

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 266

Exodus 5-6

April 6, 2019

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

This episode of the podcast covers two chapters of Exodus. Aside from some comments that relate to items in previous episodes, our discussion focuses on the biblical motif of the “hand of the Lord” and “outstretched arm” of the Lord. Both expressions are part of the confrontation between Moses and Aaron and Egypt’s pharaoh. Both are also important motifs in Egyptian literature. That isn’t a coincidence.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 266: Exodus 5 and 6. 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. I’m ready to use this episode to vault us ahead in Exodus—make up for some lost time. [laughs]

TS: Two chapters today, so that’s good.

MH: Yeah. And that’s partly due to the fact that some of the things in these two chapters we’ve actually touched on before, and then there are a couple of new things. So we’re not cheating; it just worked out this way.

TS: Well, I’ve seen people’s comments online about how far in the weeds you’ve gone so far in Exodus, so I can’t tell if that’s a good thing or a bad thing, but I think it’s a good thing.

MH: Yeah. You might want to tie a rope around my ankle or waist [laughter]...

TS: It’s like that Poltergeist movie. Have you seen that movie? They tie their waist [inaudible], you pull them back.

MH: Yeah. That’s kind of what it feels like half the time. Yeah, well, I don’t know. I’m in agreement with the comments, and I don’t know if it’s good or bad. What can you do?

TS: I think it's good, so we're just going to classify it as good. How's Norman?

MH: Oh, he's a psycho. [laughs] He's just a psycho. Yeah, aptly named. Mori's the perfect pug. He just pug-loafs all over the place. He's basically unconscious most of the day. He just wants to sit with you. But Norman is just climbing the walls, man. So he's still a puppy—eight months old. Maybe he'll grow out of that, Lord willing. [laughter]

TS: Alright, Mike.

MH: Well let's jump into Exodus 5 and 6. We're going to go through both chapters and we're going to make some observations here and there in the chapters, landing on subject matter that we've tracked on before, like I mentioned a few moments ago. And then there's going to be one particular new item that I think is in the sweet spot of interest for this audience: how the content here relates specifically to Egyptology and ancient Egypt. Let's just jump in. We can start here in chapter 5, first verse.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'" ² But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD [YAHWEH], that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD [YAHWEH], and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

If you look at what Pharaoh says here ("Who is Yahweh that I should obey his voice?"), this is precisely what someone who thinks himself a deity would say. So right off the bat, the whole confrontation is really portrayed as not just between a king and some guys showing up out of the desert. It's not going to be a debate or some sort of power struggle that's only operative on the human plane. You have a person (Pharaoh) who considers himself Horus incarnate (and so does everybody else that's listening) being challenged by a couple of hicks from Midian or from right there in Egypt—from an indentured servant population—challenging Pharaoh's authority, and really his status as deity (the one who controls and maintains order in Egypt). Pharaoh (we talked about this earlier in other episodes), as the incarnate Horus. He is the one who maintains the divinely dictated *Ma'at*, which is an Egyptian word for order (cosmic order)—the way things are supposed to be. Pharaoh is the central figure in maintaining that as the incarnate Horus.

So now we're confronted by this other deity (Yahweh) and the incarnate Horus says, "Well, who's that?" It takes on a whole different flavor right from the get-go. And ancient readers (and of course the writer) would have known this. They're going to see through this because they know what the Egyptians think of Pharaoh, and they know what Pharaoh thinks of himself. So this is exactly what

somebody who thinks himself a deity would say. And everything takes off from there. The next verse says:

³Then [Moses and Aaron] said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

This is going to take us on a bit of a rabbit trail (but a rabbit trail that we've been on many times), and that is the whole Sinai location thing again. So there's another problem here in this verse for both the traditional Sinai location (that's Jebel Musa, in the “V,” down there in the south—in the “V” between the forks of the Red Sea). And it's also a problem for the Jebel al-Lawz location in Midian. And, I might add, it's also a problem for Sinai in the Edom/Seir/Paran/Teman area, that I've spent a lot of time talking about. And we've been through a number of passages that link Sinai and Yahweh's “March from the South” to this area. Exodus 5:3 is a problem for all of them. I've mentioned before that ultimately, the real answer to the location of Sinai is that nobody really knows. There are problems with all of the options. There just are. Now you say, “Well, what's the problem here?” Let me read it again:

³Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a *three days'* journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God...

Three days. So the question is, from where the Hebrews are living in Egypt (the eastern delta), how far can you get in three days? Well, I'll let you ponder that, and I'm going to take you back to Exodus 3 because this isn't a throw-away line (“Let us go three days...”). It shows up in other passages. It's to be taken seriously. So if you go back to Exodus 3:14-18 (this is the revelation of the divine name), we read this. This is after Moses says, “Who should I say sent me?”:

¹⁴God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. ¹⁶Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’” ¹⁸And they will listen to your

voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt [MH: which is what is happening in chapter 5] and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

That's exactly what they say here. Exodus 5:3:

"The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God..."

We see it *again* in Exodus 8. This is a little bit later in the drama, after he's getting hit with some plagues here. Exodus 8:25-27:

²⁵ Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Go [Get out of here!], sacrifice to your God within the land." ²⁶ But Moses said, "It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? ²⁷ We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he tells us."

So here's the issue: either God (who gave them this direction in the first place at the burning bush) meant for them to go three days into the wilderness and do this sacrificing, or he didn't. Because they did not mishear him. They repeat what God said. The verb of sacrifice used in all of these passages I just read is the same. Now guess where we see the Israelites offering sacrifice (the very same verb) to the Lord as a newly redeemed people? Guess where we see that? That's correct. At Mount Sinai. Ex 24:5:

⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

This is the Sinai covenant ceremony. This is what they actually do. Now here's the question: If they're doing this at Sinai, and we take the words that we've read (once from God's mouth himself at the burning bush) seriously, then the location of Sinai must be three days' journey from where they leave in Egypt. You cannot get to Jebel Musa (the traditional Sinai site) in three days. You can't get to Jebel al-Lawz (which is on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba) in three days. You just can't do it. It can't work.

Now you *might* be able to get to Kadesh-barnea in three days. I mention Kadesh-barnea because after the episodes we did on the Sinai location, I posted

10:00

something on my website with a little more detail to explain to people why I don't hold the traditional view and why I abandoned the Jebel al-Lawz view. There's an incident in Exodus 17 that links Kadesh-barnea with the splitting of the rock at Rephidim and the location of Sinai, and that's right adjacent to Seir and Teman and Paran. So there's something going on. These events are going on in this area—this area south of Canaan, north of the Gulf of Aqaba, and north of the Negev.

So this is where the Sinai stuff is happening. It's not happening at the traditional site. It's not happening over at the Jebel al-Lawz site. Kadesh and Kadesh-barnea are different names that are used of the same location, and they're different names that are used, connecting this with Horeb and Sinai. You can go up to the website and read the detail. So if we're looking at the Kadesh-barnea area, which would be the closest part of this region where all this stuff is happening to Egypt, you might be able, if you really, really hustle, to get there in three days. But it's kind of doubtful. So there's even a problem with this. Plus you have other textual problems as it relates to what's going on. We have a statement in Deuteronomy 1:2 that it's eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea.

Now we know from previous episodes that there are certain passages that take the name Horeb and associate it with Mount Sinai. But there are other verses that take Horeb and it's not a specific mountain, it's a mountainous area. So how do we take Deuteronomy 1:2 there, and how does it relate to this "three days" thing that we just read three times (the first of which comes right from the mouth of God at the burning bush)? How do we relate that to this 11-day thing in Deuteronomy 1:2? You also have Deuteronomy 1:19:

¹⁹ "Then we set out from Horeb [MH: Is it a specific mountain or a mountainous area?] and went through all that great and terrifying wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us. And we came to Kadesh-barnea.

So this has to be a regional thing, because it's disconnected but still in relation to Kadesh-barnea. How do we take that? And worst of all, how do we take Numbers 33? In Numbers 33, you have this long itinerary of the journey from Egypt to Sinai and then into the wilderness. Numbers 33 has multiple stations between the term Sinai and Horeb and Kadesh. Now that seemingly requires ignoring passages that link Sinai and Kadesh. But you can't just do that and have a coherent, inerrant view of the itinerary.

Now the problems here that I'm describing may be lessened by creating the more legitimate distinction between Horeb and Sinai (sometimes it's a mountain; sometimes it's not). It could be just a generic reference to a desert wilderness. That's going to help. It's going to contribute to how you unravel (untangle) and

15:00 then put back together all of this stuff. You have these “three days” verses. You have the “11 day” verse in Deuteronomy. You have “where is Horeb and Sinai—are they the same or are they different?” What about all these stages in Numbers 33?

Now when we get to the actual route of the Exodus, you’re going to see that Numbers 33 presents a few additional problems. My point with all of this is that it is not possible—it is not possible—to be certain about the location of Mount Sinai. It just isn’t. I’m telling you the truth. This is what we do here. I’m telling you like it is. And if you’re taking the “three days” thing seriously (and I would suggest we do that, because that’s what God tells him at the burning bush), you cannot get to Jebel Musa in three days. You cannot get to Jebel al-Lawz in three days.

Now there is a location we have not even talked about that is adjacent to the Kadesh-barnea area. It’s a little bit west of that, and it’s more west of Edom and Seir and Paran. So how does all this go together? And that other location is Har Karkom. There are some scholars who park on Har Karkom as being Mount Sinai for this very reason. (The three-day journey thing, plus the “march from the South” stuff. That gets factored in.) But all of those views (even that alternative view and some other view that isn’t Jebel Musa or Jebel al-Lawz)... Any alternative view has to figure out what to do with these chronological statements and these “number of days” statements. And I’m just telling you the truth. Nobody knows precisely where this was. About the best you can do is say, “Look, there are certain options...” And for me, it’s the traditional site and Jebel al-Lawz. Even though I used to hold the Jebel al-Lawz view when I started running into this stuff, I had to abandon it. The March from the South is a big deal to me, and the three-day journey. I didn’t even mention that on the earlier podcast, but here it is because it comes up here in the confrontation, which is the context of the Exodus 3 statement. This is a big deal. You just can’t get to those locations in three days. They didn’t have cars, okay? [laughs] You can’t do it.

In our earlier episodes about Sinai (about the eleven-day thing), I postulate... Because I do think it makes more sense than what Graham Davies is saying about this being eleven consecutive days in one direction. I just don’t buy that. There’s nothing in the text that requires that. And he’s trying to do math about how much territory can be covered by adult males and soldiers in a day... Look, you’re not dealing with adult males here. Half of your population is women and children, and then livestock. So this is why even the three days to Har Karkom is a huge undertaking. Even that’s a stretch because the travel is going to be slow because of who’s taking the trip. These are not just adult males, and not everybody can ride a camel. Most of the people are going to be walking. These are significant issues, and *nobody* has really produced a coherent, satisfactory explanation for how to take all of these things, put them together, and come out at a coherent location that works—especially with the three days verse, but also works with some of these other indicators. Nobody knows. The Jebel Musa site is nothing more than church tradition. That’s what it is. Constantine’s Mom: “This is

the site.” “Okay, that’s the site.” It might be workable in many respects, but you’re not getting there in three days, and according to Exodus 24, that is where Israel offers sacrifice to the Lord as the Lord told them to do.

20:00

So either the three days thing is wrong or the Exodus 24 thing is wrong. Take your pick. This is what you’re up against when it comes to this kind of data. You don’t get to articulate a view (and I accuse the scholarly community of this with the traditional date)... It’s one of those things that rarely gets examined. If I was at an academic meeting, I’d say, “Tell me how you get to Jebel Musa in three days.” Now what they’re going to tell you, if you’re at SBL or ASOR, “Well, that’s just wrong. The three days is wrong. We can’t take that at face value.” “Well, thanks, that really solves the problem.” That’s the kind of thing that scholars get to do. They get to say to the stuff that’s in their way, “It’s not accurate.” [laughs] I don’t think that we get to do that willy-nilly. That’s really suspicious to me. That’s cheating.

And so *any* view held by *anyone* has got to take these things seriously and work them out. And good luck. Here we are again. We’re back to the whole Sinai thing. This is not easy. And my view is, nobody’s right here. Nobody really, really knows. I haven’t come across a really good explanation, and to be honest with you, I’m not going to noodle it to do it because I’m just not that interested in it. I don’t want to spend my life (or ten years of my life, or whatever it would take—kind of like the authorship of the book of Hebrews)... At the end of the day, I’ll assume there’s a solution out there, but in that five or ten years it would take me to figure this out, I could have produced a whole lot of stuff that’s really useful. This is not as useful. It is not as good a use of my limited time... Because some day, I’m going to die. And I don’t want to have devoted my life to this question or questions like the authorship of the book of Hebrews. I keep poking fun at that, but that’s an inside academic joke for the scholar who drove himself insane. “What, was he trying to figure out who wrote Hebrews?” There are just better things to do. There just are. But I want *you* to be disabused of the notion that this has been solved. It hasn’t.

Let’s go on in chapter 5 here, before we spend too much of *this* time on the subject. You get from verses 4 to 23 the rest of the confrontation with Pharaoh, and this is the bricks and straw episode where Pharaoh says, “Hey! You must have a lot of time here. You people have a lot of time on your hands. You’re wasting my time; you’re wasting their time with these meetings.” He says in verse 5, “the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!” by all this brickety-brack. So he commands...

...the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, ‘You shall no longer give people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw themselves.’

We're familiar with this scene and what happens. This increases the burden of the Israelites. And they complain to Moses and Aaron about what they're doing. This is a very straightforward account here. And I only want to mention John Currid, who is a trained Egyptologist and he's an Old Testament guy as well. I mentioned his book *Egypt and the Old Testament* before. He has also written a commentary on the first 18 chapters (he may have both volumes done now) of Exodus. And just a little note here:

A famous brick-making scene is pictured on the walls of the Rekhmire Chapel in Thebes dating to the middle of the fifteenth century B.C. It illustrates the process of brick-making in ancient Egypt, and what is demonstrated there fits well with the biblical description of Exodus 5.

And it does. We'll have pictures of those tomb wall paintings on the episode site for this episode. You can see they're making bricks in the picture, and they're cutting straw in the picture. This is a very coherent, historically on-target description of how bricks were made. And we all know this story, so we're going to move on from this because it's very straightforward. But you should just know that this is one of those good touchpoints in the Exodus narrative—that this is how they did it. And the evidence (not photographic, obviously, but pictorial) from Egypt aligns very nicely here when we get into Exodus 6, after this episode with the bricks and the straw. And then we have the confrontation getting ramped up a little bit. Exodus 6:

But the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh;

So Pharaoh makes the task harder, the people complain, Moses is saying at the end of chapter 5, “Lord, why have you done this to the people? Why did you ever send me? I was right: they're not going to listen...” This whole thing.

But the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

In other words, “Pharaoh's going to be glad to get rid of you, by the time I'm done with him. He will be thrilled to see you go.”

² God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them.

We're going to come back to Exodus 6:3. And we've already mentioned Exodus 6:3 before, when it comes to the Kenite Hypothesis and all that sort of thing. This

25:00

verse does not need to be translated specifically the way most translations have it. Because critics typically like to refer to this verse to say that they didn't know who Yahweh was. "Not only did they not know who Yahweh was, but we've got a situation where they're not worshipping Yahweh. This is all entirely new." Critics will pounce on this. This is a big go-to passage to justify all of JEDP and that sort of thing. But what we really need to realize here is that this verse... I'm going to read it to you again.

"I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them.

That makes it sound like the patriarchs had never heard of the name Yahweh, because of the way this verse is translated. Now you could go up and google this, but I'm just going to read a little section to you. I blogged a long time ago (I had an online review of the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, the first volume there of the Torah) and I left a few notes there about Exodus. And this is one of the things I nitpicked with the resource. I like the series (don't get me wrong). The series is really good. But the editor (who is Bruce Wells, who is a good guy)... I wrote here,

Wells fails to note that there is a substantive disagreement on the accepted translation.

I'll stop there and say, it's not a well-known disagreement, but it is substantive. It's for real. Even though you won't have scholars who use the verse to promote JEDP or scholars who use the verse to promote the notion that Yahweh's name and his worship was entirely foreign to the patriarchs... Those people who are already in that camp will never introduce you to what I'm about to say, in relation to Francis Andersen, who is very well-known, both in critical circles and in Christian circles. I think he's still alive. This is the Andersen of the Andersen-Forbes database. Frank is in his 90s. He lives in Australia, if he's still with us—a very, very widely-published, widely-respected Hebrew scholar. He wrote a book called *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*. Doesn't that sound exciting?

On syntactical grounds, Andersen argues for a translation that is basically opposite in its meaning to the accepted view.

Or the most common translation, like I just read to you out of the ESV. Here's how Anderson argues in this book (and this is an obscure book; it's not a book for anybody who doesn't know Hebrew and Hebrew syntax well—this is an academic, scholarly publication). But Anderson argues for a translation that's basically opposite. Here's how he translates this verse, at the end of verse 2:

"I am the Lord. [I am Yahweh.] I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, and my name is Yahweh. Did I not make myself known to them?"

30:00

It's 180° away from the way Exodus 6:3 is usually translated. And for technical reasons, if you're into Hebrew I would recommend that you get Andersen's book. You will very seldom (unfortunately) read any interaction with Andersen's book on this verse. I would venture to guess that it's either ignored by critical scholars (they don't care) or they just don't know about it. And the reason I wonder about it is there's a lengthy JBL (*Journal of Biblical Literature*) article by Randall Garr, who's an expert in Semitic philology and Semitic grammar on Exodus 6:3. He never footnotes or even mentions Andersen's book. Not once. Now to me, that's either a huge oversight or it's a thing that just gets in the way and so we're not going to include it. I don't know the explanation there. But he doesn't mention it once. So you (my audience) should know that this is not a given. The translation of this verse is not a given, and so if this is ever whipped out at you for whatever reason... You all know that I don't buy the JEDP view, but I also don't buy the "everything's Moses" view. I think editing is very obvious in the Torah. I think multitude hands are very obvious in the Torah. So I'm not either one of those. And I'm just telling you that this verse is not the load of ammunition that the dyed-in-the-wool JEDP-ers make it to be. It just isn't.

So let's move on from that. We'll focus on what I really want to get into here for the rest of our time. And that is the motif that's going to be (it's come up here) the "strong hand," the "strong arm," that kind of phrasing. Those and similar phrases are what I want to focus on here. You go down in to Exodus 6, in verse 6:

⁶Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

How many times does he have to say that? "I am Yahweh." It's an assertion of authority.

⁹ Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

So God is going to send him back to Pharaoh.

¹¹ "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land." ¹² But Moses said to the Lord, "Behold, the people of Israel have not

listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"

So here we go again with Moses making excuses about being able to deliver the message.

¹³ But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron [MH: Here we go again. Aaron keeps coming back into the picture. He is the concession to Moses.] and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

And the rest of the scene unfolds. Now what I want to focus on here are the phrases "strong hand" and "outstretched arm." I'm going to reference James Hoffmeier here. I've already mentioned Hoffmeier's book on Israel in Egypt. I mentioned (I can't remember what the specific article was on) something about Pithom and Raamses, or something like that. This is a different article, and it's specifically on this topic. So what you're going to hear from this point on is drawn from Hoffmeier's article entitled, "The Arm of God Versus the Arm of Pharaoh in the Exodus Narratives." It's from the journal *Biblica*, volume 67.3 (1986): pages 378-387. Now Hoffmeier, again, has his Ph.D. from Toronto in Egyptology. He knows the Egyptian material very well. He teaches at Wheaton now, where he has for a number of years. He was at TEDS [Trinity Evangelical Divinity School] before that. But he writes this:

The exodus traditions assert that Israel attained her liberation from Egypt by God's agency, symbolized by his victorious conquering arm. There are several expressions used to describe the victorious arm, but two stand out as being the most frequently occurring being:

"strong hand"

He lists Exodus 3:19; Exodus 13:3, 14, 16; Exodus 32:11; and then there's a series of references in Deuteronomy, referencing (looking back at) the events here.

"outstretched arm"

This occurs in Exodus 6:6 (we just read that); Deuteronomy 9:29; Deuteronomy 26:8 (looking back at these things). Hoffmeier says:

Both expressions are used in parallelism [MH: parallel with each other] in Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15 and 7:19 so we know they are synonymous expressions.

That's not a point of speculation. That's for sure.

35:00

“Hand” and “arm” “both mean hand or arm [MH: you can mean that literally], but metaphorically mean power and strength. It is well recognized that the language of the exodus narrative is connected with the motif of Yahweh as the divine warrior. So this militaristic imagery should not be surprising.

Placing the origins of the conquering arm motif in the exodus makes especially good sense once the Egyptian concepts surrounding pharaoh as a warrior are examined. Pharaoh was Horus incarnate. Horus, of course, fought against Seth in the Pyramid Texts.

Let me just break in here. In Egyptian mythology about how Egypt came to be, Horus and Seth battled... This is the religious framework. So there were two lands in Egypt: an upper and a lower Egypt. In the beginning of Egyptian dynastic history, they were separate and they get unified militarily. Part of the framework for that is this Horus-and-Seth fight. And then the Pharaoh becomes the incarnate Horus, and he's the great warrior. Back to Hoffmeier:

Starting with the scenes of the monarchs of Dynasties V and VI, such as Sahure, Niuserre, Djedkare and Pepi, inscriptions are included which say “The Great God who strikes Asiatics.” [MH: Asiatics are Semitic people in Egyptian thought.] . . . We see the king defeating his foes with his conquering arm even though no direct reference is made to the arm.

Later, Hoffmeier says:

It is not until the Middle Kingdom (1970-1800 B.C.) that we begin to see expressions related to the conquering arm of pharaoh appearing. Of particular interest is the term *ḥpš* (*khepesh*) which means “arm” or “power” and is found beginning in the 12th Dynasty and continues with even greater frequency in the New Kingdom.

Khepesh begins to appear in royal titles and names in the Hyksos period.

The Hyksos king Apophis bears the Pre-nomen *neb khepesh re* ‘ = “Re is Lord or Possessor of a Strong Arm.

This is one of the names of that particular pharaoh. Remember, we mentioned this earlier when we were talking about chronology. The pharaohs had five names. It was a five-fold titulary. So Hoffmeier is pointing out that you're going to get certain pharaohs that one of their names has this *khepesh* in it—this reference to a “strong arm.” It's metaphorical for a militaristic leader.

As might be expected, the use of *khepesh* on royal titles reaches its zenith during the days of the military minded Thutmoside and Ramesside kings of the 18th and 19th Dynasties (16th through 12th centuries).

Hoffmeier then goes on. In his article, he goes through a series of examples. He goes through Egyptian texts where you have an outstretched arm, strong arm, strong arm and hand, all this kind of stuff. This is in Egyptian texts associated with the portrait of pharaoh, the incarnate Horus as a great warrior. Back to him, more specifically, later in his article, he says:

Our second and third observations have to do with why the biblical writers chose to use the expressions “strong hand” and “outstretched arm”...

The foregoing references [MH: that he lists out in his article] illustrate that the Pharaohs, especially those of the New Kingdom [MH: which is when all of the Exodus stuff is happening, by either the early or late date], recognized that their power to conquer, subdue, hunt, etc. was linked to their mighty arms. One cannot help but wonder if the biblical writers were not consciously using expressions like “strong hand” and “outstretched arm” polemically against the Egyptian concepts that were embodied in pharaoh. The “Song of the Sea” (Exod 15) has been called Israel’s victory or triumph hymn...

That’s the one that says, “Who is like you among the gods?” There are things in there that are going to strike at Pharaoh’s status. Because “Who is like you among the gods?” Well, Pharaoh is included in that. And Pharaoh just got his butt kicked at the crossing of the Red Sea. The Lord (Yahweh) delivered his people with a strong hand or a strong arm or an outstretched arm. So Hoffmeier is wondering (on paper), “Hey, I wonder if the biblical writers were doing this on purpose. Is it a poke in the eye to Pharaoh?” Hoffmeier is going to say, “Yeah it was.” And I would agree with him. Back to Hoffmeier:

40:00

Yahweh demonstrated his legitimacy as the greatest God by his arm defeating that of Pharaoh.

This language would have been a direct confrontation to Pharaoh’s status as a deity incarnate who is the greatest military power.

The Hebrew prophets recognized that the consequences of the clash between God and Pharaoh meant that Yahweh was superior to all gods... What better way for the exodus traditions to describe God’s victory over Pharaoh, and as a result his superiority, than to use Hebrew derivations or counterparts to Egyptian expressions that symbolized Egyptian royal power.

I think he's spot-on here. For a biblical writer to use these phrases... Yeah, they're found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but specifically here in Exodus you get several of them. And then you get the same language in other passages that harken back to the Exodus event in some way. That's not a coincidence. That is the biblical writer digging... poking not only Pharaoh in the eye, but the Egyptians in the eye, and then as other Semitic people... Because Egyptians had a powerful civilization for a long time, and lots of people in Canaan... The el-Amarna texts are evidence of this. The Egyptians are running things in Canaan for a long time. Semitic people are going to be familiar with these expressions. And so when they hear the Hebrews talking in these terms or when they read Hebrew texts talking in these terms, they know exactly what's going on. This is a dig. This is a diss. This is a swipe at Pharaoh, specifically. So it's not coincidental. It's a good literary intersection between Egypt and the Hebrew Bible.

Now if you keep reading verses 14-26 in Exodus 6, you have this intrusive genealogy, which we mentioned when we talked about the Aaronic concession—the priesthood of Aaron. So at this point in the story, you get this weird genealogy just dropped in here. Like, “Boy, that’s in the way. What’s that doing there?” And we talked about that before, so I’m not going to rehearse all of its purposes. But again, it’s to remind readers that Aaron is in the picture now. It’s the same Moses and Aaron that did this, that, and the other thing. It’s to make it clear that our only leader is not Moses. It’s Moses and Aaron. We have two now instead of one. And it contributes to the elevation of the Aaronic priesthood, obviously, which wasn’t the original plan. Had Moses never complained at the burning bush, there would have been no need to bring Aaron into the picture, is the point. But since that did happen, here is another reminder of who’s who. Now Sarna (in his Exodus commentary) comments about the genealogy. He says:

A detailed analysis of the content of the genealogy discloses careful design and purpose. The line of the Levites is framed by a separate introduction and conclusion (vv. 16, 26); the lifespans of individuals are registered only in the list of Levites (vv. 16, 18, 20); and the descendants of Levi are traced to five generations in contrast to the single generation given for the Reubenites and Simeonites. Still more peculiarities appear in the Levitical listing: Aaron’s name precedes that of Moses (v. 20); Moses’ wife is not mentioned but Aaron’s is (v. 23); only the fathers-in-law of Aaron and his son Eleazar are named (vv. 23–25); only Aaron’s brother-in-law is recorded; only Aaron’s descendants and not those of Moses are listed, and to three generations. To put it all another way, the Levites are here singled out from among the other tribes of Israel; the Aaronides are distinguished from among the other Levitical families; and there is a further differentiation within the Aaronide families themselves.

These special features undoubtedly anticipate later developments: the special status to be granted to the tribe of Levi, the appointment of the Aaronides to

45:00

serve as priests, and the investment of Aaron as High Priest, with one specific line of his descendants exclusively designated to succeed him. The exaltation of Aaron is enhanced even further by the note about his marriage in verse 23; his brother-in-law, Nahshon, and also presumably his father-in-law, Amminadab, was a chieftain of the tribe of Judah and an ancestor of King David....

So genealogies on the surface are pretty boring, but there's a lot of stuff... They're kind of like congressional bills. There's a lot of stuff that's snuck into them. And if anybody reads them closely, you'll find that stuff out. This is very clearly designed to bring Aaron and his line—the Levites—on par with Moses. And that's why it hearkens back to the whole concession narrative.

Now just a few isolated observations within the genealogy. When you go down to verse 20, we have this mentioned. We have the mention of Amram and Jochebed (Moses' parents). So it says:

Amram took as his wife Jochebed [or Yochebed], his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years.

Now a couple of notes here... the line about his father's sister. Marriage to a paternal aunt is prohibited in Leviticus 18:12 and 20:19. Sarna says:

Therefore, the present notice must preserve a very ancient tradition.

Now we're not going to get into all the authorship issues. But if you're thinking that Moses (after the fact) is writing all of the Torah, why would he put that line in there? Why would he have his mother and father's marriage be delegitimized by Mosaic law, if Moses is the author? There are just things like this that come up. As opposed to somebody... It could have been Moses, it could have been a more ancient tradition. Sure, there could have been something around (oral tradition) that predates the codification—the literary product—of Leviticus and the Torah and whatnot. But it's still a question. Why would you do that? This is the kind of thing that scholars fixate on when it comes to authorship issues. Because they read the text really closely. And they'll ask questions like this. "Does this make sense for Moses to have done?" It's just that kind of thing.

I'm not going to drill down into the nuts and bolts of all these things, because it gets almost as bad as chronology. It gets really granular. It gets you into theories about sources and all this stuff, and that just doesn't translate well to audio. And honestly, it gets mind-numbing after a while. But I mention things like this just to reinforce the reality to you that a lot of what scholars say (even critical scholars who don't have any theological investment in the Bible, they don't believe in concepts like inspiration or inerrancy)... A lot of the stuff they talk about and the questions they raise derive from the text. They're not just sitting in their little faculty offices, "What can I do today to hate on evangelicals?" They don't have to

invent things. These are things that you just bump into in the text, and they create questions. And then scholars have to try to figure these things out. Sometimes you can; sometimes you can't. Sometimes you just come up with a working theory and that's as far as you can go. That's what scholars do. So it's not all just made up stuff. There's real stuff like this.

Now Yochebed (Moses' mother's name) is interesting. She is the anonymous Levite woman of Exodus 2:1 (way back in the Moses story).

A man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman, and they have this baby who gets named Moses.

This is the anonymous woman. She's the first biblical person to bear a name composed of *Yo-*, which is one of the shortened forms of the divine name YHWH. Her name seems to mean "Yahweh is glory." *Yo-* is the divine element, and then *chavad* can be a noun. It means glory. Now here's another author question. The writer or editor creates the impression that the divine name (short form YW)... And without getting into historical Semitic linguistics as to why that was pronounced *Yo...* I'll say take my word for it, or I can give you a reference for it. [laughs] The writer/editor creates the impression that the divine name (short form YW) was known in Egypt before Moses' flight to Midian. Remember the Kenite issue? Did they know? Did Moses know the name of Yahweh? Had the Israelites ever heard of Yahweh? And we said, yeah, it's entirely possible that they would have heard this name. With Moses, it's a little more sketchy, because he leaves the house when he's weaned (two or three years old). He gets raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and all that. But the notion that Israelites had never... Here we are, back to Exodus 6:3, revealing himself to the patriarchs. That verse does not have to be translated the way it usually is. But here we get some effort on the part of the writer or the editor to at least create the impression that Yahweh was known. So you can't just whip out all these Kenite verses and marry them to the archeological stuff and talk about how late a development this was, or how foreign a development this was. Again, that's a little sketchy, because you really have to know when this was composed (the first draft) and when was it edited. Because the end product is certainly making the connection—certainly operating on that assumption. It's interesting in verse 20, Aaron and Moses... Let me read you the verse again:

²⁰Amram took as his wife Jochebed [or Yochebed], his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses...

The Septuagint, Syriac versions (the Peshitta), and the Samaritan Pentateuch all add "and their sister Miriam" so that it matches Numbers 26:59, which reads:

The name of Amram's wife was Yochebed, a daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt. And she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses and Miriam, their sister.

So it's just kind of interesting. Was Miriam deliberately not mentioned here, or did it get lost in transmission? Are the Septuagint and the Peshitta and the Samaritan Pentateuch adding it in for consistency? Who knows? These are the kinds of things you run into. Verse 24 mentions the Korahites, the sons of Korah. This is from Sarna as well:

The Korahites, observes Ibn Ezra [a rabbinic commentator], are mentioned on account of the statement in Numbers 26:11 that "the sons of Korah... did not die" in their father's rebellion against Moses and Aaron. The Korahite clan later became a guild of Temple singers to whom several psalms are attributed. They are also listed as having been "guards of the threshold of the Tabernacle" and as performing other tasks, such as baking and gatekeeping. A bowl inscribed with "the sons of Korah" (*bny krh*) has been uncovered in an Israelite shrine at Arad deriving from the eighth century b.c.e.

So it's an interesting note that the sons of Korah are mentioned here. And the idea is, you can say... Let me just read you what Sarna says again. He says that they...

...are mentioned on account of the statement in Numbers 26:11.

Now that assumes that the Exodus material is later than Numbers 26:11 in source-critical terms. You don't have to make that assumption. You could say that an editor did that after the fact to align the verses—include information. When I say align, I'm not talking about cheating—fixing errors in the text. What I'm talking about... Even though a good editor or scribe, if he saw a problem, could in theory do that. But a good editor is going to be looking at the mass of the Torah, and for the sake of readers (that's the key thought)... This is the guy or the guys who are responsible for producing the final form of the Torah. We've talked about how editors will update place names and personal names and things like that. A good editor, for the sake of the reader, will do things like this. They'll connect dots for the readers editorially and add words or move things around for the sake of the story. So none of this argues for the JEDP idea as it's presented, but this is the kind of thing that for certain you have editorial activity going on in the Torah. How that translates to who wrote what when and how much, I don't know. And frankly, neither does anybody else.

Go down to verse 25, which will be our last note for the episode here. We should mention Phinehas. That's the way most of us would pronounce this (*finn' ee uss*). *Pinekhas* is the Hebrew. Sarna says:

55:00

This name is also Egyptian and means “the Nubian/dark-skinned one.” It was fairly common in Egypt in the thirteenth century b.c.e.

So let me just read you where he shows up here. I’ll read you verses 24 and 25:

²⁴ The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. ²⁵ Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans.

So this is an Egyptian name. This could be... It’s interesting. This guy winds up as one of the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites. So this is a Levite. But it could be argued that he’s a black guy. Is he a native Egyptian? How does that happen? Well, it happens with genetics. They could be intermarrying. This is pre-Mosaic legislation. All that stuff. You’re going to have people... And when we get to the exodus, we’ll run across these phrases about how a mixed multitude came out of Egypt in the exodus. You have people from other nations joining (by marriage or, in theory, some other means)... Males are going to have to be circumcised. But you have people entering into Israel—entering into the people of God—from the outside. I don’t know if this is the case. You could have just a reference to dark skin without having the Negroid versus the Caucasian issue, the Jew versus the Gentile issue. Who knows? It could be just a name—A characteristic or something like that. But it could be the result of a mixed marriage.

And then it’s like, “Wait a minute. This is the tribe of Levi. Aren’t they supposed to be super-duper clean and pure?” Well, that becomes an issue *after* Levitical legislation. You don’t have the Levitical Torah laws about marriage and intermarriage and all that stuff before there’s a Torah. I’m mentioning this again to say you have a mixed multitude coming out of Egypt. So this is a bit of a swipe on my part at people, I think, who are unreasonably obsessed tracing their lineages back to the Levites... DNA... Am I a secret Jew? Or this or that kind of Jew? Do I have Jewish blood? You have to realize that before there was Levitical legislation, God didn’t care. He didn’t care. What he cares about is that if you want to join the people of God, then you worship Yahweh and no other. You enter into the nation, you take the sign of the covenant, which for men is circumcision. Women are to marry only circumcised males because that’s the way you tell if they belong—if this marriage is legit. We talked about this in Exodus 4 with the bridegroom of blood. They have at least that much of a sense of community wholeness and needing to be loyal to the covenantal terms that God made with their forefather Abraham. But you don’t have a lot of this legislation and concern stuff.

Now once you bring Aaron... This is the chapter with big genealogy. We just read some of its features. Once you have Aaron brought into the picture and that becomes the family and the line of the priesthood... And priestly duties. They're not all priests. Some of the Levites do other things associated with the religious objects and whatnot. But once you have that tribe demarcated in this way, then this stuff becomes tighter. There are more rules to follow. It's a bigger deal.

But there is indication in the Torah that prior to that time, that's just not an issue. The issue is, do you worship, the God of our fathers, or not? Are you going to enter into the people of God or not? This is your identity now. So the mixed multitude is not only going to be "pure Jews" plus other riffraff. You're going to have that. There are going to be people who glom on to it. We know that from the Exodus narrative as well. But the whole mixed multitude thing could have something like this going on.

1:00:00

Now we don't know why Phinehas was given this name. Is it... I hate to even use the word *race*, because race is an artificial construct. Everybody's a human. But could this be a "racial issue"—the result of a mixed marriage? It could. But it's fine. It's legit that this guy is a Levite, and that the other Levites aren't dark-skinned but this one is. It's not an issue. Because we don't have the same sort of parameters and concerns. And even afterward, if you really want to be honest with it, it's kind of a misnomer anyway in the modern world, because nobody can really trace their lineage back to the tribes. Now the priests have tried this—the Kohen/Cohen lineage. I get that. They've taken a whack at this. And there's a better case there. But that's one tribe. That's just one tribe. And if you've read the DNA stuff related to Judaism and the Levites and all this kind of stuff, it's far from a perfect picture. Let's just put it that way. It's a good shot—a good look—but it's far from a perfect picture.

So I mention this again, that I just don't think that in real life, especially since we're not a theocracy and we are not a under theocratic law and laws that concern themselves with tribes and lineages and so on and so forth... We are never encouraged to try to find our tribal lineages and whatnot (as if we could do that) or to get some sort of honorary membership in one of the Israelite tribes. If that makes you feel good, fine. But realize that's all it does. It has nothing to do with standing before God. Zero. And this is something I've run into in Middle Earth, so I thought I would mention it. And Phinehas makes for an interesting discussion point in that larger area. It's not something that ought to be in the forefront of anybody's mind when it comes to walking with the Lord. "What's my lineage? Am I really a Jew?" or something like that. It just doesn't matter. It didn't matter before the law, and it doesn't matter after the law—after the theocratic system has been done away with. It was initiated with the plan for it to be obsolescent at some point. The point being, when the nations are brought back into the family, under the Messiah, this is planned obsolescence—this whole system. So I think we need to think better about that and not let it be a distraction.

So that's Exodus 5 and 6. I can't really tell you how far we'll get beyond this point. It's not going to be too long before we get into plagues and all that stuff. We want to take some time and go through those with some care. But that's Exodus 5 and 6, so we made some progress today.

TS: Alright, Mike. Yes, we did. That's good. We probably need to do a Q&A episode here pretty soon. So maybe in the next week or two, we'll throw one of those in.

MH: [laughs] I'm not taking any questions on Exodus 3:1. [laughter]

TS: Yes, so when we do our Exodus Q&A, chapter 3 is...

MH: I'll put a graphic of somebody beating a dead horse on... [laughs]

TS: That's actually a good idea. That would be a good meme. If anybody wants to create a meme with Mike beating a dead horse, we'll call it Exodus 3.

MH: It's dead. The horse is dead. So there we are.

TS: Sounds good. Alright, Mike. We'll look forward to next week. And I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.