

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 410

Q&A 49

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### Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Is there any significance to the fact that Reuben and Gad bargained with Moses about living outside of the promised land in Numbers 32? [2:25]
- How are Judah and Simeon still alive in the time of the Judges when they go to battle against the Canaanites? [11:50]
- Why do you suppose God wrote with His finger on the tablets when Moses had already written the book? And how many times did Moses go up into the mount to meet the Lord? [13:45]
- Is Isaiah 40:2 referring to a custom in which a notice was put on the city gates concerning a sin committed and has now been doubled over and re-nailed so the offense can no longer be seen? [16:15]
- Is the Spirit just how YHWH lives within his people, or is the Holy Spirit a separate person? [19:25]

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 410: Our 49<sup>th</sup> Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

**MH:** Oh, pretty good. Pretty good. Voice holding up here, so I think that's a good sign. Hopefully it'll maintain that, at least this level, throughout the Q&As.

**TS:** Yeah, that's good. I want to apologize to everybody, Mike, because I forgot to mention how I beat you in Fantasy Football in the play-offs several weeks ago...

**MH:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. I forgot about it as soon as it happened.

**TS:** I just know everybody's wanting to know what happened there. And I did beat you in the play-offs...

**MH:** I can't believe I made the play-offs. I can't believe it. I mean, I had so much go wrong this year. But yep, yep, I lost.

**TS:** But I ended up... Your brother did get revenge on me. And didn't he win the whole thing?

**MH:** Yeah, he won the league. Yeah, he did. And he reminded me of that, too! [laughs]

**TS:** Hey, did you ever get some stock in Green Bay?

**MH:** I did. I did. I got one share. I bought a share of stock in the Packers. And there's a rumor floating around the house here that my kids are going to go together for my birthday in February and get me a second one. So you know, I'll be able to attend the stockholders' meeting if I'm in Green Bay whenever those things happen.

**TS:** There you go. Look at you. Part owner...

**MH:** Get me on the field.

**TS:** Hey, part owner of the Packers. I love it.

**MH:** That's right. I'm an NFL owner now. [laughs]

**TS:** Look at you. You can add that to your resume.

**MH:** Yeah. It'll go on there somewhere.

**TS:** Yeah, absolutely. Alright, Mike, well, we've got some great questions from some great people. So why don't we just get into it here with Seth, who has our first question about Numbers 32. He asks:

2:25

**Numbers 32 has Reuben and Gad bargaining with Moses over if they can live outside of the promised land. Is there any significance to this?**

**MH:** Well, I'm going to defer to Jacob Milgrom's massive Numbers commentary here for this. There is significance. Milgrom spends 30 pages (believe it or not) on this issue. So is there significance? Yeah. Is it far too detailed and dense for a podcast? Yep. [laughs] But I'm going to read a little bit of an excerpt from what Milgrom says here that might help a little bit as far as this Q&A. So he writes:

Beginning in Numbers 21, we find a series of relatively early texts dealing with the Transjordanian experience. The historiographic accounts and poetic excerpts preserved in Numbers 21:1–22:1 record that the Israelites, after conquering the Transjordanian territories north of the Arnon, in the Moabite Mishor and the Bashan [MH: region], arrived at the Plains of Moab. They settled in the Amorite

towns [MH: now keep that in mind—these are Amorites, okay?], and in Jazer and its dependencies. These reports are followed by the Balaam Pericope (Numbers 22–24), which probably derives from independent sources, poetic and narrative, and that projects hostile relations, just short of war, with the Moabites. Then comes the brief account of a serious religious lapse at Baal Peor (Num 25:1–5), once again indicative of hostile relations with the Moabites, expanded by priestly writers to include the Midianites as well. This is followed in the historiographic chain by the present chapter, Numbers 32...

(Which is where he's going to be discussing Reuben and Gad, like Seth asked in his question.) So this chapter is historiographic in nature. And that chapter, back to Milgrom, he writes:

...whose agenda progresses to questions about the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite communities... Numbers 32 performs a pivotal literary function. It carries forward the historiographic chain that began in Numbers 21, by focusing on an issue prominent in the writings of the Deuteronomist (Deuteronomy 3), namely, the legitimacy of the Transjordanian tribes of Reuben and Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh...

5:00

So what Milgrom is suggesting here is that this chapter is here specifically because people wondered, “Were Reuben and Gad legit?” Were they legit as tribes because they're settling outside the original Promised Land? And by virtue of the inclusion of this chapter, the answer is yes. They're still legit. So Milgrom continues. He says:

What must concern us in commenting on Numbers 32 is the way that the territorial legitimacy of the two and one-half tribes, Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh (variously, the Machirite clan), is treated. It is conceived as a special dispensation to the tribes involved, who were really supposed to cross the Jordan and settle in Canaan proper, but were excused from doing so by Moses under the terms of a negotiation granting them territories in Transjordan. This dispensation remains a matter of ongoing concern to other biblical writers.

Historically, the Transjordanian Israelite communities flourished from early times until the Assyrian deportations, which began in 734 B.C.E. and continued until 721 B.C.E. [MH: that's the capture of the Northern tribes]. Just when the Israelite communities of Transjordan originated is an open question, but there are indications that their beginnings may go back as early as the Cisjordanian Israelite settlement, which probably occurred between the late twelfth to early tenth centuries B.C.E.

So Milgrom's dipping into critical theory here, basically saying, though, that these tribes are chronologically in concert with the other ones.

During the reign of David, in the tenth century, there may have been some expansion of Israelite settlement in Transjordan, and thereafter, in the early ninth century B.C.E. Omri and his successors added considerably to the Israelite presence there. We are dealing, therefore, with a network of Transjordanian Israelite communities that were joined to the northern kingdom of Israel for at least two hundred years, with a probable earlier history of settlement, as well.

So basically, he's saying that there were people and biblical writers who lived after the Mosaic period that wondered about the tribes because of where they were living. And so Numbers 32 is there to reinforce the idea and teach people that these are not sub-tribes. They're not second-rate tribes. They're legitimate tribes and they're living where they're living because Moses allowed it. He granted it in this negotiation. And so that's the purpose, specifically, of Numbers 32—to explain why they're there and that it had Mosaic approval, and so that these tribes should be considered legitimate.

Now my take, along with those thoughts here, is that... Oh, I'll just add a few things here. I think the Amorite connection is significant. I think this is also why we have Numbers 32. And this really gets into the weeds, but this goes all the way back to, "Who are the people who are in Canaan when the Israelites arrived? And why do they have giant clan traditions in their literature and in their history?" One of these is the Amorites, and the Amorites are at the core of the whole giant clan question. So if you go to the book of Amos:

The eighth-century [MH: that's the 700s B.C.] prophet, Amos, was undoubtedly referring to the Transjordanian victory over Sihon, the Amorite king...

Remember, these Transjordanian tribes conquered an Amorite king. So it goes back to defeating the vestiges of Genesis 6—the whole giant clan thing. And that alone is another way to demonstrate their legitimacy—that God is using them. And he uses Moses here to grant this concession to live over in these other lands that are the other side of the Jordan, specifically to make sure that the Amorite problem is cleaned up. And Amos 2:9 says:

**(All this after) I, verily I, destroyed the Amorites before their advance;  
Whose height equaled the height of cedars,  
And who was mighty as oaks.  
(After) I, verily I destroyed his fruit from above,  
And his roots down below. (Amos 2:9)**

So in Amos 2:9-10, the Amorites are described as very unusually tall, just like the giant clans that go by other names in the book of Numbers and the book of Deuteronomy and all these other places that we read about them. So their presence in the Transjordan has something to do, as well, with cleaning up the

giant clan problem. And so they're legitimately there. They're there by permission, and it's not something that should make them suspect or sub-tribal when it comes to the rest of the nation of Israel.

**TS:** Micah has our next question:

10:00

**Episode 289 spends a brief time talking about the glutton son passage in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. Mike uses that as a text to show how Israel is a preexisting theophany that God is working with. He claims the text doesn't endorse the theophany system and their practices. I agree with him, but I find this text hard to make that distinction. That because of how 21 ends, "so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear." My question then is: how does Deuteronomy 21:21b not endorse the practice practiced by the Theophany?**

**MH:** Well, I have to confess here, Trey, that I can't make sense of this question at all. It's because of Micah's use of the term "theophany." A theophany is an appearance of God. So there is no... A phrase like "preexisting theophany" doesn't make any sense, nor is there any such thing as a "theophany system." And theophanies don't "practice" things. The whole question is confusing to me, and I really can't parse the question. Because a theophany is an appearance of God. And none of this would relate to an appearance of God, including the actual Scripture verse references in Deuteronomy 21. So I just don't know what Micah is asking here.

**TS:** Alright, well if you don't know, I don't know, so don't ask me. Because I don't know.

**MH:** [laughs] Yeah, I can't follow the question.

**TS:** Alright. Our next one is from Steven from Bulacan in the Philippines, Mike.

**MH:** Wow!

**TS:** Yeah, there you go. Alright. Steven has a question about Judges and noticed something in chapter one that confused him.

11:50

**It begins by saying that Joshua had just died, and someone had to go up against the Canaanites. God says, "Don't worry about that; send Judah." Judah then goes to Simeon and says, "Hey brother, why not give me a hand here?" Simeon agrees and comes with. The issue is this. How the heck are Judah and Simeon still alive this far after Genesis 50 when Joseph dies? I know Old Testament**

**chronology is tricky, but the wording here is messing with me, and I cannot find any info for this online. Please help!**

**MH:** Well, the answer is kind of obvious, actually. Judah and Simeon, as far as those two individuals (sons of Jacob), are not alive. They're dead. They're long dead, just as the question presupposes. Speaking to Judah or to Simeon in these passages should not be construed as speaking to those men. Rather, the reference is to their tribes. Their tribes bear their names. Like a messianic prophecy, where Bethlehem of Judah is recognized or some other specific place, whether it be Judah or Simeon or Levi... I mean, a lot of these references are corporate. They refer to the entire tribe that bears the name of their forefather—the one who founded the tribe or the founding member, which was one of the original sons of Jacob. That's what you have going on here. So there's no necessary reason to think that the text is referring to these two individual men—two individual sons of Jacob—who are long dead. Rather it refers to their tribes who bear their names.

**TS:** Kimberly says:

13:45

**I have a question about the difference between the Book of the Covenant and the Two Tables of Stone. Why do you suppose God wrote with His finger on the tablets when Moses had already written the book? As well as: How many times did Moses go up into the mount to meet the Lord? One time he comes down to warn the people to stay back beyond the boundary, another he comes down when the people are in heinous apostasy, and another he comes down and builds 12 pillars and an altar. Am I reading this right?**

15:00

**MH:** The way I'm going to answer is to say, "Go listen to the episode in the Exodus series when we hit this section." Because we specifically do discuss this. There are several items in the book of Exodus that are not chronological, on purpose. And this section is included in that group of texts that are not chronological. And we discussed the role of different sections in the series on Exodus, but their arrangement here is for literary reasons, not to present a continuous, flowing chronology. So that's the best answer I can give you. Go back and listen to the specific episodes where we get into this. Because they're not chronological, and they're not chronological by design. They're designed to draw attention to some specific things.

Now the Book of the Covenant, I suppose refers to the application of the laws of the Ten Commandments. Again, it's an assumption as to when that was written in relationship to the two tablets. I would think the two tablets come first, chronologically, and then the rest of the covenant—the application of those laws—extend from the tablets. And Moses would naturally have written those afterwards. But that all gets jumbled in this section and in other sections of

Exodus that are not chronological, just out of the gate. And so you're reading the text closely, which is good, and you're noticing these chronological points of disconnection, but the material is arranged the way it is specifically to draw attention to a couple of thoughts or a couple of key ideas. And so it's best to go back and listen to the episode for that.

**TS:** Jerry has our next question:

16:15

**In Isaiah 40:2 where it says "she has received double for all her sins..... I heard somewhere, years ago, that it was in reference to a notice having been put on the city gates for all to see concerning a sin committed, as was custom(?) now having been doubled over and re-nailed so the offense can no longer be seen. In effect blotting it out. Do you know if there is any truth to that?"**

**MH:** I don't know of any such custom. I mean, that doesn't mean there isn't one, but I have never come across anything like that. So that's the best way I can answer it. To my knowledge, this seems to be an imported idea. Interestingly, in Oswalt's commentary, he notes that:

The exact sense of [MH: this term] *kiplayim* here is not clear [MH: as far as this "double" idea]. Some commentators believe it should be taken literally in the sense that she [MH: Israel] has suffered twice as much as she deserves, or that it means two generations have suffered.

So some go that direction. Another commentator, Grogan, offers this:

"Double" appears to many commentators to be hyperbole [MH: like a deliberate exaggeration], used to impress on the people that the chastisement of the exile is really over [MH: it's actually over], although some think... it refers to Jerusalem's widowhood and childlessness.

And that's actually where Grogan and others tend to land—that the reason why there's a "doubling" reference here is that it's a way of describing Israel (the one who's being judged here)—that she is now in a period of widowhood and she's not only a widow, but she's also childless because of the exile. Her husband, as it were, and her children, as it were... Her people are gone. Everything is gone and wiped away. And so she sort of bears a double judgment—that she's now rendered metaphorically as a widow and has no children left. So a lot of commentators gravitate toward that. It makes sense. But to be honest, we can't be really sure because the term is not a term that's used very frequently at all. And there isn't much in the context that would eliminate other possibilities. But this is a good possibility, that Jerusalem's condition of being both a widow and having no children because of the exile is what's in view here. But I've never heard of any custom about nailing anything to a wall or a gate or anything like

that. Gates were made of stone, by the way, back here. This isn't like... We can't assume what's going on in Reformation Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is the same as people did back in biblical days. So I have never run into that at all.

**TS:** Martin from the U.K. has our last question:

19:25

**I'm an Anglican so I've been brought up with the Holy Trinity central to my creed. The more I think about it though the less clear I am on it!**

20:00

**I like the way the "two powers" lens unifies the OT and NT in terms of YWYH and the Messiah. I struggle with the Holy Spirit being a separate "person" equal to Father and Son. It seems to me the Spirit is just how YWYH lives within his people once they are born anew. Obviously, it's been a contentious issue over time with various groups taking views of the Trinity and of course the Great Schism also being at least nominally about who the Holy Spirit proceeds from. I wonder what 1st Century Christians really believed about the Trinity?!**

**MH:** Well, my argument is that they were able to discern the Two Powers idea. And if you're able to discern the Two Powers idea (pardon my optimism here, but I think it's pretty clear), which is that you've got a visible Yahweh and an invisible Yahweh. They're both Yahweh, but yet they're also distinct. They could discern that and then when they come across passages elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible that reference those ideas (the Two Yahweh ideas) but loop in the Spirit—that that is what would've drawn attention. They would've noticed that. And I think also if they had understood that just the two... Even if they didn't notice the Old Testament stuff (if they knew about the Two Yahweh idea and see Jesus playing the role of the second Yahweh), well then in the New Testament when you get writers talking about "the Lord who is the Spirit" or they refer to the Spirit of God as "the Spirit of Christ" or "the Spirit of Jesus," that you have to conclude there's a Trinitarian reference there. Otherwise, you have to deny Jesus' place in the Godhead or you have to deny the Two Powers idea. In other words, if you embrace the Two Powers idea and you see how Jesus fits into that second slot, as soon as the Spirit gets looped into the picture (either through Jesus in the New Testament or through different means in the Old Testament), you come out with three. There's really no other conclusion to draw. And this is what they were struggling with. This is what they were trying to articulate way back then. And what I'm referring to in the Old Testament... I think the best example is Isaiah 63. You read through Isaiah 63, you're going to get a reference to the Holy Spirit. And it's during the affliction of the wilderness wanderings and so on and so forth, this vision of theophany leading the people through the wilderness and so on and so forth. Then you get to verse 10. It says:



**<sup>10</sup> But they rebelled  
and grieved his Holy Spirit;  
therefore he turned to be their enemy,  
and himself fought against them.**

Well, those two terms (rebelled and grieved) in Hebrew show up in Psalm 78. They're not used of the Holy Spirit, though. So in Psalm 78 in verse 40, they rebel against *him* (God proper), and way back up earlier in the passage (Psalm 78:17), they rebel and sin against the Most High. So right there, that equates the Spirit with the Most High. And if you keep reading in Psalm 78, you're going to run into the angel as well, because he's there when we were reading in the book of Exodus and these wilderness wanderings.

So if you compare, you can conflate (or at least try to reconcile) the language of Isaiah 63 and Psalm 78, and you're going to come out with three. Because you recognize the language of two, and then the Spirit gets looped into this. And that happens in a couple of passages in the Old Testament.

But I think the strongest link is how the description of Jesus employs a repurposing of the second Yahweh language from the Old Testament. That happens in the New Testament with some frequency. And once that is solidified in your mind, then when the New Testament writers start talking about the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus—the Spirit of Christ—or the Lord (Jesus), who is the Spirit... You know, he is but isn't the Spirit. He's the Son, but he's also the Spirit. You know, when you start getting into that conversation, you have to conclude there's three.

You know, this kind of stuff isn't self-evident, as the question presupposes. And, of course, as Martin knows, it's not self-evident. They have to wrestle with these things. And so I think this is in part the discussion of what they're wrestling with—how to take all of these references together and work them out into a cohesive theological system. And the idea of God being more than one person at one time is not new to the New Testament. It's not new to the Old Testament. This is something you can find in ancient Near Eastern literature. And this is one of the values of Sommer's book called *The Bodies of God*. He gets into this material in the ancient Near East and the Old Testament. And it's why he as a Jew... He's a professor of Jewish studies and biblical studies at Jewish Theological Seminary. So the guy is a Jew, and he writes in his book that the concept of Trinitarianism is completely compatible with the Hebrew Bible. So that's not me; that's him. And he's a Jew, so he should know. Okay? [laughs] So I think this is the kind of thing they're struggling with to articulate. And I think we're in a better position because we have access to ancient Near Eastern material, for instance, to see how these ideas work out in other cultures, to be able to think about them a little bit more easily, maybe. Maybe that's the wrong word, because it's still a difficult discussion. But we have more tools in the toolbox to help us to think about this

25:00

language than they did. But I think this is what they're struggling with from the Scriptures.

**TS:** Alright, Mike, another short and sweet one. That's all we got for this week.

**MH:** Well, good.

**TS:** Anything you need to talk about? [laughs]

**MH:** I'm sure we've got a pile of other questions. I mean, can you give us a hint? Like how many questions are there? Because we're creeping up on 50 of these.

**TS:** How many questions we have left in the can?

**MH:** Left, yeah. How many?

**TS:** A thousand? [MH laughs] Eight hundred and seventy-five?

**MH:** [laughs] Let me remind myself to not ever look to you for encouragement. [laughter]

**TS:** Yeah, we're not even close. I mean, we're not even... We're just scratching the surface of this. We're not making a dent in these questions. We've got enough questions...

**MH:** What you're saying is, we could do Q&A for the next year and not get through the list.

**TS:** Oh, easily! Easily.

**MH:** That's what you're saying. Well, that's great.

**TS:** We've got probably three years' worth of questions. So, yeah.

**MH:** Wow.

**TS:** I feel bad for everybody who we can't get to.

**MH:** Chip away.

**TS:** Yeah. We'll just chip away. That's all we can do, Mike. But...

**MH:** As we learned from this one and our previous Q&A, some of these are buried in stuff I've already written or episodes of the podcast we've already done.

So maybe it's not quite as bad as that. But probably not. [laughs] I'm looking for the bright side here, Trey.

**TS:** Yeah, some of the questions we've had for years. Hopefully we've answered some of those questions as we've gone through the podcast.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** So hopefully some people are getting their questions answered one way or another. But hey...

**MH:** That's bound to happen.

**TS:** Yeah, absolutely. And again, you can send me your questions at [TreyStricklin@gmail.com](mailto:TreyStricklin@gmail.com). We appreciate everybody that has them. So... We appreciate these particular questions on this episode and thank Mike for answering them. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.