

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 277

Exodus 14, Part 2

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Episode Summary

In Part 1 of our discussion of Exodus 14 and the Israelites' journey out of Egypt we focused on the *yam suph* ("sea of Reeds" / Red Sea) problem and issues related to the ambiguity of physical place names (toponyms). In this episode of the podcast our focus is cosmic geography—namely, how Egyptian conceptions of their gods and physical world can contribute to reading the exodus story as a theological polemic.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 277: Exodus 14, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What's going on?

MH: Well, we're still (believe it or not, early as it is) going through stuff and packing. We're going to be in that mode for six months. What can I say?

TS: Oh, yeah. I hear you. It's the worst. The absolute worst.

MH: It is.

TS: And of course, me being a bigger guy and having a pick-up truck, everybody asks me for help.

MH: Sure.

TS: And I finally reached that point where I just told people, "I'm out. Stop asking me, please. My services are shut down." I don't know what age (since I got older, of course)... My back...

MH: You could wear a knee brace. Just point to your knee brace and say, "Sorry."

TS: Worker's Comp... "Find somebody else. Get a U-Haul and get somebody else."

MH: You've got a knee issue. I'm surprised you haven't said that already.

TS: Well, this was [years ago]...

MH: Just gritting through it?

TS: They haven't done it recently. I'm just saying... Many years ago, when I was still moving-eligible... But I had to shut that down. I just said, "Look, people, we're at an age now where you can afford to hire movers. And trust me, just hiring professional movers will take the stress off." Because that is one of the most stressful things.

MH: Yeah, we're going to do that. Every move including getting here has been me. So I'm done with that now. Not for this one.

TS: I hear ya.

MH: Yeah, I'm a little smarter now, I guess. It's been beaten out of me.

TS: So moving... Are we going to get to move the people through the Red Sea yet? Are we there? Are we actually...

MH: [laughs] Yeah, we've got chapter 15 next time, too. But there are just isolated things in there. It's not going to be all about the crossing. So I think we're done with the crossing after today. This is just going to be a different perspective on it. This is going to be... This would have been a little too long to tack on to Part 1 (what we already did), so we're calling this Part 2. But this is just a different perspective. I wanted to include this because I'm guessing it probably will be new to just about everybody. But it's kind of interesting, too. So yeah, I can promise you, we're not going to be doing crossing stuff proper after today. So does that make you happy? [laughs]

TS: It makes me happy, absolutely. I'm enjoying Exodus, but...

MH: You like to keep moving, I know.

TS: It's just so long!!! There are so many... When Exodus won, I thought, "There's 2019..." But that's okay.

MH: You know, be careful what you ask for. That's the answer now.

TS: I think I voted for Exodus. So I got it. [MH laughs]

MH: Well, the other one (Jeremiah) would've been longer. So you know, what a relief!

TS: [laughs] And the other one was Eschatology, which would've been the shortest of all time. Because it would've been half an episode for you.

MH: Yeah, but perhaps the most tortuous, for me anyway.

TS: Well, people did speculate, "He's already got a bunch of stuff out there on eschatology." But you intended to add new information on top of what you had already produced out there, correct?

MH: Yeah, but that spasm has passed, so I wouldn't expect that anytime soon. I actually have ideas on what to do after we're done with this that I think people will like. And it'll contribute to other things I'll be working on, too. I already have a game plan.

TS: Can we get a little taste of it? Is there a hint?

MH: No, I'm not going to say anything beyond that. I'm just going to shut up. [laughs]

TS: Okay. Actually, you told me off air, and it's pretty exciting. I'll say that much to our audience. Hey, you're going to want to stay listening to the Naked Bible Podcast for a while, because...

MH: But was I telling you the truth? [laughs]

TS: Well, you're not a liar, are you? I certainly hope you're not a liar! I'm going to have to take your word for it. It's good stuff, people.

MH: You tricked me into giving you the information.

TS: It is good stuff, so let me tell you, you're going to want to stick around till the next [series]. That's all I'm going to say about that.

MH: Alright. Well, let's jump in to Part 2. This is going to be supplemental, but it's going to be new stuff. Now I'm tempted to say, "This is kind of like what Trey and I were talking about off the air. Taking something familiar and then adding new stuff to it." I don't know. Maybe it is; maybe it isn't. But I think... I wanted to add this because it's something that I've come across in the past and I find it really interesting—a way to just look at what's a really familiar story from a different but related angle. So in Part 1... If you haven't listened to Part 1, it's not like you *have* to for this, but I'd still recommend you do that. In Part 1, we focused on the *yam suph* problem (the Sea of Reeds or Red Sea problem). What does that phrase mean? Why do we have a sea and a Red Sea that are separate but yet the same? All that kind of stuff. And that problem is linked to ambiguities in physical place names in Exodus 14 (in the itinerary—the narrative) and other passages (namely, Numbers 33 is the other big one). So that's what we spent

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our time on last time. It's sort of the physical geography and its ambiguities and its problems.

This time, though, I want to look at the exodus event broadly from a cosmic-geographical perspective, mostly from the way an Egyptian would be thinking. And then how the writer who... I would think certainly if there's Mosaic material here (and I'm certainly not opposed to that). As I've said many times before, I'm not a "Moses wrote every word of the Torah" person, but I'm not a JEDP-er either. I don't see any specific impediment—that we couldn't have a Mosaic hand in lots of places in the Pentateuch. If it was, then the Egyptian connection is obvious. Even if it's not... This is just going to be part of the larger Egyptian worldview that would've been known in the broader ancient Near East among people who could write (the literate class, the scribal class). So I want to get into how the Egyptians essentially looked at their world and the way they viewed the relationship of their gods (specifically solar deities) to that world, and then how that could possibly inform reading the exodus crossing again (just like the plagues) as a theological polemic.

Now Hebrew Bible scholars occasionally traverse into this territory. It is not frequent, though. The first place I ran into this was a *Journal of Biblical Literature* article that was republished in a book by Bernard Batto. It was entitled, "The Reed Sea: Requiescat in Pace." It's Latin for "rest in peace." So it's like he's putting this to rest. Batto takes a skeptical view about this actually being a literal, historical event. And he sees this chapter and the whole episode as historicized mythology or theology. In other words, it's a theological polemic *only*. It has no bearing on historicity. Of course, that is *not* my view, and the view of many others. But that's where Batto is coming from. Nevertheless, this was a really interesting article.

I'm not going to necessarily agree with all of what Batto said. And Hoffmeier, whom we referenced a lot in Part 1, does interact briefly with Batto. It's one of the few times I've seen Batto's work referenced in studies on Exodus. But I found it really interesting. And that's going to be the first foray into this. We're going to talk about Batto's thesis a little bit and then we're going to transition to something more recent. Batto's article was in 1983, so it's over 30 years old. And this idea that I'm going to describe (that he writes about) wasn't original to *him* either. He actually picks up on some things from a 1965 article by Snaith, "Yam Suph: The Sea of Reeds: The Red Sea." That was in *Vetus Testamentum*. Batto's article was in *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 1983. So this has been around for a while, but it's just not referenced very much.

Now what Batto does (and Snaith before him, to a certain extent)... The argument is that the word *suph* in *yam suph* (which we've talked about extensively here) should not be read as *yam suph*, but should instead be read as *yam soph*. That would be a different word in Hebrew. You have to recall that Hebrew had no vowels originally. It used certain consonants to mark vowel

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sounds. One of those consonants is the *waw*, which can be the vowel U or the vowel O (so *yam suph* or *yam soph*). Everybody takes it as *yam suph*. But Batto (following Snaith) had this idea that, “Well, maybe we’ve been misreading this. Maybe it said we should be vocalizing it *yam soph*.” The word *soph* means “end.” So it would be the sea at the end of the land, or the sea which is at the end. If images of *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* with Reepicheep, the mouse, and Aslan—this sea that’s at the end of all things, and then there’s this transition to the eternal state in Narnian thinking... This is kind of the idea, cosmically, that the Egyptians looked at their land as being special. It was Egypt. Everything else was the wild place—an uncivilized, chaotic mess.

And the wonder that was Egypt was something that was special. It’s under the dominion of Egypt’s gods. It’s the place they want to live. It’s not that they don’t rule elsewhere, as we’re going to find out. The Egyptians thought they ruled basically anything they could see. But Egypt was special. It was a divine land. And so when you crossed the border—when you left Egypt (as we talked about in Part 1) at this body of water (one of these lakes) that extended from the Gulf of Suez (the left prong of the Red Sea)—you were leaving this wonderful place and you were moving past the sea which is at the end (the border) and you’re moving off into chaos. So there’s a cosmic concept here.

Now, this is consistent with Hoffmeier’s notion that you have this string of lakes that marks Egypt’s eastern border. So this isn’t different in that respect, but sort of how it would have been perceived is what’s different. Batto, by arguing this, wants to say, “The story is what it is just because you have this notion. We don’t have a literal crossing of the sea. We don’t have a miracle here. But what we have is a bunch of vagabond Israelites leaving Egypt, and they’re going off into cosmic chaos.” That kind of thing. So he tries to develop the content of the chapter along these mytho-cosmic themes. That’s what he’s trying to do.

You might say, “Is there any real justification for this?” One of the places that Batto picks up on... He suggests that at least one of the Septuagint translators (whoever the guy was that was assigned to Exodus, or maybe there was more than one guy assigned to Exodus) is going to translate it one way, and then there are going to be other guys that are translating other parts where *yam suph* occurs. And whoever had 1 Kings 19:26... in Greek, it actually translates what we would think of as *yam suph* as though it were *yam soph*. It really does that. It translates the phrase in Greek as *eschates thalasses* (the end of the sea or the edge of the sea). You could even translate it as “the end sea.”

There are several Greek words for red (*eruthros*, *pyrrakes*, *pyrros*). Those aren’t used in 1 Kings 19:26. Now *eruthros* is used elsewhere for *yam suph* (Red Sea), and also, if you’re paying attention, the Septuagint translator did not translate it “sea of reeds.” He didn’t use the Greek word for reeds, either. They do use the color red (“Red Sea”). Or here in 1 Kings 19:26, the “sea at the end.” So Batto looks at this one place in the Septuagint and says, “Hmm... That’s an interesting

idea. Maybe that's the way we should look at this phrase everywhere that's associated with this episode in biblical history. Maybe that's what we should do."

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You might be wondering at this point where the sea got its name, because the Septuagint translator does, in fact, use one of the Greek words for the color red. So there had to be somebody in antiquity that would call this body of water the Red Sea. If you're wondering who the first person to do that was, nobody really knows. Some have theorized that the name comes from the fact that Edom (the people group—the place of Edom) controlled the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, which is the point of reference in 1 Kings elsewhere when it mentions the "Red Sea." So Edom was associated with red dirt. If you look at pictures of Edom... If you google "Edom" and "red clay," "red soil," "red dirt," you're going to see that a lot of the country is reddish in color. Since they once had control over one of these tips, people have theorized, "Maybe that's where it got its name. It was the sea that the Edomites controlled." The Red Sea—just playing off the color of the Edomite land. And of course Edom, with Seir, and Esau... (Esau being the forefather of the Edomites.) Esau was hairy and red—all these associations.

So nobody really knows for sure why it got its name. But in Greek, the word for the color red is used of the sea, but in this one place that Batto seizes on (or at least offers by way of a defense of his suggestion), we have this "sea at the end." So he uses this to argue for a historicized myth in Exodus 14. He's not looking for any historicity here. The Israelites leave Egypt. They move out farther than the eastern delta border, a border which is marked by the Gulf of Suez and its canals (like we discussed in Part 1). They leave this wonderful paradise, Egypt. They venture out into the chaos of the wilderness. So it's like this mythic voyage into the unknown.

So that's it. That's how he takes this one nugget and he starts thinking about mytho-cosmic associations with land. Just to comment on Batto... Actually, you could say the opposite, too—that the meaning of the cosmic geography would be *more* compelling if they actually *did* pass through a body of water at the border, if it really was conceived of as the "sea at the end"—this thing that prevents icky foreigners from getting into Egypt. Or if this thing marks the gateway into this wonderful realm of the gods called Egypt. To basically have a foreign deity (Yahweh) just split that thing right down the middle, and you walk over it on dry land, that would've been pretty dramatic. That would basically establish who's really in control here. And you might be fearing the lands beyond Egypt, but you really ought to fear the God who has dominion of this place called Canaan, which is eventually where they're going to go. But that same God is in control of your lands as well. That would speak a lot more loudly if we didn't divorce the historicity from the episode. But you could say that. You could look at what Batto's doing and say that. So I just wanted to make that point.

Now Hoffmeier, ultimately, in his book rejects the idea that Batto is putting out (this "sea at the end"), and he largely does so because of the inconsistency of

the Septuagint. We really only have this one place where it looks like the translator saw the Hebrew text and thought *yam soph* (“sea at the end”). So not much has been really made of this.

So let’s segue into some more recent work. Batto’s observation is interesting. There might be something going on there (the “sea at the end”) even though you would think if that’s the way a lot of people thought about it, you would at least get it a few more times in the Septuagint. So Hoffmeier’s criticism is legitimate. But there are other ways to look at the cosmic geography here that don’t have anything to do with the phrase *yam suph* or *yam soph*. I’m going to reference two articles here, and I’ve uploaded these into the protected folder in case anybody is interested. Yes, it’s going to be peppered with hieroglyphs, but he transliterates everything. You can still get something out of both of these works. They’re both by the same guy, and I’ve actually referenced his dissertation in an earlier episode on chronology. The name is Julien Cooper, and one of the articles is entitled “The Geographic and Cosmo-geographic Expression T3-nṯr (*Ta-netcher*)”. That’s from the *Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology*, Volume 22. That’s a 2011 publication. And then six years later, the same author wrote a second article. This one’s in the protected folder as well. It’s called “Between This World and the Duat [MH: That’s another Egyptian term, basically for the netherworld.]: The Land of Wetenet and Egyptian Cosmography of the Red Sea.” And that’s from a book. It’s not from a journal. The book is called *The Cultural Manifestations of Religious Experience: Studies in Honour of Boyo G. Ockinga*, who was a pretty well-known Egyptologist. And that’s 2017. So I want to spend most of the time on the first one here—this phrase, *Ta-netcher*, which shows up a good deal in Egyptian texts. If you get Cooper’s article (the 2011 one) and you read through it, he gives you the whole history of scholarship here on the work that’s been done. But I’m going to read some excerpts from Cooper’s article on *Ta-netcher*, like what does that mean? Because it is connected to the Sinai and the Red Sea and a few other things. He writes:

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The Egyptian expression *Ta-netcher* or 'God's-Land' [MH: so the land of some particular god, and we’ll talk about who that might be in a bit] is an enigmatic geographic phrase which represents a particular conception of the geography to the east of Egypt [MH: that ties in with what we’re talking about here, the eastern border, east of Egypt]. This toponym, or place-name, is an exceptional label in Egyptian geographic and cosmographic terminology, as it amalgamates two basic ideas, that of a 'deity' (*netcher*) and the earthly concept of 'land' (*Ta*)... The presence of the *khas.et* ' ...

The khaset classifier... Now just let me comment on what he means here. Hieroglyphic Egyptian is a pseudo-alphabetic language. You have certain hieroglyphs that make one sound (like an alphabet). You have a few hundred that make two or three sounds. And you also have hieroglyphs that don’t make any sound. They are like little cheat hieroglyphs. A scribe would use a hieroglyph

at the end of a word to classify it. They're called determinatives. So if you had an Egyptian word and your little determinative was a picture of a guy with a hand to his mouth, then that's the scribe's way of telling you, "This word has something to do with speaking," or "eating." Something like that. So the Egyptian would use hieroglyphs to classify terms, which are really helpful when you're trying to learn vocabulary and things like that. It kind of helps you cheat a little bit. Well, Cooper says the presence... Well, when you get *Ta-netcher*, something called the khaset classifier determinative is used. It's like a hilly horizon, and it means "foreign land." So it classifies *Ta-netcher* as being some geographic place outside of Egypt. And he says this determines that...

...the phrase indicates that the expression is a label for a unit of space outside the Nile Valley...

Continuing with Cooper, he writes:

The debates surrounding this toponym [MH: *Ta-netcher*], as in all studies of ancient toponymy, usually centre around two important lines of inquiry. The most common is the debate of localisation, that is, the precise location or area a toponym refers to.

The other, no less important debate is that of semantics, namely what the toponym means in an etymological sense, but also what it means to the contemporary culture. As *Ta-netcher* clearly communicates a theological conception of geography, it is important that the religious implications of this word be studied, particularly the identity of the deity in question and what is exactly meant by a 'land of god'. This article presents the results of a textual lexicographic study of all the documents from the Old Kingdom [MH: that's the pyramid age] till the end of the New Kingdom which contain the phrase *Ta-netcher*.

So this is a pretty thorough article. It's not hugely long, but it's very thorough. And as far as what his conclusions are, I'm just going to read you a few snippets of what he discovers. He writes:

Numerous texts associate *Ta-netcher* with toponyms in West Asia.

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That might be a foreign phrase. Egyptians referred to people from Canaan or Palestine as Asiatics. So West Asia to an Egyptian is the land mass of Canaan and the land mass between the forks of the Red Sea, the land mass we call the Negev—all that stuff. It's not China or something like that. So don't get thrown off by the term "Asia."

These toponyms seem to cluster around northern Syria-Palestine and are most

commonly associated with texts narrating the procurement of aSH-wood..

That's not Ash, like we think of, but it's an Egyptian term. So a particular kind of wood. That's where they would go to get it.

The Middle Kingdom Wadi Hammamat inscription of Henu mentioned above [MH: Earlier in what he was writing.] (Text 4) also suggests that the Red Sea shore was part of *Ta-netcher* [MH: part of the God's-Land]...

Two inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadem suggest that the Sinai Peninsula may have also been part of God's-Land... Although *Ta-netcher* is not geographically defined here, the association of God's-Land with the gemstone turquoise suggests that the Sinai was within the boundaries of God's-Land...

From these sources it is clear that 'God's-Land' then refers to a wide arc of lands which are east, north-east and south-east of Egypt, including the Eastern Desert, Punt and Asia [MH: according to how the Egyptians would perceive this], stretching from the southern Red Sea to Northern Syria.

So basically, if you can think of the map of Egypt, you get out of the eastern delta. It's the Negev. It's Canaan. It's the Sinai Peninsula. All that to an Egyptian would have been the God's-Land. It's under the dominion of one of their deities. So they not only view their own place as a cosmic location, but they have also this concept that all this other stuff (especially moving out east) is under the dominion of one of their gods (or basically any solar deity, as we're going to find out). That's interesting, because, of course, in the biblical storyline none of that is the case, and in fact the exact opposite is. This is where Yahweh is going to encounter the Israelites—certain patriarchs—and, of course, there's the land of Canaan. So it's diametrically opposed to how an Israelite would look at things. Really, 180° away. So a few more comments from Cooper, In this section of his article, he's talking about religious texts in particular:

The Cosmography of Ta-netcher

[Religious texts] use 'God's-Land' in terms of cosmography, that is, how Egyptians mapped the general features of the universe including heaven and earth, usually relating it to the solar cycle...

Ta-netcher is associated with the eastern horizon [MH: you should already be thinking about the sun—the sun rises in the east] and the home of the eastern souls...

This has something to do (for an Egyptian) with what happened during the sun... The sun rises in the east every morning and then it traverses the sky and you can see it, and then it descends on the opposite horizon. We talk about the sun

going down. We know that the sun isn't really going down, but this is the language we use and that the ancients used. So it rises, goes across the sky, and then goes down and everything becomes dark. Well, for an Egyptian, that meant that the deity (they looked at the sun as a deity), Re (they had different names for this), was entering the netherworld when everything went dark. That doesn't mean that he was going to hell. It just meant that he was going to the realm where the god normally lives—the spiritual world—and he's doing stuff over there. And then the next morning he comes out of his domain (the domain of the spiritual world) and he traverses the sky again and keeps an eye on everything going on in Egypt and everywhere else. So when the sun rises (to an Egyptian), the god is leaving the spiritual world. So they also had this concept of the eastern souls—basically, those human souls that essentially get to live with the deity in the spiritual world. The east was where they were as well. So that's where you get this idea of the home of the eastern souls. So back to Cooper. He says,

[This] suggests a strong connection between this phrase [MH: *Ta-netcher*, the God's-Land] and the phenomenon of sunrise...

Taken together, all these assertions appear to confirm Kuentz's [MH: that's somebody he talked about earlier] theory that &AnTr [*Ta-netcher*] was, if not equivalent to, then strongly associated with the eastern horizon...

If you were standing in Egypt and you're looking to the east where the sun rises, you're going to notice something if you do it every day. You're going to notice that the sun rises a little bit differently (in a little bit different place) every day. It seems to move. And we know this is because of the shape of the earth. The earth is round, and it's tilted at an angle, and the sun hits it differently. And you have the equinoxes, and all this stuff. To an Egyptian, it looked like the gateway (essentially) that the deity emerges from the spiritual world in the east was really wide. It could range... This is why you can have *Ta-netcher* refer to all the way as north as Syria-Palestine, and all the way south as Punt (which is in Africa)—considerably a far ways down the Nile. Because if you were an Egyptian... And priests did this sort of thing. They're the ones who wrote the religious texts. They're watching this. And there's movement. There's a range of this gateway.

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So their idea of *Ta-netcher* (to make a summary here) is that all of the land (the physical land) that was between the two far points (the northern point and the southern point) where the sun rises (it moves back and forth)—all of that was the God's-Land. That was under the dominion of the solar deity. That was a place where he would come up and start inspecting things on earth. At the end of the day, he would go back into the netherworld and rise again the next day. So that's why you have this long swath of land that was perceived this way. The motion of the sun across the horizon would explain why we get these northern and southern extremes. As the sun god rose at different points on the horizon

between what we now know as the solstices, he would “visit” these regions. He would be above Punt some days. He would be above Canaan some days. He would be above the Negev or Sinai or any of these places in between. He was visiting those places because he was their Lord. His home (the place that he loved the most), of course, was Egypt because this is where his incarnate son (in the form of Pharaoh) was put. Egypt is the central axis from which Ma’at (earthly and cosmic order) was perpetuated. But the sun deity would visit other places, too, because he was interested in them because they were his. It was the God’s-Land.

Now what’s really interesting is if you (I’ll put it this way) take the late date of the exodus, that means that the exodus occurs after the Amarna period. You say, “Who cares about the Amarna period?” The Amarna period was when Akhenaten was pharaoh. And Akhenaten did away with a lot of the normal sun worship. He worshiped not Re (the sun god); he worshiped the Aten, which was the disc of the sun. He even changed his name to Akhenaten. The last part of that name is Aten. So he was a worshiper of the actual disc of the sun. That was his main deity. Now you have people say that he was a monotheist. Well, yeah, he did have the names of other deities (basically wherever he could get away with it) erased from monuments and things like this, but he also thought that he himself was a deity, so he’s not... Is that really a monotheist? People bicker about this all the time. It’s not the same as the biblical conception for sure, but this was where he was at.

Now when he dies, he’s anathematized by the Egyptians and they restore... This is one of the reasons why King Tut, even though he died as a boy, was such a big deal— because Tut authorized the restoration back to the old religion and he got rid of the Aten. He got rid of Atenism, the religion of Akhenaten. So by the time you hit the exodus later on (in the late date), you have Re back in place and as supreme. And it’s really important to an Egyptian because Ma’at has been restored now. We had this burp—this awful period of Akhenaten being on the throne, and it threw the whole land into chaos and all this stuff. And he did. He put the people in a lot of turmoil, because you don’t just change all the religion and just expect people to be happy with it. There were lots of people who weren’t happy with it. Everything that was bad that happened got blamed on this change. So when he’s gone, Tut comes back and restores all the old ways and everything is wonderful, because now we have cosmic order restored and Re is in his rightful place. Everything is the way it should be. Until Yahweh shows up. [laughs]

So if you’re a late-dater, it amps up the drama a little bit more, because now you have the God of the Hebrews showing up and basically giving a whole assortment of Egyptian deities (including Re) a beating with the plagues, and basically saying, “Guess what? This land over here, this is mine. In fact, I’m going to take my people out of Egypt and I’m going to take them across the desert. And you know what? We’re not afraid at all of Re. We’re not afraid that

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he's going to interfere with us." Re was just taught a lesson, along with the rest of the Egyptian pantheon. So there's Yahweh out there leading his people, going wherever he feels like, on the way to Sinai and then on the way to Canaan without a care in the world. He's not afraid of Re at all. This is how it would have been perceived, "We thought that was the God's-Land, because that's where the sun rises. That's his turf, and shouldn't...?" No, we're not scared. We're not even giving him a second thought.

You can have that polemic if it's before the Amarna period as well. You don't lose anything with the early date. But if it *is* after the Amarna period, then we have something fairly significant here, where it makes the confrontation a little more dramatic and a little more traumatic for an Egyptian. Because your country has just gone through this period that was just such a mess. You thought everything was restored. Everything is the way it ought to be. And now we have this. So they're just thinking about these places in these sorts of ways. Now back to Cooper. He says:

The term *Ta-netcher* most commonly occurs in sun hymns [MH: that should be no surprise] devoted to different solar deities like Re, Amun-Re and Re-Horakhty [MH: Re of the horizon], strongly suggesting an association with the solar deities [MH: and this concept]. When *Ta-netcher* is connected with other deities, it is usually their solar manifestations which are evoked [MH: again, there's this solar connection; the name of Mut will be connected to *Ta-netcher* (the God's-Land)]: Mut is called the 'daughter of Re' and a manifestation of the sun disc in the crossword hymn (Text 51) [MH: from this corpus that he's been using]. The goddess Hathor, who is associated with some regions of God's-Land, is called 'the eye of Re (the sun disc) in God's-Land' in a Ptolemaic text [MH: so Hawthorn gets into this, too]. In another text of this period, Horus as the god of the sky and the sun is called the one 'who assesses God's-Land'.

Again, there's a solar connection. So this has everything to do with where the sun rises. And this is how it would've been perceived. Basically, everywhere that the sun rises—everywhere that the light of the sun reaches when the sun comes up every morning—that's the God's-Land, which is a real broad statement of sovereignty if you're an Egyptian. So it's pretty clear that *Ta-netcher* was cosmic in the way it was thought of. All of these places (wherever the sun rises)... Essentially, the sun is a theophany. Think of it as a theophany. The god has come out. He's emerged from his spiritual world—the alternate reality, the spiritual reality, the reality of the divine. And he's surveying his land. And to an Egyptian, that meant dominion. That meant sovereignty. That meant control. That meant ownership. All of these things. And when we have the episode with the Hebrews, those concepts just take a beating, because you'd think that if Re is going to show up every day and he sees something going on that he doesn't like—something that violates Ma'at like these Hebrews doing what they're doing, and all these plagues, and this guy Moses—that Re would do something about it.

Well, that ain't going to happen. And when it doesn't happen, that's a theological statement. To everybody who knows the worldview, that's a theological statement that is pretty powerful for them. Now from Cooper's other article (the Duat article), just one brief point from that one. He writes:

Egyptians considered these southeastern regions not only directionally associated with solar birth...

40:00 The sun emerges, and he's born. In Egyptian paintings, you'll have the sky (the sky goddess was Nut). Remember the sun traverses the sky. You'll have Re on his solar bark (his solar ship) traversing the sky, and the sky is this gigantic woman with stars and stuff on her. That was Nut. So the sun traverses Nut and then goes down into the netherworld, and then the sun emerges from (I can't say it any other way)... Nut gives birth to the sun. The sky gives birth. So where do you think the sun emerges in Egyptian painting? Well, from the vaginal area. This is what the Egyptian concept was. That the sky is giving birth. And the birth canal essentially is the path of the sun. So the imagery of Nut gets thrown into this as well. So Egyptians considered the sun as being birthed from Nut...

...(from Nut), but the region from which the sun issued forth from the Duat [MH: from the spiritual world].

Cosmic theology provided a discourse in which Egyptians could speculate on the nature of not only the inaccessible universe, the stars, the heavens, the gates of the netherworld 'the Duat', but also [MH: they could speculate on] the boundaries of the real universe, where the Duat joined the terrestrial sphere.

Where heaven met earth is where the sun emerges. The sun emerges over the eastern horizon. And during the course of the year, that horizon gets wider and wider because of science that they don't particularly know. But they can track it. They can see it happen. They can see it happening. So the place where heaven meets earth runs from north Syria/Palestine all the way down to Punt. And that is the God's-Land. It belongs to him. It's his domain. It's his doorstep, if you want to use that as an analogy or metaphor. This is the very place where... Just think about what the Lord had told Moses to tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go, because we're going to go for a three-day journey out into the wilderness and they're going to sacrifice to me." "Well, wait a minute. If you do that, you're sacrificing to Yahweh on the God's-Land." "Yeah, we are. And that should make a point." So these are just examples of the way Egyptians (and Israelites familiar with the way Egyptians thought) would have conceived of some of this language, some of this dialogue, and some of these events.

So just to summarize the point. Egyptians believed that Amun-Re (the solar deity) owned these lands and they believed that the solar deity was reborn from these lands every day. These lands were the lands of his appearing, so the sun

is like a theophany to an Egyptian (an appearance of the deity himself). And these lands were the place where the spiritual world and the earthly world converged, in that the solar deity emerged from them each day to survey the world that he owns—the world that he has dominion over.

Now we've already seen (if you think back to the episodes we did on the plagues) how the plague of locusts and its associated plague of darkness freaked the Egyptians out. That would've been directly seen as a power play of Yahweh over Re. Because they couldn't see Re. "There's something wrong here. Why is Re obscured? Why can't we see him? Why is there darkness? Why can't Re get rid of these thick clouds of locusts that are keeping us from seeing his glory? Why can't he do something about that?" So those last two plagues are an attack on Re's power and sovereignty, and this whole concept as well.

So the Israelites aren't just leaving Egypt (to an Egyptian especially). They're headed into lands that were thought to be under the dominion of Egypt's solar deity (Re or some of these other deities in their solar manifestation). But guess what? Yahweh is in control of the land where Israel has been (that would be Egypt). He certainly showed he was in control there with the plagues. And he's also in control of the land where they're going. He has dominion. Not Re. Yahweh (and Israel by extension) has no fear of going onto Re's turf because Yahweh has ultimate sovereignty. They're going to go out into the desert and worship Yahweh at his mountain and then the plan is to go to Yahweh's own land, Canaan. He'll lead Israel on whatever route he pleases. No permission is needed from Re. And even more to the point, Yahweh has laid claim to part of the God's-Land (Canaan), because it isn't Re's to claim.

45:00

Think of your Deuteronomy 32 worldview here, with the *Unseen Realm* and other stuff that I've written and stuff we talk about a lot. It was Yahweh who doled out the nations (Deuteronomy 32:8) and set their boundaries as a judgment. That was Yahweh who did that; not Re. Re has what he has because Yahweh lets him have it, until he decides that he's done with that (Psalm 82). To a literate Israelite reader (once we have the text as we have it)—someone who is familiar with the Egyptian worldview, someone who is boots-on-the-ground—when we have these sorts of things happening, just the act of leaving Egypt and going out into the desert to sacrifice to Yahweh is a punch in the theological face of Re. Just that, because of this concept of the God's-Land. So I wanted to include this in our treatment of Exodus 14. It was too long to tack on to the first part. But if you're interested in some of this Egyptian stuff, you can look at the articles in the protected folder. But this is the kind of stuff I like because it gets you in the head of more of the people that are involved in the story—In this case, mainly the Egyptians. Like what in the world are they thinking? They were freaked out with the plagues, and this is just another episode of them being taught—a visual aid to discerning who's really in control here. It's the defeat of their gods, and specifically the most important one, the solar deity. It's not just that the sun rises and sets every day, but that is connected to the annual flood of the Nile, which

keeps Egypt alive. Egypt is not Egypt without calendar and the regularity of what happens with the Nile. It doesn't exist. It dies. So all these things are connected in the Egyptian mind. And they're connected to Ma'at (the divine order) that supposedly the Egyptian gods established. And that all just gets smashed in the exodus episode. So I just wanted to tack this on, and hopefully it provides another perspective, a little bit of a different trajectory on the exodus event. Next week, we will get into Exodus 15. Like I said earlier, we're not going to traverse the event blow by blow again. But there are things in Exodus 15 that provide a little bit of insight into cosmic geography and some of the worldview in how people are processing what's going on, both in terms of Israelites and Egyptians.

TS: Alright, Mike. We are making our slow, methodical march to the Ten Commandments. So that's next on my radar.

MH: [laughs] There you go. Don't move the goalposts, okay? [laughter]

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, that's a wrap on chapter 14. So looking forward to chapter 15 next week. And also, in a couple of weeks, Mike, you're going to be interviewing Stovall Weems from Celebration Church to get an update with what you're going to be doing and how that came about. So be looking forward to that.

MH: I think people will benefit from that. Like, "What in the world's going on here?"

TS: Absolutely. Alright. With that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast. God Bless.