

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 308

Exodus 32

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Episode Summary

Exodus 32 details the tragic failure of Israel's apostasy with the golden calf. The story is well known, mostly for its portrayal in the movie *The Ten Commandments*. The Israelites are in a panic. Moses has been gone forty days with no hint that he'll return. In tandem with Moses' absence, God has not manifested his presence over the same time period. The people are without evidence that God is still with them, they have no leader, they cannot return to Egypt, and they have no idea where they are supposed to go. They demand Aaron give them a god to fill these voids, a yearning that leads to disaster. This episode of the podcast discusses these elements and other less obvious issues in the passage, including whether the calf was thought to represent Yahweh in Israelite religion.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 308: Exodus 32. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. I'm used to you being on my left side, and now you're on my right side, on my right coast.

MH: Yeah, no more left coast. We are in Florida. For sure.

TS: Yeah. How is it? Are you in shorts?

MH: [laughs] No, it's actually in the 40s here. I think that's one of the things that surprised the kids, that it can get cold here. I actually wore gloves one day. But hey, it's January. It'll get warmer. I keep telling them that. "Oh, it'll get hot."

TS: Now can you count how many pairs of shorts you own on one hand?

MH: Yes, I can.

TS: Okay, so you're going to have update your wardrobe for the summer.

MH: [laughs] Yeah. But that'll be a thrill.

TS: So how was the trip? Now you've been there for a week or so. Briefly let us know how the drive was, crossing America. Did anybody kill each other? Did the dogs survive? What happened?

MH: Well, nobody killed each other. Nobody got angry. Everybody got tired, honestly, except for me. I like long drives. But nobody likes them as much as I do, is what it really comes down to. So I think it was a little bit tougher on everybody than I thought it would be. Because I'm just into that sort of thing. But altogether, it was about 60 hours in the car. And then, of course, you're stopping to take the dogs on potty breaks. The dogs were funny. For the first two days, they wouldn't go. [laughs] So that's like, "What's up with them? Do we have to stop every hour?" So they were a little out of sorts. But a few days in, they were fine. They were normal. They adjusted. But I think everybody's glad it's over. Like I said, 60 hours in the car. Five of the 12 days were eight hours in the car (actually more like 10 or 11 hours) and the other ones were broken up. So we stopped at a few places: the Grand Canyon, Roswell... We blew a day in Roswell because we have friends there. We did some touristy things—White Sands, that sort of thing. So we tried to do little touristy things here and there. We went to Tombstone, which is a really kitschy, kind of cheesy Wild West thing. But it was fun. So it broke up the days, at least most of the days. But we're definitely glad to be here. I'm glad it's over.

TS: What did y'all listen to on the radio? Did you list to audio books? Podcasts? Radio?

MH: You know, I had planned to listen to audio books. But I drove with Calvin almost the entire thing, and Calvin liked my podcasts. So we listened to about 15 episodes of Monster Talk and the Saucer Life (which is one about UFOs). We listened to 20 or 25 episodes of podcasts, which were all at least an hour. And I threw in some audio book stuff while he was playing games or something on his handheld. So I was a little surprised by that. But he would've been bored a lot more quickly had he listened to the audio books I had picked out. [laughs] But he was good. He was into the content of the other shows.

TS: And the dogs? How did they do?

MH: They did pretty well. We had Mori in our car, and all he did was sleep. But he was entirely predictable. Norman had to sit on the lap of whoever was driving. So when I drove for Drenna (when we switched cars)... But he always does that. He wants to sit on your lap and then he'll go to sleep. If he's not on your lap, he'll sit there and whine the whole time. So he's just... Drenna's created a monster. [laughs] He's just so... [laughs] And then Atticus, the older one, went with my daughter and her husband. They have a Jeep with a top. It's not open or anything like that. And he did fine. We were a little concerned that he would be nervous during the whole trip, but he was calm. So that was a pleasant surprise.

TS: So what's the general consensus of you liking Jacksonville so far? Back in the city. Things are down the street. To go to the grocery store, you don't have to drive through the woods.

MH: Oh yeah. I was geeking out at Walmart the first day, because it's like, "Wow, in five minutes I'm here at this place where everything that I would want to buy is in one location." Which sounds kind of dumb, but where we lived, it was like the closest town was 10 minutes and you could get some things there. But for a lot of things, you'd have to drive 30-35 minutes to get them. But where we live now, the area is great. Everything we would possibly use (even animal/pet hospitals and car dealerships, the whole bit) is 10 minutes or less. Everything. So that's new. So everybody's like, "Wow, this is awesome!" We're close to everything. Twenty minutes to the airport. It used to take me literally a day to fly anywhere, unless it was on the West Coast (then it was half a day) because I was an hour and a half from Seattle. But this is so much more reasonable.

TS: Yeah, but the trade-off there is that now you're going to have traffic and there are people everywhere.

MH: Yeah, but it moves. We're five miles from everything. And, okay, that might take 10 minutes or so with the traffic. There's a lot of it, but it moves. Granted, there could be some kind of problem, and then you have to sit there. But that's what GPS is for. It'll take you another route. You can get to anywhere in three or four different ways, because of all the connecting highways. It's nice.

TS: And you're about 10 minutes from the beach?

MH: Yep. I'm not a beach person. I know everybody's shocked to hear that. But we can get to the beach in 10 minutes.

TS: If I said the over/under of you going to the beach this year is 10, would you take the under or the over?

MH: Oh, yeah. Oh, definitely the under.

TS: Oh, under? Wow. Ten.

MH: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

MH: I'll be lucky to go there at all. [laughter] Five would be more of an edgy bet. [laughs]

TS: Alright. We'll have to check in at the end of the year and see if you made that under.

MH: Yeah, well, I'm pretty confident. [laughs] Everybody else will probably do it. But me, not so much.

TS: Well, Mike, you know we pre-recorded the last couple of ones because you were traveling. So it's almost like we have to re-learn how to do this. Although it's been five years every week. After that little break, I'm like...

MH: "What is it we're doing here?" [laughs]

TS: "What does this button do? Is this mic on? Check, check."

MH: Yeah, right.

TS: But we're on Exodus 32.

MH: Speaking of long journeys [laughs], we are still in Exodus.

TS: Your exodus from Washington state into the...

MH: Yeah, I see what you did there. It's real clever. Yeah, Exodus 32. And next time, we'll dip back into 32 and do 33. I know 34 will probably get its own episode. But once you hit 35, a lot of it is repetitious, so I don't know yet. I'll have to just read through it and see what we'll do with the last five chapters. But we're getting close to being out of the book, at any rate. For this episode, though, the focus is kind of obvious, and that is the golden calf episode. That's what Exodus 32 is about. So to jump in here, I'm going to read maybe not the whole episode, but read a good ways into it at least.

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." ²So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." ³So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" ⁵When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD [YAHWEH]." ⁶And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

10:00

⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”

¹¹ But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, “O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴ And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

We'll stop there. We know the rest of the story. Moses goes down from the mountain and sees what's going on, so on and so forth. We'll get to some of those details in a bit. But this is the gist of the chapter: the golden calf episode.

Now for the sake of time and just being selective, I just want to point out a few upfront items. There are parallels to this story in Deuteronomy 9:7-10:11, and also in Nehemiah 9:16-21. So I'll refer to some of that material only when there's some point of interest. We're not going to get full-bore into comparisons. But there are a few items that are worth bringing up in those other passages. And I'm not going to focus on the most obvious preaching points here. That'll save some time. Like Aaron's excuse, "Hey, you know, I just threw this stuff into the fire and out came this calf." It's comical. There actually is some scant ancient Near Eastern evidence in texts that concern fashioning idols of that kind of language, so it's not out of the blue completely. But it's silly, and it preaches well as an excuse. But I'm not going to get into that. That's the surface level stuff, the obvious stuff. Rather, I want to focus on what's under the surface and what's less obvious in regard to the English translation that we read (and basically every

English translation). We'll get into some of the exegetical issues and some of the Israelite religion (Divine Council) sort of stuff—those kinds of issues.

So let's start with the placement of the episode here in chapter 32. Because we've been going along here in Exodus. It's Exodus 20 when they hit Sinai and get the law. And there's stuff going on and there are these rabbit-trail topics, like instructions for building the Ark and the Tabernacle and all of that. And there's a lot going on in the text. And only here in 32 (12 chapters later) do we get Moses still on the mountain. He's been on the mountain for 12 chapters here, because the text sort of rabbit-trails into these different areas. So it feels kind of out of place. It feels like this should have come earlier, because it's Moses descending from the mountain when he had gone up much earlier. Sarna writes in this regard:

The account of the Tabernacle is interrupted by the story of the making and worship of a golden calf.

So not only does this feel like it should have gone earlier because Moses is going to descend. But in the meantime, these rabbit trails about the Tabernacle instructions... Then you get this. Even that stuff feels like it's interrupted. It feels kind of jumbled, really. So Sarna makes this point about, "Hey, we're going along with talking about the Tabernacle. That's a rabbit trail in itself. And then you get this plopped in here—this worship of the golden calf. And he continues and says:

This episode separates the detailed set of instructions from the report of their implementation.

Because it's only going to be chapter 35... We have other chapters to go before we actually get to the building of the Tabernacle and the building of its furniture. Why isn't this stuff logically grouped together? You get the instructions and then the building. You get Moses going up and then coming down. Why isn't it all together? Why are the topics chopped up into pieces and scattered (mixed up) among themselves? Why is that? So Sarna continues:

The literary arrangement conveys the impression that the apostasy of the people—that is, their alienation from God—interfered with the building of the intended sanctuary that was to be the "Tent of Meeting" between God and Israel. The work could begin only after their reconciliation through the mediation of Moses.

15:00

So this little comment here is sort of a precursor to something we're going to talk about a little bit in this episode, but more so in the next episode. The literary arrangement actually telegraphs certain points. What I mean by that is the episodes are chopped up (both the episodes of Moses going up into the mountain and coming down, and the golden calf problem, and the instructions for

the building of the Tabernacle being separated). The content is chopped up and made disparate (distanced) from itself for literary reasons. In the next episode we're going to talk about some of the literary structures of chapters 32, 33, and a little bit even into 34, where you can actually sort of build a chiasmic structure of these three chapters. And the only way you could do that is if the elements are separated and not taken and not discussed (not laid out) consecutively. So the writer is doing this intentionally, even though to us it looks like he can't make up his mind about what to talk about and it creates a disjointed chronology. It disrupts the chronology. But that's intentional, for literary reasons, to highlight specific points of focus for the reader (believe it or not). And we'll say more about that next time. But here Sarna is suggesting already that, "Well, you know, if you looked at it this way, then what you have here is there's actually a teaching point made, that the building of the Tabernacle and the actual construction can't happen until this sin is dealt with." So that's a teaching point that's brought out by the way things are laid out. But that's just one example. We're going to hit a bunch of others, mostly in the next episode.

So the real place I want to camp here is on the incident itself, not the literary structure of the chapter, and of course going into chapter 33. We'll hit that next time. For this episode, I want to focus on what actually happens here and some of the language about, "These are your gods," and so on and so forth.

Now the immediate context for chapter 32 is actually Exodus 24:18. This is when Moses goes up into the mountain (into the cloud). That verse says:

¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

So that's actually the touchpoint. Because when you get to chapter 32, what provokes this, "Hey, let's build the calf," is the fact that Moses hasn't come down yet and people are kind of freaked out. "What happened to him? It's been 40 days. Where is he? And for that matter, God hasn't shown up either! What's going on?" They're used to having Moses be God's spokesperson. They're used to hearing the voice of God on occasion or having some sort of visible manifestation that the presence of God is there with them. Like, good or bad, he's still there. But they're just like, "What do we do?" The pattern is broken over these last 40 days. "What are we going to do?"

I'm going to draw a bit in the rest of this episode from an article from Michael Hundley. I'm actually going to draw from several sources across these two episodes that I put in the protected folder. This is a really good article by Hundley. It's recent (2017). Hundley has done a lot of work on divine manifestation, temples, temple presence, divine presence, that sort of thing. This article is called "What Is the Golden Calf?" It's a journal article from *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, volume 79.4 (2017), and it's 20 pages (559-579). I put it in the

protected folder for those who are newsletter subscribers to take a look at it. Hundley writes of this episode... He jumps into this topic this way. He says:

20:00

Exodus 24:18 [MH: that's when Moses goes up into the cloud] indicates that Moses stayed on the mountain forty days, giving no indication that the people expected so long a stay and explaining their seemingly panicked reaction. Chapter 32 continues the non-Priestly narrative with Moses still on the mountain. The Israelites are alone in the wilderness with nothing to do and no idea where to go, with both god and guide nowhere to be seen. Apparently in a state of panic, they construct a golden calf, either to concretely manifest Yhwh's presence or to replace Yhwh as god and to replace Moses as guide and go-between (or simply to render his role redundant).

So that little selection there from Hundley puts you in the mindset of the people. They have neither god nor guide. They have nothing to do. "Where do we go?" It's not a good situation. So when you get to verse 1, "the people gathered themselves together to Aaron," it's a little more hostile [laughs] than that. The word in the ESV "gathered to"... the word *to* there is the Hebrew 'al, which could very easily be translated *against*. "They gathered themselves *against* Aaron." So you could really read this (and I think you probably should) that they're ganging up on Aaron. He's the one that's there. He's the one that's been the co-leader with Moses. "Moses... who knows what happened to that guy? And we're going to go and rattle Aaron's cage because we don't know what to do."

So they make this demand: "Make us gods who shall go before us." This is still verse 1. You probably guessed that "gods" there is the word *elohim*. So you can also translate it *God* (singular). Recall *elohim* is in terms of its form (its morphology) plural. But in terms of its meaning (the semantics) it could be either singular or plural. Most often it's singular—overwhelmingly so in the Hebrew Bible. It's usually semantically singular and that can be the case when the noun is accompanied (as it is in this chapter) by the plural verb form. You can still have, semantically, *elohim* still pointing to the singular deity.

Now Hundley argues that the noun *elohim* used throughout the episode is intentionally ambiguous. He has a point to arguing that that we'll get to momentarily. He says this ambiguity contributes to the questions of which god or gods is/are represented by the calf. This is an old issue in biblical scholarship. When they make the golden calf, should we read it as though the people are saying, "Hey, this calf is Yahweh now. We're still worshipping Yahweh, but he's this calf." Or are they displacing Yahweh? Are they turning... The first one is idolatrous because they're not supposed to do this. They've already heard, "Thou shalt not make any graven image" on Sinai. They should know better than this. So it's still idolatry. But the second option (that they're just displacing Yahweh) is even more idolatrous. So which one is it? It's an old question of interpretation when it comes to this chapter. And Hundley argues that the use of the term

elohim keeps it in the dark and we have to discern which one of those options is correct by other means. So Hundley writes this. Let me just summarize it by what he writes. He says:

To understand the people's intentions in constructing the calf, we will focus on two categories: which god is intended and what kind of image is intended? While the people's actions are relatively straightforward, their motives for and understanding of what they are doing remains relatively obscure—most notably regarding the identity of the deity whose presence they seek to manifest with the calf and their use of *elôhîm* seemingly as a plural. [MH: "These are your gods."] Whether purposeful or not, this very opacity serves the storyteller's purposes as it allows God (and the storyteller) to condemn their actions regardless of their motivation...

We'll get back to this term *elohim* in a little bit. There's more to say about the singular/plural possibilities that the term represents. We'll return to that in a little bit. For now, we have this ambiguity. Because we have in verse 1 "make us *elohim* who shall go before us." So in verse 2, Aaron says, "Okay, take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your son, and your daughters, and bring them to me." Now this is interesting. The gold rings (as Sarna points out)... He says:

These may have been among the items the Israelites received from neighbors when they left Egypt...

We read back in Exodus 11:2–3 that they take the spoils from Egypt and the Egyptians give them things to basically get them out of there. And Exodus 12:35–36.

From the story in Genesis 35:4...

25:00 I'll just read that to you:

⁴So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

So Sarna says, "When you look at that story..."

...where earrings are coupled with "alien gods" and are ritually buried with them, it is clear that they were not mere adornments but [MH: these rings of gold] also had some cultic significance. This conclusion is reinforced by the narrative about Gideon in Judges 8:24–27. He too specifically requested gold earrings and

manufactured from them an ephod, after which “all Israel went astray” and which “became a snare to Gideon and his household.”

So Sarna is saying, this is not just, “Hey, those earrings look nice, let’s just use them for gold,” even though they did that. There’s some cultic connection. There’s some religious thing (flavor) to them. So in verse 4, Aaron takes this material (these rings). He receives “the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf.” The language here is odd. I’ll reference Sarna again:

The verb *va-yatsar* can denote “he fashioned” or “he tied up”; the noun *heret* [MH: this tool] can signify “a stylus” or “an engraving tool.” The phrase may therefore mean that Aaron fashioned the gold with a tool. This, however, would be inconsistent with the description of the image as being “molten,” and one does not use an engraving tool on gold. It is possible that *heret* is a variant form of *harit*, “a bag”, which appears with the same verb as here in a similar context in 2 Kings 5:23: “He wrapped [*va-yetsar*] the two talents of silver in two bags [*haritim*].” In Exodus, then, Aaron tied up the gold earrings in a bag. [MH: This is Sarna’s view.] It is noteworthy that when Gideon made his image, he “spread out a cloth, and everyone threw onto it the earrings.” Finally, the Hebrew phrase may well have originated in the technical vocabulary of ancient metallurgy and then become a metaphor simply expressing the imparting of shape to metal, regardless of the technique employed.

So what Sarna is discussing here is the language seems kind of odd. There’s some engraving language. There’s molten language. How do we know what Aaron actually did with the gold, because there’s engraving and molten language? We don’t really know. So he’s trying to link it to other passages where maybe it just means Aaron put it in a bag and then they used it later and melted it. So he did both. Who knows? Now Currid (whose Exodus work I’ve quoted before) takes a slightly different tack here. He says:

[Aaron’s] next act is to make the gold into ‘a molten calf’. The term ‘molten’ derives from a verb meaning ‘to pour out’ [MH: this is, by the way, what the Hebrew text actually says—it has this molten language]; thus the idea is that the gold is melted down and poured into a cast, or on top of a mould. Obviously there is a problem here with the sequence of events. Why would Aaron work on the gold with a tool and then melt it and cast it? In reality, it is not that difficult a problem. What we have here is an example of a figure [MH: of speech] called *hysteron-proteron*, which signifies that the second of two things is placed first. It is, in fact, the perennial ‘cart put before the horse’.

Currid cites Bullinger’s book here, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (which many of you will have heard of)—specifically pages 703–704—for other

examples of where the first thing is put second and the second thing is put first. This is a literary technique. So I get into this because you shouldn't be reading this or allow the village atheist to come to you and say, "Look at this. This is an error. It makes no sense. How could he carve something and then melt it? It doesn't make any sense. It's an error in the Bible!" Well, actually, it's a literary technique. So it's not a big deal. And I think what Currid says here is probably the way to go with it.

30:00

The major issue, though... The major excursus that I want to go on is the calf. And I think I've already hinted at this because of the term *elohim*. What we're going to get into here is not just related to the event, but bigger issues of Israelite religion and how some Israelites... You have to think of the Israelites like we would think of Christians today. And what I mean by that is, under the label "Christian," there's an immense amount of variety. Lots of Christians do not agree on all sorts of theological things. In fact, some Christians we'll say, like Oneness Pentecostals—they don't even believe in a Trinity. But they're still going to call themselves Christians. You can argue whether that's legit or not. I understand that. But what I'm getting at here is, when we talk about "*the* Israelites," or "Israelites thought this or that about Yahweh (or El, the God of the patriarchs) ..." Are they the same? Are they different? Do they overlap? What's going on here? There is no single group known as the Israelites. You picked 100 Israelites out of the second millennium B.C.; you're probably going to get 10 opinions. Okay? It's just that sort of thing.

One of those groups would be the biblical writers. So the biblical writers are not synonymous with *the* Israelites. And *the* Israelites... There is no monolithic group that's just one mindset on anything—any aspect of their religion. For goodness' sake, they don't even have it in Scripture in record (this thing we call the Bible). It's not like they have weekly or even monthly instruction. They've got a very small subset of theological knowledge, a lot of which has been passed on orally. And it's not even written down yet. They're not theologians, folks. And critics of the Bible need to own up to this, whether they're evangelical in flavor or whether they're non-confessional. Because what critics like to do, in the subject matter we're going to talk about here (the identification of Yahweh or El or either or both with a calf or a bull)... What critics like to do is they like to take all of this and just lump it together in one monolithic thing and say that the biblical writers were polytheists, or the biblical writers thought it was okay originally for Yahweh to be represented by a physical object. "And then somebody later on in the 8th century, when idolatry was a big deal because of Jeroboam, then all of a sudden the theology changes and somebody makes up this story about the golden calf and sticks it back in the Pentateuch. Moses didn't really write this to tie the later abomination (the later punishment) of idolatry—to give that Mosaic roots. And so it's artificial. We all know that they were polytheists because of this, that, and the other thing." The critics talk about the Israelites and the biblical writers as though they were of one mind. That's just bunk. It's just demonstrably absurd. We don't even have that *now*, in the Church, with a couple thousand years of tradition *and*

a Bible. The Israelites (people who would've considered themselves descendants of Jacob) back in the second millennium B.C. don't have any of that.

So it's really absurd and self-serving for critics of any stripe to assume that everybody's thinking the same thing. That is just incoherent, out of the gate. I'm sorry if that's going to pit me against some other person out there in the podcasting world or whatever. Too bad. You demonstrate to me how that assumption makes any sense at all. Go ahead. Do that. That's what I need. Where is the proof that everybody thought the same—everybody belongs in the same bucket, including the biblical writers? Good luck with that.

So with that little prelude, let's get into the calf issue itself and the *elohim* language and the bull language and the calf—all this stuff. Now let's start with Currid. I'm going to give you a little bit of Currid, a little bit of Sarna, and then we're going to go into the details here and bring Hundley back into our purview. Because he thinks pretty well about a lot of the stuff going on here. Currid writes:

Bovines [MH: calves or bulls] were commonly used to represent deity in the ancient Near East. Bovine cults flourished in ancient Egypt. Apis was the most important of the Egyptian sacred bulls; Isis, queen of the gods, bore cow's horns on her head, and Hathor had a bovine head. The calf was also a religious icon associated with the worship of the Canaanite gods El or Baal. An example of a molten calf (made of silver) has been uncovered at the site of Ashkelon on the Mediterranean coast.

Very just general observations from Currid. Sarna gives us a little more detail. As far as the word *calf*, it's...

35:00

calf Hebrew *'egel* is a young ox or bull. Thus, Psalm 106:19–20, in reference to this episode [MH: Exodus 32], alternates *'egel* with *shor*, "ox." [MH: It has them in parallel. It alternates between both.] Throughout the Near East the bull was a symbol of lordship, leadership, strength, vital energy, and fertility. As such, it was either deified and worshiped or employed in representation of divinity. Often the bull or some other animal served as the pedestal on which the god stood, elevated above human level... Rashbam [MH: that's a Jewish commentator] and other medieval Jewish commentators have pointed out that the people "could not have been so stupid" as to believe that this freshly manufactured image was itself a deity responsible for the Exodus from Egypt. Rather, they felt that the object was a potent symbol that acquired a numinous quality, and that they could invoke the Deity through it."

Now Hundley echoes some of the same thoughts as these other two but adds some interesting details. He writes this:

As an artistic representation, how was a statue of a bull understood to depict a deity? In a religious context, we have roughly three options. First, a bull could serve as a representation of a divine form. In some cases, the people believed that the deity could actually take the form of a bull. Thus, by fashioning a bull, they were making a realistic replica of this divine form. Second, a bull could function as a symbol, or shorthand, for the deity. Rather than literally depicting a particular divine form, people also used associated animals, which identified the intended god by association even when it was not literally depicted. In this case, the bull statue was meant to depict not the divine form but rather the associated attributes like strength and fertility. Third, since anthropomorphic deities took humanlike shape, artists employed various means to demonstrate their superhuman potency. One way was to picture them astride and thus in control of various natural and mythological creatures, for example, Marduk and the mushkhushu (the mythological hybrid animal sacred to Marduk). Thus, the bull also could serve as a pedestal, a mount, or a throne for the deity.

That's Hundley. We can see from this comments that it's an open question as to who or what the calf or the bull or the ox represented. Is it one or more than one? Which one is it? Those questions are still out there. And Hundley gets into this source more than other sources I'm aware of. He has this to comment. We're going to get back into the *elohim* here. He says:

While it is clear that the people are seeking a replacement for Moses as guide, are they also attempting to replace Yhwh as God? [MH: That's an important question.] The people's reference to *ëlôhîm* (32:1, 4) is enigmatic. *Elôhîm* refers both to the common Hebrew plural for "gods" and to the single Israelite God, Yhwh, as an abstract plural, roughly translated as "divinity." Like *ilänü* in western peripheral Akkadian and other Semitic cognate expressions, the morphologically plural *ëlôhîm* often functions as a singular.

In Exodus 32 *ëlôhîm* is accompanied by plural verb forms (32:2, 4, 8, 23) and pronouns (32:4, 8 - "these"). [MH: That's the pronoun translated *these*, so "*these elohim*," as *elohim* has a plural pronoun associated with it.] In turn, grammatically, it reads most naturally as the plural "gods." Granted, there are scattered examples in which the abstract plural *ëlôhîm* takes plural modifiers even though it functions as a singular verb (Gen 20:13; 35:7; Exod 22:8).

I discussed a number of these in my paper (my published journal article) about whether *elohim* with plural predicator should be singular or plural. So Hundley is pointing out, "Look, this does happen when you have the plural form, *elohim*, gets grouped with plural modifiers like verbs. But it's still pointing to a singular entity. So he says it happens with verbs.

[It also happens with] adjectives (Josh 24:19; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; Jer 10:10; 23:36)...

Just to give you an example of one of those. You have holy God/jealous God in Joshua 24:19. Some of those adjectives are going to be actually plural in form. But they're still pointing to one entity.

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...and participles (Ps 58:12). Nonetheless, uses of the abstract plural *êlôhîm* with plural verbs are rare, and nowhere else is *êlôhîm* modified by a plural pronoun...

That's kind of a point of interest.

In context, the singular designator fits more naturally. Since there is only a single image, "gods" appears nonsensical. Recognizing this fact, Neh 9:18 appears to correct the plural to the singular...

Nehemiah 9:18 actually says, instead of saying, like Exodus 32 does, "These are your gods," (the plural pronoun, *elohim*), it actually has the singular pronoun, *zeh*...

... "this [*זה*] is your god [*אלהים*] who brought you up [singular *העלה*] [MH: singular verb] from Egypt." [MH: So Nehemiah 9, sort of like Hundley says, sort of looks like it's correcting or clarifying this.] Some commentators argue that the grammatically plural phrase in Exodus is borrowed from the Jeroboam episode (1 Kgs 12:26-30), where two golden bulls are in view, and with polemical intent. Even in Jeroboam's case, however, the plural is peculiar, since Jeroboam was a Yhwh worshiper— attempting to establish rival temples to Jerusalem—and even with two statues would likely have spoken of Yhwh in the singular. In addition, the liturgical formula would have been recited in the presence of only one statue at a time, such that the discrepancy remains. For now, we may conclude only that *êlôhîm* seems to be a plural that does not make sense in a singular situation.

So, back to his question, does the request tell us the people wanted to replace Yahweh with another god or gods, or does the golden calf represent Yahweh in their minds? Let's start with the latter. This certainly has scholarly proponents. Some scholars not only believe that the Israelites in Exodus 32 identify the golden calf as their god (as Yahweh or El, the God of the patriarchs), but a lot of scholars (non-confessional critical scholars) will say that this episode can be used to distinguish El (the deity of the patriarchs) from Yahweh. Like we've got a mixed up, polytheistic thing going on here. For example, if you have DDD (*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*) and you looked up the entry on "Calf"... This was written by Nicholas Wyatt, who I really like but often disagree with. But Wyatt is one of those writers that thinks about a lot of things and ferrets... He's kind of like Margaret Barker. Always worth the reading, even if you don't like the conclusions he draws from the data, or don't find them especially persuasive. He gives you lots of things to think about. Wyatt writes:

The bull as a symbol of physical strength and sexual potency, together with all the economic benefits arising from herding, has an ancient pedigree in the religions of the Ancient Near East... The use of cattle as sacrificial animals is common throughout the region. Bull-gods are widely evident.

Then he cites a few examples in Egypt and Mesopotamia and he gets to the Ugaritic material. He says:

El was known as ‘the Bull El’ (*tr il*).

In Ugaritic, it’s “thor-il” (*tr il*). Now Ugaritic and Hebrew are related languages but not the same. The Hebrew word for bull is *šôr*, and in Ugaritic it’s *tr* (thor). We’ve got a *sh* and *th* dialectical difference. I’m getting into that, because that’s going to become kind of important here. So in Ugaritic, El was known as the Bull.

This usage may belong in part to the convention of giving animal names as terms of rank to military personnel, as evidenced in KTU 1.15 iv 6–7: “Call my seventy bulls, my eighty gazelles”, and suggests at least a popular etymological link between *tr* (Hebrew *šôr*, Akkadian *šaru*), ‘bull’ and Hebrew *šar*, Akkadian *šarru*, ‘ruler’, ‘king’...

He says all these terms are similar, so that may be why they get mixed. The bull becomes an icon of royal leadership—whether the royal king is a god or a person.

Near Eastern weather-gods are conventionally shown standing on a bull as vehicle, while →Baal is described in KTU 1.5 v 18–22 as copulating with a heifer, which suggests that he too could be regarded as a bull. Cult-images of bulls have been recovered from such sites as Ugarit, Tyre and Hazor...

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A number of terms for cattle are used in the Bible as epithets of divine power. The title *Šôr ’ēl* (‘Bull El’) has been discerned (Tur-Sinai 1950) in the impossible **kî miyyisrā’ēl* [MH: which translates into kind of an incoherent] (‘for from Israel’) of MT in Hos 8:6: [Hebrew consonants can be re-divided to] read rather *kî mî šôr ’ēl* (‘for who is Bull El?’), which fits well in the context [MH: of Hosea 8:6]. With this may be compared →Jacob’s title in Deut 33:17 as *běkôr šôr* (MT *šôrô*), ‘the first-born of the Bull’. In Gen 49:24; Ps 132:2, 5; Isa 49:26; 60:16 *’ăbîr ya’ăqōb* probably has the sense of ‘Bull of Jacob’ (cf. Ugaritic *ibr*), while the divine title *’ăbîr yisrā’ēl* of Isa 1:24 is comparable. The term *rě’ēm* (Akkadian *rēmu*) is generally thought to denote the aurochs...

(The set of bulls.) So he’s saying in that verse, you don’t have *šôr*. You have some other term (*rě’ēm*). But that’s even a bull, too. So what he’s doing here (just to summarize this)... I’m not going to go through Wyatt’s data. He’s looking

in the Hebrew Bible for places where you get bull language used of either God or the people of God or Jacob or Israel, something like that. And he says this. Here's his conclusion. He says, "This is important evidence for the tradition that El as a bull god was the deliverer in the Exodus tradition."

Now what Wyatt is suggesting here is, "Look, you've got a bunch of Israelites." Whether Wyatt believes in an exodus or not or a Moses or not, he's probably on the skeptical side of that. But he's saying, "Look, what do you have here? You've got Semites ostensibly descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The deity names of the patriarchs are El names. El is identified with the bull in some Genesis passages and some other passages." We just read a few of them. So he's saying, "Look, they probably thought that their God was a bull god." And you look at it and on the surface it's like, "Well, yeah, I could see how that could be in their heads. They're not theologians. They don't have a Bible. This is pre-Moses."

But there are problems. There are some coherence problems with this. A lot of scholars are exactly where Wyatt is. This is why I bring it up. This is why I want to discuss it. The thesis has problems. Generally, it's either an unnecessary conclusion (in other words, we retroject things like Hosea 8 or Jeroboam's incident back into the Israelites in Egypt in Exodus 32. We retroject later Canaanite Ugaritic stuff. I mean, that stuff postdates chronologically the time of the Exodus. And you could say, "Well, Wyatt probably doesn't even believe there was an exodus. So he doesn't see this as a chronological problem." Well, it *is* a chronological problem just in the way that the story is related. If you're going to accept the historicity of the Exodus in any regard, the Ugaritic material is centuries later. So it doesn't seem fair to use that material to inform this earlier episode. It's an incongruence.

But even aside from that, if you take the prohibition against graven images earlier in the Exodus story... that has to mean something if you take it seriously at all. Wyatt can easily say, "Well, maybe that's new revelation." We'll pretend Wyatt thinks that the Exodus was real. Somebody could come along and say, "Well, look. They were thinking that the El deity was a bull god and then Moses comes along and says, 'No, no, no. This isn't who God really is.' And Moses delivers them from Egypt and they go to Sinai. And one of the commands is 'Don't make graven images.' That's new revelation." Well, that seems a little better. It seems a little coherent. But is there any real evidence, aside from using terms like bull and calf as epithets... Because if you remember what we just read in Hundley, one of the options... There are three reasons why an ancient person would do this. Some would have thought that, "Hey, this is what our deity looks like." Others would have just used the terminology to say, "These are the attributes of our deity. He's strong. He's powerful. He's virile. He's a creator. He has creative and procreative power." And that's the only reason they use the terminology.

You see what I mean when I introduced this whole section about (my little prelude that)... What critics typically do is they put everybody in the same bucket,

everybody in the same box. They assume that all of the Israelites and all the Canaanites, along with a host of other people, are thinking the same thoughts. They're using the terminology for the same reasons, and then they want to lump the biblical writers in here and turn them all into polytheists. It's just not coherent, even on its own terms. People in the ancient world would have disagreed. There would have been a multiplicity of religious opinion about how the gods were conceived. Even among the people of the priestly class (the artisans here who are making these objects). They wouldn't have even agreed as to why specifically they were important or why they were making them. Some would have thought, "Well, this is what the deity looks like." Others of them would've thought, "Oh, it's just about the attributes." There would have been a difference of opinion. So it's really not fair to take the terminology and conclude (as Wyatt does) that the Israelites at the time of the Exodus (at the time of this episode) thought that their God was a bull deity. That not only overstates the data, but it sidesteps the reality that, religiously speaking (just like it is today), especially without inscripturated revelation or a holy book, there's just no way that you can coherently say they were all thinking the same thing. There's no way you can conclude coherently that they're all on this page—the page that you want them to be. So there are just problems with this. There are other ways to think about the data that don't require presuming these sorts of things.

Now you could say that this is new revelation because they've been in Egypt for 400 years. Who knows what they're thinking? If they took their oral tradition seriously, where is the evidence (because all we have is the written text) in the written text—in the patriarchal narratives—that Yahweh was thought to *be* a bull god as opposed to just using this kind of terminology to describe an attribute of his? Where's the evidence that it has to be a bull deity? Honestly (and I want people to be honest here as we go through the data), we just don't have those data. We just don't. Ultimately in the Hebrew Bible as we have it, there's no endorsement of that idea that they thought this is Yahweh (this is Yahweh's form). There's also no endorsement of the God of Jacob being worshipped with a bull or calf or idols of any kind.

Look back in the patriarchal narrative. When Jacob has his, not his "come to Jesus" moment, but his "come to Yahweh" moment, he buries his objects. He doesn't *use* them and say, "Oh, I was thinking of Yahweh anyway." No, he *buries* them. He parts ways with them. So where is the endorsement that the God of Jacob (the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) was worshipped as a bull or a calf symbol or any idol? There isn't any. And so it's just not legitimate to take these leaps in interpretation. These ideas are speculation drawn from an epithet (like bull El, bull of Jacob, or something like that). People take this terminology under the influence of a presumed religious evolution and they just say stuff that sort of sounds like it could work. But when you really probe it and you really ask them, "How do you know... Maybe you had an Israelite that thought exactly what you think he thought. Did everybody? Did the biblical writers? On what grounds

do you lump everyone together? Tell me.” You have to be honest. There are no grounds for doing that. There just aren’t.

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So this is the situation. I elaborate on this because you’re going to run into this on the internet. You’re going to run into this in other podcasts and discussions and whatnot, where the village atheist is going to come out and try to make this an episode of “legitimate idolatry.” “The Israelites really thought this way. The biblical writers really thought this way. It’s only other parts of the Bible that contradict this polytheism here. The Bible’s just hopelessly contradictory. Blah blah blah.” You know the drill. You know the drill by now. And what I’m getting at is, probe the idea. If it’s true, then other things should be true. If it’s true, then it should be coherent. You should be able to say certain things about the proposition, that derive from the proposition. But in this case, you can’t. And in fact, it lacks coherence.

So we’ll move on here. But in Hundley’s article (you can reference it) he goes through this option. He goes through the option that we’ve got the Israelites thinking of their own God (El or Yahweh) with the golden calf. Or they’re thinking of other gods. So on and so forth. Hundley writes this. I think this section is worth reading to you. He says:

To this point in Exodus, Yhwh has demonstrated his power by leading the people out of Egypt, and Yhwh/Elohim has been the only god directly referenced. Indeed, nothing in the text to this point indicates that any deity other than Yhwh is in view. Thus, like Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 12:28, the people most likely seek to elicit Yhwh’s presence by means of the golden calf.

This is where Hundley lands. He’s thinking, “You know, they’re probably not thinking of other deities. They’re probably building this calf and they’re thinking of Yahweh.” Because let’s think about it. Aaron actually says, when he makes the calf, in verse 4,

⁴ And he [Aaron] received the gold from their hand and fashioned it... And they [the people] said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”

“This is our Elohim. There are our elohim.” (And remember, it could still be singular, like we’ve talked about.) And then Aaron in verse 5 says this:

⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD [YAHWEH].”

So Hundley looks at this and says, “You know, you could read that and say, “Well, maybe they’re thinking this is Yahweh.” As awkward as that seems. As

ridiculous and absurd as that seems. Because they've just been told not to make graven images. The people go along with Aaron's identification of the calf with Yahweh. Aaron is the one who makes this identification. And the people don't object to it. They don't say, "Hey, wait a minute, Aaron. We were thinking of some other deity." There's no objection on their part. They go along with it. And Hundley adds this:

By contrast, in 32:26, the people do not respond to Moses' call, "Who is on Yhwh's side?"

It's showdown language. Because when Moses says that (and Moses is obviously opposed to the golden calf) they know they're kind of in trouble. [laughs] Because if they are on Yahweh's side, as Moses defines it, then they shouldn't have been doing this. So it gets a little dicey with the language here. Another little thing from Hundley. He says:

In short, the text is clear that the people seek a tangible divine presence. It remains unclear, however, if the presence they seek is Yhwh or another god. [MH: Aaron certainly thinks he makes the identification.] There is every reason to think they hope to concretize Yhwh's presence, yet the text [MH: still has these ambiguities in it]...

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to dismiss the people's actions as blatant disobedience. From their perspective, however, the situation is critical. They try to do the best they can with what they see, yet their vision is limited, as they are not privy to the events occurring on the mountain above. Moses the guide and go-between is ostensibly gone. Yhwh is inaccessible. With no one to protect and lead them, no way forward and nowhere to return, they likely fear for their survival. In their presumed desperation and with no other obvious solution available, they use whatever means and agency they have to forge a way forward. Like their neighbors, they make an image to serve as a focal point of presence, protection, guidance, and hope. Faced with the lack of a tangible, visible deity, they make a deity tangible and visible on their own terms.

There's a lot that we could say about this. It's obviously portrayed negatively. People "rise up to play." It's a term... If you look up the term, it's *tsahaq* in Hebrew. Genesis 26:8, Genesis 39:14. It has a sexual context there. It's probably better translated something like "dallied with," maybe "seduced." Because the Genesis 39 reference is the reference to [Potiphar's] wife accusing Joseph of *tsahaq*, "dallying with her," actually accusing him of doing the thing she's doing. So it's a negative portrayal. You get the sexual element (spiritual adultery) used with idolatry elsewhere in the Old Testament. You get the flavor that even if they think that they're worshipping Yahweh, even if they're desperate and even if we can understand as human beings their fear and what's going on, they're

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desperation in the situation... Because Moses is gone. They have no direction, no leader. They can't go forward; they can't go back. All that being the case, it's still viewed as sinister and evil in the text because it violates the earlier command. And you see this as you go through the chapter. I'll read you verse 7.

⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

Before, God had been referring to Israel as "my people." Not here. Now it's "your people." God is distancing himself from the Israelites. He says in verse 8, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them." Even there, the text doesn't say (as Sarna points out) they've "turned aside from Me."

⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them.

So basically, they've adopted pagan modes of worship, using them in the worship of the God of Israel. So Sarna and others take that phrasing as indicating, "Yeah, they're thinking they're worshiping Yahweh, but they're really not." So in one sense, they haven't turned from worshiping Yahweh, like they're not worshiping some other deity, but God says, "Look, they have departed from what I commanded them to do. They might think they're still on my side. They might think that they're still worshiping me, but they have gone astray." Yahweh certainly doesn't think he's being worshiped. In the text, the language shows God distancing himself from the whole episode. And Hundley comments on that, too. He says:

Since divine approval is necessary for divine presence, Yhwh will not deign to associate with the image even if it was crafted for him. From Yhwh's perspective, whatever it is, it is not him. Rather than elucidating whether they are worshiping him the wrong way or another deity, Yhwh condemns the whole enterprise out of hand. Having "seen" the people's behavior and their character, he is prepared to destroy them and start again with Moses (32:9-10).

Now you could end it right there. It's a good preaching point. God doesn't care if your motives are pure if you worship him as one would worship a foreign god. Really, that's the bottom line of the passage. Even if you think you're worshiping the true God, if your worship in a way that you'd worship some foreign god, God's not going to accept it. But (I want to wrap up) so I'll just say a couple more things about the *elohim*. You have... Why the ambiguity in the first place? And to cut to the chase, I'm in agreement with Hundley here. If you're interested, you can go look up the article. He points out that the Bible uses plural forms for a singular deity in the context of heterodox worship in other places. And for him, this is the key, that they think they are worshiping Yahweh. And they might be. In

their hearts and in their heads, that might be what they're thinking. But God says, "It's wrong. I don't accept it."

Some of the examples he has are kind of interesting. In 1 Samuel 4:7-8, when the Philistines notice the presence of the Ark in battle they at first proclaim, "*Elohim* has come." And the "has come" there is a singular verb form. "*Elohim* has come into the camp." But in the next breath, they resort to the plural, "Woe to us. Who will save us from the hand of these mighty *elohim*? These (plural) are the *elohim* who struck (plural verb) the Egyptians with every kind of plague in the wilderness."

1:05:00 So what Hundley uses that to point out is that, "Look, you're going to have passages where there's this back-and-forth between singular and plural use of *elohim*, and often it is associated with pagans misunderstanding who Yahweh is and how Yahweh should be worshiped." And so in Hundley's view, this is why Exodus 32 makes the term *elohim* ambiguous in the text. Is it plural or one? It's as though, Hundley would say, the writer of Exodus 32 and the writer (in that case) of 1 Samuel 4 are trying to telegraph heterodox worship—apostate worship—even of the true God. The Philistines know who the Israelites worship. They worship this deity called Yahweh. But it's like they can't decide if it's one or many. And so when you see the same thing in Exodus 32, Hundley's argument is that a reader of the Hebrew Bible would know that when you get this kind of weird "is it or isn't it," singular/plural, Yahweh or foreign god—that that's deliberate. It's telegraphing to the reader that what's going on in this chapter is worship that is illegitimate—that Yahweh refuses to accept. Even though the people are in crisis, their crisis is understandable. What they're trying to do is bring Yahweh back to their midst so that they have guidance and they can feel some security or whatever. As good as the motive might be, this is illegitimate, pagan worship. And God doesn't accept it.

So it's kind of interesting in the chapter. Like I said at the beginning, I wanted to focus on something that's sort of operating beneath the text that you're not going to get from your English Bible. Although you could look at the narrative and notice that Aaron makes one calf, but then it's referred to as "*these* are your gods." You could notice that in a close reading of the English Bible and wonder about it. And to me, I think it's interesting. Because it takes us into this "What in the world is going through the mind of the Israelite when it comes to thinking about God in an era before they have a Bible and they've been in Egypt for 400 years, and nobody really knows what's going on?" And you have this guy Moses who takes them to the mountain and there are spectacular things that happen along the way. And then you get these commands. And then Moses goes up to receive the law and he never comes back. At least, he hasn't come back for 40 days. Again, putting the people in their context (in crisis), they can't go look up how to parse this in a theology book. They can't go ask anybody, "Hey, what does all this mean?" Instead, they (at least some among them, it's not everybody) believe that by fashioning this object, and this object has a long

history in the ancient Near East (in Mesopotamia, in Egypt, and in Canaan) that represents the attributes of Yahweh (the attributes that they perceive Yahweh to have) in an effort to honor him, in an effort to make him present in their midst, in an effort to have the presence of God in their midst, to come back and give them direction and hope. The motives are good. On a human level, they're understanding. But the text makes it very clear that this is unacceptable to God. And it's not unacceptable because he thinks they should be theologians. It's unacceptable because he has given them a very short list of commands. They've heard them already, at least in the context you have this revelation given in Exodus 20 about no graven image. And even if they hadn't heard that yet (because Moses hasn't come down from the mountain), the reader is getting a different impression than somebody who has the boots-on-the-ground there in the actual incident. So even if they've never heard that, they should have known, based upon their own oral tradition of their own patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) that their forefathers never made idols to worship their God. They didn't do that. And so this is a clear violation. They didn't know much, but they could've known that much. And God doesn't accept it. As realistic and as understandable as the situation is, it's unacceptable. So that's really the main focus of the golden calf episode.

So there are lots of things we could've talked about here. I thought this was a good example of something under the surface that gets us into the world of how scholars look at these passages. And I think that's practical because you're going to run into this on the internet. And I think if you really stop and think about what's going on here, it's understandable, both in order to tell the ins and outs of the episode, but also having enough of a grasp of the situation to think well about the text and not be unduly influenced by poor thinking on the critical side about the biblical writers being polytheists or something like this. This is a subject that has come up a lot of times on this podcast because we do Divine Council stuff. And you'll often hear it. But when you really probe it, when you really think about it, the whole approach has serious weaknesses. So I think that comes through once again in this chapter.

1:10:00

So in Part 2, or at least in the next episode... We're not going to call it Part 2. But the next episode, I'm going to revisit this episode a little bit and discuss its relationship to chapters 32 and 33. And we're going to focus more on literary terms—why does the story unfold as it does, in chunks that you'd think would be logically grouped together but are separated and kept apart? There are some reasons for that literarily. And then just some other things that this chapter informs in chapter 33 as well. So we'll get into that next time.

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, we will be looking forward to that. And again, we want to welcome you to the right side of the United States and also [inaudible] time zone.

MH: [laughs] What you're saying is no more left coast. [laughter]

TS: You said it, not me.

MH: We've got lots of friends on the left coast.

TS: Real quick, who's your Superbowl prediction?

MH: Well, my Packers just (ugh, let's not talk about that) looked really bad. I'm hoping Kansas City wins. So if you want a prediction, I'm just going to say I'm hoping they win.

TS: My fellow Red Raiders. I'm rooting for you, Mahoney, so...

MH: Ah, that's right. You have a connection there, yeah.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. So alright, Mike. With that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.