Naked Bible Podcast Transcript
Episode 275
Exodus 13
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Episode Summary

Exodus 13 takes us into the subject of the offering of the firstborn. Certain scholars argue that the passage is to be taken literally, that Yahweh demanded the Israelites to sacrifice their firstborn male child (i.e., human sacrifice). This episode surveys how this argument is made and evaluates it in terms of the data of the text and logical coherence.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 275: Exodus 13. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! This week, we're back into Exodus.

MH: Yep, yes we are. We're going to hit Exodus 13—at least parts of it. So we're going to focus on Exodus 13 (the first two verses and verses 11-16). And we are (believe it or not) going to get into a dissertation here. I can't post somebody's dissertation online. But there's a lot of good stuff in these things and this will be a good illustrative episode as to why that stuff is important.

Now Exodus 12 (which we went through not too long ago) was, of course, the institution of the Passover. So you get Exodus 12 and the Passover, and then you hit chapter 13. And you get these first two verses. I'm going to read them:

> **The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."**

So there's a connection here because there's a reference to the firstborn, and of course, Passover comes on the heels or in connection with the last plague (which is the death of the firstborn). And the Passover was that protection offering. If you're not familiar with that term for *pasach* (the verb that's behind the noun *pesach* or Passover), you can go listen to the episode a couple of episodes ago. But the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was about protecting the ones who did it and put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel of their homes. So there's

a connection between the idea of the firstborn either dying or (and this is important for this episode) being protected and chapter 13 (this consecration of the firstborn).

Now you hit those first two verses (consecrate can mean the firstborn—"Whatever is the first to open the womb is mine of man and beast")… and then you get this intrusion in verses 3-10. It's the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Listeners might recall that a few episodes ago I mentioned that these feasts get connected in the Hebrew Bible. Apparently, there was some sort of difference between them or separation. There's a development of thought here, or at least… Probably a better way to put is a development of portrayal. But it's not really an intrusion, because if you're going to connect the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the Passover, then it's not too interruptive to start talking about the Feast of Unleavened Bread here in connection with the consecration of the firstborn. Because the context for that is the Passover. But I mention that to say that I'm hoping that you're getting a feel for how, when you read through (not just Exodus, but different portions of the Bible), it just seems like the writers will at times skip from one thing to the next. And in some cases, you have to really pay attention to discern any connection between the sections. And sometimes, you do have true intrusions (and there could be literary reasons for that), but this is one of these instances where it feels like an intrusion. But okay, there *is* a way to connect these things.

And then you hit verse 11. Let me read verses 11-16. And this isn't going to take us to the end of the chapter. Because after verse 16, you get the pillar of cloud and fire. And that feels much more intrusive because we're not even into the exodus itinerary yet. But up until this point, you can see the conceptual connections. So here's verses 11-16:

> **11 "When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, 12 you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. [MH: So this is hearkening back to verses 1-2 about consecrating the firstborn.] All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. 13 Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb [MH: we're going to come back to that a couple of times],**
5:00 **or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. 14 And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the**

> **firstborn of my sons I redeem.'[16] It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."**

You say, "What's the big deal with firstborn stuff connected to the Passover?" Well, there's actually a fairly active controversy here. There are certain scholars that argue that the passage (specifically Exodus 13—the first two verses and verses 11-16) is to be taken literally—that Yahweh demanded the Israelites to sacrifice their firstborn male child (in other words, human sacrifice). And certain scholars further argue that this happened in Israel and it was part of orthodox, normative worship of Yahweh. (In other words, it wasn't an abomination or an aberration back in the days of Moses and Joshua—the early days of Israel.) In particular, this controversy has gone back and forth.

In 2004, there was a book that came out. This book has not been reviewed much in scholarly circles. But the author (for whatever reason) has been one of these scholars that gets into the public eye through what I pejoratively refer to as "archeoporn," because of the sensational or salacious aspects of this topic. People will find her (this particular scholar), and it's big news about how the Old Testament advocates human sacrifice, or something like that—archeoporn. So the scholar's name is Francesca Stavrakoupolou, and her book is entitled *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*. It's a 2004 book. It's a scholarly publication (de Gruyter is the publisher). So her work in 2004 is the latest iteration (or at least in the public eye) of this whole controversy and the question of, does Exodus 13 teach that Yahweh wanted the Israelites to offer their firstborn children as some sort of commemoration of what happened at Passover?

Now as you hear me say that, the red lights should go off in your head. "How in the world does that make any sense?" And I'd agree. You might ask, "How can anyone argue this point, given what we just read in verses 11-16?" It's clear that there's provision here to not offer the child as a sacrifice in verse 13. "Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem." In other words, you can substitute something else for it. You don't have to… The point is not that you have to kill your firstborn child, but you go through this ritual act as some sort of commemorative thing just to remind you of the firstborn and the cost of the Passover and all this stuff. So there's a provision there to not kill the children. And it even says that when your son asks you, "Why are we doing this?" you tell him the story of the Passover and, "This is why we sacrifice the animals, but we don't sacrifice the children because the LORD redeemed us. The LORD took us out of Egypt (the realm of death, as it were) and as a substitute, we had a lamb back at Passover." And of course, the Israelites would be observing the Passover. But since it was the firstborn, this is another part of the ritual remembrance of what happened at Passover.

It's clear that they're not doing this. They're not sacrificing their children. And it's clear from verses 11-16 that they don't have to, so why would anybody argue this? And not only that, but it makes little sense to commemorate the deliverance
10:00 of your firstborn child by Yahweh's protection (the *pesach—pasach* is to protect—the *pesach* sacrifice of the lamb in Egypt)… The whole idea of Passover was to commemorate *deliverance*. Why would you commemorate deliverance of your firstborn child by killing it? It just makes zero sense. It's just a bizarre thought pattern. "Let's kill what Yahweh spared, because he wants us to kill it now." Again, it just doesn't make any sense. So you ask, "Why would anybody think this?" And I'm going to go through the logic and the argumentation of why this sort of thing is argued. And you're going to see some patterns here. I'm going to overview for this next part of the episode. Then I want to drill down a bit on Stavrakoupolou's work, because she's the one who has been in the public eye in this regard (at least for this topic) in recent memory. So the logic and argumentation for this is as follows. This is how certain scholars—by no means the majority… It's a small number. But they do it. And by virtue of the nature of the topic, it does get attention from time to time out in the populous. So the first argument would be:

1. Verses 11-16 of Exodus 13 were added later. They weren't there originally; they were added at a later time. When Israelite religion had moved beyond child sacrifice, it had some moment of enlightenment: "Hey, we shouldn't be killing our kids." And so some scribe comes along and says, "Well, there's that stuff in the Torah (those first two verses of Exodus 13), and so I'll fix that. I'll add some verses, and then we'll be okay."

You say, "That's kind of artificial and self-serving." I would agree. But this is how the argument is made, and how it's been made for quite a long time now. This goes back to Otto Eissfeldt, who is famous as a source critic (the JEDP stuff and other things, too). He was an Old Testament scholar some time ago. Eissfeldt's views are sort of representative. Now there's an article by Hattingh and Meyer that provides a short literature review of this issue. And basically, they start with Eissfeldt, because everybody does. Their article is entitled "Devoted to Destruction: A Case of Human Sacrifice in Leviticus 27?" So they're actually talking about a different passage (Leviticus 27). But in so doing, they are going to overview the history of this question. And I think the article is pretty useful for that. So I'm going to quote a portion here, and I'll pick up a few other things with their article. But it's a pretty useful overview. They write:

> Eissfeldt (1935) also provides a broad overview of how he thinks the ideas around child sacrifice developed. In essence it was portrayed in a positive light before the Deuteronomic reform.

The "Deuteronomic reform"… When you see that in biblical scholarship, that is a reference to the time of King Josiah of Judah (roughly 640-609 BC). It was during Josiah's reign that he started getting rid of idolatry in a big way. He made a concerted effort to get rid of certain practices. And it was also the time when the book of the Law was discovered. Now classic critical scholarship says the book of the Law that was "discovered" was Deuteronomy, and people (across the confessional board—across the scholarly spectrum) are fine with saying it's Deuteronomy. But I would say that in this case, it is fair to say most critical biblical scholars would say that Deuteronomy wasn't *discovered*; it was *written* during this time. This is its point of origin. And they would use this assumption to say that… Basically they're going to argue that the entire thing was written at this time or later, as opposed to someone like a Supplementarian who would say that some of it might have been early (Mosaic) and then it gets added to later. But they're going to argue this because there are certain changes in laws in Deuteronomy from Exodus. And it is helpful in certain cases to explain the
15:00 differences against the backdrop of the horrors of idolatry. So because that's a good approach in certain passages, it's very common that people will presume that the "discovery" (by Hilkiah the priest) of Deuteronomy is not a discovery at all. It's biblical code for the priests writing it at this time. So that's Deuteronomic reform.

Let's go back to Eissfeldt. He says:

> **Before we had this Deuteronomic thing happen (before the time of Josiah), child sacrifice was viewed positively… but things changed after this reform and later authors did everything in their power to put more distance between this embarrassing act and the cult of YHWH [MH: the worship of Yahweh], and projected it onto Canaanite religion.**

So the whole notion… And you'll see this in the books of Kings and in the Prophets essentially linking this practice to foreign cults (Canaanite cults). There are a number of scholars (Eissfeldt among them) who would say, "This wasn't the problem of the foreign pagans; this was in Israelite problem, and so when they start addressing it in the evolution of their religion, they just start blaming the Canaanites." So this is the major trajectory of how this is argued—this notion that the original worship of Yahweh at one time had human sacrifice. Again, if you object to verses 11-16, they're just going to say, "Oh, those were added later." And you say, "That's just an assumption." And you would be correct. There's no empirical data that prove that verses 11-16 were added later. I'm just telling you that this is how it's argued. "All that stuff is later. Because Israelite…" Look at the assumption here—that Israelite religion (like lots of other religions, in an anthropological approach) evolves. "It becomes more enlightened." That's the underlying assumption here. So when you have passages like verses 11-16 that soften or do away with or object to… "No, no, you don't literally offer your

firstborn." They'll say, "Oh, that's later, after Israelite religion had evolved to a certain point. So there's an evolutionary assumption that goes hand in hand with this.

2. Secondly, they'll argue that commands in the Old Testament elsewhere (outside of Exodus 13 here) from the same presumed time period of the alleged "later edition" of verses 11-16 rail against child sacrifice. They would say, "Well, that means it was happening. You wouldn't have the prophets rail against it unless it was happening."

That's pretty logical. I would say yes, if it was a problem and the prophets rail against it. They wouldn't be railing against something that didn't happen. I get that. But now here's the added thought. "That means it was happening, and so therefore that also means it was legitimate at one time." That, folks, is what we call a non sequitur (a conclusion that does not necessarily follow). But my point here is this is how the idea is argued.

So you get those two ideas… And I'm hoping you see that there are some logical leaps here. It's pure speculation that verses 11-16 are later than verses 1 and 2. Even in standard JEDP studies about the authorship of the Torah, you can find plenty of them that do not divide up the text that way (that attribute verses 11-16 wholesale as some later source). So I don't know if I want to call it idiosyncrasy… I will. It's a bit idiosyncratic. But it makes "sense" to critical scholars because they presuppose the evolutionary development of Israelite religion from something primitive to something more enlightened. But it's pure speculation that one set of verses was added after the first two verses. Secondly, there's a logical leap here because verse 13 allows for the redemption of a firstborn donkey. Let me read it to you:

> **13 Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck.**

Then do away with it, or sacrifice it, or whatever. So by using this logic—the critical logic—did that mean that the prophets had some problem with sacrificing firstborn donkeys, so that when the guy added verses 11-16, he was also offended by letting donkeys off the hook? Or he wanted donkeys off the hook,
20:00 and so he put the firstborn donkey line in there as also evidence that they had evolved in their thinking? What?! How does that make any sense? Durham, in his Exodus commentary in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, says here:

> The animal [MH: the firstborn donkey] could be "ransomed, replaced" (פדה) by a flock-animal, or it could be destroyed (not sacrificed) [MH: he takes note that the breaking of the neck isn't a sacrificial act here]. The firstborn human male was to be replaced, but at what cost this text does no say [MH: it just says that you redeem it] (nor does Exod 34:20).

> **[20] The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed.**

So it actually occurs in other places in Exodus. But the logic… If you say somebody is adding these verses because they're more enlightened, and they add them because the practice of child sacrifice was so offensive by now (they had evolved to the point where they're offended by this now), well, then I guess they had evolved to the point where redeeming firstborn donkeys is necessary, too—that somehow that offended them as well. What you'll typically see… And it's interesting. Even in the dissertation I'll quote later, which evaluates Stavrakoupolou's work in one section of it… Even that person misses this detail (the firstborn donkey). The logic just doesn't work. But it's just this one line in verse 13 that often gets missed, but it mars the logic of how this idea is put forth.

Another thing I could say is some would argue in response that the passage lets the matter up to parents. Now Stavrakoupolou does actually argue this. In other words, she and others would say, "People who had verses 11-16, whenever that was added later, could still sacrifice their kid if they wanted to. But if they didn't, well, they could redeem it. So it doesn't totally do away with the child sacrifice; it just gives them the option. They could, if they chose, offer their firstborn male child to Yahweh, or they could redeem it."

Now here's a good question. Let me suggest this question: Do we ever see this happening in the Hebrew Bible? And the answer would be, "No. We don't." So this actually amounts to an argument from silence or even an argument from circular reasoning. I'll try to explain just briefly here.

So we're told that verses 11-16 were added later during some zealous monotheistic spasm (like the religious reforms during the time of Josiah). This also coincides with the time of some of Israel's prophets—the era of the Deuteronomic legislation, the Deuteronomistic period. We're further told that the various passages in the prophets that condemn child sacrifice come from the same sources and period (the prophets of the same time period). So consequently (so the conclusion goes), the prophets were trying to eradicate this practice, a practice that was legitimized by Exodus 13:1-2. The solution was preaching against it and adding to the Torah verses 11-16. That sounds like a neat picture, but there's one essential item missing. There isn't a single passage that endorses child sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible. (There's your argument from silence.) They assume that the practice was endorsed by Exodus 13:1-2. But to make Exodus 13:1-2 an endorsement, you have to eliminate verses 11-16 to a later period. And that's also circular reasoning. You might say, "Hey, Exodus 13:1-2 is an endorsement there." Well, in logic, that's called "assuming what you need to prove."

It goes something like this (I'm going to pretend I'm a promoter of this idea now): "My argument that Exodus 13:1-2 calls for child sacrifice is legitimate, because verses 11-16 were added. And we know that they were added because Exodus 13:1-2 affirms the practice." See that neat circle I just argued? That's circular reasoning. You can't use your assumption as proof to argue in favor of your assumption. You don't use your assumption as proof of your assumption. And all you have is the assumption. You need some other passage that illustrates the
25:00 practice of child sacrifice (that it was occurring and that Yahweh was pleased with it). If you find *that*, then your take on Exodus 13:1-2 becomes coherent. And then in turn, your idea about the lateness of verses 11-16 would also become coherent. But as it stands, you have circular reasoning.

Now the approach also assumes… We're talking here about logical jumps. The approach also assumes that if a practice existed it must have been approved, especially if it was condemned by the prophets. That, folks, in logic is what we call a non sequitur. And it's sort of akin to the "Yahweh's wife" thinking. I don't know if I want to get into that or not. You could say it like this. "Of course child sacrifice occurred in Israel. The prophets are condemning it. It's happening. It's going on." But why would the fact that it happens mean that it was legitimate early in Israel's history? Why?

Now I think it's worth pointing out that my skepticism here and rejection of the idea that Exodus 13:1-2 is within the scholarly mainstream… This isn't just me. This is not something tied to evangelicalism or some other confessional commitment. For instance, I'm going to quote Mark Smith here. Mark's essay "Child Sacrifice as the Extreme Case and Calculation." It comes from the book entitled *Not Sparing the Child: Human Sacrifice in the Ancient World and Beyond: Studies in Honor of Professor Paul G. Mosca. (*Mosca has done a lot of work in this area. He did a lot of work on Molech.) I'm going to quote from Smith here. Smith is not an evangelical. He's a Catholic, but he's not an evangelical. And he's about as mainstream in biblical scholarship as you can get. Smith writes this:

> The references to child sacrifice in 2 Kgs 16:3 and 21:6 likewise represent extremity, in these cases the outer limits of idolatry. Both verses are intriguing for their brevity and perspective. 2 Kings 16:3 attributes to Ahaz the sacrifice of his son, in a clause opening with wĕgam, 'and also'. Elsewhere in narrative sections of 2 Kings this construction marks material layered into accounts, either to express condemnation (see also 2 Kgs 13:6; 21:16; cf. gam in 2 Kgs 17:19) or to note action taken against condemnable practices (2 Kgs 23:15, 19, 24; cf. 24:4)…
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> The report in 2 Kgs 16:3 then offers a comparison: 'like the abomination of the nations'.

That's what he compares child sacrifice to. I'll just read the verse. "He walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel." So back to Smith. He's saying, "We have this comparison here."

> Here the practice is marked as the outer limits of immoral behavior, being associated with other nations by the implied narrator. In this way, this traditional practice is represented as the extreme measure of Ahaz's idolatrous behavior. The context for the practice is not supplied, although 2 Kgs 16:5 refers to the siege of Jerusalem: 'They besieged Ahaz, but they were unable in battling'. It would be tempting to connect the report of child sacrifice with this siege, but this oversteps the evidence. More to the point, the report of the practice charges King Ahaz with the worst behaviors associated by this narrator with foreign nations. This is historiography as sermon.
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> The similar formulation for child sacrifice in 2 Kgs 21:6 belongs to a long catalogue of Manasseh's sins. Where in 2 Kgs 16:3 child sacrifice heads the characterization of Ahaz's sin, in Manasseh's case in 2 Kgs 21:6 it is one item in a longer 'laundry list' of idolatrous acts…
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> In 2 Kgs 16:3 and 21:6, child sacrifice is represented as a foreign practice wholly unbefitting of Israel's kings. These passages represent the practice as the extreme case of immoral non-Israelite behavior.

Again, this is where most scholars are at. They're going to say, "Look. It happened. It's idolatrous." They will trace it to things outside Israel that are brought in, in terms of apostate religion on the part of certain kings. This is where
30:00 the mainstream still is. But you get scholars sort of on the periphery here (or at least their views on this are more minority)… We're talking about how in the world they argue this. Condemnations are later than Exodus 13:1-2, which is our launching point for this episode. They'll argue pretty demonstrably in a circle to do this. They'll assume that a practice certainly was accepted, especially when it was condemned by the prophets. The prophets are later. Why would they think that way? Because they have this evolutionary mindset: "Israelite religion evolved from something primitive and icky to something enlightened." Okay? So this is how the idea is articulated.

Now you might guess that there are bigger issues behind all of this. It's tied to the controversy or difficulty of the nature of the *mlk* sacrifice, which is variously… If you remember, Hebrew and Semitic languages didn't have vowels. So you're dealing with consonants here. So *mlk* in Hebrew and broader Semitic languages can mean a few things. It could be the word for king. It could be the consonants that form the name of a deity (like Molech). It could be a reference to a sacrifice

(a *molk* sacrifice). So there's a problem with knowing in any given text which one of those things is in mind or an admixture of some. And so the controversy over this extends into this area. (I'm going to try to unpack this for you.) So when these sorts of things (*mlk* events—*molk* sacrifice or whatever—these *mlk* consonants)… When you see them happen in the Hebrew Bible, the difficulty is, are we talking about a deity or are we talking about a sacrifice or some mix between the two? What that means is that the terminology may not refer to a deity (it may not refer to Molech). Some of these passages may not be talking about Molech. And it may not even be talking about a sacrifice (a child sacrifice from Molech religion). It could be talking about some other kind of sacrifice. So this is where the battleground really gets to. How do we understand these *mlk* events or sacrifices? So I'm going to read from Hattingh and Meyers' literature review again. This is a more extensive portion. Because they go through this issue. So you'll get a broad overview here of the problems—of the issues—that are part of this discussion. They write:

> Any discussion on human sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible at some point touches on Molech. Over 80 years ago Otto Eissfeldt (1935) discussed Molech and child sacrifice. He started his argument by examining the phenomenon in the Phoenician-Punic sphere (Eissfeldt 1935:1–30), but also provided an overview of how he thinks child sacrifice developed in Ancient Israel (Eissfeldt 1935:31–63). Eissfeldt argued that in Punic Molech (actually molk) was a sacrificial term and not the name of a deity (Eissfeldt 1935:31). For Eissfeldt (1935:36–40) molk was initially also a sacrificial term in ancient Israel similar to the one in Punic texts, which was eventually changed to the name of a deity. Eissfeldt (1935:40–43) believes that the motives behind this change could be found in the Deuteronomic reform of Josiah and he understands later texts as an attempt to distantiate the sacrifice of children from the YHWH cult by changing the meaning of the term to the name of a god.

Let me stop there. So Eissfeldt argued, "Hey, we got this term here in Phoenician (this *mlk* event). And we have some of these happening in the Hebrew Bible. And in the Phoenician stuff, it has to do with Molech." But Eissfeldt thought, "Yeah, you know what? I think that in ancient Israel, they were essentially doing the same sacrifice," (because the same term is used) "and is was legit. It was okay. You could kill your kid. But then in the Deuteronomic reform, when Israel reached this new level of enlightenment, the priest or whoever is fiddling with the text or writing Deuteronomy at this point (whatever they're writing or adding), they decided to point the text in a certain way so that you would think that this is a foreign sacrifice (something associated with Molech the deity), and that way they
35:00 basically covered their butts. They distracted attention away from the idea that this used to be part of ancient Israel's worship (child sacrifice). And so that their readers would think, 'Oh, this is the bad guy, Molech. That's where this comes from.'"

That is the hermeneutic of suspicion in full display for you, right there. There's no empirical evidence that will point to what I just sketched out. That is taking the data and assembling the data in such a way… In other words, you're interpreting the data. It's your interpretation of the data. But there's nothing about the data themselves that compel that reconstruction. But that was Eissfeldt's reconstruction. And I do think it's a good illustration of the hermeneutic of suspicion. "Something is condemned in the Hebrew Bible. That must mean it was okay before!" Logic, please? Can we have rules of logic that everyone sort of understands and operates by? Can we do that? Okay, back to the Hattingh and Meyer overview. They write:

> Before Eissfeldt, the "interpreters of Punic inscriptions had read the mlk-references either as the name of a deity or as a title 'King,' in either case referring to the divine recipient of the offering commemorated by the inscription" (Heider 1985:35). In 1972, 37 years after Eissfeldt, Moshe Weinfeld engaged with Eissfeldt's material and reached different conclusions with regard to most of Eissfeldt's arguments on Molech. 1 Where Eissfeldt thought that child sacrifice happened in ancient Israel, Weinfeld (1972:141) argued that "making to pass through the fire" meant passing through or between rows of flames as a means of purification and dedication. . . . Thus Weinfeld (1972:145) thought that the burning of children should not to be taken literally, but rather figuratively, as it denotes dedication to the idolatrous priesthood. At the beginning of Weinfeld's (1972:133) article he makes an important "methodological comment" which we [Hattingh and Meyer] think is important to keep in mind [MH: Quoting Weinfeld here]:
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> > *In discussion on human sacrifices a distinction has to be made between a sacrifice which, proceeding from an extraordinary situation (a crisis, calamity, and so on), occurs only rarely and at infrequent intervals, and, by contrast, a human sacrifice as a fixed institution.*

So basically, they're pointing out that Weinfeld said, "There's a difference here between this happening in some sort of reactionary panic (some crisis) and it being a normal institution. Those are two different things." Back to Hattingh's and Meyer's article:

> This seems to imply that Weinfeld does not question the fact that under extraordinary circumstances adults or children might have been sacrificed to YHWH. It also implies that Weinfeld actually saw some link between sacrifice and מָ ר ח , a debate we will engage with later. Yet he [Weinfeld] takes serious exception to the idea that human sacrifice might have been a "fixed institution" in ancient Israel. [MH: Weinfeld just didn't believe that.]

> In the 1980s two scholars revisited the issue of Molech and, consequently, human sacrifice. First, George Heider (1985:405–406) produced a study on Molech concluding that Molech was the name of a god and not a sacrificial term, as suggested by Eissfeldt (1935:401). Yet Heider (1985:402) agrees with Eissfeldt that the cult "was licit in Israel until Josiah's reform" and that it actually involved sacrificing children. Heider (1985:404–405) also disagrees with Eissfeldt in arguing that the cult of Molech is probably Canaanite and not Israelite, or could even be regarded as Phoenician, but was not part of the YHWH cult. Later John Day (1989:83) concluded that child sacrifice did occur in the Canaanite world and he sees no reason to doubt the Hebrew Bible's allusion to human sacrifice as actual physical sacrifices. Day (1989:83) agrees with Heider that child sacrifice as presented in the Hebrew Bible was practised in ancient Israel. Like Heider, Day (1989:82) also thinks that Molech possibly refers to a Canaanite god and disagrees strongly with Eissfeldt in this regard.
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> More recently Francesca Stavrakopoulou has been the most vocal on the issue of child sacrifice. Stavrakopoulou (2004:318) agrees with Heider and Day that child sacrifice was practised in ancient Israel, but she also agrees with Eissfeldt that originally the term molech was probably a sacrificial term [MH: the mlk term] (2004:260–261). Stavrakopoulou (2004:299) actually argues that there were possibly three different kinds of child sacrifice, namely "the firstborn sacrifice, the mlk sacrifice and the sacrifice of the šadday gods".

40:00

Now I'm going to break in here. The "šadday gods" is a reference to the Deir Alla' text. It's a text that's famous for its connection with the Balaam account. We're not going to be drilling down there, but it has the term *shedaian* in that text. It's Aramaic. And that is a cognate to *shedim*, which is the term for territorial deity in Deuteronomy 32:17. So the reason I bring it up is, if you take the *shedim* in Deuteronomy 32:17 as the *shedaian*, Deuteronomy 32 presents the sacrifice there as an aberration. In other words, this was not allowed. This was not a positive, licit institution in Israel if you take Deuteronomy 32 there. But people say, "Ah, it's so much later, blah-blah-blah, so on and so forth," despite the fact that Deuteronomy 32… If you look at the study by Paul Sanders (which is the most thorough to date), there's a good bit of it that was demonstrably, linguistically earlier than you would think the "enlightened" Deuteronomic reform would be. But that's getting too far afield. But I just wanted you to note that there's a connection here between the sacrifices to the gods of the nations and this whole issue.

> Most of these cults [MH: Talking about Stavrakopoulou's view, what she says.] were initially associated with YHWH worship, an argument which has a lot in common with Eissfeldt's original study and hence in this regard she differs from Heider and Day.

Then they quote Stavrakopoulou, just a little bit:

> *This discussion has argued that the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice as a foreign practice is historically unreliable.*

So she just says the biblical data are just unreliable here the way they are presented.

> *It has been suggested that child sacrifice is instead better understood as a native and normative element of Judahite religious practice, including Yhwh-worship (Stavrakopoulou 2004:310).*

Back to Hattingh and Meyer:

> This quote is from a chapter by Stavrakopoulou (2004:301–316) on "the distortion of child sacrifice" in which she argues that, although it was initially part of YHWH worship, most biblical texts portray it as a "foreign practice".

She just disagrees that that's legit. She thinks that is propaganda on the part of the biblical writers. That'll be the end of my quotation of Hattingh and Meyer. But in regard to their study, their article was about Leviticus 27:28-29. I'll just read you the two verses, because you might be curious here:

> **[28] "But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the LORD, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD. [29] No one devoted, who is to be devoted for destruction from mankind, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.**

So "devoted to the Lord" is the word *herem*. This is the verb of destruction for the conquest. So that last line is the issue. No people who are supposed to be devoted to destruction shall be ransomed. In other words, you can't redeem them. They have to be put to death (Leviticus 27:28-29). That's the comment. So their article was about that passage. But there's no way to prove (as they admit in the article) that what's referred to in Leviticus 27:28-29 was a sacrifice (like a ritual event) as opposed to a death penalty requirement. One could see these verses as applying to Exodus 22:20, for example:

> **Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD alone shall be devoted to destruction.**

There's actually a law in the Torah that if you see somebody offering to some other god, then that's a death penalty offense. So Leviticus 27:28-29 could be referring to that kind of situation. There's no way to know or to prove that it's a

religious ritual, in terms of an institution in ancient Israel. It could very well just be, “You committed a capital offense. You have to die now, and there’s no possibility of your redemption. This is a death penalty offense—sacrificing to some other god.” So in theory, you could have a member of your household (maybe your wife or a servant or something—someone in your extended family), and you catch them offering a sacrifice to another god; that’s a death penalty
45:00 offense. So that could very well be what Leviticus 27 is talking about. And the authors recognize that.

It’s conceivable that maybe it also applies to not just somebody in your household doing this (committing the offense of Exodus 22:20), but we know from the book of Judges, for instance, that instead of driving all of the people out… And my position is that the rationale for this was the targeting of the giant clans here. Nevertheless, you’re going to have people in these places that get caught up in this and they die in the conquest. We learned from the book of Judges that there was intermarriage going on with these people. They didn’t drive them all out. They don’t necessarily have to kill them. As I talked about in *Unseen Realm*, there are other verbs besides destruction verbs in the conquest narrative. But you certainly weren’t supposed to intermarry with them. And so it’s also conceivable that Exodus 22:20 might be derivative of this problem. Later on, they intermarry, and one of these people sacrifices to a foreign god. There you go. It’s a death penalty offense.

There are any number of ways where you could come up with a scenario that lurks behind Leviticus 27 and, of course, Exodus 22. But Stavrakopoulou isn’t thinking along those trajectories. She’s thinking along different trajectories. It’s clear, again, that she’s operating from something of a hermeneutic of suspicion. She wants to (for some reason) exonerate Manasseh, and simply asserts that the biblical writers are engaging in propaganda to cover up the fact that child sacrifice was once part of YHWH worship.

Now Hattingh and Meyers’ literature review (as good as it is)… And I think their… Let me just find the date of that. Their article is 2016. As good as their literature review is, it does not include a recent dissertation. This is a Johns Hopkins University dissertation. But that isn’t unusual. Published articles usually cover published literature, so whether they were aware of this dissertation or not, I don't know. But the dissertation was by Heath Dewrell. It’s entitled *Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel and Its Opponents*. It’s a Johns Hopkins PhD dissertation from 2012. Now, it has since been published by Eisenbrauns, so you could actually buy this. It’s a hardback book. If you have access to the dissertation databases, you might as well just get it there for free. But anyway, it has been published.

Now Dewrell’s thoughts… I’ve gone through this dissertation in regard to this topic, obviously. I’m just going to read a few comments that he has, because this is, to date, the most recent work on this issue. And this is Johns Hopkins. It’s a PhD dissertation. This isn’t a hack job. This is real scholarship—not that the other

ones aren't, but this is real scholarship, too. So page 59 and following, just a few little portions of Dewrell's dissertation. He writes:

> After a hiatus in monographs being devoted to the topic, Francesca Stavrakopoulou's *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities* devotes a significant portion of its attention to the mlk ritual. As the book's subtitle suggests, Stavrakopoulou is particularly concerned with the way in which the theological and ideological tendencies of the biblical writers has obscured the historical events and persons portrayed in their accounts. In the first half of her study, she focuses on the relationship between the biblical Manasseh and the historical Manasseh, concluding that "the portrayal of Manasseh within the texts reveals not a portrait, but a caricature." [MH: That's Stavrakopoulou's assessment.]
>
> Significant for the purpose of this study, though, is when Stavrakopoulou turns her critical lens to child sacrifice rituals, attempting to determine how accurately the biblical depiction of these rites matches historical reality. She begins by rejecting the suggestion of Weinfeld and others that the relevant texts actually refer to dedicatory rites. She points out that Ezekiel and Jeremiah, among others, explicitly state that children were killed as part of the ritual, which rules out understanding the ritual as involving anything other than sacrifice. While some of the terminology used in connection with child sacrifice-- 'hr (C stem), ntn, and even .frp--might be ambiguous as to the nature of the rite others [MH: He lists a few Hebrew verbs here.]—sb/ (Gen 22: 10; Isa 57:5; Ezek 16:21; 23:39), zbl; (Ps 106:37, 38; Ezek16:20), 'kl (Ezek 16:20; 2 Kgs 3:27), and 'lh (C stem; Gen 22:2; Judg 11 :31; 2 Kgs 3:27)--are clearly incompatible with Weinfeld's dedicatory hypothesis.

50:00 I think this is a correct assessment. I think Stavrakopoulou is right on this point. You can't really just go with Weinfeld saying, "It's a baby dedication," where they're just sort of waving the kid through flames or walking through flames. She's right here. There are certain passages where it's very clear that the infant was killed. So I think she makes a good point there. Back to Dewrell's dissertation:

> Stavrakopoulou then examines the way in which the ritual is depicted in the Hebrew Bible. The first thing that she notes is that the rite is often described as foreign to Israel. Deut 12:29-31, for example, accuses the "nations" whom Yahweh had driven out of the land of sacrificing their sons and daughters. She notes, "The practice of child sacrifice is thus condemned not because it is ethically untenable, but because it is foreign."

Now let me just stop there. That's really gratuitous on her part. That assumes that *the only reason* an Israelite would not want to do something is because

some other nation is doing it. Like there's no other moral basis for not doing a practice than that one question: "Do the nations do it?" That's really gratuitous. But I think that reflects… I think it's not only a false dichotomy, but I think it reflects her orientation in terms of her attitude toward the biblical material. Back to Dewrell:

> In essence, the Hebrew Bible depicts the practice of child sacrifice as restricted to foreigners, like Mesha and the Sepharvites, and Judahites who rejected Yahweh and chose to serve foreign deities, like Ahaz and Manasseh. This is not a depiction that Stavrakopoulou is willing to take at face value [MH: obviously].
>
> She begins by exploring the implications of the Law of the Firstborn [MH: this is where we started our episode: Exodus 13]. A discussion of the conclusions that she draws will appear below, but it worth noting here that she views it as evidence that child sacrifice at one time played a prominent role in the Yahwistic cult. With regard to the nature of biblical Molek, Stavrakopoulou sides with Eissfeldt in viewing the word as a sacrificial term rather than as a divine name or epithet. Addressing the most cogent objection to Eissfeldt's thesis-Lev 20:5 which refers to "whoring after the Molek"' (lizn6t 'ahiire hammolek), a phrase that otherwise always refers to a supernatural being or an image associated with such a being, never to a type of sacrifice-Stavrakopoulou recognizes this difficulty and presents several possible solutions to it.

Now at this point in his dissertation, Dewrell goes through the options. The question is, "Are any of her comebacks at all satisfactory here?" What is she trying to do? She's trying to say that this is not the name of a deity, because she doesn't want the practice of child sacrifice to originate outside Israel. She wants it to be part of the original Israelite orthodox worship of YHWH. Now I don't know if Stavrakopoulou is motivated by her atheism. (She is an atheist.) I know one student who is a dissertator under her, and he is apparently having a good experience. Nothing personal about her here, but I just have to wonder if she doesn't have some kind of axe to grind. She recognizes this problem to her thesis—that everywhere else, this syntactical construction refers to a deity name and not to a particular sacrifice. So she offers a few possible comebacks to this problem. I think only one of them is really worth mentioning, that, "Ah, you might really have a point here." So back to Dewrell. He's going through these, and this is one of them. He writes:

> [It is possible] that *hammolek* [MH: and it's vocalized there, so the ha (definite article) plus the *mlk*] refers not to the ritual but to the sacrificial victim himself…

Not the deity. Because remember, she doesn't want to say that it's a deity from the outside. She's saying that maybe the *mlk* doesn't refer to a ritual, but it refers to the victim. Thus, the Hebrew phrase "to whore after the *mlk*" would be referring

to whoring after the *mlk* offerings and not the deity. Well, that… She doesn't say this, but is she trying to say that they were whoring after these things because they just liked to kill people? Maybe they didn't like the victims. They just wanted to see certain people… I don't really know where she's going with this, but to me, that doesn't undermine the syntactical problem her view is facing. She's still trying to make it about the offering. She says, "The victim, that could be viewed sort of as a proper…" No. Look, I don't really know what her angle is here, but it doesn't feel too effective. But this is probably the best of the ones that Dewrell goes through. The other ones are worse. Back to Dewrell:

> Finally, she notes that the fact that mlk offerings were mentioned in conjunction with "ancestral ghosts" (*ha 'obot*) [MH: we talked about the *obot* here on the podcast before] and "knowers" (*hayyidde 'onfm*) [MH: "the knowing ones"] (Lev 20:2-5, 6), both of which appear to have played a role in divinatory practice, as does the mlk offering…

"That might be why people are doing it." That doesn't help her case. That doesn't help her get away necessarily from the outside origin. Because 1) the *obot* and the knowing ones are still entities. Of course, you would do this in a divinatory ritual, because it's the entities on the other side that you presume have knowledge that you want, or that you want to placate them.

So okay, it's not about Molech. It's about some other entities. What's the point? Really, what's the point? Because those practices specifically are condemned in the Hebrew Bible because they are offering sacrifices to other deities. So I don't know how she thinks this works, but I'm just saying, "Eh, it really doesn't." It doesn't get her far enough away from this thing that she's trying to get away from in making this argument. Back to Dewrell:

> While Stavrakopoulou does not attempt to demonstrate that any of these options is the correct one, she concludes that there is enough reason to doubt that the verse absolutely precludes understanding mlk as a type of offering rather than the name of a deity.

You know, if I were on her dissertation committee, I would say, "You just have not made that case." Because these are still entities. It doesn't matter that it's a deity name; they're still deities. Even if *obot* and the knowing ones (the *hayyidde 'onfm*) aren't proper names, they're still entities. So you really haven't gotten away from this very far. And the other issue about whoring after the victim, I don't know what the point is there. So if I had been her advisor, I would have said, "Man, it's not like I'm going to flunk you or anything." You don't do that sort of thing unless you're a jerk. But I'd say, "This just really isn't satisfying. It's just not cutting it." Anyway, the issue for Stavrakopoulou is that she takes the law of the firstborn as being a viable option for people in early Israel. This is really what she's trying to go after.

So when Dewrell gets around to his own assessment of what she's trying to do… Let me just quote a little bit more from him, and then we'll be done with the dissertation. Actually, we're close to wrapping up here anyway, because this is the point I wanted to angle for. The recent work… And even if you can't pronounce Stavrakopoulou, you'll see her name on the internet, because her name gets picked up as a biblical scholar who's into this topic. And she has an axe to grind. She thinks that the prohibitions of this are just propaganda. She operates with a hermeneutic of suspicion. That's what she's doing. But let's go back to Dewrell to wrap up:

> This does not mean, however, that Stavrakopoulou believes that there were some groups who adhered to a law that called for the general sacrifice of firstborn children while others did not. [MH: He's talking about how she says it's an option.] Instead, she agrees with de Vaux that firstborn sacrifice is unlikely [MH: so she actually agrees with de Vaux that, yeah, it's unlikely that this is institutionalized] to have been generally practiced, even by an isolated group, although she disagrees with his conclusion that the laws that seem to command precisely that must mean something different. Instead she argues that de Vaux misunderstands the nature of the biblical laws.

Which is a real mouthful. Roland de Vaux had real high status as a biblical scholar. And you have to have more than what you have to just dismiss de Vaux, like he just doesn't get it. So that would leave me a little dissatisfied as well.

1:00:00

> In his Exodus commentary, W. C. Propp [MH: this is Dewrell pointing out that Propp in the Exodus commentary in the Anchor Yale Bible series] also argues against interpreting Exod 22:28-29 [MH: and some of these other passages] as indicating that firstborn children were ever regularly offered by Israelite Yahwists.

De Vaux and Propp aren't even evangelicals. I think that's important to point out. This is mainstream biblical scholarship. The people who are like Stavrakopoulou are on the periphery of this issue, thinking that it was institutionalized. And to be fair to Stavrakopoulou, she does back off of that a little bit and says, "Maybe it was an option. They could kill the kid if they wanted; if not, they could redeem it later on." "But initially" (she would be firm here), in the beginning of the worship of Yahweh, child sacrifice was a normal institution." She would say that. But de Vaux disagreed with that. Propp disagreed with that. Others, of course, have disagreed with that. Propp has a funny line in here, in his Exodus commentary. He points to the absurd logic of this. He refers to an institutionalized child sacrifice as being "Darwinian suicide" on the part of Israelites, which… Yeah, if everybody is doing this, that's kind of going to hurt the population. How would you explain the expansion of the population? Someone like Stavrakopoulou could just come along and say, "Eh, the Bible is full of it. The population didn't expand. They struggled until they reached their point of enlightenment. Maybe

this was their point of enlightenment. 'Hey, our population is not growing! We're heading into the demographic winter here! We'd better stop this!'" Again, it's just speculation. Dewrell winds up this way:

> Here those who argue that the plain sense of Exod 22:28-29 (along with Exod 13: 1-2, if one views these verses as originally separate from 13: 11-16)…

So if you're one that says verses 11-16 were added later, and all you have is Exodus 13:1-2 and Exodus 22:28-29, then yeah, you'd have to read those verses, and there'd be no reason to not conclude that Yahweh was asking for child sacrifice. Because when you eliminate the redemption part of the passage, what else do you have? It would be easy to read it that way. So Dewrell is saying, "Yeah, if you take that stuff out, then yeah, that's what you'd have." And then he says:

> Further, the fact that animals are said to be offered in the same way makes it highly unlikely that firstborn children are intended to be "dedicated" to temple service rather than sacrificed.

Here I'll break in and say that Dewrell misses verse 13. Because there is an exemption that applies to firstborn donkeys. Yes, I know he's saying if you add verses 11-16 later and you just don't even look at that… I agree. If you're not looking at those verses, then yeah. How else would you read these passages? But then he tries to make part of the argument on the redemption idea, which is in those verses. And he misses the firstborn donkey thing, which as I said earlier, really messes up the logic. "What, the prophets were so offended by firstborn donkey sacrifice that they had to put in a redemption clause here?" Again, it's kind of silly.

> Despite the plain sense of the text, however, scholars are right to question how the obvious reading can be the correct one, given the overwhelming evidence that firstborn children were not regularly sacrificed. While a full diachronic examination will have to wait until the following chapters [MH: he does that in his dissertation], it is worth noting that there is no indication in any of the copious narrative material of the Hebrew Bible that firstborn children were ever regularly sacrificed by the Israelites or their neighbors…
>
> The cases of child sacrifice that do appear are all during extraordinary circumstances (cf. Judg 11; 2 Kgs 3:27). The sole possible exception is Ezek 20:25, which appears to imply that at least some Israelites were interpreting a law as demanding child sacrifice.

Ezekiel 20:25 says:

> **Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and rules by which they could not have life, and defiled them through their very gifts and their offering up all their firstborn that I might devastate them.**

Does that refer to the animals or does it refer to people? Or is it just a terrible interpretation of a law like Exodus 13:1-2? Now, we don't really know. Ezekiel is not that specific. I would agree with Dewrell in this respect. The absence of evidence for the institutionalized practice of child sacrifice argues pretty forcefully that the true worship of Yahweh did not include child sacrifice. You have to have some positive evidence that they were doing this—that they were looking at the
1:05:00 text the way Stavrakopoulou looks at it. You have to have something there. Because if you don't, you have circular reasoning. That's what you have. At the end of the day, that is what you have.

I would also agree with Propp, that this is kind of a Darwinian national suicide kind of thing. And I would further go back to how this makes zero sense of a remembrance of the protection of the firstborn. That's its context. The Passover is the context for Exodus 13:1-2, even without verses 11-16. And I don't think there's any evidence that verses 11-16 weren't there when verses 1 and 2 were written. I think that's pure speculation. But even if they weren't there, think about it. Exodus 13:1-2 come on the heels of Exodus 12—the protection of the firstborn at the Passover. So how in the world does it make any sense to say, "Hey, the Lord just protected our firstborn. Now let's kill it." Or, "He wants us to kill it now." I think that's a logical absurdity, even without verses 11-16.

Let me end by offering my own speculation here, though. See if… I'm doing what these other people do on the other side of it. So yeah, this is just speculation. But I think this rings truer. I would suggest that there would have been people in Israel who thought that Exodus 13:1-2 (presuming they knew of it and were just sort of ignorant of everything else)… Maybe there's somebody in Israel that thought those verses gave them permission to sacrifice a child to Yahweh. Let's just say that somebody would have been that dense and would have done that. Yeah, sure, somebody could have used the verses we've talked about to justify the idea, presuming (incorrectly) that that was how Yahweh wanted to be worshipped, sort of like how some people in Israelite history thought that other aberrant forms of worship were fine. (Remember 2 Kings 23:10-11—you have sun worship, Josiah's reform. That's the same context—2 Kings 23.) There were other people doing other things thinking that it was okay worship of Yahweh. But they were wrong. We might be generous and call these sorts of assumptions understandable, but they'd still be wrong. Maybe they looked at it or heard the verse, "Oh, okay. I could offer my kid. And maybe God will love me a little bit more." This isn't good thinking, but you could see where somebody would think this way. We might be generous and say that they were just kind of clueless. They weren't evil, but they were clueless. But if the verses were evident, there would have been an institutionalized child sacrifice. And you'd think there would

be either textual or archeological evidence in Israel for that, and there is neither. I would say it's sort of similar to how some Christians today (people who embrace the work of the cross and they don't believe there's another way of salvation—they're really Christians) might use Exodus 21:22-25 to justify abortion. Let me just read the passage to you:

> [22] **"When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine.** [23] **But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life,** [24] **eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,** [25] **burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.**

So the idea here… In some "progressive" Christian circles, they legitimize abortion on the basis of this passage. It's going to sound a little bizarre to some, but some of you may have come across this. They'll make the passage say that you only have the "eye for eye" (the death penalty offense) if the woman is killed. But if the kids die (they come out stillborn or something), then you don't have the death penalty. So that means that the child (the fetus) was not viewed as human, whereas the woman was. "So abortion is okay." Maybe there are Christians (and I know there are today) that would look at that passage, interpret it that way, and justify an abortion. They would be wrong as well, just like our hypothetical person in Israel that looks at Exodus 13:1-2 and says, "Ah, okay. I can sacrifice my kid." Yeah, you can see how people can reach a conclusion. But they'd still be wrong. And we know (in the instance of Exodus 21:22-25—the abortion passage) that they're wrong for certain, because when we juxtapose that passage to the very similar legislation in Hammurabi's law, we learn that the difference in fines
1:10:00 (penalties) is about social class, not something as human versus not human.

So we need to get it in our heads that just because an Israelite (or maybe a bunch of Israelites) had a thought doesn't mean the thought was correct. And it also doesn't mean that it was an institutionalized thought. Lots of people in ancient Israel thought Yahweh had a consort (a wife)—Asherah. We know that's the case from sites and inscriptions like Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom, where you have a reference to Yahweh and his Asherah. Some Israelite out there somewhere in the boonies believed that. But going from that observation (somebody thought that way) to saying that orthodox Yahwism included the idea that Yahweh had a wife is flawed. It's flawed reasoning. There's no evidence in the Hebrew Bible that this was the case (and that it was institutionalized). It's only when the hermeneutic of suspicion is applied that we see such arguments arise, and their conclusions are non sequiturs. They go like this. Let's take the Asherah one. "Well, the prophets rail against Asherah, so that must mean Asherah used to be Yahweh's wife and that was okay, until the prophets." That's a non sequitur. I hearken back once again (you've heard me mention this before) to that day in

my doctoral seminar (at Wisconsin) when I said it would be a good idea if a logic course was required of all doctoral students in biblical studies. I didn't win hearts and minds that day, but I meant it then and I mean it now. Clear thinking is kind of important.

So with respect to Exodus 13, what we're left with is the biblical data as they stand versus speculative moving parts of passages around chronologically to accommodate a hermeneutic of suspicion that wants to take the condemnations of child sacrifice as indicating a former allowed practice, and then use the moving of those passages around as a proof. It's circular reasoning, and it's a self-serving approach.

TS: Alright, Mike. Are we finally to the Red Sea? Can we cross it now? Are we close? [MH laughs] Have we…

MH: "Can we cross the Red Sea?" [laughs]

TS: Can we cross it now?

MH: Yeah, we're going to get into the itinerary. I'm going to loop the pillar of cloud and fire in Exodus 13 into 14, and that's the crossing. So yep, we're going to get in there.

TS: And you're also going to touch on the unleavened bread again? Is that correct?

MH: Yeah, we'll come back to that at some point, pick it up when it's discussed a bit later when we get to some of the feasts and whatnot. We'll loop it back in.

TS: So we're not quite done with 13, but hey. We're to the Red Sea. We're about to cross it. So alright.

MH: Yeah. Yeah. We're not being chased by Pharaoh here. But we want to move on. [laughs]

TS: [laughs] Alright, sounds good, Mike. Looking forward to it. Alright. Just want to make sure everybody out there leaves us a review and rates us on iTunes or wherever you consume us and help us out. We greatly appreciate that. And I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.