flood (5.82; 16.61), and in 4.17-18 the demons spawned by the seed of the sky-god Anu 'scorch the land like daylight, weaken (var. "uproot") the huge *mes*-trees in the forest'.

These trees are emblematic of the realm of the gods, the council of the gods. There are *lots* of *mēsu* trees, not just one. My view is that these trees were considered "the flesh of the gods" simply because in Mesopotamian thinking, the idols of lots of particular gods would have been made from trees. In other words, there's no evidence in the Mesopotamian material that the language was about one tree and one guy. So it's illegitimate for biblical scholars to use the metaphor that way, to defend the idea that we're just talking about Adam here. That's an illegitimate use of the metaphor; the metaphor does not have that element on its own terms, and it ignores lots of other stuff. Again, Adam didn't go to Sheol. He didn't die among the uncircumcised. He didn't go to the pit with the uncircumcised. Adam was redeemed. And if we look at Ezekiel 31, we're going to find out that Egypt isn't going to have the same destiny as Israel. Israel is going to be raised to new life because of the people of God. The analogy just doesn't fit in a lot of ways, the way a lot of scholars want to think about it.

45:00

Let's transition now. "Okay, Mike, we've talked about how it's usually talked about—how the whole cosmic tree metaphor is usually talked about and how scholars want this to be talking about one guy (one tree, one guy), so that we can say that Pharaoh is being compared to Adam just like the prince of Tyre is being compared to Adam. And all this nonsense about these chapters are about rebellion in the divine council and how those two chapters (Ezekiel 28 and 31) fit with Isaiah 14. Yeah, we know that the language is the same and the metaphor is the same. Don't bother us with those details, Mike. This is about Adam; all these things are about Adam because God forbid that we say that Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and now Ezekiel 31 has any relationship to Genesis 3. We don't want to say that." Again, if you're curious as to why scholars would resist that, go back and listen to the episode on Ezekiel 28. What I'm saying is that *is* what's going on. These chapters *are* related, the metaphors *are* the same, the language *is* the same, and the reference point *is* the same. It is not about Adam, it is not about a man in the garden. It is about a divine rebel. That's what all of these things are about. To be consistent, that's the way we need to treat all of them, not just one when we think it makes us comfortable for whatever other reason in our theology or in our scholarship.

You say all that and you say, "Okay, Mike. What's going on here? You haven't answered the questions you raised. Why the reference to Lebanon? Why the reference to the cedar forest? We know if we read Genesis 2 that Eden geography has the Tigris and Euphrates down there by the Persian Gulf. It's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of miles away from Lebanon. What's going on here? You've got to answer that question." You're correct; I do. And at this point, I want to refer listeners (again, subscribers will get this article, too) to an article by Edward Lipinski called "El's Abode: Mythological Traditions Related to Mount Hermon and to the mountains of Armenia." It's from the journal *Orientalia Lovaniensa Periodica*, published in Belgium.

I have to give kudos here to Derek Gilbert. Derek and I had a conversation a few weeks ago and he started talking about Mount Hermon and the Annunaki and the Watchers, and it just wasn't clicking with me. I had given him a couple articles for his book and it wasn't clicking, and then I realized a little while later that I thought he was talking about a different Lipinski article. (I have one on the furniture of El and a few other things.) I had to go back to my own archives (laughs) and find this article—and it's awesome! It's awesome. So I had never had that conversation with Derek, this wouldn't have gone off in my head. But it did, so kudos to him for waking me up there.

This article, like I said, is just amazing. I can't go through the whole thing because it's about 60 pages long. It's a long article and it's very dense and detailed, so everything I'm going to say here will be extractions from the article. Lipinski goes into mind-numbing detail to establish in various texts in various languages... He is not making any of it up—trust me. Go look at the article and

you'll find out. You don't have to trust me, just go look at the article. Here are a few summary points of this. We'll tie this into Ezekiel 31 and that will be the essence of our episode here.

50:00

The article is about where El lives. Ugaritic El was the one who fathered all the other gods. He's the highest authority, the high sovereign. Even though Baal (his co-regent) gets called the "most high" and all that stuff in Ugaritic religion, he still has to get permission from El to do things. We know in the Hebrew Bible that Yahweh, the God of Israel, gets described with both El and Baal epithets, and that's because the biblical writers want to elevate Yahweh above both El and Baal. Ugarit was their next-door neighbor. Baal had a big religious influence. El worship had a big influence on the Israelites. So the prophets will use this material to say that Yahweh and this other guy are two different things here; you need to worship Yahweh and him alone, and all that stuff. All of that said, there was a lot of speculation in ancient times and in scholarship about how Ugaritic texts talk about El's abode and El's council and where it meets and all this stuff. We get a description of Baal's council in Saphan—the remote north. What about El's? Up until Lipinski's article, most scholars would have put this location of El's mountain at a place called Mount Apheq near Khirbet Afqa. It's a mountain that's between Biblos and Baalbek. There's a PDF of a map in the folder for subscribers that you can look at while you're listening to the podcast. There's a well-known place here between Biblos and Baalbek that most scholars believed was what the ancients thought was the mountain of El (the dwelling place of El). Lipinski points out, though, that there isn't a single Ugaritic text that names this as the place of El and his council. And besides that, *'apq* is just a common noun. It's never used as a proper noun. So he says, "I'm not convinced. I think there's a better possibility." And that's what his article is about. He writes this:

It is likely the Ugaritians located the abode of El somewhere in their own geographical horizon, but rather far from Ugarit...

Since one Ugaritic text (Text 51 from Cyrus Gordon's Ugaritic Textbook; it's also KTU 1.4, column 5, 20-25) locates this abode of El:

"A thousand fields, ten thousand acres" distant from Mt Saphanu."

This was Baal's mountain. So you get sort of a vague description. "This is where El's house is: a thousand fields, ten thousand acres distant from Mount Sephanu." So Lipinski seizes on this and says, "Okay, let's try a few locations out and let's look in the Ugaritic texts for maybe some vocabulary that we can figure out where this would have been. This is what he's doing in the rest his article. Catch your breath here, this is what he says: He is convinced (and I believe his article presents a compelling case) that the mountain of El for the Ugaritic people would have been in ancient Armenia, but for the biblical people (the Israelites)... they associated the Ugaritic verbiage here and their own conception of where El

lived with Mount Hermon. Lipinski goes through lots of stuff. He makes this comment:

There is an old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh epic that identifies "Hermon and Lebanon" with "the dwelling of the Anunnaki."

The Annunaki, in early Mesopotamian religion, were gods. They were members of the divine council. In later Mesopotamian religious texts, they get consigned to the abyss. They become the lords of hell (if you want to say it that way). But in the old Babylonian texts (this story of Gilgamesh), they're just part of the divine council and the place where they meet is Hermon and Lebanon. The Ugaritic term for Hermon is *Šaryan*. that is very, very, very close to *Sirion* in Deuteronomy 3:9 and Psalm 29:6, and 1 Enoch 13:9. So what Lipinski does is he ties all these threads together and basically says that when we're talking about the forests of Lebanon or the cedars of Lebanon... there are other phrases, like "cedar mountain" as the abode of El; his article goes through all the data, but I don't have time to spill it out to you)... He's suggesting that to these ancients, Mount Hermon was the dwelling place of the divine council. This is where they met. It's specifically actually linked to the Annunaki in this old Babylonian version of Gilgamesh. I'll even read it to you. If you have *Prichard's Ancient Near Eastern Texts of the Old Testament* (third edition), this is pages 504-504. This is the old Babylonian fragment of the Gilgamesh epic. Gilgamesh is talking to Enkidu. They're in the forest and they have to confront this monster, Huwawa. It says:

Gilgamesh heeded what his friend said.
 He took the axe in his hand,
 He drew the sword from his belt.
 Gilgamesh struck him (Huwawa) in the [nec]k, [MH: this is the guardian monster of the forest]
 Enkidu, his friend, [...] ...,
 At the third (blow) [Huwawa] fell.
Confusion [... du]mbfounded,
 [He struc]k the watchman, Huwawa, to the ground.
 For two leagues the cedars [*resounded*].
 Enkidu killed with him [...] (10)
 Forest [...] cedars.
 E[nkidu] killed [the *watchman*] of the forest,
 At whose word Saria [MH: this is the Akkadian word for the Ugaritic term *Šaryon* and the Hebrew term *Sirion*, so it's Mount Hermon in Lebanon] [*trembled*].
 [All] the mountains became ... [...],
 All the hills became ... [...].
 He slew the ... [...] cedars,
 Those destroyed ... [...] after he slew the seven,
 The net [...] the sword (weighing) eight talents,

55:00

The ...²² of eight talents, bearing these [*he pr*]essed on into the forest.²³
He opened up the secret dwelling of the Anunnaki.
While Gilgamesh cut down the trees, Enkidu dug up the ...²⁴
E[nkidu] said to Gilgamesh:
“[...] Gilgamesh, felled are the cedars.”

Gilgamesh is there cutting down trees, and the forest is referred to as "the secret dwelling of the Annunaki." Without getting into too much detail (because it's tough to translate this to a podcast), Lipinski's article demonstrates that these terms that you run across in these ancient texts (*Šharyon*, *Sirion*, a reference to a cedar forest and a cedar mountain) point to Mount Hermon as being the dwelling place of El's council. And it makes sense because that's where you have a cedar forest! Not only that, but Lipinski goes on for two or three pages talking about how well-watered it is geographically. El's abode in Ugaritic texts is described as a well-watered garden. You have the watering motif, you have the garden motif, you've got the cedars, you've got all this stuff.

Again, why the connection with Eden? Because Eden was the cosmic mountain. It was the dwelling place of Yahweh. It was the place where the divine council met to listen to Yahweh and figure out what's on the task list for today. It's where humans are created to be part of the council, and then to overspread the earth and to make the rest of the earth like Eden. The cosmic mountain, the dwelling place of God... We talked about this in Ezekiel 28, I've talked about it in *Unseen Realm*. This is why Eden can be talked about as a garden and as a mountain in Ezekiel 28. It's just where God lives. That's all that the terminology means. It's where God lives, and where God lives is where he does business. And where he does business, the council is. In one of those biblical descriptions, we have Eden, Zion, Sinai, and Lebanon. There are references in the Psalms to this. We have Psalm 48 about the dwelling place of Yahweh being the heights of the north—Baal's mountain. But you also get it with references to Tabor and Hermon being associated with Yahweh. Psalm 42:6-7. Catch the language here. The psalmists says:

**My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
⁷Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.**

"Hermon," "well-watered," it's a forest... I can't really bring all the references together (that's why I'm giving you the reading material), but these places are cosmic mountains. These are places associated with where God conducts business.

I know the episode is getting a little long, but to wrap up here, I want to take you back to Amar Annus' article. He actually discusses a number of these themes. I'll read you a couple of things from Lipinski, as well. Just listen to how this language about Hermon and Lebanon make sense in the context of the divine council and the Watchers and the gods of the council—all these ideas that listeners of this podcast should be familiar with. We'll start with Lipinski here. On page 40, he says:

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According to the Midrash Rabba on Genesis 33, (67a), this cavern (of Pan - Banias) [MH: the cavern of Pan, or Banias, was on Mount Hermon] was one of the outlets of the Deep or Ocean from which came the waters of the Flood. A rabbinical tradition identified this with the source of the Jordan with one of the fountains of the great Ocean [MH: the great deep, *tehom rabba*], mentioned in Gen. 7:11 and 8:2. In accordance with ancient cosmographical ideas, the outburst of water from the cavern of Banias has thus been conceived as an eruption of the subterranean ocean on which the earth was believed to rest. On the other hand, the Testament of Levi 2:7 [MH: a pseudepigraphal text] locates above Mount Hermon "a great sea hanging" which is the celestial ocean.

Remember that in the Hebrew Bible, God dwells above the firmament, above the waters ("the waters above the firmament"). Regarding the Ugaritic texts that have two oceans (the double deep—"deep calls to deep" or the *tehom* calling to the *tehom*) and Psalm 42, Lipinski says:

This passage reflects the belief that the two oceans or deeps (*tehom*) of the world, the subterranean source of the fountains, springs and rivers that come out of the earth, and the celestial reservoir whence comes the rain, join in the region of the upper Jordan and of the "giant Mount Hermon, whose summit was supposed to reach up to the first heaven." The two oceans are personified and represented as calling aloud to one another through the *šinnorim*, "water-tunnels" (of II Sam. 5:8), that connect them in the mysterious entrails of the mountain. Their roar is nevertheless heard where waves of their waters burst out from the cave of Banias... This could suggest to localize El's abode midst Mount Hermon, since he was supposed to live "at the sources of the rivers, midst the springs of the two Oceans."

The double deep. Annus says this:

There are more reminiscences of the Mesopotamian origin in other

versions of the angelic descent myth. That the Watchers descended to earth with a good intent is in background also in the Aramaic fragment 4Q530 from Qumran, which belongs to the *Book of Giants*.

Some of the Dead Sea Scroll texts and some of the portions of Enoch disagree over whether their intent was good or not, but he says of this Aramaic fragment:

It contains in a broken context the reference to 'gardeners' (*gnnyn*) at work, nurturing and protecting the trees (2 ii 7), which connotes the Watchers prior to their apostasy.

They were the gods. They were the sons of God. They were these divine beings there to help take care of Eden, take care of the divine abode.

This reference to 'gardeners' is to be compared to the *Jubilees* 5.6, where the God sent the angels to earth, and 4.15 further specifies the reason: 'in order to instruct human beings and to act (with) justice and righteousness upon earth.' [MH: but of course, they go corrupt] According to *Jubilees*, only after the Watchers' arrival and sojourn among human beings were they corrupted and led astray by the irresistible beauty of mortal women. The statement in the Qumran fragment that 'the gardeners were watering' (*gnnyn hww mšqyn*) may be an allusion to the initial [good] educational mission of the Watchers.

But then they go corrupt. On another page (304), Annus says of the same Babylonian fragment that Lipinski was referencing:

In an Old Babylonian fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic the Cedar Mountain is identified as 'Hermon and Lebanon', an interesting coincidence of identity... The association of Watchers' sons with a cedar forest is also at work in the Damascus Document (CD 2.19) from Qumran, where they are as tall as cedar trees (3000 or 300 cubits), and with bodies like mountains.

Again, this is a Dead Sea Scroll. Another one (Annus, page 309-310):

The account of flood and its results in the *Erra Epic* again invites a comparison with Jewish lore about Watchers and Giants. In the Qumran fragment 4Q530, which mentions the Watchers as 'gardeners', also contains a reference to destructive water and fire, abruptly doing away with all flourishing vegetation in the garden under Watchers' care. The 'gardeners' in this symbolic dream refers to Watchers, and the trees to giants. Another Qumran fragment, which is probably a textual witness to the same dream or a series of dreams

(6Q8 2), mentions a garden and a tree with three shoots, which apparently survives from this catastrophe. The image serves as a symbol for the preservation of Noah and his three sons. This narrative refers to Watchers' original mission as culture-bringers, which had turned to evil, and finally resulted in their destruction by the flood of water and fire.

1:05:00

Remember that phrase of the Apkallu—"culture bringers?" If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you know what we're talking about. When you read *Reversing Hermon*, you'll know even more. The Watchers who were the original culture-bringers had turned to evil and the final result was their destruction by the flood. Here's the point of all these ideas: Ezekiel had access to all this stuff, or scribes in Babylon who edited the book of Ezekiel into the form we have had access to all this stuff. These ideas in Israelite hands describe a primeval forest that is the dwelling place of God, just like in other texts the language of a garden is used or the language of a mountain is used. Here we have the primeval forest of the divine council, the "well-watered garden" abode or the mountain abode of God, also known as Eden or the cosmic mountain. Hermon and the forests right next to Hermon are easy matches for all of these things. The perspective that unites all of this... Just think about what we're doing here. We have Ezekiel 28, which references Eden as a garden and a mountain and we have a divine rebellion in there. That's the point of the analogy. We have Isaiah 14, which shares language from Ezekiel 28, that the divine rebel gets sent to the abyss—gets cast down to Sheol and cast down to *eretz* (the earth), which is another word for Sheol. The council loses one of its members. We have Ezekiel 31 that describes the same thing, but now we get the element that the great tree has fallen and the other trees mourn. Frankly, it's not over because there are going to be other trees (other members of this council) who are also going to be cast down and take up residence in Sheol, the underworld.

All of these things—Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel 31, Isaiah 14, and Genesis 3—utilize the same metaphors, the same point of analogy of a divine rebel. Not the man, not Adam. Inserting Adam into all this actually messes up the coherence of all the data. Without him, the mosaic of ideas comes together really, really nicely. That may irritate some who don't want their demonology moved beyond a snake in a garden. And they don't want to hear about a divine council, much less a rebellion in the divine council. But folks, I don't write the stuff! I just try to do some work to understand it and get you to material to help *you* understand it.

So what we have in Ezekiel 31 is yet again, another reference to a rebellion in the divine council that is used in this case to say, "Look, Egypt, you think you're great, but nations and their gods who are greater than you have fallen. To reinforce that point, I'm going to draw on the story of a wonderful being in a wonderful place, right there with his comrades in the divine council on Hermon. And they were judged. As mighty as these gods (these divine beings) were (they're better than humans!), when rebellion against the will of the Most High

God happens, it will be dealt with. So take heed because you're nothing special. You're not an exception. You will not be a footnote to this pattern. You're going to be judged just like they were. And just like other nations like you have tried to flaunt themselves against the will of Yahweh, it's going to be terminated. You're going to be history."

TS: Mike, you know what I think about the Watchers being gardeners? It's just hard to find good help, you know? (laughter)

MH: It is hard to find good help.

TS: Eventually they'll turn on you.

MH: They start out so well and then what have you got? There's always a bad apple in the bunch.

TS: Exactly. Hey, I like it when you get snowed in! You go overboard on research. I like this.

MH: Yeah, I went a little haywire.

TS: Now, do you touch on Annus' and Lipinski's articles in your upcoming book, *Reversing Hermon*?

MH: Annus', yeah. Lipinski's is a little peripheral because there's no direct point of reversal for the Lebanon language. Hermon is the major point of reversal. But I basically try to strike points with other texts (a lot of it is Dead Sea Scroll stuff) that you're going to pick up and see threads of in the New Testament. You can't throw everything into the book, but that's what the podcast is for. The podcast doesn't have a word count, although some people probably wish it would, but it doesn't have a word count.

TS: There you go, love it. Awesome. Well, next week we'll have chapter 32, correct?

MH: Yep, chapter 32. We're going to get more about Egypt and more about Sheol.

TS: Good deal, Mike. With that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.