

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 309

Exodus 32-33

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Episode Summary

This episode of the podcast returns to parts of Exodus 32 that dovetail with the content of Exodus 33. The exchanges between God and Moses in these chapters produce points of confusion: If God really decided not to destroy Israel for the golden calf incident, then why does he still judge them? Why does Moses plead for God to turn away his anger and then demand that the perpetrators of the calf's sacrilege be killed? In Chapter 33 God tells Moses that he will no longer be going with them to the Promised Land, but will still send "an angel" to guide them—a statement that confuses Moses. How is this consistent with God's earlier promises in Exodus that he would take Israel to the Land and the identification of Angel of Exodus 23, who was the visible manifestation of Yahweh?

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 309, Exodus 32 and 33. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Alright, Mike! We've got some special guests back on to talk about something special again.

MH: Yeah. See how that works? "Special guests to talk about something special." [laughs] My wife, Drenna, is back on. She's been on before. We were talking about the Naked Bible Cruise. And with her is Cheri Geneser, who is the person on the cruise end (also a personal friend of ours), who does this for a living and knows all about how cruises work. And that's who we've engaged to create the Naked Bible Cruise. So there's some sort of special deal going on. I'm going to turn it over to Drenna and Cheri and just let them tell the audience what's going on.

DH: Hey everybody! It's nice to be back on again. And when *I'm* on, we're going to talk about something fun. [MH laughs] So whenever you know that I'm going to be on, you know it's going to be something fun to do. I'm really excited about the Naked Bible Cruise and my friend, Cheri Geneser, who is a really dear friend of mine. She's so good at what she does. She's a great multi-tasker. She has won

awards at her job for what she does, which is putting together packages for people to travel. And I just want her to explain a little bit about what she does and then this fabulous deal that is going to happen if you guys sign up to go to the Naked Bible Cruise. So go ahead, Cheri.

CG: Thank, Drenna. Boy, I don't think I can live up to that at all. [MH laughs] Um, yes, this is a passion of mine. Traveling is a passion of mine. And we have a fabulous trip planned on the Sky Princess, which is one of the new ships in the Princess fleet. So when we get on board, she'll be all sparkly and new. She was just launched this last October. We'll be heading out of New York, round trip, making it easy for people to come in and out. We'll have an opportunity to visit Newport, Rhode Island (also known as City by the Sea), as well as a day in Boston. And we get the opportunity to stop in Bar Harbor, which is famous for the Acadia National Park and Cadillac Mountain. Then we'll be heading across into Canadian waters and St. John, New Brunswick, which is famous for the Bay of Fundy. And our last port of call is Halifax, Nova Scotia. So we have a really beautiful itinerary planned. Being in October, we're hoping that the fall foliage will be in all of its glory. And we have price-pointed, I think, cabin selections for just about everybody. So I have interiors, balconies, and mini-suites. Right now, I have a promotion going. I have truly never seen an offering such as this. So the first thing is the Premier Beverage package. So that includes up to 15 alcoholic beverages a day (which if you were to consume that, I don't know how much of the trip you would enjoy [laughter], but you could do that), specialty coffee (for those of us who are very much coffee snobs), soda drinks, juices, milkshakes, things like that. That's all included in the Premier Beverage package as well as the gratuities for that package.

MH: I don't hear tea.

CG: And tea! [MH laughs] Specialties teas, Mike! Just for you.

MH: Just thought I'd...

CG: And even an occasional milkshake or a Frappuccino. Also that's included. That's a \$495 value per guest. Then it's unlimited wi-fi. And because this is a new ship, the wi-fi on these ships is very fast. And you get one device for every guest (that's another \$70 value). And then, your prepaid gratuities, which is either between \$101 and \$108 per guest, depending on cabin selection. So the other beautiful thing is, it's only a \$200 deposit right now, and final payment isn't due until July 12th. So it's not like you have to pay for the cruise in full today. So there you go.

5:00 **MH:** So the big deal is all this stuff is looped in, as opposed to having to piecemeal it.

CG: Yeah. If you were to look at it separately, like I say, it's probably an extra \$800 per person.

MH: Yeah.

DH: That's awesome! That's a great deal!

CG: And they're offering it... Yeah, it's a fabulous deal right now. So we have cabins still available. I don't want to imply that it's getting too tight, but I do want to encourage people to sign up. And again, you're only going to be charged a \$200 deposit, as soon as I get your request.

MH: Now all of this stuff getting lumped in, that's new.

CG: That is new.

MH: So how long does that last?

CG: That's going to be finished up at the end of February.

MH: Okay.

DH: That's great. And then with all those perks, there are other areas to spend extra money on the ship if you want, right? So that frees up some money to spend at the port, when we go ashore. So that's great.

CG: So there are shore excursion options. There are spas on board, for anybody who might want to consider a massage or a pedicure or things like that. There are a lot of other things you can spend your... There are also shops on board. You can go shopping as well at all of the ports of call. There are going to be lots of opportunities to indulge. And maybe you want to go have a lobster lunch while you're in Bar Harbor.

MH: Is there a bookstore? [laughs]

CG: There are bookstores, Mike. Not on board the ship, but some of the ports of call are famous for some of their bookstores.

MH: I know, Boston's bookstores...

CG: Lots of history on where we're going.

DH: That's great.

CG: I just did want to touch on... Mike you're going to be better at this. I wanted to touch on the fact that we have five sessions scheduled. Mike will be speaking. And he's talking about the Unseen Realm: A Deeper Dive.

MH: Yep. Oh, I have lots of topics to jump into.

DH: Yeah. And let's not forget. One of the great things about this is getting to meet people and connecting and making friendships. And to me, that's one of the biggest perks: getting to put a face behind names that we have seen, either through Instagram or Facebook or emails. And it's just great to meet people who love the content and love Mike. And we love you guys, too. And we're just excited to actually meet and spend time with you guys and make friends. So that's one of the biggest perks for me. And I know Mike feels that way, too.

MH: I do, but you're more of a people person. So you don't have to convince anyone. [laughs]

DH: So anybody who signs up for this cruise will get to correspond with Cheri, because she is the direct person that you will sign up under.

CG: Yep. And the easiest way to do it is to go to NakedBibleTours.com. There's a little tab that says "Join Us." You'll be asked to do a signature authentication. And then you'll fill out a form that will come directly over to me that has your name, birthdate, passport information, what kind of cabin selection you want, your credit card information. And I'll get you booked.

DH: Trey and Mike, thanks for having us on and letting us steal a little bit of your time!

MH: Yep.

CG: Yep, thank you.

TS: Alright, Mike, I'm looking forward to it. And I can't wait!

MH: Yep. It will be fun. I've never been on one. I've just heard a lot of good things about them. So I'm looking forward to it.

TS: Alright, I've got nothing else, so you want to just get right into Exodus? Unless you have something else.

MH: No, we might as well jump in here. Last time, we focused just on chapter 32. So that was the golden calf episode. This time, I'll revisit a few things from Exodus 32 and then loop in Exodus 33. These two chapters... And just a little bit from chapter 34, but 34 we're going to keep for next time—the very famous episode of Moses being hidden in the cleft of the rock, and Yahweh passes in

front of him. I want to reserve that for its own episode. But these two chapters work hand-in-hand. Some parts of that are obvious. Some parts are less obvious.

10:00

So I want to get into the content of 33 today. But to do that, we have to reference some things in 32. And toward the end, I'm again going to give listeners a chance to get ahold of some articles that deal with some literary structure of the passages. Because depending on how you perceive what the writer is doing with the arrangement of the material, you can actually analyze both of these chapters (chapters 32 and 33) in different ways so that it highlights very specific teaching points. And again, this is Exodus. We've said this before about Exodus. We've said it before about biblical narrative (historical narrative), like in the Torah (and elsewhere). Since we're in Exodus, we'll just say the Torah.

Back when we started the whole book, we brought up the whole question of historicity. You ask yourself, "What's history?" This is not the way we would write history. But just because Exodus isn't written in a neat, linear, chronological fashion that appears to *our eye* comprehensive and consistent doesn't mean it's not history. The writers do this sort of thing (what we would say "jumbling up material," "putting things out of place," "discussing one topic three or four different times in different places")... We ask, "Why don't you just discuss it all in one place? That's the way it should be done!" Well, they're not doing things the way we think they should be done. The biblical writers just generally (and it happens in narrative a lot) arrange the material in ways that may not be pleasing to our eye, but they do it deliberately so that their readers and their hearers (a lot of people would *hear* these stories) would be led to follow certain patterns. They would be looking for repetitions. They would be able to tell (because it's their culture) that the story is moving one way, and it's going to reach a point and then hinge backward to really where it started. They're going to be able to recognize those patterns, and they're going to see that in those patterns, there are things that the storyteller (whether it's verbal or written) wants us to focus on. None of that means that the stuff didn't happen. It just means that they're not doing history-writing the way we would. And frankly, it's arrogant for us to condemn what they produce and question its historicity just because it doesn't conform to the way we would do it. These two chapters are another classic example of that. It's theologized history writing. It's written the way it is to teach theological truth, not to survive a dissertation panel in a history department. That's not why they're doing it. So we need to think differently about what's going on here.

So last time, we went through the golden calf episode. We could start with a little bit of rehashing. We know the story. Moses is up on the mountain. He doesn't come down for 40 days. The people panic. They go to Aaron. They basically surround him, intimidate him, and say, "Make us gods. Make us *elohim* that will go before us." And Aaron does that, and we get the golden calf. And as we talked about last time, it's very likely that they thought... What they're trying to do is bring Yahweh's presence back into the camp because they are directionless and leaderless. They can't go back. They can't go forward. They're just in a bad

place. But it's unacceptable. And if we read Exodus 32:11-14, we get the flavor of this outcome. God is angry. And he's threatening to destroy the people. And verse 11 says:

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.

15:00

So you get this episode here in 32 where God is angry; Moses essentially talks him out of annihilating the Israelites. [laughs] But what happens is, later in chapter 32 (and this is going to affect some things in chapter 33) Moses gets angry. It sounds like he gets as angry as God was at the Israelites. So it's like the tables turn. And it's not that God isn't angry, because God still seems angry at the end of chapter 32, because he punishes the Israelites with a plague when the chapter ends. Let me read to you how the chapter ends. So think about this. In verses 11-14, Moses talks God out of destroying Israel. God relents. And then you go on with the rest of the episode and you hit verse 25:

²⁵ And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), ²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me."

So basically, what's happened is things are just degenerating in the Israelite camp. They're out of control. Moses comes down from the mountain and sees what's going on. The people are just out of control. And Aaron's not doing anything to help the situation. So even if they might have had good motives, they are now... Maybe they're thinking they're worshiping Yahweh, but it's just a free-for-all. There's immorality, there's debauchery—the whole bit. So Moses sees this. He stands in the gate of the camp and says, "Who is on the Lord's side? (Who's on Yahweh's side?) We're going to take care of this episode." So now the text of Exodus 32 doesn't have Moses pleading for them that God would be merciful. God told them what's going on there. He said, "Your people have forsaken me. They've forsaken what I commanded them." And Moses is like,

“Oh, don’t destroy them!” But when Moses actually shows up and sees what’s going on, now Moses has had it. And he says,

“Who is on the LORD’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. ²⁷ And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’” ²⁸ And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. ²⁹ And Moses said, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.”

So Moses launches a campaign of capital punishment against the people. We’re going to talk a little bit about this, like who exactly was involved here? Who’s the target? Moses essentially... He says, “Thus says the Lord God,” but we think (or we presume) that God had relented earlier. So how does God’s answer to Moses earlier (“Okay, I won’t destroy them.”) jive with Moses going down there and saying, “Hey, you Levites. Go kill the people responsible for this.” And even then, it’s not over. It feels like it just doesn’t fit. It feels contradictory. If God was, “Okay, we’re not going to kill them,” why would Moses think that it was appropriate for him to do this, to announce this? Why would God change his mind and tell Moses to do this? It just has this weird feel to it. Verse 30:

³⁰ The next day [MH: So the day after 3,000 of these men are killed] Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

What’s that? I thought those responsible had just been dealt with. I thought God had already... Notice that the text never actually said this. But the impression you get is, “I thought God had forgiven them way back in verses 11-14.” No, it just said that God relented. He didn’t destroy them. It doesn’t actually say that he forgave them or anything like that. But it’s very easy for us to look at this and wonder, “What’s going on here? I mean, shouldn’t at least the prior verses (verses 25-29)... When these 3,000 guys are killed for whatever they did in relation to the golden calf, why didn’t that take care of the problem? Now it’s like everybody’s in trouble.” In verse 30, “You have sinned a great sin. I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” Verse 31... You just wonder, “How does this all go together?”

³¹ So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold.

Of course, God already knows that.

³² But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”

20:00 So Moses wants God to forgive them. And again, you could ask, “Well, didn’t God already do that? How does one section of the chapter fit with the other section of the chapter?”

³³ But the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book. [MH: God’s answer is pretty categorical.] ³⁴ But now go [MH: “you, Moses—go”], lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.”

³⁵ Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

And that’s the end of chapter 32. It just seems like people get punished more than once. People get forgiven more than once, but then they still get punished more than once. What’s going on here? Sarna, of course, notes this problem and he even adds a little bit more to it. So here’s what Sarna says in his commentary about this whole issue:

The present section concludes with a declaration of divine forbearance [MH: that’s verse 14—God relents]; nevertheless, verses 30–34 record Moses’ entreaty of God and verse 30 expresses his hope that, “perhaps I may win forgiveness for your sin.” To this complication may be added the fact that the parallel account to Deuteronomy 9:15–21 has Moses descending the mountain immediately after being apprised of the situation below and making intercession only after breaking the tablets.

So it’s a little bit different than the one in Exodus here.

Many modern scholars explain the anomalies as resulting from the amalgamation of varying traditions. [MH: This is source criticism.] Ibn Ezra concludes that verses 11–14 are out of chronological sequence and belong after verse 31. They have been placed here because they are Moses’ response to God’s intimation (v. 10) that intercession would be effective. Understanding the text differently, Ramban believes that verses 11–14 are in the correct place and that Moses made two separate intercessions. [MH: This is actually a fairly traditional view within

Evangelical circles.] The first [MH: of these two separate intercessions] (vv. 11–14) was intended to gain rescission of the threat to destroy Israel, whereas the second (vv. 30–34) was to obtain forgiveness after the pulverization of the golden calf and the punishment of the transgressors. Ramban notes that in the version in Deuteronomy, events are telescoped because the story appears in a different context and is narrated for a different purpose.

That's the end of Sarna's introduction to the problems. Now other scholars don't see a contradiction. They view it as two separate intercessions. Durham is one of those in his *Word Biblical Commentary*. He writes a little bit about how he understands things. He says:

The implication of this statement [MH: in verse 14, God relents,] is of course that he tempered but did not altogether waive his judgment, and this implication is confirmed in the continuation of the narrative, at both 32:34 and 35 and also at 33:17 and 34:6–7.

So Durham is saying, "Well, these are different focus points. God doesn't actually forgive them the first time. He just says, 'Okay, I won't destroy them.' But the issue of their forgiveness is still up in the air. So there are two separate contexts, two separate intercessions here." That's how Durham in *Word Biblical Commentary* handles it. And that's fairly common, as I noted before. Durham adds later on:

Thus Moses, reminding the people once more of the gravity of their sin [MH: in verses 30 and 35], announces to them that he will reascend the mountain toward Yahweh to seek atonement for them. He pleads with Yahweh, this time stating with candor the sin and its critical seriousness. In a phrase that seems awkwardly incomplete in Hebrew (either a word has dropped out or the narrator is attempting to represent Moses having difficulty saying what he wants to say), Moses asks Yahweh to forgive Israel or to erase his own name from the book Yahweh has written, a reference apparently to a register of those loyal to Yahweh and thereby deserving his special blessing (cf. Ps 69:28; Isa 4:3; Ezek 13:9).

25:00 Now we did a whole episode on this idea of heavenly books, by the way. You can go back to the podcast. Google "Naked Bible Podcast heavenly books" and you're going to find that. But the point here is that Durham is saying, "Look, it's two different things. Two different contexts—different points of intercession." And he doesn't really see a contradiction here. Now Yahweh, of course, replies and he's not going to blot Moses out of his book. He's going to say, "The one who's going to be blotted out is the one who's guilty." And God says he will visit their sins upon them. But who's going to get visited? It seems like the perpetrators were already killed. So who's left? Durham actually doesn't discuss that. He sort of omits that issue. And this is why others see problems here—a disjuncting,

contradictory feel to it. And others just, “Meh, those are two different things. Who cares?” As far as answering the question, though, of who’s left for God to judge after the Levites killed off the golden calf offenders, the answer seems to be found in Exodus 32:26 and 29. Recall... This is going to tell you where I’m at a little bit. I do think there are differences between the two intercessions. So I tend to be a little bit more in the traditional camp here. But I think we have to loop some other things into the picture that I think justify that.

So to this point, think about where we’ve been in the book of Exodus. The only priests consecrated to serve in sacred space were who? Aaron and his sons. We don’t have a reference... It seems odd, because when we talk about the priesthood and the sanctification of the priesthood... All those chapters about, “You build the ark; you build the golden lampstand.” And the priests wear this and that. And they go through a ceremony and blood gets put on the ear and the toe. It’s easy for us to think that this is happening to the tribe of Levi. It’s not. The only priests you have up to this point that are specifically named are Aaron and his sons. They’re the ones who get installed. But recall even earlier that before we had the installation of Aaron and his sons, there were others who are unnamed—other people (we don’t know what tribe they’re from; there’s no specific tribe doing this) that did priestly things. They offered offerings and sacrifices and whatnot. There were others who performed priestly tasks. Now commentators recognize that. And they use that to help explicate the issue here. Commentators are in consensus that since the description of the capital punishment in Exodus 32 is juxtaposed with the loyalty of the tribe of Levi... Commentators will suggest... Let me just re-read it to you, just so you get the feel for it. This is after the 3,000 are killed.

³⁰The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

So there’s still this atonement issue. There are still people out there who are bearing guilt, so there’s a wider group. And the killing itself was initiated by “Who is on the Lord’s side?” And the tribe of Levi are the ones who are loyal. So you have three groups. You have the people who are going to get killed. They’re guilty of something in relation to the golden calf. You have the Levites, who are not guilty of the golden calf episode. And then you have the wider people. So keep those three groups in mind. What commentators will actually do with this is say, “Ah. We think that those who were killed by the Levites were these other people who were doing priestly tasks prior to the creation of the actual priesthood. So whoever these people were, they have become outsiders. They had formerly been doing things in the worship of Yahweh, or in the service of Yahweh—doing these offerings and sacrifices and whatnot that we’ve talked about in other parts of Exodus in relation to the priesthood. These are the ones who went to Aaron. This is speculative, but you can see how this argument develops. These are the guys who went to Aaron, wanted this golden calf

30:00

created, participated in the gathering of the material to create the golden calf. They were enthusiastic about the golden calf. Blah, blah, blah. And they got the people to worship it. These are the guys who are targeted when Moses comes down from the mountain and says, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The tribe of Levi says, "We're on your side. We are on Yahweh's side. We are with you, Moses. We are not defining Yahweh as this golden calf." And Moses says, "Well, thus says the Lord God, 'Take your sword. Go kill those guys.'" And that this episode is the framework against which we understand later, when the tribe of Levi is itself sanctified along with the priests of Aaron and his sons, that now the whole tribe of Levi essentially replaces these other guys. Like this is the historical event that brings the status of the tribe of Levi about. Because prior to this, only Aaron and his sons were the priests. The tribe of Levi is actually never described as being *the priesthood* (or part of the priesthood or part of any of this) until after this episode.

So this... The mention specifically of Levi in this episode is sort of an interpretive clue and an interpretive key for many people. If you had 20 commentaries here on Exodus, everybody's going to talk about this because Levi is prominent in this. They're going to see this as really how to parse who's getting punished and whatnot.

Now if we go back to Exodus 32:11-14 and Moses is saying, "Hey, don't annihilate the people," you say, "How would that get taken care of?" Well, here's how it would go. God is angry with everybody. "These people don't deserve me to be their God and they've broken my command. Here they are making this graven image. I'm just going to destroy everybody. I'm going to take you, Moses..." Think about the wording that God uses. God says, when he's threatening to destroy the people, "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*." So he actually quotes the Abrahamic covenant, the part about making a great nation from the descendants of Abraham, and he applies it to *Moses*. So "I'll just annihilate these people and we'll start over with you, Moses." And Moses says, "Oh, don't do that. Because the Egyptians are going to say this. And you know they're going to think you did this deliberately." The whole bit. So God says, "Okay. I won't do that." So he doesn't forgive them; he just says, "I won't destroy them. Moses, you'd better go back down there." Moses goes down. He sees what's going on now with his own eyes and gets really ticked. And that's when he issues this challenge: "Okay, who's on the Lord's side? We're going to take care of this problem." And he's the mouthpiece for God. The text is very plain and says, "Thus says the Lord God." (This is what Moses is saying.) "Thus says the Lord," to the Levites who said, "We're on your side. We're on the Lord's side. We're not doing this golden calf thing." "Go and destroy from one end of the camp to the other your relatives, your kin, whoever it is." And they do. Three thousand people die.

So the supposition is that those 3,000 people are the non-Aaronic priesthood guys that were in Israel. Somebody's doing sacrifices. Somebody's doing certain priestly things prior to the installation of the priesthood because you have references to elders and priests prior to the establishment of Aaron and his sons. So it's those guys—this unnamed group. This is how commentators look at the episode and how they make it fit together. And so those are the ones who are punished. But the people still need to be dealt with. God didn't destroy them, but God is still angry. So Moses realizes this. The only people who have been dealt with here are the primary perpetrators here. So Moses says, "Look. You still have a problem, people. You're still guilty. Because you participated in this. You may not have made it. You may not have been the ringleaders here, but you went along with this. And it might be that you thought you were doing the right thing." (This is our previous episode on chapter 32 about the rationale for the golden calf, whether that could've represented Yahweh or not. It very well could have.) But Moses says, "Look. Despite all that, this was still wrong. This was still sin. God does not accept this. So you still have a problem. So I'm going to go back up the mountain and I'm going to make intercession for you and try to make atonement for you." And then he has this second conversation with God. God says, "Look, I'm not going to blot you out of the book. I'm not going to do that. The ones who are guilty are the ones who are going to be dealt with." And so God sends a plague on the people. And you would think that takes care of it, because now we're at the end of chapter 32.

35:00

So this is how commentators put all these elements together so that... You can get a coherent narrative feel out of it by asking yourselves and then answering, "How many groups do we have? Who's who? Who's doing what? What is happening to whom?" So chapter 32 ends with this plague, but oddly enough, when you get into 33, you as the reader still wonder if the judgment is actually over. Because if you get into 33... Let's look at how 33 starts.

The LORD said to Moses, "Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your offspring I will give it.' ²I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ³Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; [MH: now here's the key phrase:] but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

⁴When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.

Oddly enough, there's another reference to ornaments. It has a religious feel to it.

⁵ For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.’” ⁶ Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

Now if these ornaments (whatever they were, like the rings of gold) have some religious significance, did they put these things on again? Are they talismans? Is this something God is upset with? Or is God saying, “Look. You wear that stuff, you’re not on my side. You take it off, you are on my side. So let’s go. Let’s see what side you’re on here.” It’s tough to know exactly what’s going on because we don’t know the nature of these ornaments. But at the very least, verse 3, “I will not go up among you.” Now you would think, after the plague that ended chapter 32, that the matter is settled. God’s satisfied. Everybody who is deserving of punishment gets punished. And we’re okay. We’re okay. But it doesn’t seem that they are, because God says, “I’m not going to go with you.” So the reader is left wondering, “What’s going on now? Has the golden calf problem leaked into chapter 33? What’s going on here? What do we make of this?” You might wonder how as well... “I will send an angel before you,” (Exodus 33:2), “and I will drive out the Canaanites and all these other –ites, but I’m not going with you.” You might also wonder (especially this podcast audience) how all that’s consistent with the idea back in Exodus 23:20-23 that Yahweh’s angel is, in fact, Yahweh, since Yahweh’s name (his presence) is in that angel.

Now what we’ve noted so far... You have to ask yourself... You have the angel in 23 and Yahweh’s in the angel, the angel is Yahweh, he’s just a visible Yahweh. And here in verses 2 and 3 in chapter 33, we’ve just had the awful golden calf thing and everybody’s punished. Looks like we’ve got a plan here, because God says in verse 2, “I’m going to send an angel before you and I’m going to drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites...” Everything’s going well. Everything’s reset. Everything is back to normal. And then you hit verse 3, “I’m not going with you.” How in the world is that consistent with both the judgment and the theology of Exodus 23, that the angel is Yahweh? Well, I’m going to suggest that it actually *is* completely consistent with the Angel of the Lord theology in Exodus 23 being the visible Yahweh because of some things that we’re going to encounter a few verses later in chapter 33 and some wider context things.

Here’s what I mean. Here’s why I think it’s consistent. You realize the problem. How is it consistent with the judgment? And how can... Now it seems like the angel isn’t Yahweh, because the angel is going to get sent, and God says, “I’m not going with you.” So how does this work? Here’s why I think it’s completely consistent with the angel in Exodus 23 that was going to be sent with the people actually *being* the visible Yahweh. And that’s consistent with this language here.

40:00 Here's why. A couple of reasons. And Sarna is the one who points this out. I think it's worth mentioning. Sarna points out that the promise of Exodus 33:2 ("I will send an angel before you. I will drive out the Canaanites...") closely echoes the promises of Exodus 23:20-33 and Exodus 32:34,

...but the emissary is not here [in Exodus 33:2] designated by God as 'My' angel.

In other words, in Exodus 33:2, God doesn't refer to the angel he's sending as "his angel." ("My angel.") It's generic. It's just an angel. And Sarna says, "You know, that change..." This is Sarna's wording:

The change is ominous.

The implication is that the angel being sent ahead of Israel in the wake of the golden calf incident is some other angel, something less than the previous one promised, who was specifically Yahweh's angel, and, as I've argued many times—Yahweh himself in visible form. So I think Sarna's observation... This is just our first point. I think Sarna's observation that, "You know, if you look at this carefully, you look at these other references (Exodus 23, Exodus 32:34), it was Yahweh's angel. Here it's not. And Sarna thinks that the change in wording is significant, and I would agree.

Secondly, the threat of Exodus 33:3 (that's where God says, "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way")... The threat in that verse, where Yahweh says he is not going to go up with Israel is actually more of a testing of Moses than an intended reality. Why do I say that? Well, let's read Exodus 33:4 through the end of the chapter. Let's read what else happens after God says, "I will not go up among you." What happens? Because this is going to tell us that, "Well, yeah, God said he wasn't going to go up, but maybe he does." [laughs] Maybe God does after all, and we don't have this problem with the angel. So here we are in verse 4. Let me read it.

⁴ When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. ⁵ For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'" ⁶ Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up,

and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Moses said to the LORD, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’

The part about the tent of meeting is really interruptive. God says to Moses, “I ain’t going with you.” The people freak out. “Agh, what are we going to do now?” And God says, “Okay, we’ll see what we’re going to do with you. Take off the ornaments. Get moving.” And then we have this thing about the tent. Well, it’s there to establish that Moses and God had a close relationship. God spoke to Moses face-to-face. So then when we come back to Moses in the scene after God has told him he’s not going to go up with him, Moses said to the Lord,

¹² Moses said to the LORD, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people’ [MH: (‘go take them to the land’)], but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’

Now that could be a reference (“you have not let me know whom you will send with me”)... Is Moses suggesting... Is he asking, “What angel are you going to send with me? If it’s not this other angel that we’ve seen—Yahweh in human form... We’ve seen you, Lord, in human form before.” Readers of *Unseen Realm* (or listeners to the podcast) will know why I say this. We’ve had God in human form at the bush. We’ve had God in human form on Mount Sinai. We’ve had a number of episodes, and Moses knows this. He is the one who is privy to this. So now Moses is like, “Well, just who are you going to send with me? If you’re not going to go with us, who’s this angel? Who is this? Because it’s not you!” It’s actually an implied evidence that Moses knows that the earlier Yahweh in human form *is* the angel that had originally been promised. But now he’s uncertain. Like, “Okay, if it’s not you, then who is it? What’s going on? Who are you going to send with me? If it’s not you, I want to know who it is.” So we can make sense of the language and Moses is like, “You’re doing this to me, yet I know you by name, and you tell me that I’ve found favor in your sight. This is what you’re saying. You have said to me, ‘I know you by name and you have also found favor in my sight.’

45:00

13 Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.”

Here’s God’s response in verse 14:

14 And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

“My presence.” Now there’s something interesting in Hebrew here—a couple of things interesting in Hebrew. The ESV says, “My presence will go with you.” In the Hebrew, the words *with you* are not in there. It just says, “My presence will go. And I will give you...” (And the verb form is singular.) “I will give you rest.” Now rest (if you’re going to look at the conquest accounts)... “I will give you rest.” The phrase about giving people rest means subduing the land’s inhabitants. For instance, Joshua 21:44 says this:

44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.

So giving them rest is conquering the enemies. Joshua 22:4:

4 And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

Joshua 23:1:

A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years...

So this idea of giving rest is subduing the land’s inhabitants. So God has now said in verse 14... Let me just read it to you. Back up in chapter 33:2, “I’ll send an angel (just a generic angel) [with] you, and I’ll drive out the Canaanites, but I’m not going with you. Now here he says, “My presence will go, and I will give you (singular) rest. I’ll subdue the inhabitants of the land.” Verse 15:

15 And he said to him [MH: this is Moses talking now], “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. 16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with

us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

50:00 Let's stop there. Look at the conversation. God is reassuring him, "Look. I will go." And we can't say that he's saying this just for Moses' sake, to give Moses... "I'll give you (singular—"you, Moses") rest. Just you." No. Because the singular pronoun *you* is also singular back in verse 3, "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you." That's singular as well. It actually refers to the whole people. It actually refers to Israel collectively. And he's speaking to Moses because Moses is the representative leader. So this is a promise. God says, "Okay, I know I said I would just send a generic angel. Not my angel. I'll send *an* angel." (We're hearkening back to Sarna's observation here.) "But I'm not going with you." Here in verses 14-17, God changes his mind. Or back in verses 2 and 3, God was saying that to test Moses, to see how he would respond. And we can see in verses 12 and following how Moses responded. He pleads with God. "You say, 'Bring up this people, but you've not let me know who you're going to send with me.'" Like, "What am I supposed to do now? If it's not *you*, I don't want to go. If it's not you, don't send us up." This dialogue tells you that Moses understood that the original promised angel back in 23 that's referred to by Yahweh as "my angel"... Moses understood who that was. Moses understood that this is Yahweh present as a man in visible form, just like at the burning bush. Moses gets it. And when it seems like it's withdrawn... God says, "I'm not going with you. Oh yeah, I'll send an angel, but I'm not going with you." Like it has to be some other angel now. Moses says, "I don't know who you're going to send now." And he's troubled. Obviously, he's troubled. And then God says, "Look, I will go with you. My presence (verse 14, my *panim*)... My presence will go. And I'll subdue your enemies. I'll do what I originally promised."

And then when Moses hears that (God reassures him, "This thing I have spoken to you I will do"), what's Moses' response? "Show me your glory." Moses wants to see. He wants to see what he saw in the burning bush. Actually, he wants the full blast here. He's either taking advantage of the opportunity now that he's having this conversation with God to see more than he's gotten to see... He's going to get everything out of this conversation that he can get. Or it's something a little pared back (a little simpler) that, "Okay. I want to see what I saw in the bush there. I want to see *The Angel* (your angel). I want to see *you* in visible form. Show me your glory." You could also read it and say, "Okay, I know who that is, and yes, I've seen the bush. And we know who this angel is." Moses could also be asking for more. He wants to see God's presence directly, not mediated by the angel. You could read it that way, too. And when we get to

chapter 34 next episode, I tend to think that Moses could be going down that trajectory. What God replies in verse 19 is,

“I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’

Isn't that interesting? “Yes, Moses, I will proclaim my name.” It's the name that's in the angel. And what Moses is actually going to see in chapter 34 is Yahweh as a man, but just the back parts (if you remember chapter 34, which we'll get into next time). So this language is tied back into “the angel in whom is the name” of chapter 23. So Moses knows that angel is different. That angel is Yahweh. That angel is the presence of Yahweh in visible human form. And since he knows it, that's why he's troubled when you get to verses 2 and 3 here in chapter 33. When God says, “Yeah, I'll send an angel, but I'm not going with you,” Moses knows that that's not the same. So I think Sarna's observation is really on target here. I think it really plays well into the interpretation of what's happening here and shows that it is consistent—all of this is consistent—with this one angel being Yahweh in visible human form. So back to verse 19:

¹⁹ And [Yahweh] said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

“But,” he said, “you cannot see my face” (my *panim*)... “You can't see my presence.” But God had just said in verse 14, “My presence will go with you.” Well, sure he will, as a man. As the Angel. But he's saying to Moses, “Look, you can't see just my presence, unveiled, not in human form. You can't see that. “For man shall not see me and live.

²¹ And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

By the way, God has to be embodied as a human to have a hand.

55:00

²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

My *panim*—I take that as the unveiled presence.

So we're going to talk about that a lot more in the next episode (in chapter 34), but for our purposes now, note the interchange. What this means with respect to the angel question is that God *is* going to go. He is going to go. The original

angel (“my angel,” his angel) is going to go with Moses. So it’s not a contradiction. He promises that his presence will be with Israel when they go into the land.

Now what’s really important here is the parallel in Isaiah 63:9. Because there (Isaiah 63:9) when it’s recounting the history of the exodus from Egypt and then the journey to the land, it actually refers to the delivering angel as the “angel of the presence—the angel of God’s presence.” And so bringing all these data together creates consistency with Exodus 23:20-23, that the angel in whom Yahweh’s name or presence was would go before Israel... He is going to go. God *will* be with them. He *will* give them rest. That *that* angel was God himself in visible form.

We’ll pick up more of it... I want to wrap up this episode. I want to say a few things about the odd interruptive section about the tent of meeting just a little bit here, and then I want to reference some articles that you can reference for some literary analysis and just telegraph to you what you’re going to get there. But in Exodus 33:7-11...

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent.

Now this is a good place to remind ourselves... We had a couple of episodes on the Tabernacle. It’s a good place to remind ourselves that the term “tent of meeting” and “tabernacle” are *not* completely synonymous, though there is definite overlap. As we talked about earlier in the episodes on the tabernacle structure, the tent of meeting was obviously covered with a tent. That’s why it’s a *tent* of meeting. It has a tent. The Tabernacle itself, though, was not. The Tabernacle just had a tented part (the internal part of it). The tented part of the Tabernacle was within the walls of the overall Tabernacle structure. In other words, the tented part of the Tabernacle was the tent of meeting. But the two are not completely synonymous. It appears that before the Tabernacle’s construction (that’s going to happen in Exodus 35 and onward), the tent of meeting existed outside the camp. Afterward, the tent of meeting (and after the Tabernacle’s actually built) would refer to the Holy of Holies or the entire tented holy place. It could refer to part of the tented area above where the Ark was, or the whole tented area, *inside* the Tabernacle.

Now if you have Bible software, all you have to do is look up “tent of meeting” and “tabernacle” where they occur together, and you’re going to see this

distinction. So I think this is a good place to remind ourselves of that. Because there are critics who would use this to say that this is contradictory and it reflects different sources and whatnot. You just don't have to go there. When we talked about the Tabernacle itself (like with Friedman)... The controversy over Friedman's idea that the tented structure (the tent of meeting, *the tent*) was moved inside the Temple, when the Temple was constructed... This is just me. I think that there... Unless you're just going to take those metaphorically, which there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of merit for that... If those verse mean what they say, this would make sense. It would make sense that the tent of meeting (the tent) is different than the overall Tabernacle. And it refers to a subset of the Tabernacle institution—the Tabernacle sacred space that was covered by the Tabernacle. It makes sense that this is a subset that could actually go inside the Temple. You can go back to those episodes and listen to that. But this is a good place to remind ourselves that the terminology overlaps, but we don't have totally synonymous relationship here.

1:00:00

Now lastly, I want to draw your attention to two articles I put in the protected folder that provide literary and structural analyses of Exodus 32-34. If you're interested, you can get access to these articles. I do think that they are certainly worth taking a look at. The titles of the articles are... One is by Ralph Hendrix: "A Literary Structural Analysis of the Golden Calf Episode of Exodus 32:1-33:6." It's an *Andrews University Seminary Studies Journal* article. On page 212, he takes Exodus 32 and 33 puts it into a nice chiasm. And then he summarizes the conclusions. It's interesting, if you look at the chiasm (and obviously this doesn't translate well to podcasting)... If you get the article, you can look at it. The central point of the chiasm is Exodus 32:26a, which is the opportunity for repentance among the people. So that seems to be what the writer was trying to get his readers to see as the most important thing in these two chapters. So you have lots of parallels, just like a chiasm works. The first six verses of Exodus 32 are going to parallel Exodus 33:4-6. You just have to go look at it visually. But this would explain... If the chiasm works, and it certainly seems to work... It's actually very obvious once you see it. This would explain why the episode isn't given in strict chronological fashion. The writer doesn't want to do that. He wants to chop up the elements and put them in a chiastic structure to highlight the theme of repentance. That's just what they're doing. It doesn't mean that the events aren't historical. It means that's not the way history is told. That's not the way history is put forth in biblical literature. This literary kind of stuff happens a lot.

The second article is by Dale Ralph Davis, "Rebellion, Presence, and Covenant: A Study in Exodus 32-34." This is from *Westminster Theological Journal* in 1982. The other one was in 1990. This actually gives several possible structures (that are not chiasms) of chapter 32. And then within chapter 32, he offers a chiastic structure that is different than Hendrix's. Because Hendrix's goes over both chapters. But Davis actually offers one within chapter 32. And again, highlighting important themes—theological teaching themes—in the presentation of the

material. Here's the point. This is often how the Old Testament (and really the Gospels do this, too) presents history. It tells you something happened, and you can believe that something happened. The information that XYZ happened is trustworthy. But in the telling of what happened, the writers always want you to learn something. They want you to see something. They want you to be thinking about not just the nuts and bolts of, "oh, this event happened." And "here we had this event, and that was followed by that event and another event." This is how we do history. Rather, what they want you to do is to recognize things that happened in the past and what it teaches you about God or yourself or the people in the story. What are the spiritual lessons?

So Scripture will present a retelling of the past in this way. It is not interested in many instances in producing a catalogue or a chronology or an itinerary. They just don't do history the way we do in many cases. Sometimes it does. But in many cases (I would say it's fair to say most cases), biblical writers just don't do history the way we do. They have different goals in mind. But none of that falsifies the real-time events—that something real happened here and this is a faithful retelling that these events happened, but the reason we're retelling the events or telling you about those events is not to give you an exhaustive chronicle. It's so that you'll learn something about God and salvation history and the people of God and so on and so forth. This is why the Bible does what it does. This is how it does history.

1:05:00

So if you're interested in that sort of thing, these are in the protected folder. I think you'll find them interesting. But we can't (since it's visual) really do that on the podcast. So I'm just going to wrap up this episode here and say for next time, we're going to get into Exodus 34, when the fulfillment of this conversation Moses has just had with God about seeing his glory transpires, and what we can learn from that, both in terms of biblical theology and just about what's going on on the ground with the people of God and Moses during these events in the Exodus.

TS: Alright, Mike. Sounds good. We'll be looking forward to that, and hopefully by then you'll have a tan [MH laughs] or somewhat of a better tan.

MH: Yeah, maybe it'll get into the 60s. [laughs] And even though it's chilly, the sun *is* out. That is true.

TS: That's right. More so than in Washington state.

MH: Yeah. Somebody asked me if I brought the weather with me from Seattle, because it was so cold here the first week. And I said, "Well, I looked up and saw the sun, so that told me where I was."

TS: Alright, Mike, well we appreciated it as always, and we'll look forward to chapter 34 next week. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.