

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 270

Exodus 11-12

May 5, 2019

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Exodus 11 and 12 focus on the final plague against Egypt, the death of the firstborn, and the institution of the Passover (Hebrew: pesah / pesach). Like the other plagues, the death of the firstborn is an assault on not only the pharaoh and his people, but on Maat, the principle of cosmic order to be maintained by the gods of Egypt. This episode touches on that polemic, but also on the meaning and typology of Passover and the “Destroyer” of the final plague.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 270: Exodus 11-12. 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. It’s been a fun and productive week.

TS: Well, Mike, I forgot to mention that I watched *The Ten Commandments* over the weekend. That was fun, so I feel like I’m ready for the Passover and...

MH: [laughs] The pump is primed? [laughs] We actually talked about that.

TS: Yeah, and I actually did it. It was as good as I remembered.

MH: My daughter and her husband watched *Prince of Egypt* the evening before Easter dinner, so we were sitting around talking about it. “I’ll bet Trey is watching *The Ten Commandments*.” [laughs]

TS: Yeah, and you would be correct!

MH: So I’m a prophet now. [laughs] That’s how that works.

TS: Look at that. It’s hard to watch—the inaccuracies of it, a lot of the Bible stuff. Nobody gets it 100%, and if you take it with a grain of salt and just enjoy it... I see online a lot of people being so negative and bashing other Christians for

watching that show. I'm not taking it literally. It's not 100% accurate, but I can enjoy it for what it is. It's okay.

MH: Yeah, keep it in context, yep.

TS: Yeah, keep it in context. That's exactly right.

MH: We're better off bashing Christians watching things like *Ancient Aliens* and wondering about that. *Ten Commandments* isn't quite at that level. [laughs]

TS: Yeah. Weren't you just asked again to be on that?

MH: Oh, yeah. The fifth time. You would think after four other times that they would know what the answer is going to be, but no.

TS: Well, I think you should do it! I'm one of the ones that believes that you need to go wherever you can go, because...

MH: Look, I just don't trust them. I just do not trust them.

TS: I hear you.

MH: Just for the sake of our listening audience... this is little rabbit trail. I get this email from the associate producer of *Ancient Aliens*. Again, this is the fifth time I've been asked to be on the show. So in the email request, "We'd like to invite you to be on *Ancient Aliens*, and we want to discuss your book, *The Realm of the Unseen*." It's like, "You can't even get the book title right!"

TS: That's the sequel.

MH: If you're doing any kind of research... I mean, it's just an Amazon search. I mean, come on. <sigh> In a microcosm, that just typifies the whole thing, right there. So...

TS: What's funny is, that's important to me, too. I use my last name (Stricklin). A lot of people spell it "Strickland," and the fact that they don't take the time to see it tells me how professional people are. So I always use that as a test to see if people are paying attention, and how professional they are. But regardless, I like the name of that book. You need to call your sequel that. That would be awesome. [MH laughs]

MH: Oh boy.

TS: [Trey in a movie trailer voice] "The Realm of the Unseen."

MH: Yeah, sprinkle a little more cheese on it. [laughs]

TS: That's awesome. That's what the movie needs to be called: *The Realm of the Unseen of Middle Earth*. That's perfect. I love it.

MH: *The Unseen Aliens*. Yeah. Ugh, man. Yeah, thanks for bringing that up. [laughs]

TS: Hey, I still think you should do it, because worst-case scenario, people hear your name and then they google you to find out more information, and that's where you can...

MH: No, the worst-case scenario is like what happened to me with the History Channel back in 2003, so I guess it's 15 years ago. But I don't get cut out of the program. In other words, I'm one of the people that they did dirty back 15 years ago, when they spliced sentences together to make them say things that they don't believe, like what they did to Hugh Ross on that show that I would have been in. That's the worst-case scenario.

TS: But can't you put that in your contract? Can't you tell them, "Don't do this"?

MH: No, you don't give them a contract; they give *you* a contract.

TS: I know, but you can tell them things like, "I want green M&Ms only. I want..." You've heard all those stories.

5:00

MH: They will not... I've already had this conversation with them. They will not give "the talent" veto power over editorial. They just won't do it.

TS: I understand that, but it just seems like you would be able to say, "Hey, don't do this or this." And give them a chance. Maybe it's a new producer. Maybe it's somebody that's actually trying to be accurate.

MH: And pigs are going to start flying, too.

TS: There's no such thing as bad press, in my opinion. I'm one of those guys. I'd rather just have your name out there anywhere in marketing, and then let them find you...

MH: Right. It's *my name*, is the point. [laughs]

TS: Right, as long as it's *your* name, it's okay.

MH: It's just painful. So anyway. But other than that email, it was a good week. [laughs]

TS: Well, we got through the plagues. We have one more left.

MH: That's a good segue, from *Ancient Aliens* to the death of the firstborn, right there. There's something in there [laughs] that makes that a natural segue. So we might as well. Yeah, we're going to hit Exodus 11 and 12 today. And since we're doing it that way, we're going to hit the final plague (the Passover). And we will return later, in the course of going through Exodus, to Exodus 12. We'll return to the Passover for some other reasons. But for the sake of accounting for our episodes here, Exodus 11-12 is going to be our focus today. We'll hit the final plague and the Passover. So what I want to do is start off by reading the first ten verses. It's a quick problem, but there is sort of a setting problem that some people would take as an apparent contradiction in these verses. So I want to get that out of the way before we get into the nuts and bolts of the plague and the Passover. So in Exodus 11, we read this in the ESV:

The LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely. ² Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry." ³ And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

⁴ So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt,⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. ⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.' ⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, you and all the people who follow you.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

Now you say, what's the issue here? If you go back to verse 2, where God is talking to Moses (in verse 1) and God says to Moses, "Speak now in the hearing of the people." That creates the impression (especially when you get this little parenthetical thought in verse 3 about how the LORD gave the Israelites favor in the sight of the Egyptians, and Moses was great in the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh's servants and all the people looked at him and were impressed), it makes it sound like Moses is now standing before a crowd or something and this

is a big public announcement about what's going to happen. But that isn't the case. If you look at verses 8-10, it's very clear that Moses is speaking to Pharaoh still. When it says in verse 8, "All these *your* servants", he's speaking to Pharaoh, "come down to me and bow to me." "Get out of here." And then at the end of verse 8, "And he [Moses] went out from Pharaoh in hot anger." So he's still in front of Pharaoh, and the prior chapter (chapter 10) sounded like Moses had already left. Remember the chapter ended,

Then Pharaoh said to him, 'Get away from me. Take care to never see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you shall die.' And Moses said, 'As you say, I will not see your face again.'

10:00

So it sounds like he leaves and it sounds like we have this interlude with Moses in front of the people again, and he's speaking to the people. But then it turns around in verses 8-10, and it's very transparent that he's still with Pharaoh. Chapter 11 ends:

¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

So it just seems like the author and/or editor of the text here can't make up his mind as to where Moses is. It's really not that big of an issue, because it's all resolved if you take the first verb of chapter 11... Instead of saying, "The LORD said to Moses," you could say, "The LORD *had* said to Moses..." That's a perfectly legitimate translation.

So this backgrounding information... The first few verses are background. It's not like Moses is somewhere else and then he has to come back to Pharaoh after he's just left. So I wanted to make a comment on that. This is easily rectifiable just by going from a past tense to a past perfect tense, and the Hebrew form of the verb allows you to do that. It's perfectly legitimate grammatically. It's not a forced translation. So you might run into this somewhere, "Oh, look at how the text is a mess here. The guy can't make up his mind where Moses is." That's a fabricated problem. So I wanted to mention that before we move on.

But what we really want to focus on is what happens with the death of the firstborn and, of course, the Passover. So we just read through the 10 verses of chapter 11 that gives us the setting, and we get right into chapter 12. We start off with the commentary—the explanation of the origin story (if you will) of Passover. Then we're going to hit the final plague and a few more thoughts on Passover. So I'm going to read Exodus 12 (the first 17 verses) so that we have this in our head, and then I'm going to skip to verses 43-51, because that also deals with the Passover as an institution. So beginning in verse 1 of chapter 12:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

⁷ “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰ And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. ¹⁷ And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of

Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever.

Now that's the first 17 verses and when we get down to verse 43, it picks up on that. We have the death of the firstborn as the interlude. So in verse 43, we read:

15:00

⁴³ And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, ⁴⁴ but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. ⁴⁵ No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. ⁴⁶ It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. ⁴⁹ There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

⁵⁰ All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. ⁵¹ And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

Or "with their hosts," you could translate that. So that's the bulk of Exodus 12. And we'll pick up with the death of the firstborn in a moment. But I want to make a few observations about Passover as an institution because we will be returning to this when we hit Exodus 23, especially.

So the first point, as far as observations go, is that you'll notice as we read that, there was in Exodus this connection or merging of the Passover feast... And it is called a feast in a handful of passages in the Old Testament. *Chag* is the word for feast or festival. There's a merger of that with this Feast of Unleavened Bread. And I say merger because there are other parts of Scripture where these two things are separate. So there's a whole issue here of how the Passover and its rules (its observance) relates to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Why is it separate in some passages? Why is it together in others and also in relation to the other feasts? But the big one here is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And when we get to Exodus 23, we're going to talk about that in a bit more detail. It's really odd, as well, that Passover is not mentioned in the entire book of Exodus, other than this chapter.

The feasts of Exodus 23 are, therefore, regarded by scholars as pre-Passover—the stuff that was around Israel culturally prior to Passover. I'm going to repeat that. This is just to telegraph the kind of thing we're going to be talking about

when we hit Exodus 23. This is the only chapter where Passover is talked about in Exodus, whereas in Exodus 23 you get the holy festival calendar of the nation and it doesn't talk about Passover. It talks about these other feasts. And one of those other feasts is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which, if you go back to Exodus 12, somehow gets aligned with Passover. So there's this big academic discussion that relates, as you can imagine... We've talked about this kind of thing many times on the podcast, and specifically with Exodus. It gets into the issue of when was Exodus written (or what parts of Exodus). When were they written to order or re-order what's going on in the festival calendar in ancient Israel?

So I want to set it up, because this is why... When scholars have these discussions, the impression that we get a lot of times is that you have a bunch of guys sitting in a smoke-filled room, and they're like, "What can we say to people that will be stuff they haven't heard in church that'll bother them? We'll get a kick out of that. Let's just make something up to rattle their cages." Well, okay, that occasionally happens. I have to own that because I've seen that happen. But most of the time, it's just stuff like what I just described. There are just oddities or features of the biblical text that you kind of don't see unless you're intentionally trying to be alert for these things. So people have noticed, "Why isn't Passover lumped in with this other stuff later? Because we have it first here in Exodus 12..." Why does the book do this stuff? Why does the writer do this? And that becomes part of this matrix, this whole discussion about the authorship and the editorial hands—the editorial intention—behind the book of Exodus or behind the Torah, more widely.

So the issues aren't contrived. The text itself produces real questions. The issue is, what kind of answers do you come up with that make any sense? Are you just throwing something out there and then arguing in a circle to prove your hypothesis, or does what you're saying actually make some sense?

20:00

Now Carpenter has a little bit of a comment here. And I don't want to get too far into *these* weeds, but when we talk in Exodus 23 (when we get there) about the festival calendar... We'll get into calendar issues more. But you can already see in Exodus 12 in relation to Passover, just the second verse, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months." The beginning of the year. Well, Israel already had a calendar before this. They're like any other ancient (and we know this from various passages, and we know it by just having our heads screwed on correctly)... Every culture is going to have a calendar. It's going to be an agricultural calendar. There's going to be a time of the year when you plant; there's going to be a time of the year when you harvest—all this stuff. Your year is arranged in an agricultural society by what you eat, what you harvest, what you plant—all that stuff. And they're already doing things like observing the cycles of the moon and the sun. So Israel already had a calendar, but the beginning of the calendar which in ancient inscriptions... Let's just take the Gezer calendar. And if you're an academic listening to this, I know that the Gezer calendar might not be

epigraphic Hebrew. I get that. It might be Phoenician. It's indeterminate. So be it. But that's not the only place where you get indications that ancient Israel had an agricultural calendar. You get that in the biblical text as well. But the Gezer calendar is kind of a neat illustration because it's a calendar. It's arranged this way. So what about this changing of the calendar here? These first few verses of Exodus 12 are at the heart of the whole topic or discussion (and some of you who are into calendars and chronology will be aware of this already) that... And even if you pay attention to modern Judaism, you'll discover that Israel had more than one calendar. And this passage is, in part, why. They already had an existing agricultural calendar with its month names. Now they get a different calendar because they're being reborn as a nation, and Passover is going to mark the birth (hence the new year) of this particular calendar now. They never dispense with the old one. They just adopt a new one. And you have this interplay between these different calendars. You're already going to be somewhat aware of that. But let me read Carpenter's little summary here, without getting too deeply into the woods here. Carpenter writes:

In order to celebrate her birth with proper recognition, Yahweh changes Israel's calendar; the beginning of their year is the day they came forth from Egypt. This was a new time of creation [MH: that's kind of obvious as to why this would happen at this point] (see Exod 1:7). The months shall now be remembered, beginning with the month of the exodus, from a definite time in history, not from a distant primordial or mythical past.

The name of the month used here, Abib, means "fresh ears of grain" and is equivalent to March/April (Exod 13:4 [MH: "Today, in the month of Aviv, you are going out."]; 9:31 [MH: "The flax and barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in the bud."]). The name was changed later to Nisan [MH: and this actually happens in the biblical record] (Neh 2:1 [MH: "The month of Nisan, the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him..."] And if you read through Nehemiah, you'll find out that this month name (Nisan) corresponds to Aviv earlier in Israel's history], when Israel borrowed the name from the Babylonian calendar during the exile (581–538 bc).

Of course, Nehemiah is writing after the exile. So this is something that is already in Israelite culture.

It appears that Exod 23:16b and 34:22b record a time in the fall for the end of the agricultural year, and so possibly the beginning of a "new year," but the basis for the spring festival of Passover and these fall observances is entirely different in Exodus. The solution to the seeming fall/spring new years has not been fully solved, but it is plausibly suggested that there were two new years in Israel, one in the fall and one in the spring, the one in the spring being tied to the religious calendar and the one in the fall to the agricultural calendar (cf. Sarna, 81–85).

25:00

Now you just have this going on both in the Hebrew Bible and in the history of Israel. And Exodus 12 is part of that whole set of circumstances. So I don't want to get too far into the weeds about Israel's calendar and which calendar should be used. Because I get these emails. I got one, Providentially, two days ago, about: "Which calendar should we be using, Mike? Which calendar is the sacred one? Is it the calendar that the Qumran people used? This calendar or that other calendar? Because we know the Pharisees' calendar came from the Babylonians, and it's pagan." Well, that's actually not true. Israel had a calendar already in place that wasn't the one used at Qumran and that wasn't even one of the two found in Scripture. It wasn't pagan; it was already in place.

Now the pagan idea comes from the adaptation of Babylonian names for the months of the calendar. But that was something that happened during the exile, when the Jewish (as they're going to be referred to then) Southern tribes are in Babylon for the exile. They are going to appropriate those month names for their own calendar. So that doesn't mean the calendar was pagan; it just means they changed month names. That's all they did. And the Hebrew Bible is going to show evidence of this and incorporate these sorts of things. And by the way, without getting into the weeds, the Qumran calendar was not an astronomical calendar. These other ones are... One of them, at least, is sort of rooted to astronomy. If you're going to lump in the seasons there, it's an agricultural calendar. That's going to coincide with certain months and certain events like the solstices and whatnot. So it has astronomical elements. That's solar elements there. You also have lunar elements in the Israelite calendar because of the cycles of the moon, basically 30 days, which is a month, all that stuff. None of this is pagan. The news flash here is that people living everywhere, whether it's Israel or Egypt or Babylon or wherever, they're all looking at the same moon. They're all looking at the same sun. This is how you mark time in the ancient world. It's a calendar built out of observed phenomena, and everybody's looking at the same thing. So I think we need to dispense with this "one calendar is pagan and another one is not." That doesn't work real well. And the Qumran calendar basically ignored astronomy in favor of mathematical precision. They had some very intentional things they did to produce that calendar.

But we're getting a little too far into the weeds here. I just wanted to bring this up because it becomes an issue for some, and I think we don't need to get too distracted by what's happening here. Now we'll also (in the future) get into the differences between the rules for Passover here in Exodus 12 and the rules for Passover in Deuteronomy 16. They are not the same. In fact, there are points where they are 180° opposed to each other. There are circumstances as to why that is. I'm going to read a very brief paragraph here from Jeff Tigay, in his Deuteronomy commentary from Jewish Publication Society. He writes:

The difference between Exodus and Deuteronomy may be due to the fact that the original *pesah*, [MH: Passover] in Exodus, was offered by individual households, [MH: we just read that; you observed Passover in your house] for which even a single head of small cattle might have been too much to consume (Exod. 12:4), whereas Deuteronomy deals with a time when the sacrifice would be made at the central sanctuary and many households could share a larger animal.

Specifically, in Deuteronomy, you're told not to eat it in your house. It's just completely opposite.

Another possibility is that the *pesah* offering originated at a time when the Israelites owned primarily sheep and goats (cf. Gen. 46:32–47:4), and that Deuteronomy reflects later conditions when large cattle had also become important in their economy.

30:00 Now all of that is true. But Tigay and others are going to go on from that and they're going to say, "Hey, part of the picture here is because Deuteronomy is late. Moses didn't write it. It wasn't written during the Mosaic period. It's written later, when Israel was in the land and they had a temple. That's the whole idea of the central sanctuary. So the rules change." We read in Exodus 12, you have the observance of the Passover; then you have the Feast of Unleavened Bread. You have solemn assemblies being observed. You don't really go into your house and have a solemn assembly there. A solemn assembly is a public event. When we get into this material, it's like, "Where's the solemn assembly? Is it at the temple complex, or did they already go home and have one in their towns? How did this work?" Because the rules for Passover and its observance (the whole festival time) are different in these two chapters. So when we get to some of that later with the calendar stuff, we'll get into the weeds here, but right now I think it's basically a distraction.

So for our purposes, for the rest of the time here, we want to get into the meaning of Passover (and this will be the second observation that I make about Passover). I have a couple of observations (this one and another one) about Passover. And then the death of the firstborn. So that's where we'll focus for the rest of our time here.

Now the meaning of the Passover... The first thing I want to say here is the Passover is clearly, clearly substitutionary. It just is. In other words, the Passover lamb takes the place of people, hence its blood is a protection. The lamb's life is taken in the place of people. Exodus 12:23-27:

²³ For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. ²⁴ You shall

observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. ²⁵ And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶ And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

It's very clearly substitutionary. Furthermore, the verb used in Exodus 12 to describe the ritual... The noun is *pesach* (Passover). The verb is *pasach*. That is not the normative word for the act of passing over something, or passing by. That's a different verb. It's *avar*. Tigay says a little something about this, as well, that I think is worth citing. On his note on the Passover sacrifice, he writes:

...or [you could translate this] “protective sacrifice.”

So he actually likes the word “protective” instead of just “pass over” because the verb used here in this chapter is not the normal verb for passing over something or passing through something. The noun is going to be used for protection elsewhere.

This sacrifice, called *pesah* in Hebrew, reenacts the original *pesah* sacrifice [MH: remember, Tigay is writing about Deuteronomy, so that's where he's getting this reenactment thing] that the Israelites performed on the eve of the Exodus right before the last of the ten plagues. The name is derived from the verb *pasah*, which describes the manner in which God spared the firstborn in the houses of Israel after they smeared the blood of the sacrifice on their doorposts and lintels (see Exod. 12:13, 23, 27). The Vulgate [MH: the Latin translation of the Bible] translates the verb as “(the Lord) passed over” and the name of the sacrifice as “passover.”

So this is where we get “pass over” language—from the Latin Vulgate, which was fifth century AD. And the early church, this is the time of the early church after the church becomes legal in the Roman empire... This language in this passage just became institutionalized: “pass over.” So Tigay is saying, “We kind of miss something by that language, which comes from the Vulgate.

However, the Hebrew verb does not mean “pass over.” Most of the ancient translations [MH: older than the Vulgate—those translations, like Syriac, Septuagint, etc.] and commentaries render the verb as “(the Lord) spared,” “had compassion,” or “protected,” and the name of the sacrifice as “protective sacrifice,” referring to the protection of Israel during the final plague. This rendering is supported by the way the verb is used in Isaiah 31:5.

Let me just read that to you:

⁵ Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts
will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it;
he will spare and rescue it.”

35:00

The language of protection there (the second one, “He will protect and deliver it,”)... We get this sense of clear protection. “He will spare and rescue it.” So you have two verbs for protect, and then you have “spare” (that’s *pesach*) and then “rescue” is another verb for deliver or rescue (specifically that one is *malat*), and the earlier two references are *nagon*. So you have four verbs there. Three of them are very clearly about protection and rescuing, and then you have *pasach* right in the middle of that. And Isaiah 31 translates it “spare.” “He will spare Jerusalem and rescue it.”

So I think Tigay’s observation is really important here. We get this language from the Latin Vulgate—this “pass over.” And it’s not like it’s terrible, but it’s a bit misleading because we are led to miss the protective element.

Let me throw something else in here. Let me throw in another resource. D. J. A. Clines, in his *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, notes the sparing (the protection) semantic of this particular verb lemma. For those of you who are into Hebrew, DCH (*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*) is a different set, a different scholarly lexicon, than HALOT (*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*). DCH by Clines is more recent. It’s multivolume. It may at some point replace HALOT. Who knows? But the neat thing about it is it incorporates Dead Sea Scroll material for its semantic ranges, as far as word meanings go.

But Clines takes this trajectory as well. In his entry, he has *pasach* (the verb form, specifically) as a homograph. Now what that means is, if you actually look up in a Greek or Hebrew lexicon (a Greek-to-English or Hebrew-to-English dictionary), there will be entries that have numbers, like *Pasach* 1, *Pasach* 2, *Ppasach* 3. All of the good lexicons do this because Hebrew is like English; it has homographs. It has words that are entirely distinct from each other that are spelled the same way. That’s what a homograph is. And *Pasach* is one of these. It’s a homograph. And one particular homograph is about protection. It’s about sparing. It has this substitutionary semantic to it. So Clines actually lists the Exodus 12 occurrences of this verb in the entry under his *Pasach* 3 (to protect). So he doesn’t view it as passing over anything, because like Tigay, he knows that this is not your normative verb for passing over or passing by. It specifically has something to do with protecting—sparing something. And in this case, the

lamb becomes a substitutionary element. The lamb's life is taken in exchange for the people (the people who are protected) in this ritual.

Why do I bring this up? You probably already know. Since Paul explicitly refers to Jesus as our Passover Lamb (that's 1 Corinthians 5:7)... He pulls no punches here.

Cleanse out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you really are, unleavened, for Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.

So since Paul does this (he explicitly identifies Jesus with the Passover Lamb and that his death was obviously sacrificial), Jesus, as the thing sacrificed, aligns well with the Passover Lamb because the Passover Lamb had to be unblemished. And of course, Jesus was unblemished. Because of the typology of the Passover Lamb (its nature as a substitution), it is really flawed to argue that the death of Jesus was not substitutionary. This comes up all the time in these rabbit trail discussions on the atonement. Look, folks, it has to be substitutionary if it's going to be a typological fulfillment of the Passover Lamb. And that point is explicitly made in the New Testament. Whether it offends you or not isn't the issue. It's in the text. That is not to say the sacrifice of Jesus doesn't have other semantics that go with it—other sorts of meanings, other aspects to the atonement. It does. The atonement (the work of Christ) does have other aspects of meaning—other ways you can talk about the atonement. So I'm not arguing that that's not legitimate. It is. What's *not* legitimate is to argue that in the process of highlighting these other aspects of the atonement... It's hermeneutically flawed to conclude that the substitutionary element isn't there. It is. Explicitly. And it has to be, because of the typology with the Passover Lamb. John 19:36 does what Paul's doing in 1 Corinthians 5:7. John 19:36 says,

40:00

For these things took place that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken.

Okay, well, where does that come from? "Not one of his bones will be broken." Guess where it comes from: Exodus 12:46, the Passover Lamb.

It shall be eaten in one house. You shall not take any of the flesh outside the house. You shall not break any of its bones.

And Numbers 9:12, also speaking of the Passover:

They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones, according to all the statute for the Passover that you shall keep it.

John does it. John connects the sacrifice of Jesus with the Passover Lamb. So does Paul. It is very obviously substitutionary. So yes, you know me by now if

you've listened to Q&As. I'm all in favor of the idea that the atonement should be looked at in a multitude of ways. But what typically happens is that while people love to look at it in alternate ways just so that they can deny substitution, that is wrong-headed and it's hermeneutically flawed. You basically have to pretend that these passages aren't here, that the writers are not trying to strike the analogy when they explicitly do. So the connection is important. The connection between Jesus (his body and his blood given sacrificially) with the Last Supper... This is what you have going. And obviously this is part... This whole Last Supper thing, there's a big question, "Was the Last Supper a Passover meal?" There's a lot that can be said in favor of that. It's not without controversy. It's a hotly debated item. For those of you who are interested in the defense of the idea of the Last Supper being a Passover meal, I've uploaded to the protected folder an article by Robin Routledge. It's called "Passover and the Last Supper." It's from *Tyndale Bulletin*, volume 53:2 (2002), pages 203-221. You can read it there. But I just want to read the abstract and a little bit of a section to you, because I do think that the Last Supper either was a Passover meal or was intentionally connected with the Passover. And that would make sense because of what John says about the death of Jesus, the person, "bone not broken," and what Paul says more explicitly: "Jesus is our Passover Lamb." So from Routledge's article, here's the abstract:

The Synoptic Gospels present the Last Supper as a Passover meal. Whether this coincided with the actual Passover or, as some suggest, was held a day early, it was viewed by the participants as a Passover meal, and the words and actions of Jesus, including the institution of the Lord's Supper, would have been understood within that context. In order to better appreciate the significance of what happened at the Last Supper, this article looks at the form that the Passover celebration is likely to have taken at the time of Jesus, and notes links with the meal Jesus shared with his disciples.

That's the end of the abstract. Look. The rules of the Passover changed from Exodus to Deuteronomy and they evolved further in Judaism. So if you're going to try to disconnect the Passover and the Lord's Supper based on Exodus and Deuteronomy, it's not quite a great strategy. What you really need to do is look at how the Passover was observed in the first century. And this is what Routledge is going to do in (I don't know if it's a man or a woman writing, because Robin can be either), but that's what's going to happen in this article. So if you're interested in this, I invite you to read it. The one section (Section II) I'll just read from. "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" This will give you a flavor to the issues that the article covers. He or she writes:

This is a thorny question that has been the subject of many studies. The Synoptic Gospels indicate that the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples on the night before his arrest was a Passover meal. It is suggested that the Fourth Gospel, wanting to emphasize the identification of Jesus with the Passover sacrifice,

places the crucifixion a day earlier than the other Gospels — at the time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple.

45:00

One approach to this difficulty is to accept that the accounts cannot be reconciled, and to choose between them. The traditional view is that the Synoptic Gospels paint the more accurate picture historically, whilst the Fourth Gospel focuses on theological symbolism, and has adapted the chronology in order to place the death of Jesus at the time of the Temple sacrifices. More recent scholarly opinion has tended to favour John's chronology, and views references to the Passover in the Synoptics as later additions by the early Church, which had come to interpret the Lord's Supper as a 'Christian Passover'.

Attempts to harmonise the Gospel accounts include suggestions that the Last Supper may have been some other kind of fellowship meal, maybe eaten in anticipation of the Passover; or that Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover according to a variant calendar [MH: which is interesting in and of itself]. If so, they may have eaten the meal early — though probably without a lamb. This seems unlikely in the light of Jesus' request for a place to eat the Passover. Few who support John's chronology would doubt that the similar expression in John 18:28 refers to a meal which included the Passover lamb; so why would the same not apply in the Synoptics? Of course it could be argued that if the expression refers to the Passover meal in the Synoptics, it is reasonable to suppose it also refers to the Passover meal in John. It is possible, though, that John, in the interests of theological symbolism, used the term to pascha [MH: the Greek equivalent of *pesach*] more loosely, to refer to one of the other sacrifices offered during Passover week.

The lack of clear evidence means that we cannot be sure about the chronology. In my view it is more likely that the Last Supper was a true Passover meal and the following outline will be based on that assumption. However, even if the Last Supper was eaten the day before Passover, the language of Synoptic Gospels indicates that Jesus and his disciples celebrated it as a Passover meal. The only difference then would have been the absence of the lamb, and since this does not figure in the symbolism of the meal, the substance of what follows still stands.

Of course, it is interesting in the absence of the lamb that we have Jesus present. And it's a foreshadowing of his death as (as Paul would say) our Passover Lamb. So it's an interesting article, for those of you who are into this kind of Synoptic stuff, and the chronology stuff. That will probably whet your appetite. If you subscribe to the newsletter, you can get the article through the archive. At the bottom of every issue of the newsletter is a link to the protected folder where you can get some of this material.

Let's just put it this way. Going with Routledge's last paragraph there, whether it was the Passover meal or a meal associated with the Passover celebration in some way in the first century, who cares? The issue is that the association is there in the Synoptic Gospels and John. They associate the death of Jesus with the Passover celebration, and that makes complete sense in light of what John says in John 19:36 about not breaking the bones, and it makes complete sense that Paul looked at it that way very explicitly in 1 Corinthians 5. And for us, we do the Scripture harm if we deny that the death of Jesus (at least one role that it has—one meaning that it has) is substitutionary atonement. It very plainly is. It cannot align with the typology of the purpose of Passover—the Passover Lamb—and not have that point. So I thought that was important and worth covering. I'm a "big tent" guy when it comes to the atonement discussion. I think the atonement can be looked at from a variety of aspects that are legitimate, but it is not legitimate to use that discussion to exclude and eliminate substitution. So there you have it.

Third observation: Passover's connection to the last plague (the death of the firstborn). I'm going to read Exodus 12:12-13 again. We talked about Passover; let's get into the final plague here. And we'll address this like we've addressed the other plagues at some point in a moment. But Exodus 12:12-13 says this:

¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

50:00

I will *pasach*... I will pass over you, or more accurately, I will protect you. I will spare you. It goes on, the tenth and final plague is described in detail in a few verses (Exodus 12:29-32), so let's just read those:

²⁹ At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. ³⁰ And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. ³¹ Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ³² Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!"

He wants them to intercede, because he's done now. He's giving up. Now this last plague, like the other ones, fits very nicely into the perspective of de-creation

(Yahweh's mastery and control over creation order, as opposed to the fecklessness of Pharaoh and his magicians—his *hartumim*—and the gods of Egypt). It fits into de-creation, the overturning of Maat (the cosmic creation order). So it overturns that. There's a de-creation element. It demolishes the sense—the belief, the hope—that Pharaoh and Egypt's gods can control the world order—the cosmic balance. It attacks that, and by virtue of that, it is a polemic against Egyptian religion and Egyptian theology—what they believe about Pharaoh as a god and their gods. So the application in this instance is pretty simple, actually. The final plague was transparently directed against pharaonic succession. His firstborn dies. The gods had set up Maat, and it was supposed to be transferred from one incarnation of Horus (i.e., the pharaoh) to the next in an unending, unbroken, stream.

If you recall from earlier episodes, when a pharaoh was dying or dead, it was a very serious thing. The succession had to be orderly and according to plan, according to Maat—according to the will of the Egyptian gods—so that the balance of creation (the heavens and the earth, all of that) would be maintained and things would go on as usual. You would prevent the eruption of chaos in the land. Well, that's pretty much trashed in the final plague, because the God of Israel steps in and says, "We'll show you who has power over the cosmic balance—the control of heaven and earth here, the life cycles. We'll show you who has control over order and chaos, right here." He takes away the succession. The firstborn dies. This would be the son who was supposed to inherit the throne. The gods had set this up. They instituted pharaoh as the incarnation of Horus (the son of Re) to maintain divinely ordered Maat. The plan was supposed to be unending, transitioning from one pharaoh to the next through his firstborn son. So this amounts to a supernatural assault on Pharaoh's firstborn and a supernatural assault on the whole concept of Maat—Pharaoh as the one who maintains order, who acquiesces to the gods, who through ritual keeps his commitment to the gods and they will keep their commitment to Maat as well. This symbiotic thing is supposed to go on and on. No bumps in the road.

This is a huge bump in the road. It upends the whole idea. All of this cosmic order and cosmic balance is not in the control of Pharaoh and his magicians and the gods. This power is located really firmly in the hand of something else (someone else) and that is the God of the Hebrews. And basically, the Egyptians are at his mercy. And Pharaoh wants closure. He wants Moses and Aaron to bless him as he lets the people go because he knows he has no control over this situation. He's done. He's a broken man. He's a broken deity. And so are the rest of his gods, because they can't intervene either. There's no ambiguity left in this picture. So he wants to know, "Once I let these people go, things will return to normal. The God of the Hebrews has been appeased and we're done with all of this." So it's another assault on Egyptian religion.

Before we wrap up this episode, I want to say a little bit about the destroying agent used by God in the last plague. When you consider the terminology of the destruction of the firstborn in the wider Old Testament backdrop, believe it or not,

55:00

the language loops in the Angel of Yahweh. It loops the Angel of Yahweh into the scene, and in so doing creates another identification of the angel as Yahweh. Specifically, the verb used in these descriptions is *shāḥat* (to destroy) and the noun is *mashḥîṭ*. They share the same Hebrew root—the *sh-h-t*. This verb and this noun have... There's a commonality there. And this terminology does get used of the angel of Yahweh. So I'm going to read a little bit from my *Angels* book. For those who haven't read it, this will give you a sampling. But it's relevant here. It's not just a commercial. From my *Angels* book, this is page 65 up to the top of page 68. I wrote this:

The characterization of the angel of Yahweh as a destroyer [MH: *mashḥîṭ*] in 1 Chronicles 21:16 [MH: remember this is the judgment on David with the census and all of that... the angel of Yahweh is called a *mashḥîṭ* there.] has ramifications for identifying another mysterious angel in the Old Testament.

I'm going to read 1 Chronicles 21:15-16 to get the flavor here.

And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy [*shāḥat*] it, but as he was about to destroy [*shāḥat*] it, the Lord saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction [*mashḥîṭ*], "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem.

The angel with the drawn sword in his hand occurs three times in the entire Hebrew Bible: Here, Joshua 5 (the captain/commander of the Lord's host), and in Numbers 22 (the Balaam incident where it's the Angel of the Lord explicitly). So we know who this figure is. If you've not read *Unseen Realm*, you'll have to catch up that way. This is God as man in the Old Testament. It's very significant language. It's not the only way that that idea is expressed. You have the Word; you have the Name. You have all this terminology going on in the Old Testament. This is an important one.

Not surprisingly, the parallel passage in 2 Samuel [MH: parallel to this punishment of David] uses the same terminology and forms:

When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy [*shāḥat*] it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction [*mashḥîṭ*] among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the

threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people. (2 Sam 24:16–17a)

It is clear from both passages that the angel of Yahweh is in view and that he brings “destruction” (*mashḥîṭ*). Interestingly, this is the identical term used to describe the angel of death in the account of the death of the firstborn on the eve of the first Passover:

The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over [MH: I will protect or spare] you, and no plague will befall you to destroy [*mashḥîṭ*] you, when I strike the land of Egypt. ... Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. ... For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer [*mashḥîṭ*] to enter your houses to strike you. (Exod 12:13, 21, 23)

The *mashḥîṭ* who was the angel of Yahweh in 1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Samuel 24 is here distinguished from Yahweh [MH: that’s familiar for those who have read *Unseen Realm*] by the line, “the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer [*mashḥîṭ*] to enter your houses to strike you.” Yet we read elsewhere that it was Yahweh who destroyed the firstborn:

1:00:00

**He sent Moses, his servant,
and Aaron, whom he had chosen. ...
He [MH: Yahweh] struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the firstfruits of all their strength. (Ps 105:26, 36)**

**For I know that the Lord is great,
and that our Lord is above all gods. ...
He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
both of man and of beast. (Ps 135:5, 8)**

**Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever. ...
to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
for his steadfast love endures forever. (Ps 136:3, 10)**

Remember: the destroying angel of Yahweh is actually the visible Yahweh. Given that background, these statements are not incompatible. However, Psalm 78:48–51 seems to complicate matters:

**He [Yahweh] gave over their cattle to the hail
and their flocks to thunderbolts. [MH: This is describing the plagues.]
He let loose on them his burning anger,
wrath, indignation, and distress,
a company of destroying angels [*mal'akê rā'îm*].
He made a path for his anger;
he did not spare them from death,
but gave their lives over to the plague.
He struck down every firstborn in Egypt, [MH: Yahweh did this]
the firstfruits of their strength in the tents of Ham.**

The complication is only surface level.

The complication is only surface level. It really derives from English. We do not have the *mashhîṭ* or the *shāḥat* terminology here for “destroying angels.” It’s different. It’s *mal'akê rā'îm*, which is literally... You could translate it “bad angels” and that doesn’t mean “fallen angels.” *Ra* as an adjective in Hebrew means “unfavorable, distasteful, unfortunate, something you don’t like.” Something that is against you. It doesn’t necessarily mean moral evil or fallenness or anything like that. So the complication is only surface level. Back to my book:

The ESV’s translation, “destroying angels,” is somewhat misleading with respect to the terminology we are attempting to trace. The Hebrew term translated “destroying” is not the word *mashhîṭ* associated with the destroyer in the passages we saw earlier. We should also observe that Psalm 78:49 does not say the “destroying angels” killed the firstborn. [MH: It doesn’t actually say that anyway.] That act is, once again, attributed to Yahweh (v. 51). Yahweh may have sent angels to enact the other plagues [MH: that’s perfectly possible from Psalm 78], but the death of the firstborn is attributed to him. These angels do not act in the role of the destroyer.

Given the use of the term *mashhîṭ* of that angel in other judgments handed down by Yahweh, a coherent way to reconcile all these passages would be to have Yahweh receiving the credit for the judgment on the firstborn by sending out his destroyer (*mashhîṭ*), the angel of Yahweh, who elsewhere is identified as being the visible Yahweh. This would be akin to God himself being present in the

burning bush yet also having the angel of Yahweh present. These and other passages are the foundation of the later Jewish theology of two powers (two Yahweh figures).

I don't get into the Two Yahweh thing in the book *Angels*. I do it a lot in *Unseen Realm*, obviously. But here you go again. And isn't it ironic... Think about it. Since the New Testament writers are going to align Jesus with the second visible Yahweh figure (one of which is this particular angel)... You have the destroyer—the destroying angel—who in the Old Testament was Yahweh in visible form judging evil and evildoers, carrying out these sorts of judgments, and yet that same... When you get to the New Testament, we're dealing with incarnation, so it's a bit different. It ups the ante, as I like to say. But you have the second person of the Godhead in human form now by virtue of the birth process (the incarnation). It's the same figure; just a different way of the figure being present. But now you have him laying down his life to *protect* those who would trust in him. Now *he* is the substitution for what needs to happen here. He is the substitutionary element.

1:05:00

So the irony is pretty rich here. And the theology is just really... You could think a long time about that, just how this stuff turns back on itself and how the tapestry gets woven in the Old Testament and then reaches its culmination point in the New. Here we go again. It's just another example of... If you were not exposed to the podcast (to this episode or any other episode) or my books, or anything like this, you'd still know the gospel story. You could read 1 Corinthians 5:7 about Jesus being our Passover Lamb, "Okay, I kind of get that." He's the different counterpart to the sacrifice. You could understand all of that. But there's a whole backdrop to it that amplifies what's going on in the mind of the writers and the theological episode, the theological story they're actually telling. You just miss a lot of detail when you're not reading the text in light of its own context. And the destroyer here, the *dénouement*, the climax here of Yahweh's war against the gods of Egypt... And who finishes the job? It's the angel of Yahweh, who is this second person of the Godhead come in the form of a man. There are just so many layers to this.

So I actually think this is a good episode, if you've not gotten into this content, if you're a new listener. If you like books with footnotes, read *Unseen Realm*. If you don't, read *Supernatural* first and then graduate to *Unseen Realm*. And you're going to get a lot of exposure to this kind of connectivity between the testaments that penetrates far beyond the surface. And the surface is important. The alignment of Jesus with the Passover Lamb—that's important. But it's a whole lot deeper than that. It's a rabbit hole that runs a considerable distance, if you know how to follow it. So hopefully this will be a good illustration of that. And we encourage you... This is what we try to do on the podcast. We try to get you into this content and tell you where you can get more.

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, that pretty much takes us to the exodus, so I assume we're going to touch on Exodus 12 again, moving into the parting of the Red Sea?

MH: Yep, we're getting really close.

TS: I'm going to have to watch the movie again.

MH: Yeah, there you go. [laughs] What an excuse. I'm going to have to put some more thought into it, because when you get to the exodus, you have obviously Exodus 13 and 14, and of course Exodus 15 is the Song of Moses about the exodus. But you have issues of chronology. We're going to have to get back into that. But we may have to divide it up into a couple of episodes. But I'll give it some thought. But yeah, next week, we'll get into it somehow. We'll get into it somehow, but I don't know how it'll break down.

TS: Alright, looking forward to it. I just want to remind everybody, please, please, please leave us a review and rate us on iTunes, or wherever you consume our podcast. Help others find us. And we hope you're enjoying Exodus. I promise you, we're going to do a Q&A here sooner rather than later. And with that, Mike, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.