

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

### **Episode 166**

### **Melchizedek, Part 1a**

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**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**

**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

Melchizedek is one of the more enigmatic figures in the Bible. Mentioned in only two passages in the Old Testament (Gen 14:17-24; Psalm 110), he nevertheless drew a lot of attention during the Second Temple Period and the New Testament. Thousands of pages of scholarly research have been devoted to him. Nearly everything said about him produces interpretive problems, from the nature of his name, to its meaning, to his identity as a Canaanite (non-Israelite), to why Psalm 110 favors his priesthood about that of Aaron. This episode and the next (1b) of the podcast focuses on the Old Testament associated with Melchizedek. Later episodes will be devoted to how he was understood in Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament.

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 166: Melchizedek, Part 1a. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

**MH:** Well, I'm doing pretty good. Better since getting back home. Things can return to the normal level of chaos, I guess, but I like that.

**TS:** Back from Roswell... Did you see any UFO's when you were there?

**MH:** I saw plenty of UFO's! Sticking out of buildings, windows, all that sort of stuff. (laughing)

**TS:** I was there for the 50th and now the 70th is happening. It's amazing how fast twenty years goes by.

**MH:** That's true. But it was nice to connect with people that I'd seen there before. Everything from podcast listeners (not just Peeranormal, but this podcast) all the way up to—I won't name them—friends who are on staff at Wheaton College and a few other highly respectable organizations there. They're into the content and I

have met them before at Roswell. And I got to stay with a friend who's an FBI agent, so hey—that was fun!

**TS:** Good deal. You've got another trip coming up?

**MH:** Yeah, basically two weeks from now I'm going to be in Northport, Washington. I've looked at Northport on Google Earth and it's a really, really, really small town. I'm actually thinking about the possibility of having more people turn out for the event that live in the town. It's got a few hundred people, but they're actually making a good effort to do radio spots and promote it, so I imagine people from all over the place (within a few hours' distance) are going to come. Fern and Audrey are going to be there with me. This is their first public appearance (I guess you could call it that). We'll just play it by ear. I'll have half the day on the 22nd, and we'll turn it over to Fern and Audrey for half the day. We'll get to see them, and I'm sure it will be interesting and fun.

**TS:** Do you have any idea what y'all will be talking about/covering?

**MH:** I'm just going to do Divine Council stuff. They asked me to bring along some *Reversing Hermon* because (to quote them) "everybody else that was going to come has already read the other book" (*Unseen Realm*). So I'll probably do a mix of Divine Council Worldview stuff and then talk about content in *Reversing Hermon*. That's my plan, anyway. I think Fern and Audrey are just going to sort of wing it. They're going to take Q&A and it'll be pretty interactive. So we'll see what becomes of that, but the organizers have basically told me that it's going to be a combination of Christians who are into the content and lots of other people who are (I think aptly) described as "curiosity seekers." Nothing ever really happens in Northport, so people will wander in and it could be a variety of backgrounds. We're kind of used to that and we don't have any problem with it, so I think it'll be fun.

**TS:** Sounds good. Sorry I'm going to miss that, but that sounds interesting.

What sounds interesting, Mike, is what we're going to be covering here over the next three weeks: Melchizedek. There's so much information to cover! I don't even know what you're going to do. You've got your work cut out for you!

**MH:** It's going to be three parts. We might as well jump into it. There's just so much material about Melchizedek. The reason there's a lot of material is because there's so many problems. There are so many points of confusion, so many points of ambiguity, so many things you can see in the text and then go down two or three trails and trajectories—and really rabbit-holes, in this case. It's a challenge to basically just cover it all, much less try to reach any sort of conclusions about a number of things. But we'll do our best. We'll chop it up into three parts. I don't think any of them are going to be short! I know this one's not going to be short.

5:00

In this first part, we're going to focus on Old Testament material. So we're not going to get into Second Temple Jewish stuff (that's going to be Part 2). And then, of course, New Testament material will be Part 3. Obviously, Parts 2 and 3 are going to build on this one. I can telegraph this much here: you're going to see how certain elaborations are made on the Old Testament material (some would even use the word "alterations") in Second Temple Jewish literature and in the New Testament. The Old Testament stuff is adapted in a number of respects by Second Temple Jewish tradition and New Testament. That's not to say (we'll give an example or two today) that the New Testament (or any of this other material) is just making stuff up. It's just that they'll seize on a particular trajectory and then kind of run with it or apply it in a different way that could be a legitimate application, but you could apply it two or three other ways, too. So there's just a lot here that there is to consider. This is one of those topics that is kind of a vortex. A simple question like "Who was Melchizedek?" turns into a dozen other questions, most of which don't have clear-cut answers. I would say again that this is easily one of the most complex topics in biblical studies.

Let's just jump into the passages where Melchizedek is actually mentioned. We're going to start with Genesis 14. The other one is Psalm 110. But I'm going to stick here with Genesis 14. We're going to spend a lot of time here, and then we'll pick up Psalm 110 at a certain point. So Genesis 14:17-24 reads as follows in the ESV (speaking of Abraham):

**<sup>17</sup> After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). <sup>18</sup> And <sup>t</sup>Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) <sup>19</sup> And he blessed him and said,**

**"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,  
Possessor of heaven and earth;  
<sup>20</sup> and blessed be God Most High,  
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"**

**And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. <sup>21</sup> And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons [the people Abram had saved], but take the goods for yourself." <sup>22</sup> But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup> that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' <sup>24</sup> I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."**

That's the end of the pericope (the little section there) in Genesis 14. There are a number of issues that arise just from what we read, and really even just a handful of the verses that we read. Each has a bearing on how later literature (Second Temple Jewish literature and New Testament material) ought to be understood (or how they can be understood). And it has a bearing on whether the other literature reinterprets what's going on here in Genesis 14 in a manner consistent with the original Old Testament passage. This, in turn, has a bearing on Christology (we'll eventually get there when we get to the New Testament material, and that'll actually build on some Second Temple material, too), since the book of Hebrews links Jesus and Melchizedek in some way. That's a little vague for right now, but we'll eventually get there. What I say in Part 3, I hope will be sort of evident from what we cover in Parts 1 and 2.

For our starting point here in Genesis 14, we're going to begin with the name—just the name Melchizedek. You think, "Well, what's the big deal about that?" Oh, there's just a lot going on there! In Hebrew we have *malkîšedeq* or *malki-tsedeq*—basically two parts of the name. Sometimes academic works will take *sedeq* and translate it *tsedeq* or *tsedek*. Or instead of 'ts,' they'll have 's' with a dot underneath it (it's the 'ts' sound—the Hebrew letter *tsade*). Nobody follows the same convention all the time. Either one of those is correct—it's the 'ts' sound. So the name is *malkîšedeq*.

10:00

In the course of discussing the name, here's what we're going to hit (so just keep these things in your head). We have to talk about the type of name this is in terms of historical Semitic analysis. We'll talk about what the name means. And we also need to talk about the theology that's sort of glommed onto (or packed onto) this name. That's going to take us into the issue of Israelite religion, and that, in turn, is really going to be focused on the second half of the name (*tsedeq*) because (I will telegraph this at this point and we'll eventually return to it) *Tsedeq* is a deity name. It's the name of a Canaanite god. So that is going to factor into what we have here—what we're looking at when we see *malkîšedeq* in Genesis 14 and elsewhere.

Many presume that *malkîšedeq* means "king of righteousness," since that is a wording adopted in the New Testament. Hebrews 7:2 interprets Melchizedek's name (Hebrew *malkîšedeq*) as "king of righteousness." You can translate it that way, but the Hebrew is actually more flexible than that. Here are some questions to ask as we try to analyze the name:

- Is the name a Northwest Semitic personal name or not? If not, it might be a royal epithet (a title). So is Melchizedek (*malkîšedeq*) a personal name? Is it actually the name of a person? Or is it a title? It could actually be either. I'll explain why in a moment.

- If it's not a name at all and if it's a title, is there precedent for that view in the Old Testament (where you have something that looks like a personal name but it's a title)?
- If, on the other hand, it is a personal name, is it a theophoric name or a descriptive name? Now I need unpack both of those terms. Theophoric names are names that have a divine element in them—a deity name as part of them. So *malkîšedeq*... if *Tsedeq* is supposed to be understood as a deity name, then Melchizedek would be a theophoric name. One component of it would be a deity. Kind of like Jeremiah—*Yirmeyahu*. *Yahu* at the end is the divine name, *Yah*. We have all these sorts of names in the Bible in which part of the name is the divine name or some other deity name. Is Melchizedek one of those? Or is it merely descriptive? In other words, going back to Hebrews 7:2, "king of righteousness"... Maybe *Tsedeq* (that second part of the name) is not a deity name. Maybe it's an adjective, and therefore, it's descriptive: "my king is righteous" or "king of righteousness."

So there's all sorts of things (even with the name) to think about. All of those things are possibilities. So let's take the name apart as scholars would do and start thinking about each of them. We have *malkîšedeq*, two parts. We'll start with the spelling. The New Testament "king of righteousness" presumes that the name is what is called in Hebrew grammar a "construct phrase." That means there are two nouns next to each other. There's Noun X and then there's Noun Y, so you have an X of Y relationship—this noun of that noun. So in this case, it would be the word for "king" (*malk* in Semitic), and then we'd have the word for "righteous" or "righteousness"—so "king of righteousness" (noun of noun, X of Y relationship). So that's possible.

However, there's actually something that's kind of in the way of this. The first part of the name is *malkî*. It's a noun, plus a suffix (the little "ee" on the end—the "i" letter). You cannot have, by rule of Hebrew grammar, a suffix in between two nouns in a construct phrase. So it looks like that last little "i" letter (a *yod* in Hebrew) shouldn't be there. It messes up the construct phrase. If it's not a construct phrase, then what in the world is going on? It wouldn't be "king of righteousness." It would be "my king" (there's the noun plus the suffix—*malkî*)... "my king is righteous" or "my king is *Tsedeq*" (the deity). So which one do we have? Is it a construct phrase or not?

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Now, there's a way to sort of get around this. There's something called the *hireq compoginis*, which is sort of an arcane point of Hebrew grammar and syntax. In most simple terms, the "y" that is a suffix could actually be kind of a (this gets so technical so fast!)... It could be the vestige of a case system. In other words, it may not be a suffix after all, even though 99-percent of the time when you have the little "y" on a noun it's going to be a suffix. There are apparent exceptions. And so you might have this little letter in there that messes up the normal

construct phrase. It might be okay. It might not be a suffix after all, and you might be able to translate it "king of righteousness." But that wouldn't be the normative way to understand the phrase.

So what do we do with this? Let's just go back here and see that we've got two choices where we're at right now in our discussion. "King of righteousness"... right now if we just look at the name, that's possible but less likely. That means we don't have an X of Y—"king of righteousness"—relationship between nouns. We have something like "my king is \_\_\_\_\_" (fill in the blank, either "righteous" or "*Tsedeq*"). So we either have a theophoric name where a deity is part of it—"my king is *Tsedeq*" (whoever *Tsedeq* is, and we're going to talk about *Tsedeq* as we continue)... You either have that situation or you have some description—"my king is righteousness." *Tsedeq* is either an adjective or a deity name. That would be the normative way of reading this.

Let's take the second one ("my king is *Tsedeq*") for a moment. *Tsedeq* is a deity. This is a known deity from Canaanite religion. And, of course, Melchizedek is not an Israelite. He's not a descendant of Abraham; he is a Canaanite. So if we look at it as "my king is *Tsedeq*"... (Again, we'll talk a little bit later about who *Tsedeq* was and how that can be reconciled with the Most High. Isn't that Yahweh? Who's this *Tsedeq* guy? So we have to address that and we'll return to it. We're just focused on the name here.) If we take it as "my king is *Tsedeq*" then we have something to consider and try to parse. There are other names like this. There are examples of theophoric names in the Old Testament, as I mentioned. A little bit of a wild card here... The first part of the name (*mlk*) is also a deity name from Canaan. So you might actually have two deity names here. You could have "my king is *Tsedeq*," or if we take *mlk* as a deity name, you could have *Melek* or *Malk* (this wouldn't be Molech—that would be something different). You have "*Mlk* is righteous." So we have an *Mlk* deity known from Canaan and we have a *Tsedeq* deity known from Canaan. So what do we do with all that?

Let's take a look at the Old Testament. I'll just give you a couple examples that I hope will sort of unravel the complexity here. You have names like *malkî'ēl* in the Old Testament (Genesis 46:17). That could be translated "my king (*malkî'*) is El." El is a deity. You could also spell it or have a similar derivative as *malkiyyā* (Ezra 10:31, Jeremiah 38:6). That would be "my king is Yahweh (or Yah)." We also have names like *yěhōšādāq* or *yōšādāq*. That would be the first part of the name (*yěhō* or *yō*) in Hebrew... I can't explain why *yō* is still the divine name in a podcast, but either of those would mean "Yahweh is righteous" (Haggai 1:1, Ezra 3:2). If you're paying attention, you might think, "Couldn't it also mean 'Yahweh is *Tsedeq*'?" Yeah, it could.

What in the world are these people in the Old Testament thinking when they take these names? Were they names given at birth or are they titles given later? Do they make theological statements? Are they titles that just sort of telegraph some



belief that the person has and we don't really get the true name of the person? What's going on here? Again, all these things are possible with Melchizedek. It could be "my king is righteous," "my king is *Tsedeq*," "king of righteousness," "*Malk* is righteous," or "*Malk* is *Tsedeq*." It could be any of those five things just in this one little name.

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Another example from the book of Joshua (10:1 and 10:3)... The closest example is *Adoni-zedek*. In Hebrew, it would be *ʾădōnî* (my lord) and then *ṣedeq*: "*Tsedeq* is my lord" or "my lord is *Tsedeq*." This particular guy in Joshua 10 verses 1 and 3 is the king in Jerusalem at the time of Joshua, which at the time of Joshua is a Canaanite city. *Tsedeq* (as we're going to see a bit later) is a well-known Canaanite deity. So it makes sense for the king of Jerusalem at that particular time... Remember that Jerusalem is only going to become the capital of Israel when David conquers it. We're not even near David's time yet. Originally it was this Canaanite city. Here you have a king and you wonder if this is really his name. Is this the name his mom and dad gave him, or is it a title? But either way, we know him as *Adoni-zedek* ("my lord is *Tsedeq*"), which would make a lot of sense given in context. Well, if it makes sense for him in the days of Joshua, why wouldn't it make sense in the days of Abram/Abraham to have Melchizedek mean "my king is *Tsedeq*" (*malkîṣedeq*)—taking on this name of a Canaanite deity? Because he's a Canaanite, he's not an Israelite.

I realize when you get into this discussion, you look at this and you go, "That makes me a little uncomfortable because in Genesis 14, this guy is supposed to be a priest of the Most High God, and if his king is *Tsedeq*, then how in the world does that work? What happened to *El Elyon*—"God Most High," the God of Israel? Who's this *Tsedeq* guy?" These are difficult questions, and in today's episode we're going to have to get into those things. But we're still at the name. I'm not done with that yet because there are other things to consider here in relationship to what we've already said.

Now as far as *Adoni-zedek* (just so that you fix it in your mind because we're going to come back to this more than once), we have in him what some scholars would say is kind of a template example—a very convenient parallel. "My lord is *Tsedeq*." He's in Jerusalem. That's in the land of Canaan proper. It's Canaanite territory. Joshua's in there to conquer things, but he doesn't actually conquer Jerusalem because Jerusalem by the time of David is still not in Israelite control. David is the one who has to conquer it. So we could have a thoroughly Canaanite context certainly for *Adoni-zedek*, and very likely Melchizedek. So if we presume *malkîṣedeq* is a proper personal name, it's probably theophoric. It's probably "my king is *Tsedeq*." We can't say that conclusively. It might be descriptive. It might be "my king is righteous," referring to some unknown king that Melchizedek was beholden to. We just don't know. but if we look at *Adoni-zedek* as this sort of really convenient example, a lot of scholars were sort of steered into the direction (because of *Adoni-zedek* in Joshua 10) that Melchizedek (Hebrew *malkîṣedeq*) is a theophoric personal name—that this guy

is either given a name that honors the god *Tsedeq* by his parents, or he takes it himself, and then it would also function as a title.

In IVP's Dictionary of the Old Testament in the Pentateuch volume, S.J. Anders notes the following in this regard. This is a short section from his entry on Melchizedek in the Pentateuch volume. He says:

Melchizedek and Adoni-zedek may have been Canaanite royal epithets. [MH: So he's going to try to defend the epithet view, that this is not a personal theophoric name. So here's the other side.] E. A. Speiser has argued that Melchizedek is the Canaanite equivalent of the Mesopotamian title *šar mēšarim*, "the just king" (Speiser, 318 n. 24). This would suggest that Melchizedek is a royal title rather than a personal name.

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The use of *mlk šdq* as a descriptive title is attested a few times in the Northwest Semitic world. A fourteenth-century B.C. letter addressed to the king of Egypt discovered at Ras Ibn Hani (KTU 2.81) contains several royal epithets applied to the Pharaoh. Included in this salutatory list are such titles as *mlk rb* ("great king") and *mlk mšrm* ("king of Egypt"), as well as the phrase *mlk šdq* ("just king").

Just to interrupt Andrews' little essay here, that's precedent for taking this as a descriptive epithet: "the just king." So here you have this guy come out to meet Abram. He's a priest of the Most High God. And his name happens to be *malkîšedeq*, and it just means his name/title is "the just king" or "my king is just." So it could refer to some guy we don't even know, rather than a deity. That's possible. But again, based on the analogy of *Adoni-zedek*, most scholars gravitate toward the theophoric name option. But this is a legitimate possibility, even though it might be a minority view. Back to Andrews:

The tenth-century B.C. inscription of Yeḥimilk, king of Byblos, claims that he is *mlk šdq wmlk yšr*, "a just and upright king." Later in the fifth century B.C., the inscription of Yeḥawmilk, also king of Byblos, contains the phrase *k mlk šdq h'*, "for he is a just king."

I think he marshals a decent amount of evidence there that the elements of Melchizedek's name might be a royal title, might be an epithet, might be some descriptive phrase about some guy that we don't even know who it is, because it wouldn't be the guy standing in front of Abram. He's a priest of the Most High God and his name would be honorifically given to him to honor his king, whoever that is. Or it could be a theophoric name—the guy who's standing in front of Abraham's name is a theological statement: "my king is the deity *Tsedeq*." Those are your two major options. Hebrews 7:2 ("king of righteousness")... you can sort of get there from "my king is just" or "my king is righteous." It's not a play on words, but it's just another way of saying the same thing. So the New Testament



rendering of this isn't inaccurate. It just doesn't inform us about what the other options are.

Now let's go again to the way that this is described because we have another element that might make us gravitate away from one option and toward another. Genesis 14:18 actually does describe Melchizedek as a king. He is the *mlk šālēm*, the king of Salem (pronounced SA-lem or SHA-lem—the "s" and "sh" are kind of interchangeable here in Semitic, at least at this stage). So if he's the king of Salem and his name is *malkîšedeq*, it's kind of weird because the guy standing in front of Abraham is a king—he's the king of Salem—but does his name mean "my king is righteous?" Well, if he's the king, who would *his* king be? Again, this is another reason why—even though this idea of "my king is righteous"—that it could be an epithet that refers to some other person... Even though that's possible, it just doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense if Melchizedek himself is a king. Because then he'd have another king who is referred to as righteousness. It makes more sense to have Melchizedek as a priest of the Most High God and a king of Salem and his name means "my king is *Tsedeq*." In other words, it's a theological statement/theophoric name. This is why most scholars gravitate toward that view. Not only is it possible, not only does it have a good precedent in the Old Testament (and lots of other Semitic languages, as well, which we didn't get into), but it also seems to make better contextual sense, rather than the alternative.

So let's talk about "king of Salem." We have here this description: Melchizedek is the king of Salem. Psalm 76:2 (verse 3 in the Masoretic Text—if you're looking in Hebrew you need to know that). In English Bibles, Psalm 76:2 places Salem in parallel with Zion. Let me just read you the verse.

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**<sup>2</sup>His abode has been established in Salem,  
his dwelling place in Zion.**

If we actually click out to that verse, the prior verse is:

**In Judah God is known;  
his name is great in Israel.**

So the him there ("his abode") being referred to is obviously the God of Israel. So Psalm 76:2 places Salem parallel with Zion, suggesting that Salem is to be identified as Jerusalem. You say, "Well, duh. Isn't that obvious?" Actually, it's not because you have some other things going on here. This identification is affirmed in the Targums (which are late), the Dead Sea Scrolls (which are also later than the Old Testament—that's intertestamental material), also in Josephus and early rabbinic and Christian literature. They all say that Salem is Jerusalem and Zion (six of one and half dozen of the other). In the Amarna Tablets, Jerusalem is

spelled *urusalim*, possibly reflecting a combination of the Sumerian word for "city" (*uru*) and the name Salem.

In 397 A.D., Jerome (the famous translator who gave us the Latin Vulgate) rejected the view that Jerusalem was Salem. Since it's Jerome, it's going to filter down into Church tradition. He argued that the Genesis 14:18 referred to Salim, a town located in Samaria northeast of modern Nablus. It is also noteworthy that Hebrews 7:2 appears to interpret *mlk* ("the king of Salem") as a title. It doesn't interpret it geographically. In Hebrews 7:2, we have the phrase "king of peace." It doesn't say "king of Jerusalem." It doesn't say "king of *urusalim*" or "king of Zion." It says "king of peace." So here we have another problem.

So not only do we have a problem with the name... Again, Hebrews 7:2 can be in the ballpark. Saying that Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness" is linguistically possible. It's unlikely that's what's going on in the Old Testament story originally because Melchizedek is himself a king, and because of that we sort of lean over to (at least I do) the theophoric name option: "my king is *Tsedek*." So the writer of Hebrews doesn't get this wrong. He's taking one possible trajectory and sort of playing on it. And he does the same thing with this "king of Salem" phrase because he doesn't interpret it as king of some geographical spot (king of a particular city). He actually takes that phrase and translates it/renders it as "king of peace." So we have both connection points in the book of Hebrews back to Genesis 14, obviously (because they're talking about Melchizedek), but we also have points of disconnect. We have a sort of intentional use of these phrases by the writer of Hebrews to make a certain theological point. I don't want to drift into the New Testament too much, but I want you to see that when we get to the New Testament, we're going to have to come back to this issue. The name itself and this descriptive phrase (king of Salem) aren't really precisely reproduced in the book of Hebrews the way people in the time of Abraham or in the biblical period when it comes to Israelite stuff... they probably would have read it differently than the writer of Hebrews does in chapter 7 of that book. Again, I don't want to get too far ahead of myself.

Let's talk about more on the Salem-Jerusalem connection. I'm going to quote now from Anchor Bible Dictionary at length here—Philip King's entry on Jerusalem. It's kind of interesting and gives you some of the backdrop here to the term. He writes:

A long history lies behind "Jerusalem"; it was the name of the city from early times. Jerusalem is mentioned for the first time in the Egyptian Execration Texts (19th–18th centuries B.C.E.), where the form of the name is probably to be read as Rušalimum. The name appears again in diplomatic correspondence: this time as Urušalim (Akk) in the Amarna letters (14th century B.C.E.). Abdi-Ḫiḫba, a vassal of Egypt who was reigning in Jerusalem at the time, sent letters to the Egyptian pharaoh Amenophis IV (Akhenaten), affirming his loyalty. Later Assyrian texts also

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refer to Jerusalem; for example, in the records of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.E. the form Ursalimmu (or variants) appears (*ANET*, 288).

The name "Jerusalem" (Heb *yĕrûšālayim*) is of uncertain etymology, although it is apparently of W Semitic (Canaanite) origin. It appears to be composed of the two elements: *yṛw* "to establish" and *šlm*, the name of the W Semitic god Shalem, patron of the city.

We keep running into Canaanite deities here, don't we? We have *Malk*, we have *Tsedeq*, and now we've got *Shalem*. That shouldn't disturb you because look at the context. We have Abraham, he's in Canaan, we don't have the conquest yet, we don't have anything—it's Abraham! We don't have any of this territory under the dominion of Yahweh, the God of Israel. We have Canaanite location, and you would expect Canaanite names. And if people are naming things in Canaan, they're going to be naming things after deities because that's what you do—it's honorific. So here, again, it could be *yṛw* ("to establish") or it could be *Shalem* (the name of the West Semitic god, patron of the city). Continuing with ABD:

The meaning may be "foundation of (the god) Shalem," mentioned in a mythological text from Ugarit. Gen 14:18 refers to Melchizedek as king of Salem (Heb *śālēm*), likely Jerusalem. If so, this shortened form is the first biblical allusion to Jerusalem. [MH: In other words, if this really is Jerusalem, it's the first time it's mentioned.] In Psalm 76:3 (—Eng 76:2) Salem is used in synonymous parallelism to Zion, referring to the divine dwelling.

Josh 10:1–4 contains the first specific biblical reference to Jerusalem, whose inhabitants were Canaanites. There, it relates to Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, formed a coalition with neighboring kings and attacked Gibeon. Joshua defeated them, but Jerusalem was not taken. According to Judg 1:8, the Judahites captured Jerusalem and destroyed it by fire. The text is historically unreliable; Jerusalem was not conquered until the time of David (2 Sam 5:6–7).

Let's put it this way: the writer here (Philip King) says the text is historically unreliable. He doesn't take this as a historical statement because Jerusalem was not conquered until the time of David. Let me just editorialize here. You can burn a city and not occupy it. That's not real complicated. Back to the selection:

Some OT texts (Josh 15:8; 18:28; Judg 19:10; 1 Chr 11:4–5) equate "Jebus" (the name derived from the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem) with Jerusalem...

Wait a minute, how can you have *urushalem* and have this be Jerusalem and what's this "Jebus?" The Jebusites, the original inhabitants of Jerusalem... How does this term fit in with these other ones? Well, King continues:

Some OT texts (Josh 15:8; 18:28; Judg 19:10; 1 Chr 11:4–5) equate “Jebus” (the name derived from the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem) with Jerusalem, conveying the impression that Jebus (Heb *yěbus*) was the pre-Davidic name for ancient Jerusalem. The city was never actually called Jebus, although it had been a Jebusite settlement. The Amarna Tablets attest that “Jerusalem,” not “Jebus,” was the name of the city; nor does “Jebus” appear in other ANE texts [MH: **whereas, we just saw a bunch of examples where *urushalem* (Jerusalem) does show up in ancient texts**]. Despite the lack of extrabiblical evidence, some would argue that Jebus and Jerusalem designate the same city. Others suggest that Jebus may be identified with Sha‘fāt (M.R. 172136), situated slightly N of Jerusalem.

That's the end of King's entry. Steven Reed, also in the same publication (Anchor Bible Dictionary) in his entry on Jebus, says this:

40:00

Some scholars have been troubled by this identification of Jebus and Jerusalem for several reasons. First, this identification is found in each case in a parenthetical note which could be a later redactional or scribal addition to the text. Second, while the name Jerusalem occurs in the 14th century Tell el-Amarna texts and in the 19th–18th century Egyptian Execration texts, no reference is made to Jebus (Soggin, *Judges*, ET, OTL, 1981: 286). Third, Jerusalem seems to be too far S to be located on the S border of Benjamin (Miller and Tucker, 121).

While the Jebusites inhabited and controlled Jerusalem, this does not necessarily mean that Jebus was Jerusalem. Miller contends that later scribes misidentified Jebus with Jerusalem on the basis of the Jebusite control of Jerusalem and suggests that Jebus should actually be located at present-day Sha‘fāt (Miller 1975: 154; see map in Miller and Tucker *Joshua* CBC, 130). If Jebus was actually used as a name for Jerusalem, it must have been a temporary name and must have existed alongside the older name Jerusalem.

I read those two selections to alert you to the fact (and to alert listeners to the fact) that we're well aware here of the Jebus/Jerusalem issue. We're well aware of the *urushalem*—really the focus on the Jerusalem name in other ancient Near Eastern texts. We're not skipping any of the thorny details here on the podcast—we don't do that. But what it really comes down to is that most likely, not because of the Bible or feeling like we have something to defend here, it most likely that Jerusalem (*urushalem*) is the original name and the only name, actually, of the city. Jebus could have been something very close to it or adjacent to it, and the people of that area moved into the city, took control of it for awhile and that's where the association came from.

So back to Melchizedek. You've got him as king of Salem, and that would make sense (that would be historically accurate) because of what we just read. Back in

the days of Abram, this place would have been known not as Jebus, but as *urushalem*—the city of *Shalem* or the foundation of *Shalem*. Again, *Shalem* is a Canaanite deity.

So what do we have to this point? Let's just summarize a few things. We have somebody named *malkîšedeq* in Genesis 14. He's both a king and a priest, so his name is probably theophoric: "my king is *Tsedeq*" because "my king is righteous" as a title would make this king (Melchizedek) referring to some *other* king, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense. We have a king-priest, then, of a Canaanite city. The city is Salem/Shalem/Jerusalem (for all practical purposes here) in pre-Davidic days, prior to the Israelite occupation under King David. We have a Canaanite orientation, therefore, and that makes sense in light of Joshua 10 and *Adoni-zedek* being the king there. A little bit later we still have this place under Canaanite control. That makes good sense historically. It's clearly a Canaanite name. It's arguable that the name of the king of this same place... Remember, *Adoni-zedek* is the king of Jerusalem and Melchizedek (a few hundred years prior to him) was king of Salem. So he would have been king of the city, and then *Adoni-zedek* was the king of the same city. And *Adoni-zedek*'s name means "my lord is *Tsedeq*" so we take that back to Genesis 14 and it makes sense to have Melchizedek's name mean "my king is *Tsedeq*." So you have two guys likely king over the same place in different time periods and both of their names have this *Tsedeq* element in it, and it's a Canaanite context. So that's what we have to this point.

**TS:** All right. That concludes Part 1a. Be looking for Part 1b next week. I also want to remind y'all that voting starts next weekend on the next book of the Bible that we'll cover on the podcast, so please cast your vote. Also, if you don't mind, take time if you appreciate what we do here on the Naked Bible podcast... Go rate us or leave us a review wherever you consume our podcast to help others find us. We certainly appreciate those who have already done so. And with that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.