

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 295**

**Exodus 24, Part 2**

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**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**

**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

### **Episode Summary**

In Part 1 of our study of Exodus 24 we looked at the covenant ratification ceremony (Exodus 24:1-8). This ceremony led up to the communal meal with Yahweh that is the centerpiece (vv. 9-11) of the rest of the chapter (Exodus 24:9-18). In this episode of the podcast we look at the interpretive difficulties and implications of beholding the God of Israel and celebrating his presence with a meal. How can anyone see God and live? Does this meal with God have precedent? Does it foreshadow any New Testament events and themes?

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 295: Exodus 24, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike. How are you doing this week?

**MH:** Pretty good. Can't complain.

**TS:** Yeah. Well, you're doing some traveling, aren't you?

**MH:** Yeah. I was in New York. I did the Eric Metaxas show. Lexham wanted me to go out there and do that, so we did that. And the Frequency Conference, which I believe by the time this episode airs, I will actually be in Philadelphia for that. And then I'm going to have FringePop filming right after that. Then we get ETS and SBL. So it's creeping up on us.

**TS:** Yeah. And of course, we just had our conference a couple of weeks ago. And Mike, I forgot to tell one story last week that I want to tell this week. It was pretty cool. This is more of a technology story.

**MH:** Is it a horror story? [laughs]

**TS:** No, not really.

**MH:** That's good. [laughs]

**TS:** The audio was a little low for your presentation on the livestream only, and I'm monitoring social media just to see if I get any feedback. And finally somebody said, "Turn it up a little bit." He was actually watching it from Ghana (in Africa). So how crazy is that, that you can ask, in the middle of Africa, "Hey, can you turn it up?" and then you get it turned up, in real time? [MH laughs] How crazy is that? I love that story.

**MH:** That is. It's not too long ago that that would have just been an absurd thing to even think. Wow.

**TS:** Yeah, that's just amazing. Absolutely amazing. So if you didn't catch the livestream, I can't turn it up for you more, because it's already happened [laughs], but you can at least go watch the replay. So go to Naked Bible Conference.com. Go to livestream. You can get the information there on how to do that. It was pretty fun. I'm still recovering from that.

**MH:** Maybe in our lifetimes, it'll be, "Hey, can you put some salt on this?" We'll have replicators like in Star Trek. [laughs]

**TS:** There you go. Nice.

**MH:** Yeah. That would be super-crazy.

**TS:** That would be.

**MH:** That's Elon Musk crazy right there.

**TS:** They're trying to do those space trips and whatnot. If I had the money, I'd be up there in a heartbeat. So maybe we could do a show up there, Mike. Do a podcast in space.

**MH:** [laughs] Right.

**TS:** That'd be pretty cool. From the moon looking back. That would be something.

**MH:** I'd need a lot of guinea pigs to go first before I'd even think about that. And of course, a lot of money. [laughs]

**TS:** But if were reasonable enough, would you do it? If it were safe and they had proved it? Would you do it?

**MH:** Yeah, if they could convince me it was safe, I'd do it.

**TS:** There you go. You heard it here, folks. We're going to do a podcast from space. As soon as they make it safe, we're up there. We'll have a conference up there some time.

**MH:** Put that on your calendar.

**TS:** Trust me, it's on. So if anybody who listens to the show works for NASA or Elon Musk or Jeff Bezos, contact me. Because we are interested in doing a podcast from space.

**MH:** Put us on the waiting list, yeah.

**TS:** Alright, Mike, back into the second half of Exodus 24?

**MH:** Yep. Exodus 24:9-18. That's the end of the chapter. Like I said last time, we're going to focus mostly in the episode on verses 9-11.

Let's just start by reviewing a little bit of Exodus 24. If you remember the last episode or are just glancing at the chapter right now, Exodus 24 begins with God's invitation to Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 elders to ascend the mountain in order to worship. And the areas are divided. Not everybody's allowed to occupy the same space, but at least they're there. At least there's an audience there. It's part of the covenant ratification ceremony, which you get in verses 3-8. We talked about that last time. There was a ceremony with Israel involving the use of blood—spattering blood on the people. Or maybe that means on the 12 pillars. And we talked about the meaning of that. It sealed the covenant between God and Israel, and it prepared the people for God's presence—to celebrate his presence. And it also, in some way, was part of an ordination of them collectively as the kingdom of priests. So that's how the chapter opens. And after the sacrifices occur... And some of them are peace offerings, which involved (in Leviticus anyway)... We don't have Leviticus yet. We don't have the sacrificial system laid out. But when we do, we can look back at the peace offerings. And part of the procedure there was to eat part of the sacrifice. So it was like a communal meal. So you've got that happening. And then you hit verses 9-11. Let me just read 9 through the rest of the chapter as we begin here.

**<sup>9</sup>Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, <sup>10</sup>and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. <sup>11</sup>And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.**

**<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment,**

which I have written for their instruction.”<sup>13</sup> So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God.<sup>14</sup> And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them.”

<sup>15</sup> Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.<sup>16</sup> The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.<sup>17</sup> Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.<sup>18</sup> Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

That’s the rest of Exodus 24. So we’re going to focus on the meal. They saw the God of Israel and they had a meal there. Now let’s just start with the general issue of seeing Yahweh. Now Exodus 33:20... Let me read that to you:

<sup>20</sup> But,” he said, “you cannot see my face [MH: the Hebrew is *panim* there], for man shall not see me and live.”

This is God speaking to Moses. When Moses asks if he can see God, that’s God’s answer. So Exodus 33:20 seems to suggest that what we read in Exodus 24:9-11 couldn’t happen. So we have an issue that’s been talked about numerous, numerous times in scholarship. And of course, anybody’s who’s reading the passage and is thinking about it and discussing it with friends, you’re going to run across this seeming contradiction.

Now I put something in the protected folder. This is Bernard Robinson’s article, “The Theophany and Meal of Exodus 24.” It’s from the *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* from 2011. Now Robinson is discussing this passage and he gives examples of commentators who are so startled by the scene, because of Exodus 33. When they read 24:9-11, it’s like, “How in the world can that even happen? That just doesn’t work.” Some commentators are so startled by that that they actually recommend changing the text under the presumption that what’s in traditional text (the Masoretic Text) must be the result of textual variants found elsewhere. Like it couldn’t really have originally said that, because that just can’t happen. Now other scholars (and if you had access to journals, you would find these—Nicholson has three articles on this chapter), they don’t buy that. They refute this idea. “Look, the text says what it says. There’s no need to say that it originally said something else, just to get us out of this problem. So we’re not going to change the text.” In fairness, you *can* tell that the LXX translator seemed a little uncomfortable with the idea of seeing Yahweh because of the way he

translates this. Now I'm going to read a little bit from Carpenter's commentary here:

10:00

The lxx translator found it too bold and says [MH: instead of, "They saw the God of Israel," here's what the Septuagint says:] "they saw the place, where he stood (there) the God of Israel" (καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον, οὗ εἰστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ), and proceeds to describe the appearance of the place under his [MH: God's] feet. But the mt has God as the object of ["seeing"] ἵδω, even though it refers to his feet. The implication is clear: They could not and did not look on God himself, that is, his face. His throne floor is described, but he is not. No human could look at his face and live (Exod 33:20). Theophanies were traumatic and dangerous to those who experienced them (cf. Gen 16:7–13; 28:16–17; 32:24–30; Judg 6:22–23; 13:19–23, etc.) Other commentators, however, believe that these privileged persons saw God in his glory, but, exceptionally, lived to tell about it—they did not die.

Now what Carpenter's saying here is that even in antiquity, you could tell they (the Septuagint translator) was uncomfortable about this notion of seeing God. And so that was translated in such a way where they just see the spot where God was and then they go on. They look at his feet, and so on and so forth. The pushback by Carpenter and others is, "Look, even if you take the MT for what it is, they saw the God of Israel. It doesn't specifically say that they saw his *panim* (his face). There's another way you can take "face"... And I often get this question at conferences and I think we've done it in a Q&A as well. I think the point is that you can't see the direct presence of God unveiled, like his direct presence. I would take *panim* to refer to the unveiled presence (because then you would die). And the reason I do that and don't just isolate it to his face is because of passages like Genesis 18, where God shows up as a man and the angel who has conversations. And we're not told that the angel has turned another way or the person's got his face to the ground or something like that. There are people who have conversations with the Angel of the Lord or the Captain of the Lord's host (in Joshua 5). It doesn't say they weren't looking at him. It doesn't say they couldn't see his face. It doesn't say any of that. So I think we have to assume, when we're *not* told that, that they're having a conversation with a figure they believe is a man, but more than a man. And that's okay. They're allowed to do that.

So that's why I take the prohibition of Exodus 33, that "...no man can look upon my *panim* and live." I think that's really the point: the unveiled, unfiltered presence of God—the glory itself. It's hard to even know how to talk about it. But there's a way that if you looked upon God, you would die, and there are ways that you can look at God and not die. That much is clear. It's just how to parse all that.

Now it's interesting, when God honors Moses' request, Moses is allowed to see

his back parts. In that case, he doesn't see the face. But we're not actually told... There's anthropomorphic language used in Exodus 33 and Exodus 34. So you could argue, "Isn't that the Angel? Why can't they talk face to face if it's the Angel?" It never says that. It does use anthropomorphic language. But I think that what Moses is allowed to gaze upon *is* in human form and is not the unveiled presence (the unveiled glory) of God. So that's why I take that interpretive trajectory as opposed to, "Well, the issue is just the face." So I'm going to disagree a little bit with Carpenter. But the general idea is the same. I don't think we need to change the Masoretic Text. Because Exodus 24 just says they saw the God of Israel and then it zeroes in on the feet. It doesn't contradict. It doesn't say they saw the *panim*. So this passage can work with the other passages in at least two possible ways: the face or the unveiled presence.

So I think it's an overreaction on the part of whoever these commentators happen to be: "We need to change the text." I think that's a little odd. I also think it's an overreaction on the part of the Septuagint translator. It's easy to judge him because he's dead. But I'll say that. I think it is an overreaction.

Robinson in his article cites the famous Jewish commentator Humberto Cassuto for a rebuttal to the timid Septuagint translator. I thought this was kind of interesting. Robinson writes this:

Cassuto, however, points out that while the expression in 24,11 is uncommonly corporeal in talking in the active voice about seeing God, the use of the verb *ra'ah* ראה "to see" in the passive (God/YHWH, or his glory, appeared: e.g. Exod 16,7; 24,17) is commonplace.

Let me just stop there. Cassuto points out that, "Yeah, it's pretty unusual to have the active of the verb *ra'ah* (to see) in the active voice and the direct object be God. That's unusual. But he said it's not unusual to have the passive and say that God was seen or God appeared. That's pretty common. So Cassuto is pushing back here and saying, "I don't know why the Septuagint translator was so timid here. Maybe the Septuagint translator didn't realize that this same verb used passively of God is pretty common. But he doesn't need to freak out." So it's Cassuto's little pushback to the Septuagint guy. Now back to the Robinson quote about Cassuto and his work.

This fact causes one perhaps to wonder whether there can be much difference between saying that someone sees God and saying that God appears to, or is seen by, someone...

Is there really any difference? Is that a distinction, not a difference?

Talk of seeing God is a bold usage but it needs no emending nor explaining away, despite the existence of texts which express the view that it is impossible, or nigh impossible, to see God without dying.

Then Robinson has a footnote at the end of that portion that says this. His examples are of course Exodus 33:20 (the thing about dying). But the footnote adds:

In Genesis 16:13, Hagar marvels that she has been able to see God and live; in Genesis 32:30 [Masoretic Text verse 31] Jacob says with amazement, “I have seen ‘elohim אלהים face to face and my life is preserved”; in Judges 6:23, after Gideon has seen the angel of YHWH, YHWH has to reassure him that he will not die; and in Judges 13:22 Manoah, after seeing the angel of YHWH, says, “We shall surely die for we have seen אלהים [Elohim].” (His wife reassures him, v. 23, that if YHWH had meant to kill them he would not have accepted offerings from their hands.)

Or they’d already be dead, not having this conversation. So the footnote, I think, is well-taken (that there are exceptions to this). And the way I parse that is this idea of the unveiled presence—that is what’s going to fry you, not God in human form. Because Jacob wrestles with the Angel, who is Elohim. Abraham has a meal with Yahweh as a man. There’s no hint in these passages that they’re either having a wrestling match or serving the meal and they’re not looking at the face. The text never says that. It would be... If we’re supposed to think that, the writer would put it in. Otherwise, it’s really an abnormal thought.

Now let’s go back to verse 9-11. That’s our general consideration of the whole topic of seeing God. So when we actually go back to the verses, it says very plainly, “They saw the God of Israel,” and seven verses later, God tells Moses to “come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone.” So an obvious question surfaces. We had this last time as well. Where is God when they see him? Now we have to assume either that... Moses is still on the mountain with the group, back in the beginning of Exodus 24. So we have to either assume that and then they... Moses goes up further. There might be a problem with that. We’ll hit on it in a minute or so. We might also assume that they went down the mountain and then that’s where Moses tells everybody, “Hey, you wait here. I’ve got to go back up and get the tablets.” Maybe that happened. We have to make some assumptions here, just like we did earlier in Part 1, with Exodus 24:1-2, where God says, “Hey, come up here.” And if you go back to Exodus 20, Moses (in theory) was already up there. So somewhere, Moses has a descent and then he has to go back up. That’s possible. We’re just not told every detail. And the text doesn’t intend to tell us every detail. “He turned right. He looked over here. He took this many steps.” There are lots of details we don’t get. So we don’t need to obsess about that.



Anyway, this is the instruction. And we have to wonder, “Okay, where’s Moses? Where’s God when they see him? What is actually happening here? Where is God’s location?” Now Robinson goes through a number of proposals offered in scholarly literature. And the three most interesting are these. I’m going to give you the three that I find worth mentioning here. So the first one... This is my summary here.

1. The first option is that there are scholars who say God’s in heaven, with his feet touching the sky firmament (the dome over the earth in Israelite cosmology) that the Israelites can see and, in part, see through. This idea is defended by noting the phrase “like heaven for clearness.” Let me read you the text:

**<sup>9</sup> Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, <sup>10</sup> and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.**

That’s verses 9 and 10. So one school of thought is that God is in heaven somewhere in the stratosphere (to use modern terminology). And his feet are resting on this dome, that that’s what they see. And the dome is made of sapphire stone, which is lapis lazuli. And the term that’s used here in Exodus 24 is the same Hebrew term and description drawn from Ezekiel 1:26 (and Ezekiel 10:1). Ezekiel 1:26 is the throne with the cherubim—the cherubim throne. Part of that description is:

**Above the expanse, over their heads [the cherubim’s heads], there was the likeness of a throne in appearance like sapphire and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.**

So there’s some sort of platform or thing. And if you go back to our episode on Ezekiel 1 in the Ezekiel series, I will talk about how the language there is astronomical. That’s probably the point—the four cardinal points of the zodiac. So this would be the dome. That would be the platform. So you may have a connection there because Ezekiel has astronomical meaning—a much bigger picture, if you’ll pardon the pun there. And the same language is used here in Exodus 24. You could also look at Isaiah 66:1.

**Thus says the Lord:**

**“Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool;  
what is the house that you would build for me,  
and what is the place of my rest?**

Now Robinson adds a note of interest here, along with this first view:



Lapis lazuli is a rock of varying composition, sometimes opaque, sometimes translucent; probably the latter is envisaged here and *la-tahor* (“clearness”) לטהר means that the pavement was so bright that it dazzled the seventy-four, making their sight of the Deity even more indirect.

You can take that for what it's worth. But the first option is, we ask, “Where is God in the scene?” He’s in heaven and his feet are on the firmament and they look up and they can see through it and they see the feet of God.” That’s the view, that this is what they’re actually looking at when it says, “they saw the God of Israel.”

2. The second option is kind of similar a little bit, at least conceptually. This is the idea that God is in heaven, and the summit of the mountain reaches up into heaven. This has God closer than the first view. Because if it’s the firmament, God’s way, way up there. So this has God closer than in the first view. In this regard, Robinson writes:

Mesopotamian ziggurats were said to rest on the earth while their summit reached up to heaven; their upper story contained a sanctuary, sometimes paved with lapis lazuli, that served as a habitation for gods. Sacrificial meals with a small number of human participants seemingly took place there, at least at New Year.”

He’s talking about Babylonian stuff. But a lot of scholars don’t opt for this. Because if this is the case, the command in Exodus 24:12 doesn’t make much sense.

**<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.”**

If the mountain’s supposed to be at the very top, reaching into the heavens, literally, well Moses has a long trip to make. Is this really what’s going on? And how are we to exaggerate the language so that we can get the mountain to be like a ziggurat and actually up into the heavens? So for this reason, there are fewer people that take this. But you get the representation because of the Mesopotamian parallel. And more people who would take the first one, just because of the “for clearness” language and the language of Ezekiel.

3. The third option is that YHWH has come to earth and the humans in the passage are in proximity to him to some extent, but they see (or at least look at) only his feet. And honestly that would be similar to Ezekiel 1, as well, because you could argue the prophet is there by the river Chebar. Maybe it’s a vision. Maybe it’s something that descends, because the throne chariot “descends to earth” and sets down. So the third view is in the realm of possibility.

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All three of these are worth consideration in my view, for different reasons. The text doesn't decisively rule out any of them. I think some of them are more likely than others. But the text doesn't kill any of them immediately. The first option is interesting because of the wording, as we mentioned: "like the working of sapphire stones." But this is more literal. Just to make it more literal, let me just go back to verse 10: There was under his feet as it were a pavement (something like the working of sapphire tiling) and like the substance of the heavens for clearness. That's a little more literal. "Substance of the heavens"—you actually get this phrase. "Substance of the heavens" may suggest the firmament, that the firmament is actually made of something in Israelite cosmology. However, the "glory" is said to be *on* the mountain later, not above the firmament. So again, you have problems here. What are we going to do with that?

So in verses 16-17, we get the glory on the mountain and not on the firmament. I like the firmament view. I think you can tell, but there is this point of disconnection. So who knows? Moses also has to enter the cloud to meet with God later on the chapter. Well, how are you going to do that? Does Moses go through the firmament? What's going on here? So as much as I like this and as much as some of the phrasing sort of suggests it, there are problems with it that make me a little bit hesitant. I kind of like it, but I'm not saying it's exactly workable, either.

On the other side, can't we just take the cloud there not as the clouds like in the heavens? Can we just take the cloud as a cloud that appears on earth? Because elsewhere that happens. When Moses meets with God in the cloud, the cloud descends over the holy of holies or something like that. Maybe you've got something like that happening here, early, even before we get the tabernacle. So the cloud sort of comes with Yahweh to veil the glory of Yahweh as Israel moves about its day-to-day work, and of course, on the way to the Promised Land. Maybe that's what we have going on here.

You know, the honest answer is, "They're all three sort of workable, but also not workable." All three have problems. In any event, all we can know for sure is that in Exodus 24:9-11, God is seen as a man. He has feet, okay. He's seen as a man from whatever vantage point we have. Take the view that you like but realize that all of them have some obstacles to overcome. I see no reason that the third view (that God has actually come to earth) can't be given equal weight. Scholars, in my view, are too married to JEDP thinking to allow for #3. This is the resistance you get to the third one, that you have God actually come to earth as a man. You'll see a lot of discussion in scholarly literature about anti-anthropomorphism in later Hebrew literature, like P (of JEDP). That's a chronological set of documents in that theory. So they say, "We can't have that. P doesn't like anthropomorphisms and neither does E. And E sounds like P here. And blah blah blah." So they rule out the anthropomorphic idea just because they're married to the theory. Well, I'm not married to the theory. And I think in the ancient Near Eastern world, you get plenty of anthropomorphic language

used of deity, so I don't really know what the problem is, other than the theory. The theory seems to be what's getting in the way. So Robinson comments here. And there's a little slight pushback here to the JEDP in his quote. He says:

Why does the text have "they saw the God of Israel" rather than "they saw YHWH"? If we are to move beyond saying that the phrase shows the hand of E, or more likely P... How are we to read the phrase? Cassuto thinks the sentence is worded with care in order to minimise anthropomorphism:

*It is not stated, "And they saw YHWH", using the name that belongs specifically and exclusively to the Lord All-glorious Himself, but only "and they saw the God ("Elohim) of Israel", employing the generic appellation that denotes any Divine phenomenon.*

[Cassuto] notes that in Isaiah 6, the use of the Tetragrammaton is avoided... [MH: If you read Isaiah 6, you don't see Yahweh; you see Adonai. So Cassuto notes this to try to prop up this idea.] Although the Tetragrammaton [MH: the divine name] is placed on the lips of the seraphs... [MH: In Isaiah 6. They don't have any trouble saying it. And the writer doesn't have any trouble putting it in there, on the lips of the seraphs.] in v. 3 and on the prophet's lips in v.5, which Cassuto omits to mention [MH: Cassuto doesn't mention that. He either misses it or forgets it or doesn't want to bring it up [laughs] because it messes with his own idea.], I think he may be right to think that the avoidance of the Tetragrammaton in our present verse [here in Exodus 24] may well have the sort of theological significance that he posits. What the human visitors see is YHWH but the text is coy about spelling this out too explicitly.

30:00

So he's like, "Well, maybe he's kind of right, but does it really matter? Is it a distinction without a difference?"

Now I think the resistance to anthropomorphism, as I alluded to earlier, just because you're married to the JEDP theory is a classic instance of filtering the text through a presumed religious evolution. I wrote an SBL regional paper on this—on anthropomorphisms in P. They're not supposed to be there, but guess what? They are. They are, in fact, there in literature everyone assigns to P. If you're married to JEDP, everybody agrees that the stuff I use in my paper is P. But yet, lo and behold, there are anthropomorphisms. If you're interested in that (I'm not going to rabbit trail here on it), you can get the Kindle version of that paper on Amazon. It's one of those papers I published in Kindle form a long time ago. But I just think this is a classic instance of filtering the Scriptures through a theory. So I don't see any reason why we can't read Exodus 24 as God coming to earth, even though I like the firmament view because of the language, it has problems. The second view I think is the least likely. And in the third view, God actually has come to earth as a man. That's well on the table. I just don't see any

obstacle to that. I would also say that if you're going to try to deny that it's actually Yahweh come to earth because it's late, and then you're going to argue something against it because of this presumed evolution (this presumed chronology), it would also be kind of odd because the description of what they see (the feet on the lapis lazuli) has a parallel in the Baal Epic that everybody knows. It's in the description of Baal's house. And Ugaritic literature is not late. It's early. It's well before E and P. So that would make it even more odd. Exodus 24:10 says:

**<sup>10</sup> and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.**

Baal's house is built of bricks and it's the same term (*lbnt*) as you get in the word for pavement in Exodus 24. It's also built of sapphire stones (lapis lazuli). This is what Baal's house is built out of—the same terminology here. El, of course, also holds banquets in his house. So why... You get this anthropomorphic language in early literature (Ugaritic is early). So why can't we see it in Israelite stuff? "Well, because of the theory. The theory says we shouldn't." Well, sorry, I don't really care about the theory. The Baal Cycle is much older than where the critics want to put E and P, and I think we need to think better about this. So for me, God coming to earth in Exodus 24 is actually on the table.

Now one interesting difference (since we just rabbit-trailed to Baal stuff a little bit) between the Ugaritic stuff and that of the Hebrew Bible in these divine banquets (these scenes at Baal's house or El's house or whatever) is that in the divine banquets in the Ugaritic text, there are no human participants ever. Humans do not belong in the presence of the gods at all. But in the Hebrew Bible, they do. I think that's a telling contrast between the literature. So we talk a lot about comparison. Sometimes the contrasts are pretty significant, and I say that one is really significant.

Now in verse 11, we get the sentence, "They beheld God and they ate and they drank." All the verbs here are third person plural. And it takes us into the meal. Now we don't have God eating. The nearest antecedent here would be the people—the chief men of the people of Israel. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, the seventy elders—they're the ones who are eating and drinking. And that's indicated by the plural verbs. It's not God. They're just looking at God, and then they eat and drink. They have a meal in God's presence, but God isn't said to be grabbing a fork and chomping down himself. That's the only point we're trying to make with that particular observation.

Now let's talk about the meal a little bit. You get other passages, though, that argue pretty strongly for a real meal that God *does* participate in. That's Genesis 18. That's the most obvious example. When you read Genesis 18... You're familiar with this story. Yahweh and two angels show up. They look like three

men. They show up where Abraham is, and they're going to have a meal. In Genesis 18:8, it says:

**<sup>8</sup>Then [Abraham] took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.**

35:00

Now some people try to argue that the one standing by is Yahweh. That's just really a misreading. "He stood by them..." The nearest antecedent (this is grammar) is Abraham. It's very obvious. "...and they ate." So there are passages where this does happen, where God does participate. You get a few sacrificial references that seem to have God enjoying the smell of the sacrifice and whatnot. So you get some of that language, too. But Genesis 18 is probably the strongest precedent for God participating in a meal directly. But in Exodus 24, to be consistent, to be fair here, you don't actually get that language. It's important to note that the meal itself, rather than fixate on the question, "Is God grabbing a fork or not?" (this is the kind of thing that scholars like to fixate on), I would suggest that it's more important to note that this meal is not what certifies the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. That has already been done via the blood ceremony (verses 3 and 8). The meal is a celebration of God's presence. We talked about that in the last episode—peace offerings and whatnot—when we talked about Amy Peeler's work. Now Robinson writes this, in conjunction with what we're talking about:

It is by no means clear that what happens in vv. 9-11 is a covenant-making ceremony. Meals sealing a covenant are, it is true, narrated in Gen 26,26-30 and 31,43-50, but a reading of vv. 9-11 as speaking of a covenant-making ceremony, based as it largely is on the phrase "they ate and drank", is very vulnerable to criticism...

And then in his article he feels free to criticize it. And he does. And then he quotes Nicholson here:

That a meal eaten in the presence of God was not ipso facto a covenant meal may be seen from a glance at the narrative in Exodus 18:1-12...The passage seems to describe nothing more than an act of worship of which the eating of a meal "before God" was part and a means of rejoicing in the presence of God...

The activity of eating and drinking before God is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament in contexts which cannot be understood in terms of covenant ratification (e.g. Exod. 32:6; Deut. 12:7; 14:26; 27:7; 1 Chron. 29:22).

Had the tradition spoken of YHWH as himself eating with Moses and the others, the case would have been different, for we could then have readily taken it as

representing the Deity as calling his human visitors into a covenantal bond with himself.

That's the end of the Robinson quote. But of course, it doesn't say that. The covenant has already been ratified. The blood sprinkled or spattered on the people or on the 12 pillars. The meal is a celebration of something that's already taken place.

Now last note on Exodus 24:13-14. Let's just read that passage again.

**<sup>13</sup> So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. <sup>14</sup> And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them."**

Now we have to presume Moses left the mountain after the theophany meal. Now he's going to go back up. This time he takes Joshua with him. Joshua's presence will be important in terms of the leadership transition and consistency with the divine encounter motif common to spokespeople for God—what we would think of as prophets. That's all a prophet is: a spokesperson for God. I spent a whole chapter on this in *Unseen Realm*. This is chapter 27: "Standing in the Counsel" (this idea). So I'm going to quote a little bit from *Unseen Realm* here because Joshua is validated as leader, because he does have divine encounter. That's what marks a prophet: someone who speaks for God. There's a divine encounter motif that goes from Adam all the way up to the New Testament—to Jesus, to the apostles, and honestly, in some respects, to us as believers because we have the Spirit. So this is a running motif throughout the entirety of Scripture. So with respect to Joshua, here's a little bit of what I wrote in *Unseen Realm*:

Divine encounter was also what initially validated Joshua as a prophet. In Exodus 24:13, just [after] the description of how Moses and the elders of Israel shared a meal with Yahweh on Sinai, we read, "So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God" (ESV). The verse implies that Joshua went along with Moses to see God. [MH: He goes somewhere. He sees something.] Exodus 33:9–11 makes Joshua's contact with Yahweh a bit clearer.

40:00

So if we read Exodus 33 (a little bit later), this is what we encounter:

**<sup>9</sup> When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. <sup>10</sup> And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. <sup>11</sup> Thus the LORD used**

**to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.**

So apparently [laughs], the implication is that in some cases, Joshua was there too. That's kind of interesting. And this is going to help validate Joshua's leadership position, because Joshua goes with Moses up into the mountain. We're not told exactly where. Did he go all the way with Moses? We're not told the details. But he's there. He's going to hear the voice. He's going to see something happen. Then we get this reference in Exodus 33. In Deuteronomy 31:14-23, Yahweh specifically commands Moses to bring Joshua to the tent of meeting, where God himself commissioned Joshua to replace Moses. So this is the beginning of singling Joshua out—marking him as significant.

One last note about the thematic continuity of what we'll loosely call "divine banquets," because that's what's happening here with Exodus 24:9-11. And honestly, this would take us an entire episode to unpack. But I'm just going to trace the thought. I'm just going to sketch this. Robinson's comments are a good place to start:

Although the scene in vv. 9-11 is not expressly set in the heavenly sanctuary [MH: we don't really know what it looks like here] (else we should perhaps find some reference to seraphim, as in Isaiah, or cherubim or living creatures, as in Ezekiel), there are clear signs here of Temple imagery which serve to point forward to the construction of the Tabernacle. We have noted evidence for lapis lazuli being used in the construction of temples in the ancient Near East [MH: Robinson does that in his article on Baal's house—he gives that reference], and that in Israel a cultic theophany was part of Temple life. [MH: God does show up at the tabernacle.] Again, feasting was associated not just with pagan temples (we have remarked earlier on Ugaritic evidence for this) but also with the Jerusalem Temple.

Do we realize this? Eating and drinking and feasting is associated with the Temple and the tabernacle. So he ferrets out a few passages here.

Eating and drinking in the Temple with joy before YHWH is prescribed in Deuteronomy (12:4-7; 12:1-7, 15-18)... Feasting within the Temple is probably envisaged by Psalms 36:8 [MT 9],

**Psalms 36:8**

**They feast on the abundance of your house and you give them drink from the river of your delights.**



That may not be just metaphorical, because the temple did have a water source and they could have food there. Because they did that back in Deuteronomy with the tabernacle.

“they are filled with the rich plenty [דָּשֵׁן] of thy house” and 65:4 [MT 5], “we shall be sated with the goodness [טוֹב] of thy house.”

There are references like this that could be taken as food based upon what happens earlier in Deuteronomy in relationship to the tabernacle. So Robinson is suggesting here that some parts of this scene seem to foreshadow (or at least parallel) temple talk and we need to pay attention to that.

45:00 It is also significant that Exodus 24 has earlier connections (Genesis 18) with this idea of God sharing a meal with his people. You can even go back to Genesis—to Eden—for that. Eden, of course, is the garden of sustenance. There’s no reason to think that God didn’t show up at mealtime. “I’ll let Adam and Eve have a meal now. I don’t want to bother them.” No, they’re in God’s house. They’re in his abode. And in his abode (his house), which is Eden, there’s abundance. There’s enough to eat. There’s water. It’s a paradise.

So you take this sort of connection between eating and drinking and having enough and being satisfied and the abundance there of the things that you need for life, that’s in God’s house in Genesis. So is it really unusual that we see feasting elsewhere—in Genesis 18 and Exodus 24 and Deuteronomy 12? Is this unusual? And the answer is, “I guess not.” It’s kind of a continuing idea.

Also, the same language used of Passover in conjunction with the temple... Passover is a communal meal in Deuteronomy 16:5-7. It’s not in Exodus 12. We’ve talked about this before with differences about the Passover between Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16. In Deuteronomy 16, it’s a communal meal with the Lord at the place where he has put his name (i.e., the temple). That’s significant given the strong possibility... Now here’s the connection that you’ve probably been waiting for. The connection of this language (communal meal with Passover) is significant given the strong possibility that the Last Supper was a Passover meal.

Now, I put in the folder two articles. This is the protected folder. You get access to the protected folder if you subscribe to the Miqlat newsletter. The articles are Robin Routledge, “Passover and Last Supper.” That’s from the Tyndale Bulletin (2002). And Joel Marcus, “Passover and Last Supper Revisited.” That’s in New Testament Studies (2013). So it’s more recent. Both of these articles establish connections between Passover and the Last Supper. And if you take those connections and insert them or give them their place in this idea of a communal meal with Exodus 24 and Deuteronomy and Genesis... You get the idea. We have connections between Exodus 24 and the temple and the New Covenant,

and of course, the Lord's Supper, which commemorates the New Covenant work of Jesus. The Lord's Supper language occurs in other places, like the road to Emmaus. You get Lord's Supper language there in that episode. The culmination of this motif for the New Testament would be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It's juxtaposed with the devouring of God's enemies and the Day of the Lord—Armageddon—and the subsequent return to Eden. Eden returns to earth. Then we have a global Eden.

In Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism, the great eschatological feast included a meal of Leviathan. [laughs] Guess what's on the menu? It's Leviathan! In other words, the devouring of chaos. It's metaphorical language for the consumption, the devouring, the end of chaos. Hence in Revelation 21:3 "there was no more sea" (and therefore there's no more Leviathan, either). Chaos is done. The point of Revelation 21:3 isn't, "I guess there's no more saltwater in the new earth." No. We're not blind literalists. We appreciate the metaphor for what the metaphor means throughout the course of the Old Testament. Leviathan is a chaos metaphor—one of the most frequent—and so is the sea, because those two things are connected. Leviathan lives in the sea. That's also why the underworld is described in the same ways. It's a chaos metaphor. So when John in Revelation says, "There ain't no more sea," it means, "There's no more chaos." Chaos is anti-Eden. It is the term that scholars would use to describe everything and anything that runs contrary to the way God wants things. There's no more of that when you get to Revelation 21 and 22.

So this communal meal idea is actually part of that picture, too. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is juxtaposed in conjunction with the Day of the Lord and the descent of the Temple—all this stuff. It's all part of the same matrix of ideas. And I just think it's kind of interesting that here you go with Exodus 24. What are they doing? They're ratifying the covenant (the Law). And they do this with Passover. They celebrate God's presence and you connect that to the Lord's Supper and to some of these other things. It makes sense. Why? Because what God wants is the restoration of his family. Families eat together at home. It's not complicated. It's profound, but it's not complicated. And Exodus 24 is part of that.

50:00 So the point is that Exodus 24:9-11 has a history and it is a type. This is typology. A type is a nonverbal prophecy—an event that foreshadows something yet to come. In this case, it foreshadows various things to come that the New Testament will of course unpack and unfold in its description of the eschatological Day of the Lord and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

**TS:** Which brings us to our assignment for next week's podcast. Do you know what that is?

**MH:** Yeah, we're going to spend a whole episode on the Ark of the Covenant (so part of Exodus 25).

**TS:** Right. So their homework assignment is...

**MH:** Read the section on the Ark of the Covenant.

**TS:** Watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

**MH:** [laughs] See, you would go to the more entertaining one. [laughs]

**TS:** We've got the face-melting Scripture part coming up, right?

**MH:** Right, right. You can learn a lot of good biblical theology from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

**TS:** You've got face-melting Scripture coming up... I mean. The homework assignment is for everybody to watch it.

**MH:** I'll wear my jacket. I'll get into the spirit of it.

**TS:** *Please* tell me you're going to wear your jacket while we record that episode. At least put it on, okay?

**MH:** Okay, we'll do it.

**TS:** Alright, awesome. [laughs] We'll be looking forward to that.

**MH:** You could play the music in the background, too. [laughs]

**TS:** I want Drenna to take a picture of you with the jacket on while you're recording the podcast, and we'll put it out there on social media. It'll be perfect.

**MH:** Okay. [laughter]

**TS:** We appreciate it. With that, I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.