

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 261

Exodus 3, Part 2a

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Exodus 3:1 puts Moses in Midian, a land that, as we saw in Part 1, is closely tied to occupants known as Kenites. The Kenites, in fact, overlap in biblical thought with the Midianites (Judg 1:16; 4:11). Midian is also connected with the idea that Yahweh, the God of Israel, came to his land “from the South,” where “South” is defined as Edom, Teman, Paran, and Midian (Hab 3:3-7; Deut 33:1-2; Judg 5:4-5). It is for this reason (and some archaeological data) that many scholars and archaeologists believe that the Kenites / Midianites transmitted the knowledge of Yahweh to Moses (and, hence, Israel). This episode explores the coherence of this idea.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 261: Exodus 3, Part 2a. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MH: Pretty good. We are out of the bad weather (out of the snow), mostly out of the cold. So I'm liking it a little bit better.

TS: Yeah. Here in Texas, it's been pretty mild. A little bit of snow in the northern parts and rain for the rest. But I take my cold weather when I can get it because we won't have it for long.

MH: Did you see that there was snow in Las Vegas?

TS: I did! I actually lived in Las Vegas.

MH: I know, that's why I was bringing it up.

TS: I have some friends still there, so it's fun to see their pictures on Facebook. But when we lived there, it had one of the worst snow storms in history. It was amazing. It was crazy.

MH: Wow, that's weird.

TS: Yeah, it was very weird. But it's fun to get cold weather when you can when you live in those hot areas, so I know our Las Vegas listeners are enjoying it.

MH: [laughter] Well, it's good somebody is! I've more or less had enough of it.

TS: Yeah, I hear you, but you don't get too much of it, being on the coast.

MH: No. It's not bad. It's just... When I moved here (like I said before), I just threw all my boots away, and the shovels. "Ah, it doesn't snow here." And that was music to my ears after 12 years in the Midwest. I'm still looking for the person who lied to me... [laughs]

TS: I hear you. Well, Mike, I need our iTunes listeners to do something for us real quick. I need our iTunes listeners (this is for y'all only) to go rate us. You don't have to leave a review. It's just those stars. I'm telling you right now. I had to change the feed. We had some website issues. I got everything moved over. I need every single iTunes listener to go rate us, please. You don't have to leave a review. All you have to do is click those stars.

MH: Click the little stars.

TS: That's all you have to do. So please, if you listen via iTunes or use that app, go do it for us, please.

MH: Yeah, listen to Trey. Go do that. [laughter]

TS: Help us out. Help other people find us. That's all I need you to do for right now. Alright, Mike. I'm excited... Watchers! You teased us last week about maybe connecting some dots to the Watchers, so please tell me that's the case.

MH: Yeah, I know. There's going to be some odd stuff in here. So that's what people pay us for, Trey. [laughter]

TS: They do?! [laughter]

MH: Oh, boy. No, I guess that's why they listen. I hope they listen for more reasons than that.

Well, we are in Exodus 3 still. Last time, we did the whole Midian thing—what's this about Midian and Horeb in Exodus 3:1? And we tied that into the "Yahweh coming from the south" traditions in the Hebrew Bible in four or five passages. So I'm assuming that if you're listening to this now, you have listened to that, because I'm not going to repeat that. And I'm going to build on what we did last time. So if you have not listened to Part 1, you need to do that or some of the stuff here is going to be lost on you. But we want to focus this time on the Kenite Hypothesis. And since the Kenites as a people (obscure in the Old Testament) are tied to the lineage of Cain, it's kind of interesting to take a rabbit trail (a sidebar) in the second half toward how the book of Enoch looks at the genealogy

of Cain, and specifically in relationship to linking Cain to evil and the Watchers, and so on and so forth.

So we're going to do two things in this episode. We're going to talk about the Kenites and the Kenite Hypothesis (explain what that is and what the implications are, at least how they're perceived). And then in the second part, we're going to do some of the Enochian crossover here into the lineage of Cain. I think you'll find it interesting. I think you'll find both parts interesting, actually.

5:00 So to jump in here, by way of introduction, what is the Kenite Hypothesis? And this goes back to the late 1800s when a few scholars drew attention to the Kenites and their lineages and how it overlaps with Midian and the Midianites. And then, of course, that takes you into an overlap with Moses and Jethro and all the things we talked about in Part 1. And once you do that, it raises a question about, "Well, it is possible that Moses..." I'm going to use critical scholar speak here. And when I say "critical," I'm not referring to critical thinking, because all scholars (hopefully) will use critical thinking. But critical scholarship is typically one that does not have a necessarily high view of Scripture and is probably non-confessional. They don't assign any concept of inspiration (for example) to the text. And that's especially true when critical scholarship starts to come into its own in the late 19th century and early 20th century and so on. It was about that time (late 19th century) that a few scholars raised the question based upon the Kenite-Midianite-Moses connections, in view of the fact that Moses *apparently* (that's an important term we're going to hit this next episode) did not know the name of Yahweh. We get that from Exodus 6:3. Typically, the way it's translated, it's pretty explicit there—where God says to Moses, "By my name, Yahweh, I did not reveal myself to them [to the patriarchs]." And then you get Exodus 3, where Moses says, essentially, "Hey, what's your name?" in this conversation with God. And God says, "I am that I am." This is where the divine name comes from. So certain scholars raise the question, "Well, maybe the Midianites worshiped Yahweh before the Israelites did, and Moses had to *learn* Yahweh religion from Jethro and from the Midianites and from the Kenites."

Now this picked up steam later on, when there were a couple of archeological discoveries that did locate the divine name in artifactual evidence in these geographical areas where the Midianites and the Kenites come from. So the Kenite Hypothesis has been... It's probably overstated to say it's a big deal, because there are a lot of scholars who don't buy it because they don't think Moses was at all historical. So that just throws the whole thing out the window from the get-go. But it's still something that gets talked about in biblical scholarship.

So by way of a well-written definition or overview, I'm going to read from *Harper's Bible Dictionary* here about the Kenites to get us into this whole hypothesis. How does it work? And HBD says:

Kenites (ke'nīts), an ethnic group listed among the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:19) [MH: so that means that prior to the conquest there were people in the land called Kenites]. Their name is popularly derived from 'smith' (Heb. qayin) [MH: as in blacksmith... Kenite, qayin—you can hear the similarity there.], a theory supported, but not proven, by the fact that the Kenites lived in northern Sinai, a region of copper mining and smelting in ancient times (cf. Num. 24:17-22). Moses' father-in-law, Jethro (or Hobab), a priest of Midian (Exod. 2:15-16; 3:1; 18:1; Num. 10:29), is identified in Judg. 1:16 and 4:11 as a Kenite.

I'll read you Judges 1:16:

¹⁶The descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negev near Arad, and they went and settled with the people.

Let me just look up Judges 4:11. We can read that one as well. We might as well, since we're here.

¹¹Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses...

That's the first part of the verse. So it's pretty explicit (pretty clear) that you've got the priest of Midian (Jethro) who is part of the Kenites. Well, of course Moses marries into that family in the Exodus story. So back to HBD:

In view of the fact that Moses first encountered Yahweh in the service of the priest Jethro, and since Jethro later blessed Moses, offered sacrifice to Yahweh, and instructed Moses regarding delegation of authority (Exod. 18:17-27), it has been speculated by some scholars that Moses learned Yahwism from the Kenites (the so-called Kenite Hypothesis). The evidence, however, is not adequate to support this view.

10:00 HBD is being honest with us that there are a lot of people who just don't buy this. We'll get into why (for what reasons) they might not. Continuing with HBD:

Some Kenite families evidently accompanied the Israelites to the Plains of Moab, for the descendants of Moses' father-in-law, the Kenite, went up from the city of palms (presumably Jericho) with the men of Judah to live among the people of the wilderness of Judah, in the Negev near Arad (see Judg. 1:16). One Kenite family from this Negev community, Heber and his wife Jael [MH: or Yael], migrated north to settle in Zaananim, near Kedesh (probably just northeast of Mt. Tabor), and Jael subsequently killed Israel's enemy Sisera in her tent (Judg.

4:11, 17-22; 5:24-27) [a famous story]. In Saul's campaign against the Amalekites of northern Sinai, he sent word to the Kenites to separate themselves from the Amalekites; Saul wanted to spare the Kenites, since they had shown 'kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt' (1 Sam. 15:6).

So when Saul is going to campaign against the Amalekites, he tells the Kenites to get out of Dodge, because he perceives the Kenites as being kind to Israel when Israel came up out of Egypt. So even Saul knows at this point that there's some relationship between the Kenites and the Israelites. Now I want to also quote a little bit from an article. I'll put this in the protected folder. Marlene Mondriaan's article is entitled "Who were the Kenites?" This is from *Old Testament Essays*, Volume 24, No. 2, in 2011. She writes:

The Kenite hypothesis postulates that Moses was introduced to the cult of Yahweh, before he was confronted by Yahweh from the burning bush. Scholars, in support of the Kenite hypothesis, advance that these nomadic peoples from the regions south of Palestine venerated Yahweh, even before tribes migrating, or escaping, from Egypt were introduced into the cult of Yahweh...

And by the way, as I've mentioned before in the podcast, when you read the word "cult" in scholarly literature, you can substitute the word "worship." That's all it means. It's not a cult like we think of, but cult refers to ritual acts. So the worship of Yahweh.

In Numbers 24:21-22 the name Cain is specifically associated with the Kenites [MH: Now that's going to be important. Cain is associated with the Kenites; Kenites with Cain.]. Scholars have identified the Cain narrative of Genesis 4 as the possible aetiological legend of the Kenites [MH: aetiological means "point of origin"], and Cain as the eponymous ancestor of these people....

They've identified Cain as the eponymous ancestor of these people. In other words, the ancestor whose name they bear.

Although presently not so much in the forefront in scholarly debates, the question of the origin of the Yahwist religion of the Israelites has, as yet, not been resolved. Scholars have, thus, reached no consensus regarding this contentious matter.

So that's a nice way of saying, "Hey, this is a debate within scholarship." There are questions raised in brief from those short summaries. I want you to be thinking about these questions:

1. Is it coherent to say that Moses got “Yahweh religion” from the Kenites?
2. Is it coherent to say that the Kenites “introduced the worship of Yahweh to Moses”?
3. Are the Kenites scripturally and etymologically connected to Cain?

So those are three questions to have in your head as we start here. I’m going to propose some other questions about what the implications of certain answers might be for a person like the people who listen to this podcast—those of us with a high view of Scripture. Does any of this matter? And I’ll propose a few questions momentarily here, related to those kinds of issues. Just so we understand, though, when scholars raise these questions they are not just fabrications. They’re not just sitting at their desks thinking, “Well, how can I call the Bible into question? What can I suck out of my thumb to make the face value story of the Old Testament appear like it’s not what it’s supposed to be?” That’s not what they’re doing here. These are questions that arise from the text. Specifically, the questions are raised by:

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1. Exodus 3, which is the revelation of the divine name to Moses in the region of Midian associated with the northern Sinai peninsula—the area of Paran, Teman, and Edom where certain biblical passages have Yahweh coming from. Habakkuk 3:3-7, like we saw in the last episode, specifically loops Midian into that complex of ideas and that geography.
2. Exodus 6:3. The way the verse is usually translated, it seems clear that Moses had never heard the name Yahweh. So that generates this question.
3. There is ancient material that shows the name “Yahweh” was known in the area of Edom and Midian. As we talked about last time, these texts date to the 1300s BC or 1200s BC—either nearly a century earlier than the time most scholars have the exodus. (Remember the late date? The late dates are in the 1200s.) So if you’re taking the late date, which most scholars do, and you find an inscription in Egyptian text that has the name Yahweh in it, that’s going to raise questions. Well, they’re not in the land yet, because one of those Egyptian inscriptions specifically situates Yahweh of the Shosu-beduin in the land of Yahweh in Seir, which is one of the place names where Yahweh “comes from,” from “the south”—Seir, Edom, Paran, Teman—this area.

So if you look at that evidence, you’re going to be thinking, “Good grief! It looks like Yahweh was known earlier than the exodus and not by the Israelites.” It’s a

very logical question to ask. So they're not sitting there at their desks just thinking up ways to justify tenure or something. These are real questions.

Now, just to rehearse the DDD evidence a little bit more, there are two Egyptian texts... I'm going to read again from DDD like I did last time:

There are two Egyptian texts that mention Yahweh. In these texts [1300s, 1200s], Yahweh is neither connected with the Israelites, nor is his cult [MH: his worship] located in Palestine [Canaan]. The texts speak about "Yahu in the land of the Shosu-beduins" (t3 š3šw jhw3 ...) The one text is from the reign of Amenophis III (first part of the 14th cent. BCE; cf. HERMANN 1967) [MH: that's the 1300s] and the other from the reign of Ramses II (13th cent. BCE...) [MH: that's the 1200s]. In the Ramses II list, the name occurs in a context which also mentions Seir (assuming that s'rr stands for Seir). It may be tentatively concluded that this "Yahu in the land of the Shosu-beduins" is to be situated in the area of Edom and Midian.

This is why it's a question. Now let's get into the data here about the Kenites themselves. Mondriaan writes this in her article:

The Kenites were a nomadic or semi-nomadic tribe of coppersmiths [MH: just hold that thought in your head—coppersmiths, people who work with metal] who inhabited the rocky country south of Tel Arad, which was an important city in the eastern Negev. As early as the thirteenth century B.C.E. they made their livelihood as metal craftsmen.

Scholars have identified the Cain narrative of Gen 4 as the possible aetiological [MH: reference point to this]...

Now if I go back to the HBD article... Remember I read this line earlier:

Kenites (ke'nīts), an ethnic group listed among the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land of Canaan ([Gen. 15:19](#)). Their name is popularly derived from 'smith' (Heb. qayin)...

That's a blacksmith—someone who works with metal. So what we have here right off the bat in the name Kenite, which is spelled q-y-n-y.... The name is q-y-n (*qayin*) and then the "y" on the end is called in Hebrew grammar a "gentilic" ending. You'd stick that little consonant there to turn a name into a people group. That's essentially what gentilics are. So you have "q-y-n" + "y" ending = Kenites. The name Cain is exactly the same, minus the gentilic ending. It's q-y-n (*qayin*). So people who are working in the Hebrew text notice this immediately.

Now Rick Hess' (we interviewed Rick back in our series of SBL interviews) specialty is actually personal names in ancient texts (not just Hebrew, but Canaanite, Amorite). He has a number of books and articles specifically on personal names and topographical place names. This is his thing. So in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, Hess wrote the article on Cain, and he writes this:

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Cain appears in Genesis 4 as the murderer of his brother Abel and as the progenitor of a line credited with the initiation of various aspects of culture. The name recurs in the oracle of Balaam at Num 24:22 in a difficult text which associates Cain (qyn) with the Kenites (qyny)... The name of Cain has its etymology in a root, q-y-n, which does not appear other than in proper names and gentilics in biblical Hebrew. A similarly spelled root occurs in South Arabian personal, clan, and tribal names (Beeston et al. 1982: 112; DOSA, 454) as early as the 5th century B.C.E. (Eph'al 1982: 194, 211, 212, 226, 227).

So we have a bit of a chronological disconnect there, but this is where you get this kind of naming terminology in that part of the region.

A qyn root occurs in later Aramaic and Arabic with the meaning of "smith" [MH: again, someone who works with metal]. Furthermore, a similar root appears in the gentilic with which the Balaam oracle associates the name Cain, i.e., the Kenites (Num 24:21–22). These people appear in the biblical text as smiths associated with the desert area of Israel's wanderings...

This is all biblical data. Hess concludes with this line here:

Compare Tubal-Cain, the last-mentioned figure in the line of Cain. He not only possesses Cain's name but also is described as a smith.

So the biblical data are there. Back to Mondriaan. Just a brief note here as she says:

According to Exod 3:1 [MH: which is where we're parked] and Judg 1:16, there is a connection between the Midianites and the Kenites... Exodus 3:1 refers to Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, as a priest of Midian, while Judg 1:16 names him a Kenite... Cain and the Kenites are also linked in Judg 4:11. Heber, the Kenite, is said to have separated from Cain; he is also identified with the sons of Hobab, the Kenite or Midianite, father-in-law of Moses...

So it really seems that the biblical data are pretty clear as far as these connection points, anyway.

The location of the Kenites in the SE (on the border of Judah with Edom)...

On the border of where Judah would be in the south of Canaan, right there, where, if you're under the Dead Sea, when you start to move under the Dead Sea, you run into Edom. So there's this fuzzy border. And of course, south of Canaan is the region of Teman and Paran. We saw last week in Habakkuk 3 that this area is still connected with the Midianites in some way. You get this picture that all these things converge again. So once this archeological data was discovered, with... Since most scholars take the late date of the exodus, when you have Yahweh specifically said by an Egyptian to be a place name (that includes the name Yahweh) in this area in the time of Ramses, then you have to wonder. Because even if... Let's just say I'm a late-dater, and I think the exodus happened in the reign of Ramses. There are problems with that. We've talked about them in several episodes already. But let's just throw it out there. Let's say the movie *The Ten Commandments* has it right. It's still only going to be much later before the Israelites actually get into the land. You have to have the conquest. You at least have an encounter with Moses. But when you read the biblical text at face value, when Moses shows up in Midian and he meets Jethro (and, of course, his daughters), it's like they already know this. They already know the name Yahweh. So what Ramses (whoever wrote this text is from the time of Ramses)... it would seem that this was already a place that the Egyptians knew, too. The Egyptian army and Ramses aren't in Exodus 3. They're not scouting out Midian and running into the name Yahweh. It's already there. So these things just create these questions.

So our sources (at least biblically) seem pretty clear to create these associations. But I've already mentioned that some scholars just don't buy in to the connections. So we ought to say something about why before we go any further. It seems kind of obvious, so why would this be a debate? We'll take out the whole "chicken or egg," "Did Moses know Yahweh?" theological question, if it even is a theological question. We'll get to that in a moment, too.

25:00 But let's just put that to the side of the table here. If we're a bunch of scholars who don't really care if what we think conforms to the Bible alone or we don't have a high view of Scripture, and we're just looking at the data, why would anybody doubt it (the hypothesis, anyway)? Well, fundamentally, some scholars doubt (here's a key word) a historical connection between the Kenites and Cain. They say, "Yeah, I know there's a Bible verse for that." But they don't consider Cain real. They don't consider Moses real. So they just think that the verse is made up. They don't consider any of this historical. They believe the biblical writer just heard the same sound between the literary name Cain and ran into some Kenites and heard their name or knew the people group name and just made up a connection in the biblical text. They don't think any of it is historical; it's just literary and made up. So that's why they don't really care about the hypothesis. They don't put any stock in it, in terms of real history. And some of them even doubt that the Yahweh references in Egyptian texts... They think that there's a place, and it has these consonants in it. Y-H-W. "That doesn't mean there was a religion of Yahweh there. You can't just take the occurrence of a

name and say there's a whole system of worship there." And they're right on that point. You really can't do that. You can't take a place name and assume that there's a deity there who's worshipped and has a priesthood and a cult. That exaggerates (way overstates) the data. Because the data is like two texts, and only one of them puts them in Seir. So they're right. The people who are doubting this are right at this point. They just don't think there's enough data to make these connections. Plus, they don't consider it historical anyway, so they just don't assign a whole lot of importance to it. "Who cares if the Kenites come from Cain?" The Hebrew Bible is still pretty clear that the Kenites were related to the Midianites. So the "Yahweh from the South" of Canaan stuff (Seir, Edom, Paran, and Teman) these scholars would say, "Well, that's still valid, because there are other things going on here in this "Yahweh from the south" tradition. That's pretty obvious. But why do we have to come up with this Kenite Hypothesis about where the worship of Yahweh comes from?" They would argue that where our attention needs to be is in the general "Yahweh from the south" stuff and not really obsessing about which people group told Moses... Because they don't believe there was a Moses. "We don't really need to care about distractions like this. Let's just look at the "Yahweh from the south" traditions and go from there."

Now I'm going to illustrate for you kind of how this works. And I'm going to quote from van der Toorn's article in DDD. This is his article on Yahweh, because it spends some time on the Kenite thing. And you'll just see how van der Toorn... Van der Toorn is a guy who knows all the data. He's not going to be a believer in the historicity of Moses. I don't want to say for sure that I know that. I've only met the guy once, so I can't really tell. But if he's a mainstream European scholar, nine chances out of ten, I'm going to be right here. He doesn't assign historicity to Moses. But he recognizes all the data. So how would he talk about this? That's what the DDD entry (at least this part of it) is good for. Just how do they think about this? So he writes:

Before 1200 BCE, the name Yahweh is not found in any Semitic text...

That's true. That's true if you exclude the Bible. Yahweh was not at Ugarit either. I get email questions about this all the time. "What about Yahweh came from the Ugaritic stuff?" No, he didn't. He just didn't. There's like one guy in the world who claimed this, and I think he's still alive. Nobody buys that. This is a good example. Van der Toorn is not an evangelical Bible believer who thinks the Bible is inspired. He thinks that's just silly. So let's jump back in here.

Yahweh was not known at Ugarit either; the singular name Yw (vocalization unknown) in a damaged passage of the Baal Cycle (KTU 1.1 iv:14) cannot convincingly be interpreted as an abbreviation for 'Yahweh'... The earliest West Semitic text mentioning Yahweh—excepting the biblical evidence—is the Victory Stela written by Mesha, the Moabite king from the 9th century BCE... [MH: That's the Moabite Stone.] The absence of references to a Syrian or Palestinian cult of

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Yahweh outside Israel suggests that the god does not belong to the traditional circle of West Semitic deities. The origins of his veneration must be sought for elsewhere. A number of texts suggest that Yahweh was worshipped in southern Edom and Midian before his cult spread to Palestine. [MH: Palestine is politically correct terminology for Canaan, for Israel as a land.] There are two Egyptian texts that mention Yahweh. In these texts from the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, Yahweh is neither connected with the Israelites, nor is his cult located in Palestine. [MH: We read those before.] ... In these Egyptian texts Yhw is used as a toponym [place name]. Yet a relationship with the deity by the same name is a reasonable assumption. Whether the god took his name from the region or vice versa remains undecided.

By the 14th century BCE, before the cult of Yahweh had reached Israel, groups of Edomite and Midianite nomads worshipped Yahweh as their god. [MH: He's saying this is apparently what's going on.] These data converge with a northern tradition [MH: North of Edom and Midian would be in Canaan proper.], found in a number of ancient theophany texts, according to which Yahweh came from →Edom and Seir (Judg 5:4; note the correction in Ps 68:8[7]). According to the Blessing of Moses Yahweh came from Sinai, "dawned from" Seir, and "shone forth" from Mount Paran (Deut 33:2). Elsewhere he is said to have come from Teman and Mount Paran (Hab 3:3). [MH: We've been over all this turf.]...

All of these places—Seir, Mt Paran, Teman, and Sinai—are in or near Edom. If Yahweh was at home in the south, then [MH: Because Edom is south of Palestine or Canaan], how did he make his way to the north? [MH: If it started here, how did it migrate north?] According to a widely accepted theory, the Kenites were the mediators of the Yahwistic cult... In its classical form the hypothesis assumes that the Israelites became acquainted with the cult of Yahweh through Moses. Moses' father-in-law—Hobab, according to an old tradition (Judg 1:16; 4:11; cf. Num 10:29)—was a Midianite priest (Exod 2:16; 3:1; 18:1) who worshipped Yahweh (see e.g. Exod 18:10–12). He belonged to the Kenites (Judg 1:16; 4:11), a branch of the Midianites...

The strength of the Kenite hypothesis is the link it establishes between different but converging sets of data: the absence of Yahweh from West-Semitic epigraphy [MH: inscriptions]; Yahweh's topographical link with the area of Edom (which may be taken to include the territory of the Midianites); the 'Kenite' affiliation of Moses; and the positive evaluation of the Kenites in the Bible. [MH: So he says, "All that makes sense."] A major flaw in the classical Kenite hypothesis, however, is its disregard for the 'Canaanite' origins of Israel. The view that, under the influence of Moses, the Israelites became Yahwists during their journey through the desert, and then brought their newly acquired religion...

That's questionable. I hope you're following there. Because it intentionally separates Yahweh from who the Israelites were worshiping while they were slaves in Egypt. But again, that's mainstream scholarship. They're going to say that El (in El Shaddai, El this and that, in the patriarchal narratives of the Bible) was a different deity than Yahweh. Because they're assuming polytheism here. They're assuming lots of things.

The view that, under the influence of Moses, the Israelites became Yahwists during their journey through the desert, and then brought their newly acquired religion to the Palestinian soil, neglects the fact that the majority of the Israelites were firmly rooted in Palestine. The historical role of Moses, moreover, is highly problematic. It seems more prudent not to put too much weight on the figure of Moses. It is only in later tradition that he came to be regarded as the legendary ancestor of the Levitical priests and a symbol of the 'Yahweh-alone' movement; his real importance remains uncertain.

If the Kenite hypothesis is to be maintained, then, it is only in a modified form. Though it is highly plausible that the Kenites (and the Midianites and the Rechabites [MH: we didn't get into them] may be mentioned in the same breath) introduced Israel to the worship of Yahweh, it is unlikely that they did so outside the borders of Palestine. [MH: So he's a skeptic of this.]...

If Yahwism did indeed originate with Midianites or Kenites—and the evidence seems to point in that direction—it may have been brought to Transjordan [MH: Edom and these other places] and Central Palestine by traders along the caravan routes from the south to the east...

35:00 You might think, "Well, that's kind of a wild card. Where does he get that idea?" Well, we're going to bring this passage up a little bit later. He gets it from the Joseph story. Who was it that took Joseph into Egypt... And think about where Jacob and his sons were. They're up north in "Palestine," or Canaan, or Israel. They're in that area. And who is Joseph sold to? The Midianite caravan—the Midianite travelers, also called Ishmaelites. So what van der Toorn is saying is, "Look, this is probably how the name Yahweh got into this region." This is his view. So he's skeptical of the Kenite Hypothesis that Yahweh as a deity and his worship *originated* (that's the key word) in this area south of Palestine. He doubts that, even though he knows the data is there, and he knows the Bible connects these places with Moses and Midian, etc. He's arguing that the name got there by some other means. He's not going to deny that this is consistent with Yahweh coming from the south. And that's an important idea, even from somebody that we'll call an unbeliever (who knows?). Who knows where any of these people are at, unless you actually have a conversation with them—but someone who is quite willing to assign less historicity to this stuff than a lot of people listening to this podcast would.

But that's still an important point. That's entirely plausible. And that's going to factor into the whole question of Moses learning about Yahweh from the people in this region, as though he had never... He would have had no idea who the God of his fathers and forefathers was, or that the Israelites down there in Egypt were worshiping some deity and then they flipped deities. They changed deities. "Oh, we're going to get rid of the El stuff. We're not going to worship the God of Abraham anymore (El Shaddai). We're going to go to this new one, Yahweh." If what van der Toorn is suggesting, that this name was circulating around even down into Egypt (the Joseph story) and then winds up in this region, that's significant, because it undermines this notion of a polytheistic deity-flipping later on when you get to Moses.

So I'm hoping that that rings a bell in your head. So let's try to just wrap up and assess the Kenite Hypothesis part of this episode now. For someone who doesn't believe that there was a real Moses or an exodus, the biblical material about "Yahweh from the south" and the external Egyptian material gives them a Yahweh origin explanation. It does that for them. They might complain that it isn't entirely accurate (like van der Toorn did). They might have that complaint. They might see some conflict with other biblical material, maybe something else archeologically, but they don't care. Who cares? They're not looking to harmonize anything. They're nuts-and-bolts kind of people. They would say, "the Bible's not accurate on other things anyway, so who cares?" But for them, it gives them a working explanation for how Yahweh became known, because the name is not in any West Semitic text—any Canaanite, Israelite, that part of the world north of Midian and Edom. The name Yahweh is not found in any inscription in that part of the world earlier than the Moabite inscription, which is 900 BC, which is the time of the Omri dynasty—Jehu, that bunch.

So you say, "Well, we have the Old Testament." Yes, we do. That's a literary source. They're saying, "This is just odd." If the Israelites come into Canaan (1200 BC for the late daters; 1400 BC for the early daters), it's kind of unusual that we wouldn't see the name pop up anywhere—not a seal, not an inscription, nothing. It's thousands of times in the Bible. But for scholars who either don't regard the Bible as a historical text or they don't think it any more significant than any of these other historical texts, this is a chronological oddity to them. So the Kenite Hypothesis helps them understand (or at least have a working model) for how the name Yahweh would have been known in this part of the world prior to 900 BC. So it does that for them.

The real question for us (for those of us who do believe in a historical Moses and have a high view of Scripture) is, does the Kenite Hypothesis pose a problem? And this takes us to some questions that I think are required for coherent thinking about the data we've just covered. In other words, what we want to do is think about the data and ask, "What do the data say and what don't they say?" Because we don't want to just fill in gaps with our imagination. What do they say,

what do they not say? And how do we think well about the data that we have? So here are some questions that are important:

40:00

1. Does the Bible—think about this—require that Moses knew the name of Yahweh before he flees to Midian? We assume that as readers and in the Christian tradition (what little of the Old Testament actually gets taught to people). What most people know about the Old Testament they get from movies. I hate to say it, but that's kind of true. So we assume this, that "Of course Moses... He's a little boy. We have the little basket. He gets rescued. Oh, it's just a wonderful story. And he gets raised in Pharaoh's household, but he's weaned by his mom and he knows he's a Hebrew. Of course he knows about Yahweh." Really? Does the Bible require that Moses knew the name of Yahweh before fleeing to Midian? Moses is taken from his mother when he is weaned (two or three years old). He is raised in Pharaoh's household. Somehow... We aren't told. This is the key idea. What does Scripture actually tell us and what do we mentally fill in, culturally? We're not told how Moses learned that he was a Hebrew. It's evident that he does know that, because of the argument that he breaks up and then he kills an Egyptian. We know the story. But we're not told how he knows that. And we are never told that he knows the name of Yahweh. How would he? It's not like he's going to Yahweh class on early release from Egyptian school every day. He's raised in Pharaoh's household. What do you think they're going to teach him? They're not going to teach him about Yahweh. Chances are good he would never have heard the name. They're not letting their little Egyptian boy go off and observe Sabbath with a bunch of slaves. How would he know? I would suggest to you that the Bible doesn't require that he knew it. All that we know that he knew was that he was a Hebrew. And he doesn't like what he's seeing, and he gets in trouble, and he has to flee the country. That's what we know.
2. If Moses did not know the name (which is an assumption, but it's not an unreasonable one), does that mean he didn't worship the God of his ancestors? This is in the same bucket. Did Moses know about the God of his ancestors? In his heart of hearts, did he worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? We assume that, too, to some extent. "Surely Charlton Heston would have done..." Come on. We just don't know. We don't know. We don't know about Moses' spiritual condition or his spiritual knowledge *at all* until we hit Exodus 3, and God basically punches him in the nose. We just don't know.
3. If Moses didn't know the name Yahweh before the burning bush, does that mean he had no religion at all? That goes with the second one. We just don't know these things. The Bible doesn't require... Catch what I'm going to say here: The Bible doesn't require all of the things that critical scholars think the Kenite Hypothesis overturns. I'll say it again: *The Bible does not*

require all of the things that critical scholars think the Kenite Hypothesis overturns. It just doesn't. And so this is a manufactured problem on one level. It really is. Don't let... I don't want to cast this like it's a conflict or a fight here. But when you're talking about interpretation of Scripture, do not let your opponent insert details and get you to fight over them when they aren't there. That's what happens in a lot of these debates.

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4. If the name Yahweh was revealed for the first time to any of the line of Jacob (Israel) for the first time at Sinai (that would be Moses)... So we're assuming in this question that the slaves in Egypt had never heard the name Yahweh, either. Based on what van der Toorn says, that may not be true, because of the caravans and all that stuff—Joseph going down into Egypt, and generations later they wind up as slaves. You would think somebody knew this. But let's just go with it here. If the name Yahweh was revealed for the very first time to anybody in Jacob's line (to anybody in Israel), does that mean they were not worshipping the same deity (even without that name)? I would suggest to you, no, it doesn't mean that. What it means is that the two lines of Abraham... Remember one is down in Egypt (Jacob). The other line of Abraham (through Esau) is in this Midian/Edom/Seir/Paran area. That's where they live. You have two lines of Abraham.

So what this would mean is that you have one line of Abraham down in Egypt. Let's just assume for the sake of the question, they've just lost everything. They've lost all historical memory of... Not all historical memory. But if they ever heard the name of Yahweh, they've forgotten it generations ago, and now they're slaves, blah, blah, blah. And if there's this caravan where you have a few Semites (like Joseph) who knew the name, Joseph's memory is history. Who knows about this guy Joseph anymore? And if you know about Joseph, you're not talking about Joseph's knowledge of the name Yahweh, you're talking about the things he did to save people from starvation. Let's just assume that nobody down in Egypt knows the name Yahweh and the Exodus 3 event is the first time that they hear it. That's only part of Abraham's lineage. They would have known about their forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and maybe they knew (chances are really good here) of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's God by an El name (El Shaddai, El Olam, something like that—something in the patriarchal narratives). So that's what they know. But the other side of Abraham's lineage would know the name Yahweh, because that much of the Kenite Hypothesis... That makes that a plausible argument.

So that's really what it would come down to. If this is the first time anybody from Jacob's line hears the name of Yahweh, we can't necessarily conclude that they weren't worshipping the same God, because they both could quite easily be worshipping the same deity of their same forefathers. Both of these lines come from the same source: Abraham. Now we have it divided after that. You've got Isaac. Ishmael, of course, is the non-promised seed. But there are even

promises about Ishmael, that he will become 12 princes, and they go settling among all of the Midianites in south Arabia. Is it unreasonable to think that the Ishmaelites would not have known about El or El Shaddai or one of Abraham's names for God? It's quite reasonable that they did, because that vocabulary is in south Arabia, and so is the name Yahweh. (That's the whole Kenite thing.) So it's very conceivable that they would have been worshiping the same deity, but with different names—different terminology.

Now this raises a sub-question. Let's say that scenario is the case. We would still wonder, "Why would Abraham's other line (the Esau line, the Ishmael line, whatever) come up with the name Yahweh? Because they didn't have a burning bush experience. Where does the name come from? Now in South Semitic (languages that are in Midian and Edom and Paran and all these areas, and the Arabian Peninsula), there are a number of possibilities here. You can read DDD's entry on Yahweh to get all of them. I think one of the more reasonable is the South Semitic root *HYW*. It means "he blows" and it refers to wind (like a storm). You could very easily see that the God of the mountain... Think of storm clouds over the mountain and lightning flashing, like you would have had in this region—and this is a mountainous region. We read that material last week. You could very easily see that if you're in the mountainous region of Seir/Edom (these places) and you get these storms that come up, and right there in association with the mountain (the mountainous area there) you would think as an ancient person that this frightening weather is caused by the gods or God. And you could very easily see how you could name the God after the windstorm idea. And if they did, there you have the consonants right there in South Arabia.

50:00 Now we know when Moses has his encounter (Moses is from the other half of Abraham's lineage in our little thought experiment here) and he gets confronted... In West Semitic (in Hebrew) it doesn't mean "he blows." It's a different language. It's a Semitic language, but it's another dialect of Semitic. In Hebrew, it means "to be." It's from the "to be" verb, just like Exodus 3 tells us. So at that point, they're both worshiping the same deity who has the same name, even though in this scenario the etymology (the derivation of the name) comes from two different ideas. All of these things are on the table. They are all parts (either collectively or partially) of a coherent explanation that doesn't require the Israelites showing up in Midian behind Moses and saying, "Well, you want us to switch gods? Okay, we'll do that." [laughs] That kind of thinking (even though it's common in critical scholarly circles) overstates the data dramatically. And it fails to consider alternatives that are workable with the data. So we need to be thinking more carefully about this.

To leave the thought experiment alone, what I just want to have you go away with in this part of the episode is that we have this data. Certain people draw certain conclusions from it. What I want you to realize is that those conclusions are not necessarily valid. And in some cases, they're not necessarily even coherent, because they're either repackaging the data and including some things

that aren't really there or they're just dramatically overstating the implications of the data. And one of the flaws is to assume certain things about Moses that the text never tells us. These are all in the bucket of silence when it comes to Scripture. (What Moses knew, who knew what and when.) These are guesses that are part of Christian tradition and part of Jewish tradition. They are certainly part of those traditions. But when you just actually look at the text, you don't get some of those things. And some of those things are important.

When you're looking at something like the Kenite Hypothesis I would say none of this material is a threat to those who believe in a historical Moses or the exodus. We have to remember what the Bible does describe with respect to these people. Nobody has a Bible, folks. Both sides of Abraham's line have a handful of stories about a deity whom their ancestor Abraham encountered (or who encountered him), and they hand down those stories orally. The people of both sides of Abraham's lineage worship his God. This deity had many El names. One of them was El Shaddai (God of the mountains, God of the wilderness). Is it really a stretch to think that one line of descent from Abraham and the other line that winds up in Edom and Seir and Midian... Is it really a stretch to think that one line of descent also described El Shaddai as Yahweh, even if the name that they chose in the South Arabian dialect comes from "he blows" (the blowing of the wind, the storm God)? Is that really a stretch? No, it's not. We don't know how the name would have developed in one dialect or the other. The west or northwest Semitic dialect we get from Exodus 3. We get textual information there. But on the other side, all we have to do is wonder where they would have come up with that name without the text in their life context. People assign things like weather to the power of the gods or God. Moses has his divine encounter with the God of his fathers at the burning bush somewhere near Midian in the wilderness at a mountain. [laughs] Okay? Either Moses or the later biblical writer take H-W-Y and South Semitic (maybe they knew about the South Semitic derivation) and they "convert it" to West Semitic Hebrew, where it means "to be." That's entirely possible. There we go. You can actually have the biblical writer transforming the Kenite/Midianite Southern Semitic name to reflect the circumstances of the God who was about to make himself a new nation or people after the deliverance from Egypt, specifically of the other (i.e., the Jacobite) line from Abraham that is now released from Egypt.

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All of this is on the table. It can all make sense. And it can be quite consistent with a historical Moses and an exodus. You don't need to pick one or the other. So don't let yourself be forced into these sorts of conclusions or be troubled by them. You just need to think better about the material.

TS: Alright. Well, we're going to stop it right there and I know that's not nice of me. But next week, I promise y'all, it will not disappoint as we get into the weirder side of things, including the Watchers and connecting those dots with Exodus 3. Also, I just wanted to let y'all know that our website issues are behind us since the last week or two. I put it off for so long to do a lot of the back-end stuff that I

needed to do, and it was finally time to do it, only because I knew it would break a bunch of stuff. But I think we got through it. So we appreciate everybody's patience during that ordeal. Please let me know if you're still experiencing some issues. Hopefully everything is 100% back to normal. And one more thing, real quickly for all of our iTunes listeners. It doesn't matter which country you're in. If you use iTunes, please, every single one of y'all, if you would take a few seconds out of your time to leave us a review and rate us, we would greatly appreciate that. Doing so helps other folks find our show. And that would be a very great thing. And I want to thank all of our iTunes listeners for doing so, and I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.