

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 278

Exodus 15, Part 1

June 29, 2019

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Exodus 15 is referred to by scholars as the Song of Moses. The label is due to its poetic nature. On the surface the Song reiterates the crossing of the Red Sea. But there are actually a number of items in the passage that dip into divine council worldview content and ancient Israelite cosmology. This episode engages such items and shows how Exodus 15 is more than a repetition of Exodus 14.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 278: Exodus 15, Part 1. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike. How are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. Busy as usual. I've had now almost two weeks of working at home with the pugs. It's good.

TS: Going good?

MH: Yeah. It's actually been really productive, yeah. I'm happy with it.

TS: We can tell, because we have all of these Exodus chapters in multiple parts. We're going to split 15 into Parts 1 and 2. So you're really getting in there. We would have Parts 1 and 2 for the whole...

MH: Yeah, you may have to reel me in.

TS: Yeah, we're going to have to reel you in.

MH: Yeah. We're saying that now, but the next time, it'll probably be four chapters grouped together, and then we'll have to apologize for that. I like it. I get to essentially just drill down on stuff that I need to get done. For lots of things... We have lots of plates spinning. But I actually get to do that and just stuff that I need to fill the tanks. So it's really nice.

TS: And we keep adding more stuff to what you and I want to do, which is... We've talked a lot about stuff. We keep adding and hashing out. So maybe one of these years, it'll actually...

MH: Well, people will hear at the conference. We'll have something new. I think we can promise that much for sure. We'll have something new that we'll announce at the conference. So once the conference website goes up, you'll want to register for the conference. That's where you're going to find out. You're not going to find out before.

TS: There you go.

MH: [laughs] If you want to know, show up. [laughs]

TS: Absolutely. Good deal. Well, chapter 15... What are we going to be talking about today?

MH: Exodus 15. This is the Song of Moses (so-called by scholars). Why do they call it that? Well, because it's a poem. Substantially (almost in its entirety), it's a piece of poetry in Hebrew. So this is one of those unusual sections in the Torah that isn't narrative prose. It's a poem. So that's why people call it that. And we are going to split this into two parts. So we're going to essentially hit the first 21 verses in this part, because the second part, when we get to the end... Even if you sort of glance at the end, you're going to know why we reserved that for a second part.

But typically, people look at this chapter as just a reiteration of the crossing of the Red Sea or the Reed Sea (the *yam suph*). And sure, you can read through chapter 15 and that's kind of what it is. But that's just the surface. There are actually a lot of things in here that, for this audience (especially people who've read *Unseen Realm* or even the lighter version, *Supernatural*)... But especially if you've read the book *Unseen Realm*, you're going to see that there are things in this chapter that take you into Divine Council worldview content. So as is our custom here, we're not going to do a verse-by-verse thing. I'm just going to go through the chapter and drill down in places where there's just something of that nature that surfaces, and then we'll talk about it—why it's important, what it means, all that sort of thing. So let's just jump into the first three verses here to get started. Exodus 15:

**Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying,
“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.**

**² The LORD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;**

**this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.**

**³The LORD is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.**

In those three verses there, LORD is the divine name—the Tetragrammaton—Yahweh. One peripheral note here. ESV has “the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.” The wording there in the Hebrew can refer to somebody who drives a chariot, so it’s not inconsistent with what’s gone before. You might get that impression just reading through quickly that, “What? They were all riding horses?” No, it refers to chariotry.

5:00

But where I want to do the initial camp-out is the third verse there, “Yahweh is a man of war; Yahweh is his name.” Now Durham, in his Exodus commentary... I’m going to read you a little section of his comments and then a little bit from Carpenter. And then I want to take this verse into a larger issue that’s really concerning the Two Powers in Heaven issue. You might have already sensed that in “Yahweh is a man of war”—just in the language there. So Durham says:

There follows a descriptive celebration of Yahweh as victorious deliverer. He is *אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה*, a “man of battle,” a “warrior,” an undoubtedly authentic epithet the translators of LXX found too embarrassing to keep (and so altered it: *συντρίβων πολέμους* “crushes wars,” a reading out of place in this context).

You might think that’s kind of weird. The Septuagint has “Yahweh crushes wars,” or basically “wins battles,” or something like that. Instead of “a man of war,” it turns that into this descriptive phrase. You might ask why they would do that. This takes us into... I’m going to speak as a critic now—somebody who does Israelite religion and sees an evolutionary arc. We’ve been in this territory before in Exodus. And you all know my position on this basically is I think that the evolutionary approach to Israelite religion is largely based on circular reasoning because it has so many inconsistencies. We’re going to get into that here again.

Now just as a jumping off point, there would be those who would say, “The Septuagint translator (obviously this Hellenistic Jewish guy) was offended by anthropomorphic language about Yahweh, transforming Yahweh into a man. He didn’t like that wording because by the time of the Exile, Yahweh was transcendent above the gods. And this is primitive religious thinking, to cast the deity as a man.” And blah blah blah blah blah. And if you’re thinking, “Good grief; there’s a lot of stuff in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Jewish literature that have Yahweh as a man,” you’d be correct! So that ruins the evolutionary arc—the neatness of the picture.

I think the most that you could say (and there's nothing unclear about the Hebrew) is that the guy who is doing Exodus just thought this made better sense, because elsewhere in Exodus, you have the burning bush (Yahweh is in the form of an angel there) and other places where Yahweh in the Torah is going to show up. The people who did the translation of the Septuagint, who did the Torah (it's not just one person)... You're going to have many that had no problem at all with anthropomorphic language, and then you have this guy that maybe you could say that about him, maybe he has some other motive. We actually don't know. But scholars will assume that they know the motive. They know why the translator did what he did because they are operating mentally with this evolutionary trajectory in mind, that to cast Yahweh as a man is primitive. "This is primitive religion." And it's more enlightened (more "mind-expanding", more sophisticated, more intellectual) to abstract Yahweh as this non-person, this non-human deity entity that's just so transcendent, out of the human world in every respect... This is the kind of language that you get when you read academic material about religion in general, but here it's applied to the Hebrew Bible.

If you're sitting there and if you've had good exposure to Second Temple literature, and even the late literature of the Hebrew Bible, you're thinking, "Good grief. There are lots of exceptions to that." Yeah, there are. That's the point. That's the point. There is no neat trajectory. If you were at the Naked Bible Conference last year, I did my presentation on how the Septuagint handles (and also the Dead Sea Scrolls) the language of divine plurality. Because one of the axiomatic things in biblical studies is that when we get to the Greek period (the Hellenistic period), they don't use "sons of God" anymore. They just take all these phrases that are primitive polytheism and they use the word "angel." Yeah, except where they don't. Except for the 180 times in the Dead Sea Scrolls where they have *bene elim*, *bene elohim*, *bene ha elohim* in Divine Council scenes—the stuff that's supposedly pre-exilic and now has been outlawed religiously. That happens to show up 180 times in the Dead Sea Scrolls. And the Septuagint does not consistently render these phrases with *angelos* (angel).

10:00

I actually went through in that session... (I guess this is a commercial for the next Naked Bible Conference. This is the kind of thing that we do. We present good topics and research, because we know whoever signs up for that cares about content.) But I gave a handout last year that said, "Look. Of all the places where you have divine plurality in the Hebrew Bible (plural *elohim*, *bene elohim*, *bene ha elohim*)..." I showed how the Septuagint handles that. And there were only, as I recall, three or four instances where you *couldn't* find a Septuagint rendering that was literal ("sons of God"). In other words, there were only three or four instances where all the manuscript material we have says "angels." (It doesn't take it literally.) Most of the time, they're just fine taking these phrases and translating them literally. They're not bothered by it at all. But scholars have this template that they impose on the text (this evolutionary arc thing) and it is just so inconsistent. But yet it is axiomatic. This is why I wound up doing my dissertation on this topic. And to my advisor's credit, he let me do it, but it was a fight every

step of the way because this was contrary to the consensus opinion. And once he figured out that, “Yeah, Mike knows it’s contrary, but good grief, there are lots of exceptions here!” then it was okay. In other words, it was a good experience for me to see how a seasoned scholar is embracing an idea but never actually looked at it because that wasn’t really his field.

So this is what you have. And Durham’s comment here points out that we have one instance here where “Yahweh is a man of war” gets erased by translation. Now Carpenter says:

The new era [MH: Ugh, just the wording there...] of Yahweh’s name and his great acts of judgment and deliverance is ushered in.

Now if you restrict that comment to the exodus, that’s a good thing to say. And Carpenter’s not one of these that are on the evolutionary trajectory thing. But somebody who is could read that, “Ah, yes, the new era of enlightened monotheism here...” That’s now where Carpenter is going here.

He is holy, high above all the “gods.” This assertion “Yahweh is a man of battle” caused much puzzlement to the ancient translators...

Maybe this phrase did, but the concept itself didn’t, even though that’s what’s accepted. But Carpenter does add:

...and the concept itself causes consternation among God’s people even today.

I look at that and I think, “That’s a little overstated.” But it’s probably still kind of fair because there is something of a struggle where, because we have Jesus and the incarnation in the New Testament... I’ve met a lot of Christians that are surprised at their Old Testament—that you actually have God as a man in the Old Testament. Like they’d never seen it before. They’d never really thought about it. So I think if you’re looking at it that way, then what Carpenter says here, “Yeah, that can be legit.” A lot of it is because people just don’t look. They’re not thinking about... They’re not thinking in these terms. When they read certain Old Testament passages, it gets glossed right over. Or we take things like “the word of the Lord” and think that that’s just a voice in the prophet’s head. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it is clearly *not*. This is the “Two Powers” stuff that I discuss in *Unseen Realm*.

There’s just no blanket statement that you can make here. There are plenty of people who aren’t offended by it today, and there are plenty of people who weren’t offended by it in the intertestamental period and on into the New Testament. Now Alan Segal was the guy who wrote back in 1977 the *Two Powers in Heaven* book. Segal was a rabbinic scholar. He was a Jew. He passed away recently (in the past few years). And he wrote this book on the Two Powers

of Heaven, trying to find the history of when did this teaching that there were two good powers (not good versus evil)... This isn't Zoroastrian stuff here. But two good guys. Two Gods (essentially) in Judaism. Because he knew that Judaism used to teach that, because he's familiar with Second Temple Jewish monotheism or Jewish binitarianism in the Second Temple intertestamental period.

15:00

So Segal asked a very logical question. "Well, if there were lots of Jews writing about this and they were fine with it... It was a big item of discussion. Nobody was calling each other heretics over it. Why did they start doing that? Why did they start making it off-limits? Why did they start forbidding the discussion? When did that happen and why? When did Jewish theology change?" And in his book on the Two Powers, Segal makes a number of observations. Obviously, the whole book is about the subject, but specifically about this verse. He actually includes some rabbinic commentary on this verse. And Segal's point is, "Look. You can tell by this commentary that they are writing after the Two Powers idea has become forbidden. They know it exists. They know it *existed* as well. They know that there were people in their community that used to think this way and apparently not too long ago by the way this was written." But it's very clear from certain selections in rabbinic material that, "We don't want to think this way anymore."

I'm going to read you this section, because what this section actually shows is that rabbis started to write and talk like modalists. If you're not familiar with modalism, it's the idea that God could show up in more than one form. And modalism doesn't work with trinitarianism because of things like the incarnation. Modalism, to a Christian (because of trinitarianism and the incarnation and the deity of Christ), is not acceptable language for trinity. But here you have Jewish rabbis that sound like modalists. [laughs] And the reason they do this (they want to start talking about God appearing in more than one form) is that, "There aren't really Two Powers in heaven. It's just that God shows up in two different disguises, as it were. God shows up in two different kinds of manifestations, so that the two don't exist simultaneously. It's just God in different forms, periodically." And Segal is on to them. He's on to the people in his own community, because this is what his book is about. So I'm going to read you this. Segal quotes from the *The Mekhilta of R. Ishmael Bahodesh 5, Shirta 4*. Here's what the rabbis are saying:

I am YHWH your God: Why is this said?

Because When
He was revealed at the sea,
He appeared to them as a mighty
hero making war. As it is said,

YHWH is a man of war.

He appeared at Sinai like an old man,
full of mercy, as it is said: And they
saw the God of Israel. (Ex. 24:10)

If you go back and look at Exodus 24, it doesn't describe Yahweh as an old man. The rabbis are just reading that into that passage because they're thinking like modalists. Back to Segal's quote of the rabbi:

And of the time after they had been
redeemed what does it say? And the
like of the very heaven for clearness.
(Ex. 24:10).

Again, it says [MH: in another passage]
I beheld 'til thrones were set down
(Dan. 7:9) And it also says A fiery
stream issued and came forth from
him etc.

Scripture would not give an opportunity
to the nations of the world to
say "There are 'two powers' but declares
I am YHWH your God." (Ex.
20:2).

I was in Egypt.
I was at the Sea.
I was in the past, I will be in the
future to come.
I am in this world, I am in the world
to come.

That's the end of the rabbinic section. So Segal is looking at this and he's on to this trajectory. He knows what they're trying to do. He can tell that they don't want to land in Two Powers territory as their predecessors in the Second Temple period did so often. Because to the rabbis... You have to realize, folks, that the rabbinic material is not contemporaneous with the Old Testament. When you start listening to people about "what the rabbis say," that's medieval. That's when the rabbinic material is put together. Some content strands of it go back into the Second Temple period and are relevant for New Testament thinking. But this is not contemporary with the Hebrew Bible. And a lot of it isn't even contemporary

with the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Second Temple period. It's after. It's later. And Segal knows this, because he's a professor of rabbinic literature. And he knows that they're trying to avoid landing in Two Powers Land. So he (Segal) writes this on pages 35-36:

The exegesis notes the repetition of the name of YHWH in Exodus 15:3...

Let me just read it to you again.

20:00

**³[Yahweh] is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.**

Segal says:

The exegesis notes the repetition of the name of YHWH in Ex. 15:3 and explains its significance. "YHWH is a man of war" is to be interpreted as a descriptive statement referring to God's manifestation as a young warrior when He destroyed the Egyptians at the Red Sea. "YHWH is His name" [MH: the other half of verse 3] is necessary because at Sinai He will reveal Himself as an old man, showing mercy. Hence, it is important for the Israelites to realize that the same God is speaking in both cases, though the manifestations look different. The proof-text for these statements is Dan. 7:9 f- which describes a heavenly enthronement scene involving two divine manifestations, "the son of man" and "the Ancient of Days." In this context, the reference from Dan. must be taken to demonstrate that God may be manifested either as a young man [MH: that would be the Son of Man] or as an old man [MH: the Ancient of Days].

Now let me stop there. You see what the rabbis are doing. They're looking for a way to handle Daniel 7. "Son of Man, Ancient of Days... Oh, those aren't two figures. Those are just two modes of Yahweh. Those are just two manifestations of Yahweh. And one goes back to Exodus 15:3. That's the young one, the 'man of war.'" Son of Man somehow is equated with the "man of war." And then the Ancient of Days somehow is equated with Exodus 24:10, "They saw the God of Israel." And of course Exodus 24:10 never describes what he looks like. But the rabbis don't care. They need the two modes there. One deity; two modes. Two manifestations. Not Two Powers. God forbid we have Two Powers in heaven. Back to Segal. He writes this:

When the whole biblical passage is seen, the passage seems to describe more a danger than a solution. Not only does the passage allow the interpretation that God changes aspect, it may easily be describing two separate, divine figures. More than one throne is revealed [MH: that's Daniel 7] and scripture describes two divine figures to fill them. One sits and the other seems to be invested with

power, possibly enthroned. The Ancient of Days may be responsible for judgment, but delegates the operation to a "son of man" who accomplishes judgment by means of a fiery stream. That this "son of man" is young or that his dominion is to be merciful, ostensibly the point of the reference, is hardly evident in the text.

Now that's an honest comment from a rabbinic scholar about what the rabbis are saying. Basically he's saying, "These guys are just blowing smoke here." [laughs] Because Segal's book is about the history of this idea within the Jewish community and why it transitioned from being okay to being a heresy.

So I just wanted you to know that Exodus 15:3 is part of the Two Powers in Heaven debate within Judaism. If you get into a conversation with a Jewish friend, they might have been schooled by rabbis and they might go to their rabbi and say, "You're not going to believe what this Christian person told me." And the rabbi could say, "Ah, just tell him it's two modes. It's two manifestations. Here, read Rabbi Mekhilta." That's what you're going to get. But Segal is honest enough to say, "That just doesn't make a whole lot of sense." And in Segal's book, he's trying to show the reader how this was dealt with. But there you have it. He goes, "If you actually look at the passages, they could just as well be teaching two separate individuals. Not two modes." So let's move on to verses 8-12 here. Another thing I want to just land on briefly. Verses 4-7 are just a repetition of what happened at the Red Sea. We hit verses 8-12, when the Egyptians are drowned, then we hit verse 8:

- ⁸ **At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.**
- ⁹ **The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'**
- ¹⁰ **You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.**
- ¹¹ **"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"**
- ¹² **You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.**

25:00

I want to comment on all of those verse except for verse 11. I'll come back to verse 11. But did you notice the odd phrase in verse 12? The song is talking about what God does to the Egyptians at the Red Sea, right? "The earth swallowed them"? The earth isn't water. Water is not the earth. It's just an odd

thing. What it's going to take us into... That comment and some other things in these verses are Israelite cosmology, specifically the underworld deep, as it were. So this is underworld imagery that's used of what happened in or at this particular body of water we talked about a few weeks ago. Durham says here:

There is here a subtle but important shift from “waters” (מים) [MH: *mayim*] and “currents” (גולים), neither of which refers to the primordial waters of chaos, to “ancient deeps,” תהומות [MH: which is *tahom*—and *tahom* is actually used in this passage along with these other two terms... when it says “the deeps congealed at the heart of the sea,” it's *tahom*]. The implication, at the very least, is that the visible waters in their everyday flow were thrust aside to make way for the temporary release of the devastating rebellion-waters from their subterranean prison [MH: the ultimate deep—the *tahom*]. Then, these same waters, the very symbol of disorder in motion...

Because the deep is the chaotic mess. If you think back to Genesis 1, this is the chaotic state out of which Yahweh creates order. God creates an ordered place of habitation for humanity. “Darkness was over the face of the deep,” implying some sort of control, and then you get refashioning in Genesis 1. So Durham is saying, “Here we have this same concept—this primordial deep, the subterranean waters, the waters that were in the three-tiered cosmology of Israelite thought, waters under the earth.” Remember to an Israelite, the earth was a round, flat thing floating on water. You say, “Where is the water? Isn't the water also on earth?” You're thinking like a 21st century person when you ask questions like that. The writers are not 21st century people. They're not asking questions about where the water came from, where it is in relation to other water. You have this primeval mound come up out of the earth. It's surrounded by water. It floats on water and then God, of course, fastens it. He fixes it with pillars, “the pillars under the earth.” This is all standard Old Testament cosmological language and ancient Near Eastern cosmological language. And then “water under the earth”—the great deeps that would threaten to break the pillars and unleash chaos on the habitable land mass. That's what this term (*tahom*) is talking about. So back to Durham. He says:

... these same waters, the very symbol of disorder in motion are [MH: in the Exodus account] “made solid,” [MH: congealed,] “stilled” in the middle of the sea.

And God makes them sort of stand up like walls. And when God does that, the earth swallows the Egyptians (verse 12). You say, “How does that make sense?” Well, it makes sense because the great deep now (that is cosmologically under the earth), that's been split apart and congealed and made into walls and so that opens up this cavernous thing. Basically, the Egyptians slide into the underworld. They go to hell, if you want to use later language for this sort of thing. This is the idea. They're all sent to the underworld. And Yahweh is the sovereign over the

inescapable underworld. And remember from *Unseen Realm* that one of the terms for land (*erets*) is also used of the underworld (*erets*). Same word. And that's what we have here, where it says the earth swallowed them. The *erets* swallowed them. The underworld swallowed them. They're dead. They're dead, and there's no escape from this realm. No Egyptian deity is sovereign over this, because it's Yahweh commanding the great deeps to congeal and swallow the Egyptians. So there's some cosmological thinking going on here.

Now there is an interesting article that takes this language (and the language of other passages) and tries to make an argument. I think there's some really good material in this article, where you can connect this kind of language (the language used of the Red Sea and what happens there) with Sheol (the realm of the dead). And on my part, that's not to say that this wasn't an historical event. There are just two aspects to it. This is like anything else in Exodus, and frankly like lots of things in the Hebrew Bible. There's the boots-on-the-ground interpretation of what's going on (what the text says and what the writer is talking about), and then there's this cosmic, supernaturalistic, metaphysical kind of interpretation behind all of that. This is another case in point. What happens at the Red Sea to the Egyptians is viewed in "historical event" terms and then these cosmic terms. There are two ways to read the same material.

30:00

Now this article is by a fellow named Wifall. And what the article is about (I don't know if this is actually the title) is how the sea of reeds is based on Egyptian symbolism or gets tied into Egyptian symbolism, specifically the Shi-Hor, which is the Egyptian equivalent to the Hebrew Sheol as the place of death.

Now interestingly enough... Go back to our discussion a few episodes ago about where the crossing occurred. Think of the Red Sea. You have the left prong (that's the Gulf of Suez) and at the tip of that, you have a bunch of bodies of water that in ancient times were connected (in some cases by canals), forming the eastern border of Egypt at the delta there. Basically, if you've passed through that or cross over that, you're (to an Egyptian) out into the wilderness and the chaos. But this is borderline territory. So we talked a lot about that, this chain of lakes. And it factors into the way the Old Testament describes the crossing at Pi-hahiroth (the mouth of the canals) at some point along this chain of bodies of water. So we don't know which body of water they crossed, but it was in this conceptual (and literal) barrier or border, borderline waterway, link, all these bodies of water linked together. So one of those bodies of water is the Shi-Hor (believe it or not). And that's a term that is associated by the Egyptians with the underworld. This particular place is near Avaris. This is in the delta. And we have a map on the episode webpage so that you can see where this is. It's one of these bodies of water. So this might be (if Wifall's article is correct) that the language here (not only of Exodus 15 but some of the other parts of this event description), if this is tapping into Egyptian belief about this one particular place, maybe that's the place that they crossed. Because the Egyptians going in there to pursue them wind up in the underworld. Maybe that's the case.

I'm going to read a little bit from Wifall's article just so you get a feel for it a little bit... a couple of portions here. So he's going through the history of scholarship on this in his article, and he writes this:

...an article by L.S. Hay on the historicity and history of the tradition of the Reed Sea events points to another source besides Canaan for the mythological elements in Israel's description of her Exodus from Egypt.

"Mythological" is a term that most scholars are going to use for cosmic terminology, something connected to the supernatural worldview. Whether this author treats the event as historical or not is a different but related question. But don't get thrown off by that term.

In arguing for a military encounter in which Israel defeated the pursuing chariotry of pharaoh, L.S. Hay proposed that this basic historical account was later overlaid in the tradition by a Sheol myth, possibly derived from Egyptian mythology. Hay cited an article written several years ago by J. Towers concerning Egyptian influences on the Reed Sea story. J. Towers pointed out the equation between the Hebrew term *yam* and the Egyptian š (sea, lake). [MH: probably in Egyptian it would be *esh*.] In Egyptian mythology, the lake or field of reeds was the underworld where the soul of the dead was purified before ascending into heaven. The soul was said to pass over the underworld sea of reeds...

Well, isn't that interesting. For an Egyptian acquainted with these texts, this lake (I'll read it again) was the place where "the soul of the dead was purified before ascending into heaven" (kind of like a purgatory). "The soul was said to pass over the underworld sea of reeds..."

... much as the historical Passover of Israel in the Reed Sea events.

Guess what, folks? If you're an Egyptian, and you're either witnessing the events or if you're a Hebrew familiar with this and you're reading about it later on in Exodus 15... This is not purgatory. Egyptians aren't going anywhere. They're dead. They are in the realm of the dead for keeps because it's the God of Israel who has command over this. He sets the terms. This would have really struck fear into an Egyptian. And the biblical writer (if indeed Wifall is correct, that we have these connections back into Egyptian thinking) knows exactly what he's doing. If you're someone who's familiar with this belief, either because you're an Egyptian or you know about the Egyptians, you're going to know that this is a theological statement. "You're not going anywhere, buddy." [laughs] "You are in the underworld. This isn't just a temporary thing that you're going to get out of later. You're not getting out of anywhere. You're locked up." Back to Wifall:

35:00

Tower's remarks about Egyptian mythology as the possible source of the Exodus imagery can be amplified through studies by Egyptologists, such as Frankfort, Reymond, and Zandee. For example, Frankfort, in his study of Egyptian religion noted a close relation between the geographical lake and field of reeds and the mythological region of the dead.

Frankfort is a major figure in Egyptian religion. There's all sorts of stuff you can get online or books by him. Back to Wifall:

Reymond, in her study on the mythical origins of the Egyptian temple has also emphasized the importance of these two geographical regions in Egyptian mythology. On the one hand, the lake with its field of reeds was both the site of the first creation and of the earthly temple where life was renewed daily in the royal cult. Indeed, the temple's design and complex reflected the reeds in the pool or lake of the mythical creation setting. On the other hand, although the sun rose daily with life, it also set on the western horizon into the dark abode of the dead, so that the lake represented also the pit where the nightly struggle between light and darkness was waged. The lake was the place where Apophis, the serpent of darkness, was pierced and slain by the sun god in both primeval and daily combat. Just as Re repelled Apophis in heaven, so the Egyptian king was believed to drive out disorder daily and establish justice [MH: Ma'at] in the land.

In his study on the Egyptian concept of death, Zandee has cited terms and descriptions of this underworld lake of reeds which recall the Old Testament's concept of Sheol. For example, the Egyptian dead were at times called the drowned ones and the wicked were said to be burned by fire...

You know in Old Testament talk about Sheol, there's both water and fire? Back to Wifall here:

[They're said to be] ...burned by fire as Yahweh burned his enemies. In fact, Israel's understanding of the underworld as a great body of water upon which floats the disk of the earth, and her fear of death in the sense of drowning and inundation would appear to reflect more the attitudes of Egypt than those of Ugarit or even Babylon.

I will put Wifall's article in the protected folder as well for newsletter subscribers. There's some good stuff here. If you're looking at this as an Egyptian or someone who's familiar with Egyptian thinking, this accounting of the exodus and the elements of it, the sea of reeds... Where is it? It's on the border of Egypt. You go over to the other side, and it's chaos. You don't want to wind up in this water here (this specific body of water) because that would be where the dead go. If you go there, you're going to be dead. But the good news is, you're only going to be there for a while, because it's like Egyptian purgatory. You'll get out and you'll go

to heaven when and if... I think there is something to this. The biblical writers are drawing on these ideas. You go back and you read Exodus 15. No, this is not a temporary situation. They've been judged by the one who has control over the deep. Because it was Yahweh who made the waters of the deep congeal and stand up like walls and let his people pass through. They're the ones who go to "heaven," because they're on their way now to Yahweh's domain.

40:00

We said last week about other elements of Egyptian thinking... Israel's not (they shouldn't have been) afraid to traverse the wilderness on the way to God's house at Sinai (the place where God lives) and then on to the land of Canaan, where God will put his name ("they will be his people and he will be their God.")... This is all Edenic. This is all establishing the domain of Yahweh—the divine abode, the people of God on earth, God's original intent back in Genesis—that whole thing. If you've read *Unseen Realm*, this is familiar territory to you. If you haven't, I'm sorry, but you need to go read the book. I can't repeat all the content in every episode when we get into this kind of stuff. This is familiar territory. These are repetitive ideas and concepts. They mime and mimic and build off each other, step by step through Scripture, all the way to the end in the book of Revelation. These are repeating themes.

And if you're aware of that, you can look at this material and it's like, "Hey, they shouldn't have had any fear going through the wilderness (the place of chaos) because who was in control of that?" "Well, evidently, Yahweh is, because look at what he did with this really big, bad place—the Red Sea. Because to an Egyptian, that was the gateway to the realm of the dead." All these ideas. It's Yahweh's people who are taken out of the realm of the dead to new life at the exodus event (at the crossing event), not the Egyptians. And that shows the Egyptian (and of course the Israelite who's familiar with these ideas) who's in charge. It's just as simple as that. Who has sovereignty? Who has authority over these forces of chaos? Life and death? Eternal death and eternal life? Dwelling with God forever as opposed to not? Who is in command of all of this? Well, it ain't the gods of Egypt. It's just theological messaging all over the place. Let's go back to Exodus 15:11, because we skipped that. I'll read it to you again:

¹¹ **"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? [MH: "Among the *elim*" in Hebrew.]
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"**

Now Durham, in his Word Biblical Commentary (the Exodus volume) writes this:

Yahweh is thus extolled as incomparable among the אֱלֹהִים "gods," any and all beings for whom divinity is claimed. There is simply none like him, none even approaching an equality with him ...He is magnificent in the holiness that sets him

apart [MH: that's essentially what holiness means: to be set apart, to be other] from all others.

He references Labuschagne. He wrote an important book, *The Incomparability of God in the Old Testament*. It's really hard to find. I used it for my dissertation. It's an important work. If you ever find it, snatch it up, unless you have to take a loan out. It's just hard to find. But he (Durham) references this book on pages 79-80, and he makes the comment that...

Labuschagne (*Incomparability*, 79–80) would emend בְּקֹדֶשׁ “in holiness”...

The phrase “Who is like you, majestic in holiness...” Labuschagne wants to change it from *ba kodesh* to *ba kodeshim* (בְּקֹדֶשִׁים to בְּקֹדֶשִׁים). He wants to make it plural. You say, “Why would he do that?” Why does Labuschagne think that's a better reading in the original text? Because that's what the Septuagint has. The Septuagint has ἐν ἁγίοις. It's a plural. You say, “Who cares? What does it matter?” It's just kind of interesting. This is just a nugget to throw out. It would read then, “Who is like you, majestic among the holy ones?” It would be a nicer parallel to the preceding line. “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic among the holy ones?”

Ultimately, Durham says, “I'm not persuaded. I don't think it's necessary.” Well, nobody says it's necessary, but it's still reflected in the Septuagint. And I will add, this isn't the only place that such an inundation might be merited on the basis of what looks to be like a different text the Septuagint translator had. It's just a nugget to throw out there. It would sound... In other words, Exodus 15:11 would sound a little bit more like Psalm 89:5-7. And even in Psalm 89, which is a very famous Divine Council passage, there are others like Dahood, the famous Ugaritic scholar and Psalms scholar, who argued that a couple of places in Psalm 89 should be pluralized as well to bring out the council imagery a little bit more, as far as the composition of the council (the gods) there. So you could look that up if you're interested. But it's just an interesting observation. You have textual evidence, apparently, in the Septuagint, working with a different Hebrew text that had a plural there, that just brings out the Divine Council thing a little bit more. And the point is theological. “Who is like you among any member of the heavenly host? Who is like you among the *elohim*, the *elim*, in council?” Or the *bene elim* in Psalm 89? The answer is, “Nobody.”

45:00

So no, you can't say (to quote the title of one of my articles) that if you've seen one *elohim*, you've seen them all. No, in Israelite thinking, there is one among them that is unique. Species unique. Utterly incomparable. Incomparable in terms of who he is. Ontological uniqueness. And so you can find that in Exodus 15. Now if you keep reading in Exodus 15, we'll run into a couple of other things here. We read through verse 12, so let's hit verse 13.

**¹³ “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.**

Let me read that again.

**¹³ “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.**

You say, “Why would you include this in our discussion?” Because it sounds like they’ve already been to Sinai. This is a clear textual element that suggests that Moses is either not writing this then... Like this wasn’t somebody like... They get to the other side of the Red Sea, and Moses breaks out in song, and somebody writes this down. And he says, “I’m going to break out in song now. Start writing.” No, it’s after the fact. They’ve already been to Sinai.

Now other scholars would say, “Well, yeah. They’ve already been to Sinai. This was written centuries after the biblical events.” And that could well be. I like to point things out like this to you to reinforce the point that when scholars wonder about when something gets written, it’s not because they’re just sitting in a dark room wondering what to do. “What can we think up next to talk about Bible stuff or get after the fundamentalists?” or something like that. That’s not what they do. They’re looking at the text and they’re going, “Man. Sounds like they’ve already been there. So how could that be Moses...?” So there are just these things in the text that are very easy to read over. But I’m trying to reinforce the point that biblical scholarship (even biblical criticism)... When you hear “higher criticism,” that’s about things like, “When was it written?” “How did the text as we have it come together?” “Was it written or transmitted in stages?” All this kind of stuff. And we have hit this through the Exodus series here. There are just things that are easy to overread in the text that are just there that make you ask these questions if you’re a close reader. Now what you do with it... What your presuppositions are when you start thinking about it... It’s a related-but-different question. But just so that you’re aware that this stuff does arise from the text. Look at the next few verses, verses 14-16.

**¹⁴ The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.**

**¹⁵ Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.**

**¹⁶ Terror and dread fall upon them;
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,**

**till your people, O LORD, pass by,
till the people pass by whom you have purchased.**

You know what that sounds like? That sounds like Rahab at Jericho. “Hey, we’ve heard about what happened at the Red Sea. That just kind of freaks everybody out. We know you’re going to kick our butts.” [Laughs] “Please, save me and my family.” It sounds like the itinerary that Moses and Joshua take on their trip up through the Transjordan, which is long after the crossing of the Red Sea. The content of these verses do not happen as soon as they hit the other side. But a lot of you, I’m sure, have heard... Well, I can’t say a lot of you have heard this preached, because it’s the Old Testament. A lot of churches don’t even preach the Old Testament anymore. But if you *have* heard this, chances are that the setting that’s described for you is, “They get through the sea, and everybody just kind of stops, and Moses breaks into song, and isn’t this awesome?” Well, yeah, it is awesome, but you have stuff like this in it that is clearly much later. So these things arise from the text. It’s not people just making stuff up. Currid, in his *Study Commentary on Exodus*, the first volume, Exodus 1-18, writes this:

All four nations [MH: these nations that are mentioned in the verses I just read] were to become notorious enemies of Israel. Philistia was located in the coastal plain of Palestine, and the Philistines often fought with Israel during the early centuries of her existence (e.g., Judg. 13–15; 1 Sam. 4–7). The Edomites were descended from Esau, and they populated the area of southern Transjordan. They struggled with Israel in order not to let her pass through their territory [MH: much later] (Num. 20). Moab, in central Transjordan, was the home of the descendants of Lot. Balak was one of the kings of Moab during the conquest period, and he strongly resisted Israel (Num. 22). The Canaanites, of course, inhabited the land of promise, and many of them were destroyed by the Hebrew invasion of Palestine.

50:00

Now Currid doesn’t want people to think that this was written after the fact. (And I don’t know why, because so what if this was written after the fact?) But he’s like, “Well, I know that sounds like later authorship, but...” Well, it *is* later authorship. Because nobody is there... CNN isn’t there. They’d probably destroy it if they were. But CNN isn’t there with a camera beaming it in to Philistia. This isn’t a real-time, moment-by-moment, blow-by-blow commentary. Of course it’s after the fact. It’s very obvious. There’s no harm in saying that parts of the... You know, Moses could’ve written it later, if you want Mosaic authorship. But you don’t need that, either. We’ve talked about this before. My point is here to show you that if you read the text closely, these things just pop out. These questions arise.

Keep reading to verses 17-18. This is interesting in terms of a polemic against the Canaanite Divine Council (El and Baal). You might think, “Good grief! How do you get that out of verses 17-18. Well, let me read it here:

**¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode...**

By the way, that sounds like it's contradictory to the earlier verse, where it seemed like they had already been there. Just pay attention for the sake of the point we are making. We're not going to get into authorship and editorship and all this stuff.

...the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

¹⁸ The LORD will reign forever and ever."

You say, "How in the world does that relate to the Canaanite Divine Council—all that El and Baal stuff from Ugaritic." It does. Currid takes note of this.

This epilogue looks even further into the future when God will establish Israel in the land of promise. The Hebrews will build a sanctuary there to worship Yahweh. The designation of a mountain obviously refers to Mount Zion where the temple will ultimately reside.

I'll read verse 17 again:

**¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode,
the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.**

So I would agree. This is temple language. It's Zion language, which is much later. Where I want to zero in on is that Currid does notice the parallel here ("on the mountain of your inheritance, the place of your dwelling") that occurs in these verses. That's important. The reference to the sanctuary—to the mountain, to the divine abode. These are stock terms used of Divine Council stuff. And the Hebrew terms here are used and they have Ugaritic equivalents. So Currid takes note of this, and he starts talking about it. And he says, "There's probably a polemic here against the Canaanite Divine Council, specifically Baal, because Baal is the one who gets a house after his battle with Yam and Mot (the god of death and the river). Baal is declared king of the gods, and he gets a house. And Baal is declared king of the earth. Look at verse 18:

¹⁸ The LORD will reign forever and ever.

That language is close to the language used in the Baal Cycle of Baal. And so Currid and others look at this and say, "There's something going on here in the text where the writer not only wants to tell us what happened to the Egyptians and is dipping into Egyptian worldview stuff, but the writer is also giving Baal and

El (the Divine Council, Ugaritic stuff, Ugaritic pantheon) a poke, too. Because it's not Baal who is Lord of the earth. It's Yahweh.

55:00

For my part, I do think that there is something to this. There's no dispute that Canaanite literature existed at the time of the Exodus. So if you want Mosaic authorship, there's no obstacle there. The issue is when the Israelites or even Moses would have been exposed to Canaanite religion as an opposing system. That's much later. That's the time of the prophets—the monarchy. Certainly not in Egypt. They're not exposed to Ugaritic religion in Egypt (the full-blown El and Baal as a competition to Yahweh). That's going to be later. So I think what we have here is we have either an editorial hand, or something going on. Maybe part of the original composition or an editorial hand that wants to loop El and Baal (Canaanite thinking) into this story and say, "Yahweh is not only better than the gods of Egypt; he's also better than these guys over here." Yahweh is the one who is at command. He takes his people through the waters of chaos, through the chaos wilderness. He's taking them to Zion. That is where his abode is. That's the realm of God on earth. The high God. The Most High. All this stuff. And he's going to build his sanctuary there. And the Lord, Yahweh, will reign forever and ever. He is king of the whole world. Not Baal. And I think that's entirely possible.

I wanted to riff on this a little bit because what you have here is, this is territory that those who are on this evolutionary-trajectory perspective of Israelite religion are going to look at and say, "Yeah, the writer wants to do that because at one time, he has to establish the fact that Yahweh is now king of all the nations, and that wasn't true at one time. Yahweh was just one of the council of El." If you've read *Unseen Realm*, if you've read any of my articles, if you've read some of the other things I have on the website, this is the common perspective of Israelite religion. Let's go back to Deuteronomy 32:8:

⁸When the Most High divided up the nations, he divided them up according to the number of the sons of God. But Israel is Yahweh's portion. Jacob is his allotted inheritance.

So those who believe Israelite thinking... Specifically the biblical writers, not just the Joe Schmo Israelite. But the biblical writers who were once polytheists, that polytheism was orthodoxy—that Yahweh was just one of a number of gods. And here we have the Most High (*El Elyon* is a separate deity in Deuteronomy 32), and he gives Yahweh a little piece of the earth, and it happens to be Israel. But the Most High (*El Elyon*) and Yahweh are different deities. Because they were polytheists. Later on, Israel is going to evolve into the notion where all these deities are fused into one (into Yahweh) and when that happens, Yahweh is Lord of all the earth, because now there's only one God. And so the critics will say Psalm 82 is about the Israelites evolving to this point of enlightenment where they kill off the other gods of Psalm 82 and only leave one, and that's Yahweh.

So Psalm 82 for them is proof of the defeat of polytheism in the mind of the biblical writers. Polytheism is no longer orthodox religion. Polytheism has been defeated. Now we have this wonderful breakthrough to monotheism. The lights have turned on. So that allows the critics to say, “Well, from that point on, they don’t believe the other gods exist. You have an intolerant, exclusivistic monotheism. And so all talk of *Elohim* means that the other gods don’t exist anymore.”

I reject all of that. And if you want to know why, you can go to my website (thedivinecouncil.com) and read some conference papers and published articles and whatnot. Because there are littered through that neat little picture a number of problems and inconsistencies—things like assuming that plural *elohim* are all equal. That’s an assumption. And assuming that El and Elyon or that Yahweh is a separate deity in Deuteronomy 32, that’s an assumption. Because if you go back two verses... Take the trek back two verses... You have El and Baal epithets both applied to Yahweh. It’s very clear that the writer is not looking at Yahweh as a separate deity in Deuteronomy 32:6-7. So why would he in 8? And if you go to Deuteronomy 4:19-20, Yahweh isn’t *given* Israel; he takes it. It’s his choice. There are all sorts of problems. I’m not going to rehearse all this stuff. You can go back and read this material. But if you’re thinking that way, you look at what’s going on in Exodus 15 here and you don’t just see a polemic here; you see an evolution out of polytheism—another “evidence” of this evolutionary trajectory. I bring this up because it’s kind of sad that there are folks in evangelicalism who are buying into this. And I’m not saying that you can’t get the gospel and think this way. I’m just saying that you’re thinking that way because you’ve never examined the problems with the whole idea. You’re hearing this and you’re just buying into it, and you never get to where it doesn’t work and why, and the circularity of the argument. And I want to zero in on one of these for the rest of the episode—this notion in Exodus 15. I’ll read it to you again. Exodus 15:18:

1:00:00

¹⁸ The LORD will reign forever and ever.

If the evolutionary trajectory is correct, then this idea that Yahweh is the God of all the nations over the earth—in effect, that Yahweh now has become the Most High who divides up the nations... If you think that is a late development after the exile (because during the exile they’re getting punished for this), and then out of the exile comes this breakthrough—the breathtaking, wonderful idea that the gods are all dead now, and we have only one. If this is what you’re thinking, you’re going to have some problems. There are other places in the Hebrew Bible where you have this language of Yahweh being king over all that nations that are clearly pre-exilic. They’re pre-exilic. “King of the earth” was a Baal title. So what we have here is a polemic against Baal. Baal, of course... the material was pre-exilic. And you have this idea show up because the biblical writers want to

establish this point long before the exile. There are just a number of indications that this is the case.

So what I'm going to do is read a little bit from my second BBR article (*Bulletin of Biblical Research*). This is the one about co-regency in the Divine Council of Ugarit, and how in the Hebrew Bible that idea was re-purposed. In the Ugaritic Council, you had El and Baal (two deities). Israelite Council did not tolerate that. You have Yahweh occupying both slots. You have the invisible, transcendent Yahweh and you have the Yahweh that appears as a man. They're both Yahweh from the get-go. And Baal imagery... Baal is the one who is anthropomorphized a lot. I don't want to get too technical. I'm just going to read you a little bit as to how this idea that Yahweh is over the whole earth is an old one. It's not late. It's not something that results from some breakthrough to monotheism during or after the exile. So I wrote this:

For example, terrestrial lordship is transparently stated in several enthronement psalms that date to well before the exilic period. Psalm 29:10 declares, "The LORD sat enthroned at the flood; the LORD sits enthroned, king forever" (NJPS).

That's Psalm 29:10. "Lord" there is Yahweh. If you're familiar at all (and scholars should be) with Israelite cosmology, you have the waters over the firmament. That's where the Lord sits. And the firmament covers all the nations, folks. Psalm 29 dips into Ugaritic material. And it has this idea. I don't know that any scholar thinks that Psalm 29 is not pre-exilic. So you don't need an evolution to have this thought. It's already there. Yahweh is God over all the nations. There's no one higher that does him one out.

In Israelite cosmology, the flood upon which YHWH sat was the watery covering thought to be over the solid dome that enclosed the round, flat earth. This throne obviously did not cover *only* Israel. As such, it cannot coherently be denied that the author viewed the foreign nations under the dome and flood as being under the authority of YHWH.

The same kingship perspective is echoed in the Song of Moses. In Exod 15:11 [MH: Exodus 15 is considered some of the oldest material in the Torah by the source critics] we encounter the rhetorical challenge, "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?" (ESV) followed in verse 18 by "The LORD will reign forever and ever" (ESV). As [Frank Moore] Cross [MH: he's deceased now, but he was the department chair at Harvard, Near Eastern Studies, for many years] noted many years ago, "The kingship of the gods is a common theme in early Mesopotamian and Canaanite epics. The common scholarly position that the concept of YHWH as reigning or king is a relatively late development in Israelite thought seems untenable."

And I would agree. I think Cross puts his finger right on it. This is an old idea.

1:05:00

Other pre-exilic texts can be brought to the discussion. Psalm 47:2 not only declares that YHWH is a great king over all the earth, but in so doing it equates YHWH with Elyon: “For the LORD (YHWH), the Most High [MH: Elyon], is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.” [MH: not two great kings] Verse 7 adds, “God is the king of all the earth.” This psalm belongs to the category labeled by scholars as “enthronement psalms.” J. J. M. Roberts argued that the psalm should be situated in the “cultic celebration of YHWH’s imperial accession, based on the relatively recent victories of David’s age.” [MH: David’s pre-exilic.] A narrative sampling of the same idea is readily available in the Deuteronomistic History (DH) [MH: which is also pre-exilic]. The writer(s) of the DH presumed that YHWH controlled the destiny of the nations targeted for removal from Canaan. Israel’s pre-exilic biblical writers expressed the belief that YHWH had defeated and banished the nations in Israel’s land, an idea that presumes YHWH was supreme over the gods of those nations. And as we have seen, this supremacy is cast anthropomorphically via the angel in whom was the name, who was YHWH (Exod 23:23-24; Judg 2:1-3).

I think we need to, without getting into names and podcasts and all this stuff... This notion of this evolutionary trajectory within Israelite religion is seeping into evangelical thinking. Now this is not something that the gospel succeeds or fails on. And I’ve also written (and said in interviews), “Look. Let’s just pretend that Mike doesn’t hold Mike’s views. Let’s just pretend that the evolutionary trajectory is correct. That is easy for an evangelical to handle. It’s called progressive revelation. It is not impossible that God could have told the biblical writers only limited information about himself, and then later on, as they get more information, they figure out, ‘Okay. God is unique, and Yahweh is different than the other ones, and there’s none like him.’ Before when we were talking about councils, and... Is it possible, because God gives them more information, that they go through this evolutionary arc?” Sure. You could look at it that way. I think you actually have a tough time if you actually pay attention to the text, because you do not have that neat picture. And you certainly don’t have it after the exile.

Remember the Dead Sea Scrolls. You have 180 references to divine plurality. They didn’t get the memo there. And those guys at Qumran were not liberals. They were not progressives. They were about as uptight about theology as you could possibly get, and they’re not offended at all by the talk of divine plurality. And I would suggest the reason is because it has *always* been part of biblical thinking, biblical worldview, supernatural worldview. And they *always* viewed Yahweh (the biblical writers, anyway) as unique among the gods. Because they don’t view *elohim* as a term that is connected to a specific set of unique attributes. That’s not what the term means or signifies. The reason that the biblical writers use it of a half a dozen different things (different entities) is because all it really means is that you are by nature a resident (a disembodied

member, disembodied inhabitant) of the spiritual world. That's all it is. And that has nothing to do with polytheism as moderns conceive it.

But people (and I'm including scholars here) have literally not thought about the topic. Literally, they haven't done it, because it's repeated so often in biblical studies that people just reflexively conclude there's nothing to think about here. [laughs] On my Twitter feed today, I saw a New Testament textual critic (New Testament scholar) say this, "If you repeat the idea that Gehenna was a garbage dump often enough, even scholars will begin to believe it." His point is that there's no evidence for that. Well, I'll give you the Old Testament equivalent. "If you hear often enough about the evolution from polytheism to monotheism in Israelite religion, even scholars will believe it." And most of them do. And now we have evangelicals that just don't think really anything about this. And it's not like the gospel is in trouble here. It's not. Because there are other ways to process this—progressive revelation. I get it. I just think the whole thing is incoherent. I think it implodes on itself upon close examination, which is why I don't accept it. Again, this was the subject of my dissertation. It's just something that for one reason or another, I wound up seeing and thinking about, and then winding up doing a dissertation on it.

1:10:00

I'm going to stop here, because I don't want to go past verse 21 here. We'll just stop right here. Next time (Part 2), we're going to do verses 22-26, because we have a reference there (interestingly enough)... And I want to be able to give it the time that it deserves. I'll read you verse 27, the last verse:

²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

Now if you don't see Divine Council stuff in there, cosmic geography in there, then this is probably the first time you've ever been exposed to those topics. That's just loaded. And there isn't much written on that verse or this section of Exodus 15 in which it is found. So I've gotten this question a number of times and I've wanted to devote an episode to it, so I figured this was a good place to do it: Part 2, Chapter 15. There's a lot of interesting stuff there that I think this audience especially will get a lot out of.

For the sake of wrapping up this episode, there are things in this chapter that if you know what you're looking at will take you well beyond just, "Oh, we have version two of the crossing of the Red Sea. Isn't that nice?" Well, we do, but there are a lot of things here to drill down on that take you into other areas of cosmic geography, Divine Council worldview, just ways to think about the text. So this is what I like to try to do when we hit these things in podcast episodes. We just drill down a little bit and say, "Hey, there's more to look at here than what you might suppose."

TS: I want everybody out there to raise your hand that in the past had just read Exodus 15 and just glanced over it. Raise your hand, right now. My hand is up. [MH laughs]

MH: Can you see them?

TS: Guilty. I am guilty. You're in rare form. Summer, drilling on down. I like it, because there's no way that the typical lay person is going to go that far down. You're going to have to listen to the podcasts.

MH: There's just neat stuff.

TS: Yeah. There are so many chapters of the Bible where I probably just glanced right over it. Just the sheer volume of content... And it takes a scholar to drill down on some of these points. Otherwise, the lay people (me included) are going to just glance right over.

MH: And I don't want to do it just as points of curiosity, because... You say, "Why should I care about what scholars think?" Well, you might have a son or daughter or grandkids going to college and taking Religion 101, and they're going to get this stuff thrown at them. I guarantee, if they take a Bible as Literature class in high school or college, this is what they're going to get. They're going to get this evolutionary perspective. They're going to get source criticism. And it's going to be presented to them in such a way that everything you thought you knew and believed up to this point is just crap. And that is a totally unnecessary conclusion. So I'm really sensitive to that. Because... Maybe I get too much email like that. "I used to believe the Bible." Or "I used to be a Christian until..." And it's just the dumbest thing in the world that would literally have taken (back in the day, when this happened to this person) five minutes of time to clear up. But now they're 20 years past it, and they've just walked away. And it just shouldn't be.

TS: And not only that, it's just entertaining. For those of us who aren't conditioned one way or another, it's entertaining. Learning about the Bible is entertaining.

MH: Yeah, there's a lot to think about.

TS: No reason why learning about the Bible cannot be entertaining. I'm one who doesn't have to unlearn anything, because I really wasn't conditioned one way or another. So I feel for the people out there that are having to walk back and unlearn some of this stuff. Alright, with that, Mike, I just want to thank everybody for tuning in and listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.