

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 315

Exodus Q&A, Part 4

March 16, 2020

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Why did God refuse to tell Jacob his name when he wrestled with him? [3:50 time stamp]
- Is Jesus the “arm of the Lord” in Isaiah 53, and does that give us a hint about the Messiah being God in the flesh? [14:20]
- Is the “mixed multitude” in Exodus 12:38 the same people as Numbers 11:4 (“the rabble”)? [16:50]
- Why couldn’t the Israelites cook a baby goat in its mother’s milk? [23:35]
- How do we know when we get carried away reading into the author’s intent? [29:50]
- When you were talking about hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, why you didn’t bring up Romans 9? [34:35]
- Did Moses make the wrong decision when he listened to Jethro’s advice and delegated judicial work? [36:25]
- Have you changed your mind about what you taught years ago regarding Exodus 33 and 34 and the “two powers”? [40:55]
- Is Sarna’s Exodus commentary the best one? [42:50]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 315: Exodus Q&A, Part 4. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Well, we lied to everybody: we were able to squeeze out four episodes. We said two, then we said three, but now we’ve made it four.

MH: Yeah. I’ll bet they’re shocked. I’ll bet people are just reeling from that.

TS: A year’s worth of questions, so we have to squeeze in as many as we can.

MH: Yeah. It’s not like it hasn’t happened before, either.

TS: Right, absolutely. Well, Mike, how’s everything else going?

MH: We are up to our necks in students in Jacksonville. So that's a good problem. The distance ed. component of the Awakening School started this past Monday. And the final tally by the time they cut off registration was a little over 700 just for the distance. There are about 120 or so live. So we're over 800 students, which is significantly more than we thought it would be. But we'll cope. We will recruit people. Probably we'll drag them kicking and screaming [laughs] over from what their normal job is to help me do some grading. But I can already tell that in the fall we're going to have to staff up. So it's a good problem to have.

TS: Absolutely. And have you met any people randomly in town that have listened to the podcast or read your work or recognized you?

MH: Oh, yeah. Yes. So I've been recognized in a grocery store, in a restaurant bathroom [TS laughs], and I'm trying to remember the third place. Oh, yeah. There was a waitress in a restaurant Drenna and I were at that somebody working with her (one of the other waiters, I guess) recognized me and asked her to ask me if it was me. [laughter] So three times in one week.

TS: That's pretty good.

MH: It was just kind of crazy. Well, it's Jacksonville, and Celebration is a pretty large church network here. So I guess I'm not surprised. But three in a week. That was a bit of a... I wasn't expecting that. Especially the one in the restroom. [laughs]

TS: That's awesome. Do you know if they recognized you because of Celebration or the podcast? Or did they say?

MH: One of them was Celebration and the other two had heard me on the podcast or read the book or something like that.

TS: That's awesome. Good stuff. I like that.

MH: My kids like to make fun of me when I get recognized like that. They like to pretend that I'm a celebrity or something, especially Simka. She gets into digging me for that. But thankfully, she wasn't there for any of them.

TS: Yeah, you're not just famous. You're *infamous*.

MH: Nerd famous.

TS: Did you ever see that movie, *The Three Amigos*, with Steve Martin and Chevy Chase?

MH: Oh, a long, long time ago.

TS: They're like, "We're *infamous!* We're not just famous; we're *infamous!*" [laughter] Alright, Mike, well, we've got some questions here. So let's get to it and try to knock them out if we can.

MH: Okay. Sure.

TS: Charlotte says:

3:50 **I really enjoyed the episode on the Kenite hypothesis. In the episode on Exodus 5 and 6, you touched on the translation of Exodus 6:3. You said it could mean the opposite of how it translated, implying that God had indeed revealed Himself by His Name Yahweh to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, in Genesis 32:24-32, Jacob wrestles with God in human form and asks His Name. The Man refuses. How does this passage relate to the Kenite hypothesis, especially considering the fact that at the time when Jacob wrestled with the man, the Kenites had been around for at least two generations since Abraham (Gen 15:18-21) and Jacob could therefore have potentially known it? Why does God refuse to give Jacob His Name in this instance?**

5:00 **MH:** Well, let's briefly review what I said back in Episode 266. That's what's being referenced here. I was commenting on Francis Andersen's opinion, which was published in his book, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*. (There's some great late-night reading for you.) Andersen was commenting that Exodus 6:3 should be translated "I am the Lord. [In other words, 'I am Yahweh.'] I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, and my name is Yahweh. Did I not make myself known to them?" That's quite opposite of what you'll see in most English translations. And Andersen is doing that based upon his understanding of the syntax in that verse and turning it into a question, which... Andersen is a very famous, very well-known Hebraist and Semiticist. He's not an amateur. So this could very well be what the point is. And if Andersen is correct, then therefore the verse is no proof of the divine name criterion for JEDP (the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch), which takes Yahweh and El names as proof of separate source documents for the Torah.

So if Andersen's right, then the divine name criterion... And they reference Exodus 6:3 a lot in justifying using divine names as a criterion for separate sources. But if he's correct, then that whole argument just sort of falls flat. In the Hebrew Bible as it stands, of course, Yahweh *does* appear in texts that source critics say originally didn't have that name. The critics believe that Yahweh gets sprinkled in the "non Yahweh" source (or sources) by a later editor to help dovetail the sources together and to help their content to create a connection between the patriarchal deity (the El names: El Shaddai, El this, El that) and other sources that used Yahweh. They (the source critics) would say Abraham

didn't know Yahweh as the name of the deity who visited him, but he knew the deity that visited him by some EI name. That's how the argument goes.

Anyone with a study Bible or who looks for "Lord" in all small caps will see the name Yahweh in the patriarchal stories and wonder, "What in the world's going on here?" But again, if you wonder what's going on here, then that shows you're not familiar with the whole JEDP approach—that originally the Torah was composed of these source documents. One source document used Yahweh, another source document described the deity in EI names, and then some later editor came along and spliced them together. And to tighten the agreement, he sprinkled in the divine name in all sorts of places just so it would just cohere more readily. That's the theory.

Now source critics (people with that perspective) would say that the Kenites would have been EI worshippers, not Yahweh worshippers. (They would have followed the patriarchal traditions. And the patriarchs, of course, in this view used EI names for God.) And so they would argue that Exodus 6:3 *is* new information to Moses, and therefore to others in Midian and even broadly to the Israelites. They would argue that Yahweh is a new name—a special covenant name, forever to be associated with the deliverance from Egypt to which the God of the burning bush was calling Moses.

As far as the Jacob incident itself (this is another part of the question) and the refusal of the Angel to give a name, the answer could follow a couple trajectories. I'll just reference a... There's a decent commentary discussion here. I think Hamilton's commentary does a nice job of this. But in a nutshell, there are two ways to look at this. You could say that:

1. Since the point of the episode (Jacob wrestling with "the Man" who turns out to be Elohim—God) is that God has decided to change Jacob's name (Jacob's given name is thus surrendered or taken from him), the point could be that Jacob was out of line to ask the Angel to surrender *his* name. After all, Jacob is the trickster in the patriarchal stories and he could've been seeking information that wasn't relevant to perhaps seek an advantage in the exchange. Now Currid (we referenced his commentary before in the Exodus series) thinks that Jacob was essentially playing games at this point to seek advantage. Currid writes:

Jacob then attempts to turn the tables by asking, 'Now tell me your name.' The Angel of Yahweh responds with another rhetorical question—Jacob already knows with whom he is wrestling.

"Why do you ask my name?" implying he already knows who it is. The Angel isn't letting Jacob call any shots here. He's just refusing.

10:00

2. Another way to look at this is the ancient belief that to know the name of a supernatural being is to have power over it. Some have argued (and it's fairly common in exorcism texts, for example) that this is what's going on. Now Hamilton, in the *New International Commentary on Genesis* (NICOT, Genesis), rejects this idea, drawing on a parallel in the book of Judges that certainly has no such hint of trying to get power over the supernatural being by asking for the name. I'm going to read a little bit from Hamilton. If you go back to Judges 13, this is Samson's parents and they get visited by the Angel (the Man). Samson's mother refers to this figure as a man. So they end up encountering him again and then they ask the Angel for his name. So Hamilton writes this:

The man's question is: *Why is it that you inquire about my name?* It is a question to which Jacob is not given the opportunity to respond [MH: what Hamilton's doing is comparing the two stories], or perhaps he chooses not to respond. The scene is much like the one between the angel of Yahweh [MH: with Jacob] and Samson's father Manoah: "And Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, 'What is your name, so that... we may honor you?'"

There's a little important feature there. Because in the Judges story, it's clearly not to seek power or to seek some advantage over the Angel. They're not trying to pull a fast one here.

And the angel of Yahweh said to him, 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?'" (Judges 13:17–18). Both the man (Genesis 32) and the angel (Judges 13) ask the same question: *lāmmá zeh tiš' al lišmî*. In both instances the silence, the hesitancy, of the other being, begins to produce within Jacob/Manoah a realization of the supernatural status of that being. One wonders if "Why is it that you inquire about my name?" is another way of asking, "Jacob, don't you realize who I am?"

So at this point, Hamilton is veering off to where Currid is at (the first view). And he adds:

The text contains no evidence that Jacob desires to know the name of his adversary so that he might exercise power over him. This interpretation is based solely on parallels drawn from primitive religion in which demons and numens played a large part. Jacob's question is nothing more than a request for information from and identification of his adversary. This request is a formal element in the theophanies of the OT (see, e.g., Judges 13:6, 18). A feature of those theophanies seems to be that only with the disappearance of the deity does the protagonist realize he or she has had contact with the divine. Cf. Judges 6:22; 13:21; Luke 24:31.

So what's going on here is both Hamilton and Currid... And I think the comparison of Judges 13 *does* rule out seeking power by asking the name in this passage. So that leaves us with this option. The refusal in Judges is akin to saying, "You can't handle the truth," or "You ought to know better. You ought to know who I am." And Currid is sort of tracking on the same thing. So I'm with Currid (and Hamilton as far as he's concurring with Currid here). The Angel doesn't give an answer to Jacob's question. But yet (think about the story), Jacob calls the name of the place Peniel (the face of El, the face of God) and explains, "I have seen God" (or "a god"), "I have seen *elohim* face to face." So I think it's reasonable to conclude that Jacob did know—he had some inkling—that this wasn't an ordinary man. So therefore, the question again is, "Is Jacob playing games and trying to seek something in the exchange that the Angel is not willing to give him?" But I don't think it's a magical sort of formation, seeking power over a supernatural being. I think that goes too far.

TS: John has a question about episode 266:

14:20

In episode 266, Dr. Heiser discussed the Biblical motif of the "arm" of the Lord. I believe he tied it to Egyptian pharaohs who believed themselves to be Horus incarnate (i.e., Horus in human form). Isaiah 53 clearly speaks of Jesus and states, "And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Is it safe for us to view Jesus as the "arm" of the Lord? Does this give readers a hint that the Messiah, Jesus, would be God in human form?

MH: Well, I think the language in Isaiah 53 certainly points to a personal, individual deliverer. I don't think readers would intuitively know from the language that God would come as a man, though, as opposed to the passage speaking of a man *empowered* by God. Even in John 12:38, where the Isaiah 53 passage is actually cited (referenced)... Let's just read that:

³⁸ **so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:**

**"Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"**

Even in that passage, it's linked two verses earlier to signs and wonders. So even in John 12:38, the verse is referenced in connection with signs, not as a part of an argument that God had become a man, though elsewhere in John some of the things John says make that evident. But in this passage, the citation itself isn't making that point. Now when you think about it, Moses was the conduit through which God did signs and wonders and he wasn't God in human flesh, obviously. If the messiah was perceived as a new Moses (the prophet like unto Moses), which the New Testament makes pretty obvious that's how Jesus was to be perceived (Acts 3:22, Acts 7:37, for instance), then the arm of the Lord reference could quite easily have been understood in the way that it was used to

describe Moses: “here is a human agent of God’s power,” which falls short of incarnation. So I think it would be to read too much into the language of Isaiah 53 to say that the arm of the Lord points to incarnation. I think that takes the language a bit too far.

TS: Larry in Denver, CO, has our next question:

16:50

What or who are the 'mixed multitude' in Exodus 12:38? Are they the same people in Numbers 11:4 when they are referred to as 'the rabble'?

MH: This is kind of an interesting question. “Mixed multitude” in Exodus 12:38 is in Hebrew = עֶרֶב רַב (‘*ereb rab*). *Rab* is a noun that means multitude, so ‘*ereb* is the important term. For those who have some Hebrew, this is a homonym to another *ereb*. ‘*Ereb* is a Hebrew word for “evening”. This is a different ‘*ereb*. This ‘*ereb* is used for people of foreign descent (in other words, non-Israelite descent, or not descended from Abraham). Examples would be Nehemiah 13:3:

³As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

The word there is ‘*ereb*. Jeremiah 25:20:

“all the mixed tribes among them...”

“Mixed tribes”... Tribes would be ‘*ereb*. So you get the idea. So the “mixed multitude” would therefore refer to foreign peoples (i.e., non-Israelites, non-Hebrews) who left Egypt with the Hebrews.

The word translated “rabble” in Numbers 11:4 is an entirely different word (רַב־עַמִּים). You would think that ought to end the discussion, but it actually doesn’t. Some rabbinic commentators do make this identification. They do view these passages as parallels. Targum Onkelos actually translates the term in Numbers 11:4... The term is ‘*asapsûp*. We have an aleph appended in the text. (This is a weird instance. We’re not going to get into it. But it’s one of the few times in the Hebrew Bible where a letter doesn’t have any vocalization for it. So it’s pronounced *sahf sûf*, even though it begins with aleph.) For those of you who have Hebrew, you can care about that. For those of you who don’t, don’t worry about it. But you’ve got ‘*asapsûp*. Let’s just say that. So that doesn’t sound anything like ‘*ereb rab*. But you have some rabbinic commentators that view them together. And Targum Onkelos (a Targum is an Aramaic translation of something, in this case, the Hebrew Bible) actually translates the ‘*asapsûp* term with an Aramaic term that is nearly identical to the ‘*ereb rab* in Exodus 12:38. [laughs] So it’s almost like the Aramaic translator of the Targum intentionally tried to harmonize the two. So that gets picked up on by later rabbinic commentary

20:00

and leads to putting these two things together in identifying the two groups (the mixed multitude of Exodus 12:38 with the rabble of Numbers 11:4). Now I'm going to read you some really short sections here from some commentators that sort of... I'll just read them and you can see where they're coming from here. This is the *Word Biblical Commentary*. Budd writes this, talking about *'asapsûp*:

The word occurs only here, and might mean literally "a gathering of people," from קָדַח "to collect." Some commentators associate this group with the "mixed multitude" of Exodus 12:38 (e.g. A. Dillmann, *Numeri*, 56; G. B. Gray, *Numbers*, 102). The root, however, is different, and there is no clear warrant for the assumption.

So that's pretty clear-cut in Budd's mind. Now Baruch Levine, in his commentary on Numbers, writes this:

The Hebrew *'asapsûp* [MH: he's going to vocalize the aleph for us] is a reduplicative form of the verb *'-s-p* 'to gather in', which is said of taking in foundlings as well as lost objects (Deut 22:2; Ps 27:10).

See, what he's doing here is he's going to say, "Okay, if you go back to Exodus 12:38, you'll notice *'ereb rab*, *'ereb rab*, *'ereb rab*. There's that R-V (or R-B actually) section in both words. It's like a repetition." He says, if you look at Numbers 11:4, *'asapsûp* is also a reduplication of a particular verb lemma (*'asap*, to gather in). He says:

The verb *'asap* often connotes the assembling of fighting forces [MH: and he's going to draw a conclusion from that too] (1 Sam 17:11). So it remains unclear whether the reference here is to auxiliary fighting forces, or to camp followers and other non-Israelite hangers-on. [MH: He's basically going to turn this into a mob, is what Levine's doing in his commentary.] In the parallel account of Exod 12:38 [MH: so he just assumes out of the gate that Exodus 12:38 is parallel because both forms of the word have this reduplication thing going on in them], the term used is *'ēreb rab*, perhaps originally *'arabrāb*, also a reduplicative form meaning "a mixed group." In both accounts, in Numbers and in Exodus, these presumably non-Israelites are blamed for incurring God's wrath, whereas the fault of the Israelites themselves was that they followed suit.

Now in Exodus 12:38, where's the wrath? So I'm going to object to Levine's saying here. I think he's reading some things into this. Now he could say, "Well, if they were Egyptians, God's wrath was upon them." Well, okay, but if they're leaving, doesn't that suggest whose side they're on? I mean, the Israelites are going to get out of there. The Hebrews are going to be gone, so their problems should be over. If they were really not on the Hebrews' side, for some reason (whatever reason), they'd stay. So I just think he's reading a little bit into this. But

it's not a big deal. But that's how the two get identified by some commentators. They'll either look at the morphology of the terms and say, "Ah, they're both reduplication forms, so maybe there's a relationship there," or they'll go look at the Targum and say, "Oh, the Targum thought so. The Targum translator tried to harmonize them, so we should look at it that way, too." Those are essentially the two trajectories that you get to joining these things. But if you just looked up the lemmas, you're going to see that they're quite different.

TS: Alright, Lance has a comment about Exodus 23:19 and 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21:

23:35

Cooking the baby goat in its mother's milk. It seems so left field.

MH: [laughs] Yeah, pretty much. [laughs] It really is. And it's not only that it is to *us*. This is one of those passages that will probably never get resolved. People still wonder about this. But you have commentators that really, I think, try (and they do well) to articulate a possibility or two. I'm going to read you what Sarna says here, and I'll follow that with what Tigay says in the Deuteronomy passage. Sarna writes:

[This] rule largely remains an enigma. Its importance may be measured by its being repeated twice more in the Torah, in Exodus 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21. In this latter source the prohibition appears in the context of the dietary laws [MH: so in Deuteronomy, it's in that section], but the other two sources indicate that its origin lies in the overall context of the festivals. [MH: So you even get different contexts here.] The juxtaposition of this rule with the law of the first fruits led Menahem ibn Saruq (10th cent.) to interpret *gedi* [MH: that's kid or the baby] not as a kid of the goats but as "berries." This eccentric explanation was taken up by Menahem ben Solomon (first half 12th cent.), who took "mother's milk" to be figurative for the juice of the bud that contains the berry.

25:00

You see, I threw that in because people are really going to great lengths to try to make sense of this. [laughs] In another paragraph, he says there are other rabbinic interpreters, and he gives a list, who...

... in various ways, adduce a humanitarian motivation akin to that cited in the Comment to [Exodus] 22:29. Rashbam further suggests that because festivals were celebrated with feasts of meat [MH: so these are the Exodus contexts here—the festivals], and because goats are generally multiparous and have a high yield of milk, it was customary to slaughter one of the kids of a fresh litter and to cook it in its mother's milk. [MH: This is just rabbinic opinion here. There's nothing factual here to nail this with.] The Torah looks upon such a practice as exhibiting insensitivity to the animal's feelings. The explanation of Rashbam has been buttressed by the modern observation that in biblical times goats were far

more plentiful than sheep in the Land of Israel and were the main source of milk. The flesh of the young kid is more tender and more delicate in flavor than lamb. Also, since the estrous cycle of goats occurs during the summer months and parturition takes place in the rainy season, the earliest litter would be produced just around the time of Sukkot. This injunction, therefore, regulates the festivities at the Festival of the Ingathering of the Harvest.

The interdiction of boiling a kid in its mother's milk was generalized to outlaw the mixing of all meat and milk...

This is why observant Jews don't mix those two things, meaning all dairy products when it references milk. So basically, he says the law is there to regulate this practice at the festivals specifically. But he includes through Rashbam and others this notion of compassion or humanitarian motivation. Now Tigay, in his Deuteronomy commentary writes this about the Deuteronomy passage:

The point of this prohibition is that the animal's own mother's milk may not be used. It is similar to the rules against slaughtering cattle on the same day as their young and capturing a mother bird along with her fledglings or her eggs, and the requirement that newborn cattle remain with their mothers at least a week before they may be sacrificed. All of these rules have the humanitarian aim of preventing acts of insensitivity against animals. It is likely, therefore, that the present rule also applied to lambs and calves, and that kids are mentioned only because goats were the most commonly owned type of cattle or because their meat is most in need of tenderizing and flavoring.

So that's where Tigay is at. He goes on to discuss rabbinic opinion about this or that. But that gives you both trajectories there. There's a humanitarian trajectory and then there's this regulation of what happens at the feasts. Now Tigay gets into this thing about its association with paganism, which is what you'll hear a lot if this is ever preached. But you'll hear a lot. Tigay writes:

Maimonides reasoned that since this prohibition is mentioned twice in Exodus right after the pilgrimage festivals, boiling a kid in milk was probably a rite practiced at a pagan festival and prohibited for that reason (see Exod. 23:19; 34:26). This is not a sufficient explanation, since the Torah does not oppose all pagan forms of worship; even sacrifice and prayer were practiced by pagans.

What he's saying is that pagans prayed. They offered sacrifices. So if just because a pagan did it was a reason to prohibit it, prayer and sacrifice would be prohibited too. Instead (just cutting to the chase here)... Tigay would say, "Instead, they're modified. It depends who you pray to. It depends who you sacrifice to. But the practices themselves are not outlawed just because pagans

do them too.” So this is his point. It’s not just sufficient to say, “Well, the pagans boiled the little baby goats in their mothers’ milk and so that’s why it’s prohibited.” Well, pagans did other things that just get modified in some form and not outright banned. So he doesn’t find this trajectory very coherent. So I wanted to throw that in because you’ll hear that perspective. Now there are obviously more trajectories here that we could get into. But for the sake of this episode and time, I’m just going to leave it at that.

TS: Jason from Ohio’s question is a reference to episode 280: Exodus 15, Part 2.

29:50

How far, or at what point do we cross from exegesis into eisegesis when looking for symbolism in the Bible? Podcast 280 discussed how certain references to trees/wood and mountains are likely associated with God, but scripture also connects God to wind, water, and fire at various places. At what point is, say, the rod of Aaron simply a rod, and not a symbol for the Garden or for God himself? Is it when there's supernatural language involved that we can make the connection? Sometimes when listening to and reading Biblical scholars I'm reminded of my English Lit classes where my profs asserted that everything, even very mundane things, were symbols for something else. But is it always the case that the author intended his audience to understand the language in that way? How do we know when we get carried away reading into the author's intent?

MH: That’s a good question. I would certainly say that no, they’re not always to be taken metaphorically or symbolically. The examples given don’t really clarify (wind, water, and fire). Well, wind and water... Why does God appear in the tempest, in a storm? You can pick up a lot of the vocabulary in those passages back in the creation account. So the whole point there would be the link back to the God who brought order out of chaos. He is in control of the forces of nature, because he’s the Creator. That doesn’t mean that the wind and the water... It doesn’t mean like the prophet’s not getting splashed. Or maybe he just sees it and isn’t getting burned. It’s not a fire that he can touch and be burned. It’s not water that he can get splashed with. Maybe it’s just something visual. And in that case, is God getting wet? We don’t know, because typically in those instances, God doesn’t even have a body.

So if you start asking questions like this and then you start realizing, “Okay. The terminology here (because I can look it up with a concordance) occurs in creation passages.” Well, it’s probably just designed to get us to think that this is the Creator and he has mastery over creation, mastery over chaos, and so we ought to listen to him. That’s a real simple path. But again, that doesn’t mean that everywhere you see these things, we are supposed to abstract them. The real question is, would it make sense in the context to be learning these things about the figure in the maelstrom, in the storm? Does that make sense in the context of what we’re looking at directly? The same thing with fire. Fire is often used for the

presence of God because it's purifying. Either the fiery coals or a fiery basin or just fire-fire—flames, like Ezekiel 1, where part of God's form is fire. There's fire there in other contexts as well.

So my take on this is that the metaphorical or symbolic reading ought to be on the table for all of them. You have to ask yourself, "Well, does it make sense in context to go that direction or not?" Or maybe it's a little bit of both. There's no guidebook at the end of the Bible that really tells you how to parse this, but I would not be categorical and say it *always* has to be going down one direction. So there's no way often to be really conclusive when it comes to this. Biblical authors are like authors now. Even us. We might intend a double meaning or not.

Now in the case of Aaron's rod or Moses (that whole situation that the questioner brought up), because this rod of Moses originated at the burning bush (that's where he gets the rod) and was used as a source of miraculous control over creation, it seems that the biblical writer may want us to think of the Creator and, thus, Eden or another "tree" with which Yahweh was associated—the Tree of Life. And you also have the fact that theophanies (these appearances of God) prior to Exodus 3 often occur at, or are connected to, trees. So when you take all that together, it lends support for the metaphorical idea.

By the way, if we say that Aaron's rod (or Moses' rod)—that the whole point of that is to make people consider the God of the burning bush or the God of the Tree of Life or something like that, it's still a rod. It still exists. It's not like it's not real or the event didn't happen. All those things are still in place. It's just how we parse what's going on—why it's this description and not some other. So I like to put them all on the table and then just spend time thinking about it. And you might come out with one or two more possibilities, but to me that's the fun part of Bible study. There's just a lot to think about.

TS: Trey in Palmdale, CA, was wondering:

34:35

When Mike was talking about hardening of Pharaoh's heart, why you didn't bring up Romans 9? Regardless of views on soteriology and all the other theological problems that people have, why wouldn't you bring up the verses that talk about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart according to what the New Testament says about it?

MH: Probably because I was just focused on Exodus in my head at the time. But I have to confess, it's actually far from certain to me how much freight we should attach to God's use of Pharaoh in Romans 9. What I mean by that is, just because God makes an example of Pharaoh (who played a role in his own hardening), should we then reason that God is working the same way with the lost whom he wants to redeem? I don't see much of a desire on God's part to redeem Pharaoh. Frankly, I don't see any desire. It's time for Pharaoh to be judged. So the analogy, at least in some respects, breaks down. I think Paul's

point is that God doesn't have to show mercy. But then Paul proceeds to try and convince readers that God *is* showing mercy to the Gentile and *will* show mercy to the Jew. The Gentiles are part of that process. So I think the passage is often read through a damnation lens rather than a mercy lens, and so I question whether that's really the point. Is damnation really the point here? Or is the point, "You know, God doesn't have to show mercy, but he does and he's willing to and he wants to?" To me, that sounds a little bit more like what Paul is angling for in Romans 9. So I don't really know how much mileage we can get out of the pharaoh case to make Paul's point.

TS: Alright. Keith:

36:25

When I was in seminary, I had an Old Testament professor state that when pastors use the story of Jethro and Moses in Exodus 18 to justify delegating ministry, they are taking the passage out of context. He suggested that Moses made the wrong decision when he listened to Jethro. My professor never told us why. He was the type to make bold claims like this to whet our appetite to hit the library and do the hard work of research ourselves. It has been over ten years since I finished seminary, and I have never come across a scholar who teases out my professor's bold statement. To be fair to my professor, as a bi-vocational pastor with several other irons in the fire, I have not had time to do the research the way he would have liked. I was wondering if Dr. Heiser has come across this interpretation at any point in his research. The best I can theorize is that Moses' decision to follow Jethro's advice could be interpreted as the wrong decision because the idea did not come from YHWH himself in this circumstance.

MH: Well, I've never sent his before, and it really strikes me as odd. Because when I hear that Moses was wrong to delegate or that we shouldn't use Exodus 18 as a justification for delegating ministry, what pops into my head is, "Is ministry therefore a dictatorship? Do we have pastors that everything that happens in the church—everything done—has to go over their desk? Is it a sin to let someone else *do* something?" It sounds just kind of odd. I have no idea if this fellow was saying that or implying that. I give him the benefit of the doubt. I wouldn't think so. But that's just what I hear, that it's somehow wrong to delegate ministry. That's just what pops into my head.

Now I suspect, though, that Keith's guess at the end of the question might be on the right track—that the rationale for why he would say this might be just what he supposed, that, "Okay, Yahweh didn't tell Moses to do this, and then on that basis you could conclude that Moses shouldn't have." But I really can't think of any reason why *that* would make sense, either. Moses is never rebuked for the decision, nor are there failure stories that are traced back to the decision (back to Exodus 18). So I suspect that the professor just had the notion stuck in his head

that unless a suggestion came from Yahweh, it couldn't be a good one or a right one. And I would disagree. I'd ask for biblical evidence that it was the wrong thing to do. I don't really see anything there. I mean, Moses married Jethro's daughter. I'm betting Jethro had good things to say about that and Yahweh says nothing about it. We're not told Yahweh said, "Hey, go marry that girl." But I don't see any evidence that that was the wrong decision, either. Did Yahweh tell Moses to go to Midian? We don't read that. Was that a bad decision? Because he meets Yahweh there at the burning bush. But Yahweh didn't say, "Hey, turn left here at the sagebrush. I want to make sure..." He doesn't direct him. We don't get any direct statement where Yahweh tells him which way to go.

So let's face it. In any biblical story, you could come out with something where a character makes a decision and God isn't the one who told them to do that, but in the story there's nothing wrong with the decision. So I don't know why we'd have to pick at Exodus 18. It really strikes me as odd. But again, I don't know the fellow. But what pops into my head is, "Is this someone who has such a view of ministry that there's a control problem here?" And that may be. I don't know. Because I just can't see any coherent rationale for rejecting the idea of delegation generally or that Moses did something wrong here. It's really an odd hermeneutic. So I wouldn't assign any validity to it.

TS: Okay. Isaiah from Ballwin, MO, has our next question:

40:55

Many years ago Dr. Heiser did a lecture series on Gnosticism and the Da Vinci Code controversy. When he gets to the two powers in heaven theology, Mike uses Exodus 34:5-8 as an example of a two powers event. He says that there are two ways to read the story of God walking before Moses. He even has someone come up and illustrate that one of the Yahweh figures could have been standing by Moses and proclaiming the name while the other Yahweh figure walked by Moses.

I was curious to know if Mike had changed his mind about this passage since he didn't mention any of this on the episode that dealt with Exodus 33 and 34.

MH: You know, the short answer here is, I didn't recall any of that. And I'd have to go back and watch the video to remember actually what I said. [laughs] So obviously I'm not going to take a commercial break and go watch the lecture series on Gnosticism. I would just say it this way. You *could* read it the other way, but I'm going to land with the way I took it on the recent episode of the podcast. To me, that feels satisfying as far as a good interpretation in context. And I'm content with it. So even though I can't quite remember what I said... Gosh, that's got to be probably 12 or 13 years ago. Yeah, I'm content with what we did on the episode of the podcast. [laughs] So another short one.

TS: Yeah, I also like, Mike, how people ask me, “What did Mike say on the 34th of January, 1917,” [MH laughs] like I’m some database of what you say. I can’t remember anything...

MH: Right. “I’ve got no idea.”

TS: I get emails asking me, “When did Mike say this?” I don’t know. Google it. I’m not Mike’s keeper. But I find that funny. Mattias has our last question:

42:50

I’ve noticed that Sarna is a scholar that you have quoted the most in the entire Exodus series. Is his commentary on Exodus the best one out there?

MH: You know, it’s fair to say it’s my favorite. I think Carpenter’s EEC (*Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*) is good. It’s certainly more detailed. Enns’ commentary is pretty good, too. But I like Sarna because... And generally, I like the *JPS Torah Commentary* series because okay, the volume on Leviticus is still kind of what I’m going to say here. The Numbers I think maybe gets a little too detailed. But I like that set because by and large it avoids technical jargon. It’ll just give you really important, relevant information and it’ll tell you why. It’ll answer the *why* question (why the commentator is veering over here or there) without spending a half a page or a page and a half on source critical discussion. Scholarly commentaries on any book (but especially the Torah) just get lost in this because as academics, they feel that they’ve got to address source critical theories everywhere. And I just get tired of that. I just get tired of it. I want a commentary that deals with the text as we have received it. I don’t care about the author’s speculations as to where the text came from or how the text came together. If that is relevant for interpretation, okay, then it might be worth reading. But I would rather have a commentary that deals with the text as received with an eye toward good ancient Near Eastern background information and a good bit of literary discussion, which I think is real important for intertextuality. So JPS series does more of that well than other commentaries that just seem to get lost in these nuts and bolts critical questions.

45:00

So I really like Sarna’s Exodus. I really like Tigay’s commentary on Deuteronomy in the same series. We used the one on Leviticus. It’s either by Milgrom or Levine. I think it’s Levine (because they switch off Numbers and Leviticus in two different commentary series, so I always get them mixed up). But the other thing you’ll notice in the JPS series if you have one, when they get into these really technical discussions, they will relegate that discussion to an appendix so it doesn’t get in the way. So if you’re interested in it, you can still get it. I think Tigay’s commentary has something like 40 excurses (40 appendixes). But it makes his commentary so much more readable. And if you want to get into the weeds, you can. It just doesn’t get in the way of reading about a particular passage. He’ll do both. So yeah, I really like Sarna. There aren’t that many

commentaries on Exodus to begin with. But Sarna's has more detail than most, but it's still readable. It just doesn't distract you with lots of these other things.

TS: Alright, Mike. And just like that, that's it. No more Exodus at all. No more questions. No more chapters. No more verses. No more nothing. That's it. That's the final Exodus...

MH: So what I hear is, this was our exodus from Exodus? Is that what you're saying?

TS: Exactly. This is the exodus of the Exodus. It's been a year-long journey. I wonder how many podcasts it was. I'll have to go back and add it up. Wouldn't it be fun if we had exactly 40 episodes of Exodus?

MH: Yeah. You go do that, and then if that's what it is, someone I'm sure will attribute some numerological meaning to that.

TS: Hey, it's got to be close. Do you think... We went over a year, and there are 52 weeks in a year. And in there, we had other interviews and Q&As and stuff. So it might be right around 40. That'd be interesting.

MH: Well, could be.

TS: We should've planned to make that happen. But we're not that smart, Mike. You know? We're just not that smart.

MH: Yeah, I know. That's true. We're not that smart. [laughs] We're not that clever.

TS: Don't forget, if you want to remember Exodus from the Naked Bible Podcast for eternity, go to NakedBiblePodcast.com and get your swag. We've got T-shirts, stickers, notebooks. We have pillows. We have everything.

MH: Yeah, I've got a pillow behind me here. I got one for my office. Because now that I'm using this new-fangled mic here, I have to lean forward. So I'm going to hold it up for the livestream. I got me a pillow. So now I get to sit on both of our faces (or at least my back does).

TS: Whoa, Mike! I don't know if there's something...

MH: [laughs] I'm just leaning on your face.

TS: Drenna's recording you right now for Instagram, isn't she?

MH: Yes, she is.

TS: So everybody, go to Naked Bible on Instagram.

MH: I'm going to lean back and give Trey some pain here. [TS laughs] Did you feel that?

TS: [laughs] Yeah, that's crazy! What does that mean? It's like voodoo. I don't know what that means. But I can't think of a better way to wrap up Exodus.

MH: Like I said, it's our exodus from Exodus. Finally.

TS: There you go. Alright, Mike. I appreciate you taking the journey to get us here to the end, to the Promised Land. It's been a lot of work, I know.

MH: [laughs] Okay, Trey.

TS: We appreciate everybody that sent in questions. We certainly appreciate you tackling our difficult questions. And we thank everybody for it. It's been awesome. So with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.