

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 321

Q&A 37

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- What range of verbs relating to the “high senses” is found in the Near Eastern writings in relation to the gods and their interactions with man? [Time stamp 4:25]
- If they (men) had visions, did they have an “angelic interlocutor” that explains their meaning to them? How did they perceive the divine fully? Are there any recorded visible acts in history in the texts that you study? [5:40]
- Was there a sight-knowledge relationship between the gods and their people? [10:15]
- Why did iron chariots prevent Israel from driving out the Canaanites if God was with them, and how could the Canaanites have been made their slaves if they weren’t conquered? [15:15]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 321: our 37th Q&A. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Good. I’m doing pretty well. You know. And the fact that this is a Q&A is actually kind of a good segue to an email I got this week. And I wanted to say something about it real quickly. And that is, we did a Q&A over 100 episodes ago. So even though it was quite a long time ago, you know, we have people listening to the podcast and going back and listening to old episodes. And there was a Q&A where a listener who goes by the name Slash asked about whether Adam and Eve could poop. And I want to apologize for the way I responded to that. Because that one really kind of threw me for a loop, and I think I was a little too flippant. I went back and read the transcript after I got this email. Because someone said, “Hey, you were just too... You took that too lightly.” So I went back and read the transcript, and it was like, “Yeah. Guilty as charged. I was too flippant with that question.” And the more I thought about it, it’s like, “Yeah, it actually is a decent question,” even though it was so unusual at the time. So I

wanted to give a shout-out both to the person who emailed me and also to apologize to Slash for not treating the question a little more seriously. So I wanted to throw that in before we even got started on our next Q&A (even though it was so long ago).

TS: Well, do you have any other information, how you would answer that differently?

MH: No. No, I would answer it the same way. It was just the manner in which it was treated.

TS: So you were kind of stinky, is what you're saying?

MH: [laughter] Yeah, you're working on a pun there, I know. [laughs] Yeah, I would answer it the same way. But you know, it's one of those things, because it's (to use the big word) scatological. So it sort of lends itself to being treated in a less than serious way. But I think I was a little overboard on that.

TS: Well, if we're going to start apologizing every time you get grumpy, we're going to be here a while.

MH: [laughs] I wasn't grumpy! [laughter] I wasn't grumpy. It's just like, "Oh, I can't believe I got this question." It was one of those things where I didn't think about it right away as to *why* the question was being asked. Then when I got into it (people can go back and listen or get the transcript), it's like, "Well, of course this is why this question is being asked." It actually is a meaningful question. But it was just so odd at the time. But again, I should have handled it better. So I'm just glad that somebody brought it up, to give me an opportunity to tell Slash that, "Look, that was something I should have handled better." So that's what we're doing.

TS: Alright, awesome. Is there anything else you'd like to apologize for, since we're on the subject? Anything?

MH: No, no.

TS: Okay.

MH: Why? Are you... [laughs]

TS: No, I've got nothing in mind.

MH: I've got the feeling that something's coming here.

TS: I was just thinking, "Now's the chance to get it out."

MH: Yeah. So you've turned, like, therapist now? [laughter] Is that... Either that or you've been waiting to throw something at me.

TS: No, no, I'm good.

MH: Nothing's going off in my head.

TS: Alright. And to make amends, we actually have three questions from Slash. Actually, we didn't even plan for this. [laughs] It just worked out this way. I kid you not. And the first one is:

4:25

In the Old Testament it is through human sense that one perceives God and the world. What range of verbs relating to the “high senses” is found in the Near Eastern writings in relation to the gods and their interactions with man? And what were the primary senses of the epistemic process?

MH: Well, first I'd have to know how Slash is defining “high senses”. I actually don't see much of a division. My answer's going to stem from a guess as to how I think he might be defining high senses. But I don't actually know. I don't see a division of senses in perceiving God. But perhaps the division he's suggesting is between cognitive processes (like reason and intuition and maybe even dreams—things that happen in your head) and maybe tactile or sensory processes (like sight and touch). Maybe that's what he means by higher and lower. I don't know. But all of them are at work in the Old Testament in divine encounter, and they're all used by God in the Old Testament. Same for the ancient Near Eastern literature. But I have to guess on the question. Maybe I'm in the ballpark of what's being asked. I don't specifically know. But that's how I'm parsing it.

TS: Slash's second question has the word of the day. [MH laughs]

5:40

If they (men) had visions, did they have an “angelic interlocutor” that explains their meaning to them? How did they perceive the divine fully? Are there any recorded visible acts in history in the texts that you study?

MH: So interlocutor is the word of the day? [laughter]

TS: Yes. “Interlocutor: a person who takes part in a dialogue or conversation.” There you go.

MH: There you go.

Yeah. Well, they did. They had angelic mediation, angelic interpretation, all that sort of thing. You see that a lot in the Bible. And you also see it in other literature as well, but especially in the Bible—in the Old Testament. I keep referencing the Old Testament because that was the first part of the question, when he mentioned ancient Near Eastern stuff. But it's true in the New as well. So does "perceive the divine" refer to sensing presence or does it refer to parsing information (in other words, what the person was told by the interlocutor)? I'm not sure by the wording of the question. So I'm just going to take a stab at this, because I don't quite know. I don't know with precision what is being asked, but I'm going to take a guess here. I should throw one other thing that sort of makes me wonder what we're really angling for here: the qualifier *fully*. "How do they perceive the divine fully?" is also ambiguous. How full is full? How much do I have to understand before I think I have a full understanding? Well I don't know.

But circling around here, if the question is asking, "How did they move beyond the interlocutor? Or *did* they move beyond the interlocutor? Or did they *want* to move beyond the interlocutor to see more vision or hear more from the ultimate source (God)?" All those things would be factors in how I would approach this. And I would say ultimately it depends on the text. It depends on the incident. Because they're not all the same. They have the same motifs, but you're going to get differences in these areas that I just sketched or just mentioned.

So for example, some texts (we'll just call them Jewish mystical texts or Merkabah mystic texts for convenience) have the human participant moving through levels—levels of divine access—and usually (I would say overwhelmingly) with an escort. Whether they're an interlocutor or an interpreter or not, they typically have an escort. Other texts have the human involved being so paralyzed by the experience, he doesn't *want* to go to any more levels. [laughs] You know? "I'll just stop right here." So sometimes you get these levels and you get the wonderment that's increasing with greater access to the actual focus of the divine world, which is the presence of God. And other times, it's like, "Let's just stop." So it's a variable experience. There are all sorts of other things going on. So talking about this "how do they sense or perceive the divine?" there's lots of things that happen in these sorts of episodes, these encounters, these visions, these dreams (whatever they are).

So there are all sorts of visible acts. And I'm sort of playing off the question. I think it had the word *actions* in it. There are movements. The person and his escort can move from point A to point B. Sometimes they fly there. Sometimes they're just sort of there. But there's motion. There's movement involved in some of these episodes. There are postures that are observed—archangels doing something or positioned in a certain way. There are gestures that figures in the vision do (God included, and of course the heavenly host around him). There's worship. There's speech. There are sounds. There are even natural forces operating in the divine world—things they hear (the sound of wind), or they see fire, or they feel heat. They hear the sound of waters. So there are lots of things

going on. So it would just really depend on the particular episode or text in terms of how to answer the question.

TS: Alright. Slash also wants to know:

10:15

Was there a sight-knowledge relationship between the gods and their people?

MH: Yeah, I would say part of what we just said factors into this. If the knowledge of the divine world is mediated to people who didn't go on the journey... (Think of somebody like Enoch here. He relates what happens to him. Or the apostle John in the book of Revelation.) So that would be nonphysical even though it's cast in physical terms in so many ways. So the fact that those episodes live in written literature communicates to readers both physical things and nonphysical things. But of course, they're not experiencing them directly. So for them it would be a nonphysical experience. But ultimately, depending on who you are, both could be in play. Certainly in the Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature, there are stock patterns here of the way these things work or the way these things are described.

For those (Slash, of course, and anybody else who's listening to this) who are interested in this sort of thing, I'm going to recommend a few books here. I'm doing this because these are not on my recommended book list on my website. This is more specific. Maybe I'll put these there at some point. But if you want a good academic overview of the kinds of things that are in this question, or that relate to this question, I would suggest a few. There's a book called *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* by Peter Schafer. There's one called *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*. It's by April DeConick. She's the editor for that. I'm sure she makes a contribution, too. Be advised (and this isn't a pejorative, because April would be very warm to this) she's a gnostic. [laughs] But that's an excellent book. It's a Society of Biblical Literature book. It was a symposium. There's another one called *Flights of the Soul: Visions, Heavenly Journeys, and Peak Experiences in the Biblical World*. That's by John Pilch. Another book called *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*. It's by John Collins. And lastly, there's one called *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*. That's by Rachel Elijor. You may have heard me reference her name in other contexts on the podcast. Her book, *The Three Temples*, gets into a lot of what we would call astral theology and Jewish mysticism as well. It has a lot to do with calendar and celestial objects. She dips a lot into the Enochian stuff. She's kind of doing a survey—a history—of the Old Testament on through Enochian literature on into the New Testament of these sorts of things. But her book revolves around Merkabah mysticism. Merkabah is the word for the throne chariot, the divine throne (like in Ezekiel 1 or just the throne of God described in other passages). That's what it means. So Merkabah mysticism really gets its start in Ezekiel 1. Like "What in the world was that all about?" Well, there's lots of speculation—lots of mystical thinking—about the meaning of that chapter and

also even the meaning of the elements (four faces, the cherubim, all that kind of stuff). So it was a chapter that led to a lot of speculation. And there's a whole history of that—a whole history of interpretation. And since (hint, hint) Ezekiel 1, the four faces of the cherubim are the cardinal points of the zodiac, that actually meant something. It takes us into calendar. It takes us into constellations. It takes you into a lot of things. So I'll mention that title last.

The other books that I mentioned before I got to Elijah's book are really just about heavenly journeys—these visionary experiences, these encounters (in that vein). But hers does some of that but then it peels off into this other aspect of Jewish mysticism. So if you wanted a really technical book (and you have to be able to read Hebrew for this) on Ezekiel 1 (the throne chariot), there's probably nothing better than David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*. That is a scholarly work. Very detailed. And you have to have the languages to deal with that. But those other books, you don't have to have training in the biblical languages to get most of the content there. So I'd recommend those.

TS: Alright. Kimmie from Anderson, SC, says:

15:15

I'm puzzled by two themes, if you will, in Judges: 1) The iron chariots preventing Israel from driving out the Canaanites even though Yahweh was helping them still to win battles. This is making Him appear weak, which we know isn't true. And 2) how they (the Canaanites) could be made slaves but not be driven out? To make a group into slaves requires conquering them, right? Or am I missing something?

MH: This is one of those questions that could be a whole episode. [laughs] I'm going to reference a few things here. I'm going to have to reference a few things from Judges. I'll use Dan Block's Judges commentary. I can't remember which one it is. But this is... Gosh, Judges 1 is so involved. So many problems here. [laughs] Alright, let me just start in and pick off a few of the little things here. I'm not sure why Kimmie would consider the Canaanites slaves. Judges 1 is pretty clear that there are a lot of Canaanites in the land that were not driven out of the land. And they aren't slaves to the Israelites or anybody else. I mean, they're fighting for their homeland. In verses 4-8 in Judges 1 they're under a king. So I don't understand the characterization about slaves. But anyway, we'll set that aside.

The conquest, just generally... Let's think about Judges 1, what the point of Judges 1 is. The conquest in terms of driving out all the inhabitants, of course, we know wasn't completed under Joshua, which is part of the point of Judges 1 (basically where the failures were, what went wrong). Now incidentally, you might recall that Joshua defined success earlier in the book of Joshua (Joshua 11:22-23) as there being no more Anakim in the land (except for the ones that got away

and went to the Philistine cities). So in what sense has it been telegraphed, even before we get to Judges 1, that the conquest is incomplete and in what sense is it complete? You have that stuff going on. That might seem like it helps, but in some respects it doesn't, because Judges 1 is a longstanding historical problem in the conquest narrative overall. So one problem of several is that Judges 1 repeats (this is important to catch) events that have already happened in Joshua (specifically Joshua 15, which is after Joshua 11, incidentally)... It repeats events that happened in Joshua 15, specifically the episodes with Caleb at Hebron and Debir with the Anakim. You read about those things in Joshua 15 and then you read about them *again* in Judges 1. But you can read those two things and it'll feel in Judges 1 like there's a slightly different outcome, because of the matter of the chariots. And if you go back to Joshua 11, where Joshua made this claim that, "Yeah, there's no more Anakim in the land." That's sort of his victory statement. And I think that's important because I do think ultimately the *kharem* (the "devote to destruction" idea) is aimed at the giant clans. You all know that if you've read *Unseen Realm*. If you go back to Joshua 11, the Israelites have no problem with the chariots there. That's Joshua 11:1-9. But in Judges 1, the report is mixed.

20:00 So how do we... What's going on here? You've got a repetition of accounts. You've got slightly different outcomes in these accounts. You've got, "Oh, it's finished" in Joshua 11, but it's not finished because in Joshua 15 they're still fighting Anakim. And then that gets repeated in Judges 1. It's a mess. You look at it and you think, just as an English reader, "This is a mess." So you need some sort of... Scholars have approached this any number of times. And there are ways to sort of understand why things are presented the way they are presented that help. They may not help in every respect, but they do help. So I want to go to Block's commentary here. He has a long discussion of these problems and I'm just going to cherry pick a little bit of it and I will try to at the end of the episode give you the actual source. He's done a couple of these commentaries. I don't want to guess here. But as far as what Block says, he kind of introduces the whole problem with Judges 1 by giving us an overview before he even gets into the actual text itself. He does this in sort of an overview. I think this is the *New American Commentary*. So he says:

First, although it is generally recognized that Judges 1 is dependent upon the narrative account of the conquest of Canaan found in Joshua 13–19, our text summarizes, recasts, and continues the story of the process of Israel's taking possession of the land of Canaan." In so doing the form adopted resembles that of Assyrian summary inscriptions of military campaigns. In such documents events are not arranged chronologically but according to geography...

So that's a point to hold on to. Skip ahead in Block.

[Judges 1] does indeed begin with a chronological note, highlighting the fact that after the death of Joshua, Judah was the first tribe to attack the Canaanites. However, it is impossible to construct a chronology of the conquest from this chapter... [MH: You're going to find out why as we proceed.] One may conclude, therefore, that the present document is not intended as a corrective to the normative narrative found in Joshua but as a summary of Israel's fortunes after the death of Joshua, without which the theological narratives that follow [MH: in the book of Judges] lack historical context... Second, the order in which the fortunes of individual tribes are presented is deliberately geographical...

So again, we're focused on geography, not chronology. And Block has long discussions of each of these points. I'm just pulling the points out.

Third, although the document reports the fortunes of individual tribes, as in the rest of the book, the author is concerned about the nation of Israel as a whole... [MH: So let's not get too fixated on the tribes.] Fourth, although the author is concerned about all Israel, he expresses special interest in the Judahite experience [MH: what's happening with the tribe of Judah]. Not only does he highlight the pride of place given to Judah in the tribal conquests after the death of Joshua but fully one-half of this chapter (vv. 3–20) is devoted to the accomplishments of this tribe [MH: Judah]. Furthermore, two of the three anecdotes (vv. 5–7, 12–15) add interesting details concerning the conquest of two significant cities, Jerusalem and Hebron, respectively. The narrator's emphasis on the positive achievements of Judah, [MH: now catch this point] which contrast with the reports of the failures of most of the other tribes, is often interpreted as a tendentious effort to glorify Judah and to lessen the stature of the northern tribes. However, this interpretation fails to take seriously enough the implicit criticism of Judah....

I'll just stop here. He's saying, "Look. You look at what's going on in Judges, especially chapter 1, Judah has this special interest. And the other tribes (basically the northern tribes) are basically just... It only focuses on their failures. Whereas Judah gets a lot of success language." But Block says, "Yeah, it gets some criticism too. So let's not forget that." And then he adds here, commenting on the chariots problem:

...most seriously, [MH: the criticism of Judah is given] for failing to take the lowlands because of the Canaanites' technological superiority (v. 19). [MH: This is the reference to the chariots that Kimmie had brought up.] The same presence of Yahweh that had provided victory in the highlands (v. 15a) should have gone before Judah into the lowlands. After the conquest of a major city like Jericho, accompanied by Yahweh (v. 15a) Israel should have found no enemy too great (Deut 7:1–5). Accordingly, the attention and space devoted to Judah probably suggests no more than the author's Judahite citizenship and may, together with

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his ascription of primary role to Ephraim among the northern tribes, point to a date of composition after the division of the kingdom... Seventh, the author has deliberately arranged and shaped the conquest summary to reflect the moral and spiritual decline evident in the rest of the book. The catalog of tribes begins with the most positive examples (Judah) and ends with the most negative (Dan)...

Now let me just stop there. What he's saying here is that we have to think about geography. It's not about chronology. So it doesn't matter that Judges 1 is going to talk about things that happened back in Joshua. It's not about chronology. It's about geography. Judah gets a special emphasis, but it does get criticized. And they're the ones that can't beat the Canaanites because of the chariots. And he suggested here that the writer... There might be a reason why Judah is the only tribe that gets anything positive said about it and the tribes that are from the north are all negative. They're all failures.

Now what you might not be aware of, and he does have a comment about authorship there, is that most people (whether they're evangelical or otherwise) believe that Judges (and Joshua for that matter) are part of something scholars call the Deuteronomistic history, which is really Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, but you could say Joshua through 2 Kings, because Deuteronomy is still part of the Torah. That is the idea that all of this is written not only after the conquest, but after the monarchy fails, after the days of Solomon. It's written after the time of Solomon. Because that's when the kingdom splits. The southern kingdom (which is Judah and little Benjamin) is where the Davidic dynasty is holed up, where it survives. And then the northern tribes (the ten tribes in the north) are called Ephraim. That's the northern capital. They're the ones that go apostate immediately. So there's the rivalry between the north (the northern kingdom) and the south (southern kingdom, Judah). So Block is saying, "The writer seems to be using a lot of this occasion to write this story to basically get at this rivalry and ultimately ask the question of, 'How did this just all fail so terribly? How did this just go so wrong?'" So if he's living during the days of the divided monarchy, he wants his readers to know where the unfortunate sad story gets its start, and that's what he's doing in Judges 1.

Now if you read Judges (and Block has a nice table on this), you will actually see where there's some victory and then there's mostly defeat. And the victory is going to go to Judah. But again, they do suffer their own loss. So he goes through all that introduction. And then he tries to get to the heart of the matter. I'm going to confess. I'm not completely satisfied with where Block lands on this, but I'm going to read it to you anyway. And then I'm going to riff on it a little bit. So he says:

The author ends his survey of Judahite fortunes [MH: in chapter 1] in the fulfillment of the divine mandate to take the land by offering a summary evaluation. Positively, they were able to wrest control of the hill country. [MH: So

they did have some victories.] Negatively, they were unable to take the river valleys because of the Canaanites' technological superiority [MH: with the chariots]. The infantry of Judah were unable to devise an effective strategy against these state-of-the-art military resources. Chariots were useless in the highlands of Judah, but in the valleys and the river plains they proved a great advantage.

That's important. I'm going to stop there because where the Israelites succeed, the chariots aren't a factor. So even though the enemy has chariots like in Joshua (I don't remember exactly where off the top of my head)... Even though we get accounts from Joshua where the Israelites are successful and then there's a comment about, "Oh, the Canaanites had all these chariots but Israel still wins," the conquest is still successful, those victories are in the highlands. You don't take chariots up into the mountains. Chariots are useless in the highlands. So they are not a factor. In the lowlands (in the plains, in the valleys) they're a big deal. Because then you can actually *use* them. So hold that thought in your mind.

30:00

What I'm angling for here, where *I'm* going to go, and where I wish Block had gone, but he doesn't, is that ultimately, when God promises victory in the conquest, this isn't what he's saying: "Hear, O Israel. You don't have to do squat. I'm just going to hand you the land. I'm God and I can beat down all of these enemies. So kick back, do stupid things, do nothing at all, and you're still going to win because I'm God and I'm bigger." That is not the case. In all of the conquest accounts... Jericho, I think, is an exception because it's the first one. God illustrates the fact that he is present in a dramatic way. But in the other accounts, Israel has to use strategy. They actually have to think about... Like the incident with Ai, God even gives them a strategy. But Israel has to use strategy. Their soldiers still have to be brave. They still have to go out into battle. They can't be morons on the battlefield. In other words, there's still a human element to this. This is not a passive conquest. Soldiers still have to be brave. Commanders still have to be intelligent. Your strategy still has to be coherent. And that's going to matter. It's going to matter. And I'll loop back to that in a moment. I wish Block had spent a little more time with that, but he doesn't. So to go back to Block, he says here:

The author's note that these were "iron" chariots is extremely significant not only because it expresses the impressive nature of the Canaanites' military hardware but also because it announces the beginning of the iron age in Palestine...

And he goes on a little bit about that. Moving on, he says:

However, the significance of the author's reference to the Canaanites' iron chariots lies in the theological implications of Judah's inability to overcome superior technology. In light of Deut 7:1–3 and after the miraculous conquest of

Jericho (Joshua 6), no one, no matter how technologically superior to the Israelites, should have been able to withstand Judah's attack. [MH: That's the case with Kimmie's question.] This verse must be read in light of Josh 17:16–18, according to which Joshua had encouraged Ephraim and Manasseh by specifically declaring that the Canaanites' superior strength and their possession of iron chariots would be no hindrance to the Josephite tribes' conquest of the river valleys and plains. In our text (v. 18a) the narrator explicitly attributes Judah's successes in the hill country not to equivalent military power but to the presence of Yahweh. Then why could they not take the lowland? Why is Yahweh's presence canceled by superior military technology? The narrator does not say, but presumably the Judahites experienced a failure of nerve at this point, or they were satisfied with their past achievements.

And that's where Block ends his discussion. And I just really don't find that very satisfying. So I'm going to riff on this a little bit. That sounds unsatisfactory, and it is. The fact is that we are not given an explanation. Let's just start there. All that's backdrop to Kimmie's question, to me approaching it. We're not given an explanation. So let's begin there. Everything beyond that point is speculation. So we aren't told, for example, if there was some sort of unbelief rippling through Judah. We could surmise that, based on the failure of a strategy in the lowlands that had worked in the hill country (apparently, or some sort of strategy). And that much is hinted at. But why would that matter? Why did God not give them a strategy (like he had at Ai, for example)? Again, we aren't told. We aren't told why God gave them a strategy at Ai and he doesn't give them an alternate strategy here. Overall, however, I think the point that Block makes is worthwhile and should not be missed. Jericho, I think it's fair to say, was unique in that it is the beginning of the conquest. It is the only part of the conquest where God does something miraculous. Have you thought about that? In the rest of the conquest, we don't get miraculous victories where people are just marching around armies and everybody falls over dead. No, it's human effort. There's a significant element of human effort. You've got to have people. They have to go out to battle. They have to be brave. Okay? None of the other engagements is Jericho. Jericho is unique. So let's not use Jericho as a measuring stick for this question or for the rest of the conquest. That is not only unfair but it's also unwarranted because we don't get that in the text. So I think Jericho is unique because it's the beginning. God is going to show them that he is present. It's the only part of the conquest where God does something miraculous, basically, to show that he would be with Israel. The walls fall down and... I mean, just think about it. The walls come down. There the Israelites are. What if they had just stood there and laughed? Or clapped? Or had lunch? No, they have to still go into the city. So even Jericho, with the miracle there, there's still a partnership here. The Israelites still have to go in there and do the job. They have to go in and fight. Every succeeding engagement has the Israelites fighting. At times we're given specific strategy.

35:00

My point is that God saying he would be with Israel doesn't remove the necessity of Israelite bravery or intelligence. God being with them didn't remove their role and activity. There's no "I'm with you so you can kick back and let me annihilate the Canaanites for you." That just doesn't happen. So the failure against the chariots could be read as the result of possibly an unworkable strategy, but we're back to the same question: Why would that matter? Why did God not give them a better strategy? We aren't told.

So at this point, I'd only interject one other thing. Block mentions it, but it gets lost in the details of his commentary. Judges is a book very likely written at a time after Saul (even after the united monarchy). Block talks about all the attention and space given to Judah over against Ephraim. Judah and Ephraim are the two kingdoms after Solomon. So if we take that seriously, it means that the book is written to explain how Israel went wrong. The book has to explain the rise of Saul, Israel's first (awful) king. So Judges explains why Israel needed a king. That's part of the book of Judges. It explains why Israel even needed one. And the book ends this way: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." So, great.

The reader would say, "Okay, you've convinced me. We needed a king. And now our kingdom (if you're living when the writer is writing, after the days of Solomon) is split in two. Wonderful. How did that happen?" Well, it happened because of Saul versus David, ultimately. Petty rivalries. This is where it began. The unity began to crumble. We had a king like Deuteronomy outlined. Deuteronomy actually gives us rules for a king. So having a king wasn't evil or bad. It was the kind of king and it was really *why* that we're asking in 1 Samuel 8. We actually answered that in a previous Q&A. That's the issue that Samuel was getting at. They wanted a king who would go out and go in—go out to battle and come back in. They didn't want God to fight for them. They wanted something else, to be like the other nations. So it seems like we had a good king for a while (David). But did we? Did David really follow the rules of Deuteronomy? You could look at the rules: Don't multiply armies. Don't multiply wives. Don't multiply wealth. All this stuff. Solomon basically violated everything. David could be accused of all those things as well. So the whole thing's a mess. The whole experiment has turned out to be a mess. And Judges gives us a perspective as to where the mess started. That's what Judges wants us to know. We aren't told why God let the failure happen or didn't intervene. That isn't the point of Judges. It's just telling you, "Here are where the cracks started to show up." We can read between the lines, as Block suggested. We can say the Israelites gave up. They got tired. We can make up reasons why God wouldn't have been with them or wouldn't have helped them. Because God wasn't going to just remove the Canaanites.

And that's how Judges 1 ends. The Israelites just capitulate. They give up. And I think that's an important point too. It's not just the chariots. If the only failure here was the chariots, then I think Kimmie's question would be the most challenging it could be. But it's not just the chariots. If you read the end of the book of Judges,

they just give up. They intermarry. They're content with what they have. Tribe after tribe after tribe, they just give up. There's no mention of chariots anywhere else. So it's really not the chariots. This reflects something bigger than chariots. There's something going on where, in the face of resistance and in the face of defeat in certain skirmishes, they just come to the point where, apparently, they just don't believe or they don't care. And they just give up. Judges 1:19, with the reference to the chariots, is actually an outlier in the problem. It's not *the* problem. It's an outlier.

40:00

Let's add one more element: Judges 2. [laughs] The second chapter. This is where the Angel of Yahweh shows up and tells them that he isn't going to lift a finger in response to their failure. If you read the end of Judges 1 (around verse 27 to the end of the chapter), where tribe after tribe after tribe just gives up, you can read what the Angel says as essentially saying, "You've given up. I'm not doing the job for you. I'm out of here. There will be no Jericho. We're not doing a miracle here. There will be no Jericho." In other words, "You have to do this. You can't fear. You can't give up. Even when you lose. Hey, there were some losses earlier. Even when you lose, you cannot give up. You must persist in doing the thing God wants you to do. He is not going to do it for you." Ultimately, I realize that that doesn't really resolve the question. But it does put the question into something of a different context. And by the way, when you hit Judges 2... [laughs] Let me just throw verses 6-10 at you and you'll see why you can't do chronology in these chapters. Remember Judges 1:1? [laughs] I'll just read you Judges 1:1. Let's start there.

After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the LORD, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?"

Even the question. They're looking for somebody else to do the job. [laughs] I mean, nobody says, "Well, time to get to work. This wasn't all Joshua's job." No, then they ask, "How do we do this now?" So it's kind of a dumb question. But anyway, "After the death of Joshua." Now go to Judges 2:6. This is after the Angel of the Lord has met with them and said, "I'm not doing the job for you. I'm out of here." Listen to what verse 6 says:

⁶When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. ⁷And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. ⁸And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. ⁹And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash.

Wait, I thought Joshua was dead. You can't construct a chronology from this. So you've got geography. You've got a whole situation. Apparently this problem... Joshua's either dead before or after the problem. Now since Judges 1 rehearses things that already happened in Joshua, then what do we do with that now? Are they having this problem when Joshua's still alive? Maybe. But at some point, Joshua actually does die.

And there we go. This chapter is just full of these problems where... Can we even think about them chronologically? Should we just throw chronology out the window? We try to overlap them. We try to come up with a picture. I think Block's advice is just think about the geography—where they had success, where they didn't have success. They didn't have success in the lowlands because of the chariots. But the chariots are only one tribe (Judah). It's only one problem. And isn't it interesting that since the chariots are only mentioned with Judah, why include it? Well, if you're writing after the kingship, if you're writing after the monarchy is split... The dream of the united monarchy under David and Solomon and David's line is dead... If you're writing then, you know what the messaging is? Even the tribe that God chose (because he chose David), even the tribe out of which God chose his king (the man after God's own heart and, of course, ultimately his line and even after that, the Messiah), even that one didn't do the job. Even that one. The other ones just give up. This one... We have the chariots problem. But they should have known how to do the job better. Because chariots... In the highlands, that's easy. In the lowlands, you're going to need to approach it a different way. But they don't. They fail. Were they stupid? Were they ungodly? We don't know.

It's curious where Joshua gets buried is in Timnath-heres. Without rabbit-trailing into this, because this is a subject for another episode, this place is named after the sun and the sun deity. One of these words (*heres*) is a word for the sun. That doesn't mean that the Israelites gave it the name. It does become sort of Joshua's place, part of what was associated with his property, his inheritance. Is this an indication that there was a spiritual problem in this place? We don't know. We'd have to read that into it. But there are things like that. Ultimately, there are things in the first two chapters that raise questions about their willingness to do the job, possibly their spiritual commitment. Again, we just don't know. There are just things that are undercurrents that might contribute as to why things worked out the way it worked out. We just don't know.

45:00

Let's move on. I'm going to read one more passage. This is what happens later in chapter 2. Again, we can't read this chronologically. Since everything up to this point from 1:1 to 2:10 is not a chronology. Because is Joshua alive or dead? We don't know. There's stuff that's repeated that happened in Joshua's day. It's not chronology. It's a summary. And ultimately, it's about geography. But if that's true... If it's not chronological, then listen to these next few verses, and we're going to end with this. Maybe this really was the state of affairs with Judah and with everybody else in real time. In other words, this isn't something that

happened *after* the failure. This is something that *explains* the failure. Here's Judges 2:11-15:

¹¹And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹²And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. ¹⁴So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. ¹⁵Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

Now we read that as chronology. "What happens in 2:11-15? That's not the explanation for why they couldn't win with the chariots." Maybe it is. Maybe it is. Because these chapters defy chronology, for the reasons that we've just overviewed here.

This was a *long* answer, but you have to be sensitized as to what's going on in this first chapter. And it's a fundamental point. It defies chronological reconstruction. So we have to throw that out the window and think the thought that maybe all of this is sort of simultaneous. Maybe all of this is going on both before and after Joshua dies. And if it is, good grief, that would explain why they give up, why they don't care. It would explain why God isn't with them in the matter of the chariots. It's just that we have to be alerted to the fact that we might not want to read this chronologically and that might produce an answer. None of it's for sure. But it is certainly on the table as a way to process this question, which is quite involved. But there it is. So that might be really the solution—to throw the chronology out the window and say all of this is going on at the same time—a little bit before Joshua died, after he died. It just goes south. And even Judah—even *Judah*—the tribe from which God is going to select the man after his own heart, even Judah falls victim to this. So that would be my take on it. It's very long. I understand. It's almost an episode itself. But there you go.

TS: Thanks, Kimmie, for that question! That was a good one.

MH: [laughs] Thanks for that episode!

TS: Thanks, Kimmie! [with aggravation]: Kimmie! [laughter] No, that was good. Alright, perfect. Alright, Mike. That's all we have for this episode. And we appreciate everybody sending in their questions. And again, thanks for

answering them. And hope everybody out there is staying safe and staying well. Alright, well, appreciate everybody listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.