

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 282

Exodus 17, Part 1

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Episode Summary

The first seven verses of Exodus 17 give readers the story of the water from the rock at Rephidim. The story is straightforward enough. Moses strikes the rock as God instructs him (Exod 17:6) and God provided water in the desert wilderness for the Israelites to drink. Moses calls the place “Massah and Meribah” (Exod 17:7) which produces the point of orientation for this episode, and sets up Part 2. The item that unites the two parts is that this incident (Massah and Meribah) is associated elsewhere in Scripture with Kadesh. Since the location of Kadesh is known, this incident is part of the problem of the location of Mount Sinai (especially for the Midian view) and links this incident to the failure with the giant clans from Numbers 13 (Part 2).

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 282: Exodus 17, Part 1. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What’s going on?

MH: Well, we’ve managed to split Exodus 17 into two parts. So here we go again. [laughs]

TS: Hey, that’s okay. We expected this.

MH: I just can’t help myself.

TS: This is your wheelhouse.

MH: Did you really? [laughs]

TS: Yes. I think we did. When we all voted for Exodus, we knew, “There goes 2019.” And we were correct.

MH: My wife asked me this morning, “How long are you going to be in Exodus yet? You should be about done.” I said, “We’re going to be in Exodus the rest of the year.” [laughter] Just... Sorry, but...

TS: It’s okay. We knew what we were getting into. [MH laughs] We already know what we’re going to do after. Usually after we do a book, we have several topics that we touch on, so we already have those planned out. Let me tell you, you’re going to want to stick around for those because they’re going to be really good. I can’t spill the beans on that. But I’m looking forward to that.

MH: Yep, it’ll be fun.

TS: Exodus is good stuff all over. So I know nobody’s complaining. Trust me. Nobody’s complaining.

MH: It is good stuff. There’s just a lot in here. I don’t want to sound like a broken record, but there’s just a lot in here that’s easy to read over. Like, “Oh, I never really thought about that before,” or “never really factored that into something else that might be more familiar.” We got that last time, just in chapter 16. But here we go again. We’re going to have the same issue here. What I’m going to do is read the whole chapter. I’ve already telegraphed that this is going to be broken into two parts. The first part where we’re going to camp today is the first seven verses (the water from the rock episode). And I really toyed about doing the whole chapter, and I thought, “You know, if I do that, we’re going to have to split it up anyway, because Exodus 17:8-16 (through the end of the chapter) is the Amalekite incident. And that’s going to take us into some real *Unseen Realm* territory, but actually to a depth and adding content elements that I did not cover in the book. So that’s going to be one of those expanding episodes, where we expand on certain things in the book. So I just figured, “You know, we’re going to have to do it anyway. We’re going to take that off and make it its own episode.”

But I’m going to read through the whole chapter so you can get what we’re doing today, and then you get a preview of what Part 2 is going to be about. And by the time we wrap up today, I’ll also telegraph a bit more of what Part 2 is going to be about. Some of you might, even as we read through it right now, pick up on it. But for those who don’t, I’ll telegraph it. It’s going to be good stuff. So here we are, Exodus 17. I’m reading from the ESV.

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses

and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴ So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵ And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

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Let me just stop there. We hit a few things. There was a reference to the elders of Israel. You say, “Well, that’s kind of weird, because we’re only going to get the elders in the next chapter.” That’s true, but we’ve already seen that Exodus doesn’t follow strict chronology. It was composed at different times. We also got a reference to Horeb, which we saw earlier (in our episodes on the location of Mount Sinai) that that’s another name for Sinai. We’re going to get into that big-time here. That’s really what our focus this episode (this part of Exodus 17) is going to be. But if we keep reading, here’s what we get. This is verse 8 to the end of the chapter:

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses’ hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, ¹⁶ saying, “A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Now that’s the end of the chapter. And I don’t want to telegraph too much now because I’m going to do that at the end of this episode, but the reference to

Amalek is really important. It's going to take us down a number of roads here in some of the language used elsewhere in this section. Now the part about Moses raising his hands, if you remember the episode that we did about Elim and the terebinths there (the 12 and the 70 and all that imagery), we alluded to this episode about, well maybe the staff of Moses, since it's wood it came from a tree. It's emblematic of the tree of God or divine encounter—maybe even Eden, because all the... There's a reason why trees were put at places of divine encounter (or divine encounter occurred at places where there were trees) because of the cosmic garden/cosmic mountain imagery that takes our minds back to Eden.

So we talked about that a little bit. I'm not going to spend much time on that next week. I'm going to spend most of the time (really, practically all the time) on the issue of who is Amalek and how that bleeds into some other passages. But when we get to the end of this episode, I'll telegraph that a little bit more. So for our purposes here, we want to get into the first seven verses. And the first thing we run into here... It doesn't sound like much. This is easy sermonic material, "Trust God," and so on and so forth. All of that's true. And it *would* be good sermonic material. But the reference to Rephidim and Meribah and Massah are actually really important. They're going to dovetail with some things that we talked about earlier. So Rephidim... I'm going to read you a little bit from the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* on Rephidim. And I think that'll telegraph for us what we're going to be talking about. So the entry in ABD (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*) says this:

REPHIDIM (PLACE) [Heb *rēpîdîm* (רֶפִּידִים)]. A station of the Exodus located between the Wilderness of Sin and the Wilderness of Sinai (Exod 17:1, 8; 19:2; Num 33:14, 15).

So let me just read Exodus 19:2, just so that you have that in your head.

² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain...

And Numbers 33:14,15:

¹⁴ And they set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. ¹⁵ And they set out from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

So you get the impression that Rephidim and Sinai are somewhat close. We don't have measurements or anything like that in here. But we kind of get that impression. Back to ABD:

Dophkah and Alush are also mentioned as encampments between the Wilderness of Sin and Rephidim (Num 33:12–14). The location of Rephidim is unknown and dependent upon the identification of Mt. Sinai. Various proposals have been made following a northern route of the Exodus placing Mt. Sinai and thus Rephidim in the Negeb Highlands, N Sinai, or the land of Midian... Those opting for a southern Exodus route locate Rephidim in the vicinity of Jebel Musa close to the S tip of the peninsula...

10:00 Let me just stop there. Jebel Musa is the traditional site of Sinai, way down in the “V” that’s formed between the two forks of the Red Sea. And the other ones are, of course, further north—a variety of situations. But the key point at this point is to note that Rephidim had some proximity to Mount Sinai.

Three significant events occur while Israel is situated at Rephidim. The Israelites complain of being in a place where “there was no water for the people to drink” so Moses is instructed to provide water by smiting the rock. Rephidim became known as Massah, “testing,” and Meribah, “contention,” because Israel determined to test the Lord to see if he was among them or not (Exod 17:1–7). The term Massah is used several other times in warnings to Israel not to prove the Lord as they did at Rephidim (Deut 6:16; 9:22; 33:8). [MH: So basically, “Just don’t do this like you did at Rephidim.” Now here is an important component.] Meribah [MH: That term that we just read in Exodus 17 that’s associated with the incident at Rephidim.] also refers to an incident near Kadesh-barnea involving a challenge to Moses to provide water (Num 20:13, 24; 27:14; Deut 32:51; Ps 81:7).

And we also get Meribah mentioned in Deuteronomy 33:1-2. I’ll turn there in a second. But here’s what you need to be tracking on. There is some proximity between Rephidim and Mount Sinai. There’s also some proximity between Rephidim and Kadesh. I’ll read a couple of the verses. (Which ones do I want to go to here?) You know what? I’m going to hold off, because I’ll get into a fuller discussion here about Kadesh specifically. Let’s go to Deuteronomy 33:1-2. Here’s where else this occurs (but this isn’t going to be as obvious a translation). Deuteronomy 33. I’m going to start with ESV. Here’s what it says. I actually did discuss this passage in *Unseen Realm* in the section about Divine Council presence at the giving of the Law. So here’s Deuteronomy 33:1.

This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death. ² He said,

**“The LORD came from Sinai
and dawned from Seir upon us;
he shone forth from Mount Paran...**

Let me stop there. We're back in the March from the South passages. And earlier, when we talked about the location of Sinai, I said that you must account for the March from the South. It's part of how to locate Sinai, and it's actually significant trouble for the view that Sinai is in Midian. You can go back and listen to those episodes. But here we are again. This is one of those passages.

**"The LORD came from Sinai
and dawned from Seir upon us;
he shone forth from Mount Paran;
he came from the ten thousands of holy ones,
with flaming fire at his right hand [MH: which is really odd; that's ESV]
³Yes, he loved his people,
all his holy ones were in his hand; [MH: that's also really odd]
so they followed in your steps,
receiving direction from you.**

Now, if you've read *Unseen Realm*, you will know that there are a number of textual issues in Deuteronomy 33. And I took people to the Septuagint and compared the Masoretic Text (the traditional text) with the Septuagint. Because this passage is really behind the New Testament idea (which is stated in three or four passages) about the Law being dispensed or delivered through or by angels. And it's not really clear in ESV because ESV is following the Masoretic Text, basically. In the Septuagint, it gets a little clearer. And I'll turn there in a second. But if I switch versions here and go to the Tanakh (this is the Jewish Publication Society English translation of the same passage—Deuteronomy 33), this is what it says. It translates the Masoretic Text a little bit differently than the ESV does.

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This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God bade the Israelites farewell before he died. He said, 'The Lord came from Sinai. He shone upon them from Seir. He appeared from Mount Paran and approached from Rivavot Kadesh.'"

It transliterates that term. It doesn't translate it. It transliterates it.

"Lightning flashing at them from his right. Lover indeed of the people, their hallowed [something] are in your hand." [MH: That's awkward, too.] "They followed in your steps, accepting your pronouncements."

Now the Hebrew text reads either "from Rivavot Kodesh" or going back to the ESV, where it says, "from the ten thousands of holy ones." The Hebrew text actually says Meribat Kadesh—Meribah, Meribat. Meribat is the construct form... If you've had a little Hebrew, you know that the *-ah* ending of a feminine noun

(and geographical nouns are typically feminine) changes to a “t” when it’s linked to a following noun. So Meribat Kadesh is the word Meribah (which is associated with the Rephidim in Exodus 17) followed by the place name Kadesh. It’s really kind of odd. And you can see why there’s a problem.

Now if you go to the Masoretic Text, the Kadesh part is pointed. The vowels put in it are pointed to spell Kodesh, which is like “holy” or “holiness” or something like that. But the Septuagint... And I’m going to click over to *Unseen Realm* here, because I discussed this in *Unseen Realm*. The translator of the Septuagint didn’t take those consonants that way. I’m going to click out to *Unseen Realm*. This begins on page 164, and this is part of the discussion of the Law being dispensed by angels and whatnot. And I put Deuteronomy 33:1-4 into two columns. The left column is the traditional Masoretic Text., and the right column is the Septuagint. Here’s what the Septuagint says.

The Lord has come from Sinai and he appeared to us from Seir. He made haste from Mount Paran with ten thousands of (or from) Kadesh [the place name] at his right hand, his angels with him.

In *Unseen Realm*, I talked about how since the Septuagint has “angels at Kadesh,” (Kadesh, which is also right there in the verse—it’s connected with Sinai), and how the Septuagint is the pool from which Paul in Galatians and the writer of Hebrews and some other passages in the New Testament where they get this idea (this connection) between the Law being delivered and having an angelic presence there. This is a very clear New Testament idea.

So the question I’m addressing in *Unseen Realm* at this point is “Where does this idea come from?” And you can go back and look at the discussion there. If you wanted to look at the New Testament references, you’d go to Acts 7:52-53 and Hebrews 2:1-2 and Galatians 3:19. Again, this is a very clear New Testament idea that the Law was delivered or dispensed by or somehow mediated by or in some way connected with the event of the giving of the Law. There are angels. There’s a Divine Council presence. You can go back and read that. But what I want you to notice here is that there were translations (namely the Septuagint) that took the Hebrew and saw a place name there (Kadesh). And if you looked at the Hebrew underlying that, you could see how they could do that with the vowels. You could also see prior to that the word Meribah in construct (to use Hebrew grammar lingo) Meribat Kadesh.

So Deuteronomy 33, these first few verses, which are clearly associated with Sinai (this is Yahweh coming from the South— “The Lord came from Sinai, dawned from Seir”) connect Sinai and Seir and Mount Paran, and now Kadesh. Just hold that in your lap for a little bit, because what we’re going to establish here (or at least illustrate) is that Rephidim (which is in the first seven verses of Exodus that we just read, where this incident of the water from the rock comes

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from) is associated geographically (it has proximity to) Mount Sinai. This would make sense given Deuteronomy 33 and with the way the Septuagint translator took the text, and other passages as well. So we have Rephidim and Sinai being part of the same regional context. And if Rephidim is part of that context, and Sinai and Kadesh, well so are Meribah and Massah. So we have a number of place names here that are all part of the same regional context. And this is actually going to produce another problem for Mount Sinai being in Midian, because Kadesh is known. The location there is known. And so are Seir and Paran. These places are known—the area, at least generally. So we're right back into that topic that we had discussed weeks ago about the location of Sinai. And here we have Exodus 17 contributing to the problem. Now I'm going to go to *Anchor Bible Dictionary* again. And this is the entry on Massah and Meribah. Those two places have their own entry. It says this:

MASSAH AND MERIBAH (PLACES) [Heb *massâ ûmĕrîbâ* (מַסָּה וּמֵרִיבָה)]. Literally, "Testing and Strife," the site of an Israelite rebellion during the desert wandering (Exod 17:7). The precise location is unknown, since the Elohist [MH: *Anchor Bible Dictionary* is taking the JEDP view of the Torah. Since one (E)...] places it at Horeb and near Rephidim (Exod 17:6, 8), both of equally unknown location...

So Horeb is Sinai. How do you determine exactly where Sinai is? Nobody knows that. Rephidim is the same place, same incident, so Massah and Meribah are part of this whole discussion. Now they give some cross-references here. And I'm going to read these to you. Numbers 20:14. Just listen to what these passages say. This is about Edom.

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom:

Now right away, that implies that the two places aren't precisely the same, but regionally, they're close. They're in the same area, same region. We're talking regional here. And Edom, of course, is associated with Seir and Mount Paran, and those places in turn are connected with Sinai. Mount Sinai. This is the March from the South tradition. If you haven't listened to those earlier episodes, you need to.

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom:

"Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met: ¹⁵ how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers. ¹⁶ And when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel [MH: isn't that interesting?] and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory.

So again, there's that indication that they're geographical proximity here.

¹⁷ Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King's Highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

And of course, then they have a problem. Edom says, "No, I'm not going to let you do that." Then there's a conflict there. At least, it's not a good relationship. Edom refuses. Israel is turned away because there's a relationship there. So God says, "Okay." But again, it establishes an adversarial relationship between Edom and Israel. But for our purposes here, the point is that we have some geographical, regional connections between these place names. Numbers 27:14. I'm going to go back to verse 12.

¹² The LORD said to Moses, "Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. ¹³ When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, [MH: so this is right before Moses dies] ¹⁴ because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)

Now you'll notice how similar that language is. In Exodus 17, it was the wilderness of Sin. We have in Hebrew... Let me just go back there: "... wilderness of Sin by stages." Now that (what's translates "Sin" there) in Hebrew is spelled differently (with an S letter) as opposed to here (the wilderness of Zin). It's another S letter, but it's a different one. Hebrew has different S's. The first one is *samek*. This one is *tsade* (if you know the Hebrew alphabet). So they're nevertheless kind of close, in terms of name. And we have the same incident going on there, that Moses... There's an incident about water—not having water. And in one (Exodus 17, that we're looking at today) it doesn't say that Moses sinned. It just says that he did what God told him to do in the presence of the elders and Aaron. And they went on their way. But in the other one that this refers to, Moses disobeys. He has a problem, and then God tells him, "Look, because of what you did here, you're not going to go into the land of promise."

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Now we know these stories. I don't want to go too far down the rabbit hole of the stories. Are these two traditions conflated into one or separate? I think you can easily tell... For those who want to see sources in the Torah, they're going to look at these and say, "Well, they're basically the same, but yet they're not. Moses was punished after one. He's not punished at the other." So they look at this as two sources converging into one, and the editor not getting them quite

exactly right—that sort of thing. And other people would say, “No, these are two things that happened at the same place at different times. And we have separate incidents.” Regardless of that, what I want you to notice here is that if you want to take either view (that they’re separate traditions that happened at the same place or they’re two different events that happened at the same place at different times), you have Kadesh associated with Meribah here. That’s going to become important. Numbers 33:34-37. We read again:

³⁴ [The Israelites] set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. ³⁵ And they set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. ³⁶ And they set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh). [MH: So you have Kadesh being lumped in with these other geographical terms.] ³⁷ And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

Right there, it’s the same region: Kadesh, Meribah, Rephidim, Massah, Seir, Paran, Edom... Are you getting the picture here? Mount Sinai is somewhere in the mix of all of these place names. It’s somewhere in there. All of these places are regionally associated with each other. They’re close by. There’s a geographical matrix going on here. And the Israelites are smack-dab in this region. And we know where Edom is. We know where this region is. We know where Seir is. We know what that region is. It’s kind of... Some of them are subsets of others. We know about Edom. We know about Seir. We know about Paran. We know some of these places. And the unknowns (like Meribah and Massah and Rephidim)... Those are the question marks. But we know generally where these things occurred. And therefore, we know generally where Sinai should be. And it’s not in Midian. That’s the point. You can’t get Kadesh in Midian. Kadesh is known. So this isn’t... On one hand, this doesn’t really help locate Sinai with any precision, but it does hurt the Midian view. It makes it extraordinarily hard, with the rest of the March from the South traditions.

So here we are again. Back to ABD (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*). The writer says... Let’s look at Psalms... He actually brings a psalm in here. He quotes Ezekiel in a few places that places Massah and Meribah at Kadesh. We don’t need to read all of these things. Psalm 81. Let’s go to verse 4:

**⁴ For it is a statute for Israel,
a rule of the God of Jacob.
⁵ He made it a decree in Joseph
when he went out over the land of Egypt.
I hear a language I had not known:
⁶ “I relieved your shoulder of the burden;
your hands were freed from the basket.**

These are all references to Egypt—God delivering Jacob (Israel).

⁷ **In distress you called, and I delivered you;
I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah***
⁸ **Hear, O my people, while I admonish you!
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!**

It's a reference to Meribah in association with the secret place of thunder, which would be the mountain where God answered the call, which was the burning bush incident. So you have Meribah and Sinai in the same region. There's some geographical proximity going on there. In *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, the writer says:

Examination of the texts referring to Massah and Meribah shows that there was no unified tradition of what constituted the rebellion.

30:00 So now they're going to go off into the sources and all that stuff. Let's see... Without getting lost in the source talk, could these things be harmonized? That's the question for us. Or maybe they're different incidents. And you're going to have scholars on that side of it as well. Psalm 81...

...implies that **all Israel** was tested by the waters of Meribah.

And then he's going to go, "Ah, Deuteronomy 33, not so much. It looks like the priesthood was." So they're going back and forth. And the question is, "Well, maybe these things can be reconciled. Maybe they're two different events that happening the same place." You're going to have scholars take different positions here. Here's a key thought, though.

Ps 95:8–11 specifies that Israel was punished with forty years of wandering in the desert for the sin of testing Yahweh at Meribah, but no details are supplied.

Now let me read that to you. I'm going to go back up to verse 6:

⁶ **Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!**
⁷ **For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.**
Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸ **do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,**

- ⁹ **when your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.**
- ¹⁰ **For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways.”**
- ¹¹ **Therefore I swore in my wrath,
“They shall not enter my rest.”**

Now that passage (I'm just going to give you my little take here) doesn't specifically say that the forty years' punishment derived from or was caused by what happened at Massah and Meribah. I think the writer of *Anchor Bible Dictionary* might be reading that into it. But some scholars do make that argument. Where else (if you remember our series in Hebrews) did I suggest from other psalms and from other passages... Where did I say that when the writer of Hebrews says that “They're not going to enter into my rest” and then references the Old Testament... Anybody remember what incident the writer of Hebrews took us back to that was the catalyst for the wilderness wanderings? That was Numbers 13 and 14. And what was the failure? It was the report of ten of the spies who went into the land and saw the Anakim (the descendants of the Nephilim) there and they just quit. That happened at Kadesh. So you could connect that incident with Meribah if you wanted to because they're both connected with Kadesh.

So we have another passage (in this case, Psalm 95) that has some geographical proximity relationship between not only these place names now but a specific incident that was the catalyst to the 40 years of wandering, and that just so happened to involve the vestiges of the giant clans. Now that is going to be Part 2, because Amalek is intimately connected with the giant clan stuff. We're going to get to that next time. So I'll telegraph it a little bit more. But what I want you to see is that we've got a convergence—a concatenation—of place names that are regionally in relation to each other (Meribah, Massah, Kadesh, Rephidim, Paran, Seir, Edom, and Sinai). The ones that are known are not in Midian. They're just not. They're not on the right-hand side of the right prong of the Red Sea. They're not over there. They are on the left-hand side, near the top. Edom is known. Seir is known. For the fourth or fifth time now, if you have not listened to the March from the South episodes related to the location of Sinai, you just have to do that because that material typically gets skipped or glossed over, or nobody realizes what that means in relation to discussing the location of Sinai. And here we have another one (Rephidim).

So I just want you to realize that while we can't determine these things with the kind of precision we'd like to have, you can whittle away at it. You can get rid of some options and label them least likely, or less likely.

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Now let's go back to the Massah and Meribah and Rephidim incident here in the first several verses. We now have this associated with the forty-year curse in some way, by virtue of Psalm 95. What I'm suggesting is that in some way, we either have a couple of incidents at Kadesh/Rephidim/Massah/Meribah... Maybe things happened at the same place at different times. Maybe (if you prefer the JEDP approach) these are different sources that are trying to put the events together. Whichever way you want to go... I don't think that that view is called for, in part because I think there are other weaknesses to the whole JEDP thing. I'm a little bit colored by that. But there are differences between them. And there can be different events. There's no rule against that. Because these places are regionally close. They're within a few days of each other if you're walking around. It is quite conceivable that you could have things happen at the same place or near the same place more than once. There's nothing nonsensical about that. That's very possible.

So what are we going to do with that? And if we throw Deuteronomy 33 into it (the giving of the Law—Sinai—at Meribat Kadesh), it's very possible that these could have been waystations. And they were. We can tell this much from the itinerary. There were waystations on the way to Sinai, and they do have something to do with (after Sinai) journeying to Canaan and then failing, and then being sentenced to wander for 40 years. Basically, they're kind of in the same area. They're just wandering around in the Negev somewhere south of Canaan proper. Because they're going to emerge... Ultimately, after 40 years, they're going to go up the Transjordan from the south and then cross over into Canaan during the days of Joshua. We know how this works, roughly, with the itinerary.

All of this can work, really, except if you think you're in Midian. Then you have significant problems. If we throw in the whole (we spent part of an episode on this, too) "three days' journey" language in the mouth of Moses and Aaron and God himself in the burning bush incident in Exodus 4... "Let my son go out into the wilderness three days and offer sacrifice to me." We know where the sacrifice happened. It happens at Sinai. Do we take that literally? If it's three days, then really all of the views of Sinai have a tough time. Even the Kadesh/Edom... It's like, boy, you'd really have to truck it for three days to have three days to get out there. I guess you could make it, maybe. It's three days. Maybe they had to wait to catch their breath before they did what they're going to do. Who knows? But you can quicken the pace dramatically and get there, if you're going to take that three days literally. This is why some people will say Sinai is Har Karkom, which is a little bit short of some of these other places, but it's still to the south. But to get to Midian in that amount of time is impossible. It's just not feasible. So you have to take the three days as not literally.

Then you have to ask yourself, "Why does God and Moses..." This is like four or five times they say this. What's the point? You have to basically take that part of the itinerary not at face value, and then take other parts at face value. There's no sin there. That's an interpretive strategy to do that. But I want to point out that

even if you “solve that problem,” you still have this agglomeration of place names all in the same region. But not Midian. You have a problem there.

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So I just want to read a couple of excerpts here from people who have taken this information. These are commentators. I don't want to just say that some people say that we have different incidents at the same places. That's real. There are scholars who land there. So I don't want you to get the impression that I'm just saying that because I don't like JEDP. I'm not a traditional Mosaic authorship guy, and I'm not a JEDP-er. I'm something else, something in the middle there. But in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*... This is written by Walter Kaiser. Kaiser says this. This is his take, commenting about Massah and Meribah, this incident at Rephidim:

This incident is not to be confused with a similar episode that comes near the conclusion of Israel's forty years of journeying in Numbers 20:1–13.

So this one... Exodus 17 is near the beginning, a few months. And then the other one is like 40 years later. There are obvious differences here.

In this later account, the glory of the Lord is not present [MH: whereas he is in Exodus 17]; and Moses is explicitly instructed that he is *not* to strike the rock but only *to speak* to it. This shows that the only connection between Israel's need and God's supply was the divine Word. True, they also named that place “the waters of Meribah” (Num 20:13), but the symmetry and naming may indeed be deliberate to emphasize the purpose in allowing the incidents and in directing that they be recorded as Scripture. God's people are prone to grumbling at the first hint of adversity no matter how abundant and spectacular may be the evidence of his power and presence.

Basically, Kaiser is saying, “Look, they complained at both incidents, so the terminology is still appropriate.

Thus the dual name brought out both the people's testing of God (*Massah*, “test”) and quarreling (*Meribah*, “contention,” “strife”; NIV mg., “quarreling”) (v.7). In less than six months they had witnessed ten plagues, the pillar of cloud and fire, the opening and shutting of the Red Sea, the miraculous sweetening of the water, and the sending of food and meat from heaven; yet their real question came down to this: “Is the Lord among us [*beqirbēnû*] or not?”

Like, “Duh.” That's not in Kaiser; that's me. [laughs] You have this string of events, and then you get to Exodus 17, and then their question is, “Is the Lord among us?” Like, how clueless can you possibly be? That was Kaiser. On the Jewish side, I'll quote Cassuto. He separates the incidents as well:

An incident similar to this one, which took place at the outset of the Israelite itinerary in the wilderness, is described in another part of the Torah (Num. 20:1–11), dealing with the end of the wanderings. From the literary viewpoint, this provides an interesting example of the symmetry that the Biblical style is fond of achieving by means of parallelism between the beginning and the conclusion of its narrations; and from a thematic standpoint, we may see in this duplication the intention to substantiate emphatically the tradition concerning the providential care that the Lord gave to the needs of His people in the wilderness, from the first to the last stage of their travels.

So Cassuto is more or less making it either literary purely, but he also recognizes the disconnect in the chronology and therefore, presumably, the events. He's saying, "Look, these two events are characterized in very similar ways to create literary symmetry." These are just examples. I just want you to know that there are scholars who disagree on this, and it really comes down to the authorship debate. But regardless of that, for our purposes what I want you to get focused on... If you want to rabbit-trail on these things, I throw them in sometimes because people are interested in issues like authorship. But for our purposes here, we want to pay attention to where these things in Exodus 17 happen—this concatenation of place names that are associated with Sinai (the mountain) itself. I'm going to read what Sarna says here, from his Exodus commentary:

The last station on the journey from the Sea of Reeds to Sinai, according to Exodus 19:2 and Numbers 33:14–15 [MH: so those are the other itineraries]. Its location is uncertain. Verse 6 in the present chapter shows that it must be very close to Horeb/Mount Sinai, but the identity of the latter is itself a matter of considerable scholarly controversy. Certainly, a wilderness station must be assumed to be an oasis. Why then was there no water at Rephidim? Unlike the situation at Marah [MH: that's the bitter waters] (Exod. 15:23), potability [MH: the quality of the water] is not mentioned as a problem here. Therefore, either drought conditions had caused severe depletion of the usually available local resources, or the people were forcibly denied access to them.

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Now let me just stop there. Sarna is making an assumption here that any place that the great company of people would stop... They would only stop if there was a reason to stop, i.e., there was an oasis. There's food and water there. They stock up. That makes sense. We're not actually told that, but there's some sense to that. So Sarna goes from that point of logic in his head and says, "If it was a waystation, why wasn't... What's wrong? There's no mention that the water is bitter, like at Marah. They just don't have it. So why don't they have it?" So he says, "Either there was a drought and it was dried up or there was some force there preventing them from getting to the water. And he opts for the last one because of what follows in Exodus 17. He says:

The latter [MH: they were forcibly denied access to the water] seems the more plausible explanation because it ties in with the next episode, verses 8–16. The hostile Amalekites were in control of this region and blocked the approaches to the sources of water.

So that's his take on how he sets up what's going to happen in what follows. We can look at it and say, "Well, you know... Okay, that might be the case." It says, "Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim." That's Exodus 17:8. It's very clear that there's a conflict. Something starts the conflict. But there's just more to it because of Amalek. And so next time we're going to get into verses 8-16. And the real question we're going to start with is, "Who are the Amalekites?"

Now I'm going to seed some things to you so that you can be thinking about them for next week. So we first encounter the name Amalek in Genesis 36:12. It's one of these boring genealogies. And if we've learned anything on this podcast to this point, it's that boring genealogies sometimes (in fact, many times) have some really interesting stuff in them. So I'm going to read Genesis 36. I'm going to go back to verse 11 (one verse prior), and here's what we read:

¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

So we learn in this parenthesis a few things. Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, who was Esau's son, whose own mother was Adah who... If we go back up to Genesis 36:2, we read this:

² Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite...

So we learn that Adah was the daughter of Elon "the Hittite." According to Genesis 36:20, 22, Timna was a Horite. Let me just read Genesis 36:20, 22.

²⁰ These are the sons of Seir [MH: there's a familiar name or term] the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. [MH: Horites are in Seir and Edom... hmm...] ²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.

So we learn from that genealogy that Timna, who was the concubine of Eliphaz, who was the son of Esau, and Eliphaz's own mother was Adah, who was the daughter of the Hittites. We learn that Timna was a Horite, one of the native population of Edom. And the Horites were a people group who lived in the hill

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country of Seir, according to Genesis 32:3, which says, “Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.” So Seir is a sub-geographical set of Edom. Seir was part of Edom. You say, “Well, who cares?” Well, we have to ask ourselves, “Where do we get this grouping elsewhere? Edom, descendants of Esau, the Horites, Seir... Where do we get all that elsewhere?” Deuteronomy 2. And if you’ve read *Unseen Realm*, that’s going to be familiar. Deuteronomy 2. Who’s the speaker here? It’s Deuteronomy, so we’re going to have Moses here. He’s leading the Israelites up the Transjordan. In verse 9:

⁹ And the LORD said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the people of Lot for a possession.’ ¹⁰ (The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. ¹¹ Like the Anakim they are also counted as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. ¹² The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession, which the LORD gave to them.) ¹³ ‘Now rise up and go over the brook Zered.’ So we went over the brook Zered. ¹⁴ And the time from our leaving Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire generation, that is, the men of war, had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them.

So they’ve gone full circle. They began at Kadesh, then they’ve ended there. And then they go across. We know the familiar story here. But the Horites are mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:12 along with the Emim and the Anakim and the Rephaim. Isn’t that interesting? If we keep reading in Deuteronomy 2, we get down to verse 20 and we read this, talking about Ammon in this case. The place Ammon.

²⁰ (It is also counted as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly lived there—but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim— ²¹ a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim; but the LORD destroyed them before the Ammonites, and they dispossessed them and settled in their place, ²² as he did for the people of Esau, who live in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites before them...

Did you catch the parallelism there? Who are the “destroyed them” of verse 21? The Zamzummim (the Rephaim). And who are the “destroyed them” in verse 22? It’s the Horites. This is consistent with Genesis 14:6. This is the five kings against the four kings—the Chedorlaomer passage—which I do not talk about in *Unseen Realm*, but we’re going to get into next week.

⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. ⁷ Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.

And, of course, we know from Amos 2:9-10 that the Amorites were tall as cedars. You see the picture emerging here. We've already gone to Numbers 13. That's the famous Nephilim/Anakim passage. Boy, just look at that. I can't help but go to Numbers 13. Verses 26-33, especially verses 28-33. There's a lot packed into this. Pay attention here, especially to verses 28 and 29.

²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

Where does that incident take place? Numbers 13:26.

²⁶ And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh.

Can you believe that? Paran. In Deuteronomy 33, Paran is where Sinai is. Numbers 13:26 actually says that the failure with the giant clans occurs in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They're right back into it. When you hit the incident in Exodus 17 with the Amalekites from verses 8-16, it's the same area. It's also where Sinai is. Can you believe this? The place where they failed because of the giant clans—this region is peppered (sprinkled) with more of these people. Now there had been a lot more of them in the past, because the descendants of Esau and Ammon and Moab had wiped out the Emim and the Zuzim and the Zamzummim. And the Horites are always mentioned with those other groups. And interestingly enough, Amalek's mom was a Horite.

So that's what we have going there. It's cosmic-geographical stuff that you wouldn't necessarily pick up on unless you're looking back and looking at some of the genealogies and some of these place names and how they conglomerate

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together. The Amalek incident occurs in the same vicinity as the later failure of Numbers 13 and 14, which is the catalyst for the 40 years' wandering.

Now Moses and Joshua here (think about this) are going to defeat the Amalekites, whose lineage goes back to the Horites, one of the peoples associated with the giant clans. We don't have the giants specifically mentioned in Exodus 17, unless you count the Horites. But in that people group there are some of these, because they're always mentioned with the other ones all the way back to Genesis 14. Look at the list! This is from verse 5 to verse 7. You have Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, and the Horites in the hill country of Seir. And the hill country is a big deal, too, because when you actually get into the conquest accounts, the places where you get the killing language (to target the Anakim) is typically in the hill country. These things overlap. And they have relationships to each other: Amorites, Amalekites, Horites. The other ones get more press because we think for some reason that they're the ones specifically associated with the Rephaim and the Anakim. They really all are—all of these sub-groups.

So it tells you that among these people groups and in these geographical areas or this wide geographical region (both south of Canaan and then in the Transjordan on the other side), this is where all this action takes place. And we have all of these common associations. And here's the surprise: Sinai is somewhere in the middle of that, because of these geographical place names. It's just... I've mentioned it before. You can't get all this stuff... It's not just one or two things that you have to somehow get it over into Midian. You have to get all of this in Midian, and I don't know how you're going to do that. There's more going on than just one or two place names. It's all of this activity and action. And Kadesh is known. Seir is known. Edom is known. Lots of the other places aren't, but there are some that are.

And Sinai is somewhere in the middle of all this stuff. Doesn't that set up the giving of the Law, the fact that God is camped out in the middle of this... It just adds another layer to the whole series of confrontations. God essentially going into a place that... He's been cleaning house there before Moses and the Israelites ever get there. He's using other descendants of Abraham to do the job. And if you've read *Unseen Realm*, you know that this is ultimately about God's victory over chaos. And the victory over chaos is intimately associated with Babel and Babylon, and not coincidentally. It's not only what happens in Genesis 11 that's connected to Babel; it's also what happens in Genesis 6 that's connected to Babel. It's a matrix of ideas. How many times have I said that? You have a matrix of ideas that are at work, running underneath the surface of these sorts of things.

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So where does God put his own place? Right in the middle of that, because he's going to do away with it. He's going to clean house. He's going to establish his beachhead right in the middle of this stuff. That's where he's going to begin to make new (to revive, to make alive again) his presence on earth. Think Eden and

kickstarting Eden (a phrase I use in *Unseen Realm* a lot). This is where he decides to do it. This is the beachhead right here. And then he's going to move with the people from Sinai into Canaan. And what was cleaned up in the Sinai region (Seir, Edom, Paran, Kadesh, Rephidim, etc.) is just going to migrate into Canaan proper. And the Israelites are supposed to do the same thing there: get rid of the vestiges of the Babel chaos. That's what you're here for. This is where we're going to start the next installment (the next phase) of salvation history—to restore Eden and unify what was lost (what was disinherited) at Babel.

All these Babylonish connections mean something, but we often don't notice them. And we'll flesh this out next time, in Part 2. I don't want to... It's just cool stuff. I don't want to run down the road too far just to set this up. But next time in Part 2, we're going to devote a full episode to this. We'll get into Genesis 14, which I did not include in *Unseen Realm*. We're going to get into that. We're going to get into these people-group names. And then we'll take a look at what happens in the conflict with Amalek. But there's a lot that's just lurking under the surface here.

TS: Mike, I need some kind of visual reference to go through all of this stuff. It starts blending together. We need to produce some kind of a visual aid or something.

MH: Of Mike and a white board? [laughter]

TS: Something. You can get lost here pretty easily. But you start talking about the hill country and all this stuff. This is where actually going to Israel... And I start visualizing some of the terrain. I know it's not the exact location, but it helps at least to visualize some of this stuff—the places you're talking about. But we need some kind of visual guide to help us with all this stuff. Because it's...

MH: Yeah, I guess we can stick a map on the episode page for now. Just say, "Hey look at that while you're listening." But you know. Yeah, I hear you.

TS: Alright, well that's good stuff. Looking forward to Part 2. Don't forget to go get your tickets at NakedBibleConference.com if you haven't done so. We hope to see you there. And with that, Mike, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.