

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 162

The Evil Eye

June 11, 2017

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

The “evil eye” was a widespread superstition in the ancient world, one that continues on into the present day. The belief that one could cause someone harm merely by looking at them, or cast a spell over them by the same means, shows up in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamian, Greece, Rome, and Rabbinic writings. But does the Bible contain any reference to the notion? This episode explores biblical references to having an “evil eye” and discusses the meaning of those references in biblical thought.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 162: The Evil Eye. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing this week?

MH: Pretty good. We had a busy week!

TS: We did! What did we do?

MH: Yeah, what did we do? (laughing) We did all sorts of strange stuff.

TS: For those who haven't seen it, I posted a picture of me and Mike on our Facebook podcast page, so if you want to go take a look...

MH: You mean the one in the chair?

TS: The one in the suit.

MH: Oh, the one in the suit! Okay. My wife has been posting stuff on my Instagram account, too. We have the one with you and me in the chair, but I know what you're talking about. Go ahead and tell them what you're talking about.

TS: Bigfoot! I got to play Bigfoot in one of the episodes. That was fun.

MH: Yeah, we were filming for FringePop. If you're a newsletter subscriber you know what that is.

TS: I think I scared Mike on how much of a good interpretation of Bigfoot I do.

MH: Kind of like interpretive dance, right. (laughter)

TS: Hey, I make a really good Bigfoot. It's almost second nature.

MH: I was just hoping you'd fit in the suit, you know? 'Cuz Trey's a big guy.

TS: I managed to do it and it fit perfectly. It was a lot of fun!

MH: Yeah, it was.

TS: Mike, when are we going to get to see those episodes? Just tell us more about FringePop.

MH: If you're a newsletter subscriber, you know what this is. If you're not, I'll give you the basics of it. FringePop will be a TV show. It'll have a Roku channel and, of course, YouTube and some other outlets. It's basically a response video show to all sorts of fringy topics. I blog on paleobabble (weird stuff people believe about the ancient world) and UFO religions (how people make that into their alternative believe system or faith). FringePop sort of combines that. We're trying to make short video episodes helping people to just parse one of these fringe topics a little bit better. Some of them will be a series. We're going to do other episodes on Bigfoot. We did "Bigfoot DNA." That was the one Trey was in—his starring role. He was born to play the role of Bigfoot in that one. I think we got eight or nine episodes filmed (something like that). This was the studio that we've been putting together in McKinney, Texas, near Dallas. We went back there. Thanks to everybody who helped us, especially Pat (our videographer), Brian, and my wife. She had fun putting makeup on my face. She said that would be the perfect Father's Day gift, by the way: getting me makeup. (laughter). But anyway, it was fun. You'll see more about it. If you want to know more about it and see some pictures, you've got to subscribe to the newsletter.

TS: Or you can go to our Facebook page. I did a "Facebook Live" with some video of the studio. Mike gave us a quick video tour of the studio. So go check that out if you want. Mike, can I wear that Bigfoot costume to Roswell?

MH: (laughing) You know, you'd fit right in there!

TS: Seriously.

MH: Of course, it'll be 110 degrees out, so I'm not sure that you're going to enjoy that.

TS: Everybody's going to be going UFO's. I'm going to go against the grain and go Bigfoot. I don't know what that's going to do, but...

MH: Chances are if you put it on at night and wander into the parade, nobody's going to say anything. They'll just figure you belong there.

TS: There you go. So what's going on in Roswell.

MH: Roswell is going to be June 29 to July 2. That's the four-day conference event. I'm part of a conference at the Roswell UFO festival, which I have done three previous times. I don't think I've been in Roswell for seven or eight years (something like that). It feels kind of long. But we'll be back there this year for the seventieth anniversary. Natalina's going to be there, Trey's going to be there... We're just going to try to get something together for a Peeranormal episode, as well. I have one person in particular that I'd especially like to interview. It'll be a fun trip. We'll try to do some stuff for that particular podcast and try to inject some sanity into the Roswell stuff. But it's always fun. If anybody's interested in this kind of thing (even peripherally) and you have kids, especially, I'd say it's not a bad vacation. They have stuff for kids to do. It's kind of like a street fair atmosphere. And, hey, it's Roswell. There's lots of funny/crazy things to see.

TS: I feel like it would be going back to my roots because that's where I first discovered you, Mike. Shout-out to Guy for putting on that conference in 2003—"Ancient of Days," or whatever it was called back then. But that's where I first learned of you.

MH: Were you there?

TS: No, I was not there, but found...

MH: You got like the DVD's or something?

TS: Yep, on the internet. I got the DVD's and all that stuff. So thanks to Guy Malone.

MH: Yeah. Guy's the one behind our event. There's always two or three conference events that are kind of going on simultaneously. They overlap a little bit. It's four days and it's all day long, so people usually get to see what they want to see and go hear this or that person.

TS: Good deal. Before we get started, you've got one more thing you want to tell us about, about your book *Reversing Hermon*.

MH: Oh yeah. It's available now on Kindle. For those of you who are Logos Bible Software users, I got an email... I posted it and it's probably a day or two old now

(something like that). But it's available for Logos Bible Software users in the Logos format on pre-order. So the product itself isn't ready for immediate drop. Those of you who are Logos users know what I'm talking about here. But you can get it on pre-order. Like I said when I posted it, make it part of your data-mining experience. Lots of good verse references, cross-references, references to other literature in there. It's a great kind of book to have in a fully searchable format. I'd recommend it if you're a Logos user.

TS: All right, Mike. Can you tell what I'm doing?

MH: No.

TS: I'm looking at you.

MH: (laughs) You're looking at me, huh? The evil eye, right?

TS: Can you feel it?

MH: No, I really can't.

TS: I need to work on it then.

MH: That must be what I ate this morning. I don't think it's the evil eye.

TS: Well, maybe you're going to tell me what I'm doing wrong in this episode here.

MH: This is kind of an odd one. This is an interesting topic. I don't know how I'm even going to... It was several months ago that I got an email. I've gotten more than one, interestingly enough, about whether I could do something on the evil eye or if I have anything on the evil eye idea. When we finished Ezekiel and were looking for topics, we thought, "Why not throw this one in here?" I'm relatively new to the ancient Near Eastern biblical connections to it. The concept I was familiar with, but in terms of the specific overlaps, that was a bit new. But it's really interesting so I'm glad we're doing an episode on it.

By way of just getting into it here, I'm going to read a little selection from the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery. It actually has some information on this. It's basic; it's a good place to start. We're going to get into a lot more detail, but that's the source: Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, edited by Leland Ryken. The entry says:

The notion of the "evil eye" that is common throughout most religious traditions is notably absent from the Bible (though Gal 3:1 may be a veiled reference).

I'm not going to really go out on two much of a limb to say that is a dramatic understatement, and to some extent, misinformed. What they're really getting at here in this entry... Well, I'll read a little bit more so you can get a flavor for what we're talking about here. Because after saying, "It's not there in the Bible" they have a whole bunch of verse references (laughs) to different things. Some of them we'll hit, but the entry continues. It says:

Nowhere is this view of the magical power inherent in the observer's eye more evident than in the almost universal ancient belief in the power of the evil eye.

I'll just stop with that sentence. Well, if it's universal, we might want to think that there's also something here in the biblical framework about it, rather than just saying it's not present. Again, that first part of the entry is dramatically understated and really under-informed. Continuing:

Some people, it was thought, could bring about calamity by casting a spell with an "evil eye." The expression of jealous sentiments or even compliments were viewed as harboring vengeful spirits that would subsequently destroy what had been admired. In accordance with this outlook, the phrase "evil eye" in Scripture is usually rendered conceptually as "jealousy."

10:00

Wait a minute! Let's stop there. Stop the presses! You mean the phrase "evil eye" *does* occur in Scripture? In fact, it does. Again, that might sound odd because the of the entry saying it wasn't in the Bible anywhere. What they're really talking about is this magical view of it. The phrase "evil eye" does occur in Scripture. We're going to go through those passages in this episode. The notion that somehow there's some sort of supernatural or spooky power in it that's somehow emitted or transferred, either from the person doing it or to the person being looked at—that's what the entry is sort of being cautious (maybe even overly cautious) about. But the phrase actually does show up. Back to the quotation:

In accordance with this outlook, the phrase "evil eye" in Scripture is usually rendered conceptually as "jealousy." The literal phrase "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" (Mt 20:15 AV) becomes "Do you begrudge my generosity?" (RSV).

Well, that's nice. That's kind of an awkward, literal rendering of one verse. But as we see, the phrase shows up in other places.

But the eye betrays the inner spirit and may be selfish and hoarding (Prov 22:6) or bountiful and generous (Prov 22:9). Eyes can be sharpened like weapons (Job 16:9) and narrowed to a threatening squint (Ps 35:19; Prov 6:13; 10:10; Job

15:12). The eyes communicate the whole range of human emotions: suspicion (1 Sam 18:9), haughtiness (Ps 101:5; Prov 6:17), arrogance (Is 2:11; 5:15; Ps 101:5; 18:28), humility (Job 22:29), pity (Deut 7:16).

The rest of the entry is sort of like that—references to the eye in Scripture (a person's eyes, generally). But what we want to focus on is this actual idea, and then again the phrase, where it shows up in either the Old or the New Testament. Now, there's a context for this, and I think it's important that we try to say something about the context before we try to jump into the Bible. I'm quoting here (or referencing, anyway) an article called "The Evil Eye in Mesopotamia." This is Marie Louise Thomsen, who I think still is a Sumerian scholar. This article was in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* in 1992 (JNES 51:1 (1992): 19-32). Just a few excerpts from this fairly lengthy article... I'll just lift a few quotations out of it. She says:

That someone just by looking, through a kind of witchcraft or power of the eyes, may cause harm to another person, animal, or object seems to be an almost universal belief known as the evil eye.

Thomsen goes on to go through a number of instances where there are specific incantations in Mesopotamian literature against the evil eye—basically to protect someone from it. She writes about those incantations:

These [incantations] all indicate that the evil eye was associated with witchcraft and sorcery . . . and other evils caused by malevolent human beings. But whereas witchcraft most often resulted in conflicts with family and neighbors, serious illness, or even death, the effects of the evil eye seem to be somewhat different. In TCL 16, 89 [Cuneiform Texts from the Louvre, one collection]... they are described as accidents, situations which might happen to anyone at any time: it rains too little, the cheese-making goes wrong, a tool breaks, clothes are torn, and the like.

What she's saying here is that the evil eye in Mesopotamian thinking didn't have to be this awful, malevolent, disastrous, catastrophic kind of thing. The evil eye, in their thinking, was something they could blame for almost everything that went wrong—everyday occurrences. I want to include one other thing here. She says:

In the Near East today, eye imitations made of glass are worn as amulets against the evil eye [MH: **so even in modern times**]. Beads resembling an eye or a pair of eyes are known from ancient Mesopotamia and are often understood as such amulets;16 the texts, however, prescribe other remedies. Means to protect against the evil eye are described in incantations.

15:00

Yamauchi (who I think is retired now) is/was an evangelical scholar who taught at the University of Miami in Ohio. In *Tyndale Bulletin*, he has an article called "Magic in the Biblical World." I believe this one is publicly accessible online. He talks about the evil eye there. So we're just setting some context here before we jump into some passages. Yamauchi writes:

A widespread superstition both in antiquity and at present is the fear of the 'evil eye'. That is, the concept that someone can cause harm by his baleful glance. The usual motive for this form of black magic is envy.

That's an important statement, as we'll note as we go on. The motive is envy.

Occasions of gaiety and unusual success are especially thought to excite the resentment of those less fortunate. Any unnatural or diseased eye was especially considered an 'evil eye'...

So if you had some kind of problem with your eye, people would look at you and say, "That guy has an evil eye!"

The 'black' magic of the evil eye and the defensive 'white' magic against it are already attested in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. From Arslan Tash in Syria an amulet against the evil eye was published in 1971...

I actually had to translate this thing in graduate school. He's correct. In this particular inscription, there's something about warding off the evil eye.

We have rabbinical references to the evil eye. Rabbi Arika [MH: I'm assuming that's not a typo for "Akiva," but we'll go with what Yamauchi has here.] went so far as to aver that 99 of 100 people died because of the evil eye! An exception to the ban on work on the Sabbath was the uttering of a spell against the evil eye [MH: You could do that; that wasn't too much work]. A man could take his right thumb in the left hand and vice versa, and say for protection, 'I, A, son of B, come from the seed of Joseph, against whom the evil eye has no Power'. The belief persisted among Jews in the Middle Ages. Rashi reported that a man would call his handsome son 'Ethiop' (the equivalent of 'N-word') to avoid the envious evil eye [MH: which is kind of weird].

It is quite clear that the fear of the evil eye continued through the Christian era as evidenced by numerous amulets, paintings, and mosaics. A mosaic from Antioch, for example, shows the evil eye being attacked by various animals and weapons. One aspect of the hostile relations between Christians and Jews was the suspicion that Jews had this malevolent magical power. The *Canon of Elvira* no. 49 (305 A.D.) forbade Jews from standing in ripening grain, lest they cause the crops to wither by their gaze.

That's the end of Yamauchi's section. So Yamauchi talks about the rabbinical belief in this and then the Christian belief. The Christians, in this 305 edict, forbade Jews from standing in ripening grain, lest they look at it and it die because they had the evil eye. So it's kind of apparent that you had Jews and Christians that bought into this idea, which was a wider cultural idea. One last source (and I'll bring this one up again). Fiensy in his article (which we'll reference on the episode page) says:

Greek literature is also full of references to the evil eye. In a lengthy discussion (*Momita* 5.7, 680-683), Plutarch tries to give a rationalistic explanation for why the evil eye is effective. There are "emanations" (ἀπορροιαί, *aporroiai*) of particles, he maintains, from all bodies, especially living bodies. The eye gives off these particles most abundantly:

Indeed, I said, you yourself are on the right track of the cause (of the effectiveness of the evil eye) when you come to the emanations of the bodies... and by far living things are more likely to give out such things because of their warmth and movement... and probably these (emanations) are especially given out through the eyes.

So it's a passage where you have Plutarch essentially buying into this notion that living bodies, living organisms, give off something. He calls them "emanations." And the eyes are especially good at this. So that's his attempted scientific explanation for the efficacy (effectiveness) of the evil eye.

20:00

The question that this raises, of course, is whether there is anything in the Bible that really draws on these ideas. Curiously enough, there are a few things that seem to... I don't know if "draw on" is the right word, but they seem to reflect the same sort of notions, minus the emanations—like this good or evil energy being projected from the eye and that kid of stuff—and minus the notion that there was some sort of spiritual power or spiritual energy being emitted against someone else. So minus that sort of idea, you do have references in Scripture that reflect the general idea of someone giving someone else the evil eye and having it actually sort of mean something or affect something in some way.

I will have this article, as well, referenced on the episode page, and I will include it in the protected folder for newsletter subscribers, but Nicole Tilford wrote a really interesting article on this called "The Affective Eye: Reexamining a Biblical Idiom." The source is *Biblical Interpretation*, Volume 23, 2015. In this article, she goes through the passages in both testaments in a decent amount of detail for this belief—how certain passages in Scripture reflect this notion that someone could look at you or look a certain way at you and it affected you in some way. Of course, we don't have this kind of paganistic idea that we're emitting energy particles or bolts or emanations or whatever... it's not like your eye is

weaponized, okay? But nevertheless, there are passages that reflect this idea that the way a person looks at you can and does affect you and others in certain ways. That reflects the broader notion that harm to someone else can be caused by the way someone looks at them or the way you would look at them—that they can actually be affected in this process/way. So Tillford begins her treatment this way. She says:

Throughout the twentieth century, scholars were quite comfortable asserting that the ancient Israelites believed in the existence of the “evil eye.” Anthropological studies had proven that pre-industrial cultures around the world share a nearly universal belief that “certain individuals, animals, demons, or gods had the power of casting a spell or causing some damaging effect upon every object, animate or inanimate, upon which their glance fell.” That ancient Near Eastern cultures were among the earliest examples of this belief and that the Hebrew Bible specifically mentions an “evil eye” (עֵין רָעָה, Prov. 23:6; 28:22) and “to do bad with the eye” (עָשָׂה רָעָה, Deut. 15:9; 28:54, 56) seemed to confirm that the belief was prevalent in ancient Israel. In the words of John Elliot, the evil eye was thought to be “one of the most pervasive and enduring elements of ancient culture” and the ancient Israelites “were no exception.” Some scholars, however, have challenged this assertion, finding little or no evidence for the existence of the evil eye belief in Israel... Those passages in the Hebrew Bible that seem to mention an evil eye are, according to such scholars, idioms for greed or stinginess, not references to a magical practice... (207-208)

I'm going to suggest here that the biblical stuff is probably somewhere in between those two things: idioms for greed and stinginess on one side and references to magical practices on the other. I think we're going to see that the biblical notion falls somewhere in the middle there.

25:00

Let's jump to the Old Testament. There are book-length studies on the evil eye in antiquity (even some multi-volume studies), so you can find those on Amazon or any one of these references that we'll provide here are probably going to note them. A number of them start off in the Old Testament with 1 Samuel 18:9, which I don't think is a very good example, but I'm going to give it here for the sake of being complete. Here we have Saul literally “set his eye upon David.” Again, I don't really think this is a very good example because of what we have in the Hebrew. You have a term here where, as it is in the Masoretic Text, you could translate this (I'm just translating it looking at the Hebrew here and trying to make it somewhat literal but understandable for our subject matter) as something like “and it came to pass” or “and it was” that Saul... And then there's the word for “iniquity” or “wickedness” and then we have the direct object in David. So it's like Saul did something wickedly or did something evil. He had some sort of evil intent toward David. The word there for wickedness or evil... depending on which manuscript or reading you would go with, there is an alternative form for this

particular word that could be not a noun (like wickedness) but could be a participle. Then it would refer to "looking with evil intent" or something like that. For lack of a better term, it's the idea of having a malicious eye toward someone. That's the way most of these articles are going to take it. They're going to go with that manuscript reading. I don't really think this is a very good one because you do have a textual issue here, and also it could just mean that he looked at David and the anger in him just festered. He just didn't like David. He determined in his heart to do something evil toward David. That doesn't mean that his very gaze somehow affected David negatively. So I think this one's a little bit overstated.

I think a better example is Balaam. It's interesting language here. If you go to Numbers 23:13, we know the story of Balaam. Balak wants the prophet, Balaam, to curse Israel. He keeps trying to get the prophet to do this and Balaam says, "Hey, I'm only going to say what the Lord puts in my mouth." And every time he opens his mouth, he can't curse Israel but he has to bless them and Balak gets mad and all that kind of stuff. Here in Numbers 23, we read this:

¹³ And Balak said to [Balaam], "Please come with me to another place, from which you may see them. [MH: You could translate that, "that you may look upon them."] You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me from there."

So the feeling you get from that passage is that Balak, at least (and we're going to look at another passage that I think shows that Balak would have thought of it this way, as well), thinks that the gaze of the prophet will help him curse Israel. In other words, it has something to do with affecting an evil outcome against the thing—in this case, the people/nation of Israel that he's looking at. So you actually have this language that Balaam needs to look at them. If you look at the very next chapter, Numbers 24, beginning in verse 1:

When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. ² And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and he took up his discourse and said,
"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man *whose eye is opened*...

If you go down to verse 15, we read this in Balaam's first oracle:

¹⁵ And he took up his discourse and said,
"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened...

30:00

So you have this notion twice that Balaam is described as this man/person whose eye is opened. What does that mean? It has to mean more than that he's not blind or something like that because there's no indication that this would be any special status. "Hey, we found a prophet here—one that's not blind! Look at that!" No, there's nothing unusual about that, but this description is unusual with respect to other places in the Old Testament talking about prophets (good or evil). So the supposition is that Balaam's practice or his ability or his power or his technique (whatever word you want to apply to it) had something to do with gazing upon the subject that he was going to prophesy against. He had to look at them. He had to cast his eye on them. He had to see them. So some have looked at this passage and thought, "Well, we may not have the phrase 'evil eye' here, but there could be something here where looking at an object to curse it matters."

And so perhaps this is akin to the way the evil eye behaves in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, where a prophet or a deity or some other spirit would send their eye out toward a thing that was cursed. In other words, either symbolically or metaphorically, the idea of sending the eye out is that they fall within your gaze. If you think of the *Lord of the Rings* here and the Eye of Sauron—that kind of thing... When it detected you, that mattered; you were affected. That would be sort of the idea here. To fall under the gaze of this prophet-person or the deity in the ancient Near East was not something you wanted to have happen because that gave them the ability to curse you and to affect you in some way. And so scholars looking at Numbers 23 and 24 here have wondered and they've written about this. They're thinking, "This sort of sounds like that idea when it's associated here with Balaam."

Tilford comments on this whole idea briefly. She writes:

God's watchful gaze could bring aid to the one who sought it (e.g. Psa 25:18–20) or harm to the one who had the misfortune of falling under it (e.g. Job 40:11–12; Hab. 3:6).

Let me just read you Job 40:11-12.

- ¹¹ **Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.**
- ¹² **Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low
and tread down the wicked where they stand.**

So Tilford is making the point that sometimes God is described in this way, where God's mere look is going to affect someone, either positively or negatively. And that would be consistent with the evil eye idea in the ancient Near East. In her

discussion here... Is this why Balaam is described the way he is? Do certain prophets kind of imbibe in this or mimic this kind of idea, where the deity (in the case of Job 40, it's the God of Israel) could look at someone and that results in a judgment. So is the talk about Balaam the same sort of thing? She continues:

Thus, Job specifically asks God to "look away" from him so that he can have a brief respite from his troubles, the implication being that God's sight itself brings harm (Job 7:19).

Sight also had the power to affect the perceiver... Sight could also [apparently] transfer physical properties between entities... Thus, in 2 Kgs 2:9–15, Elisha absorbs the prophetic power of Elijah by seeing him ascend, and, in Num. 21:9, a person who is bitten by a snake could be healed by looking at the serpent staff of Moses.

Obviously, we can read those passages differently, but the point is if we're thinking about this notion that either God or a prophet (someone who is ostensibly empowered by God or God is working through them in a given episode)... which Balaam would sort of fit because God does intervene there and prevents him from cursing Israel. In other words, when Balaam looks at the people of Israel, they turn out to be blessed. Maybe his usual procedure was to gaze upon something to curse it, but God is intervening to sort of reverse that process. Is that what we're looking at? I think the best we can say here is that these sorts of passages and these sorts of statements (whether they be about God or about Balaam) are consistent with the evil eye idea. That doesn't necessarily mean that the writer was thinking about what he was writing the same way as maybe some guy over in Mesopotamia or Egypt, but the language has an overlap here. There is some consistency to it. As we keep going, you'll see that this kind of works itself out in some other places, too.

35:00

There are more specific biblical references to the evil eye than these (the ones we've talked about already) where you actually have the phrase in Hebrew "evil eye"—the word for eye and the adjective for evil. So Proverbs 23:6... You're not going to hear this in the translation because the translation is basically going to obscure this kind of language because it's not going to be rendering it literally. It's going to be rendering the phrase interpretively. On a recent podcast episode we talked about translation and how difficult that is and how the translators can influence the way people think about a certain passage. Here you go. This is a good example.

⁶ Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy;

Literally, that verse actually says, "Do not eat the bread of (or with) the evil eye." "Do not eat bread with the evil eye." "Do not eat the bread of the evil eye." You

could translate it either way. You say, "Well, how in the world does somebody take 'do not eat the bread of the evil eye' or 'with the evil eye' and get 'do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy?'" Just hold on. We'll see how translators sort of drift over to that direction. Proverbs 28:22 says:

²² A stingy man hastens after wealth...

The text literally says, "A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth."
Deuteronomy 15:9:

⁹ Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin.

Literally, instead of "your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother" it says, "your eye does evil on your poor brother." That language is very reflective (similar to) the kind of language you would see in other literature about someone's gaze affecting someone else negatively—this evil eye idea without the magical incantations idea. That phrasing is actually pretty similar. Deuteronomy 28:54:

⁵⁴ The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left...

In other words, it's describing some desperate circumstances here. Basically, people are going to act poorly/badly/selfishly. In this case, the man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother. It's "he will do evil with his eye against his brother and against the wife he embracing and against the last of the children whom he has left."

So you have four references here in which the phrasing is really interesting because it does sound similar to (or at least consistent with) this concept that's pretty much ubiquitous in the ancient world—in all eras, frankly. Even in what we would consider the biblical lands in modern times, people are still thinking this way and thinking about the evil eye. Here you have four references that are kind of consistent with that.

Back to Tilford's article. Here are a few things she notes about these passages. She writes:

... the mention of the “evil eye” in Proverbs is an idiom, denoting a person who is stingy. Unlike a person who has a “good eye” – that is, a person who is generous (Prov. 22:9)...

Let's read that:

**⁹Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed,
for he shares his bread with the poor.**

So that's a good eye. You're a sharing person. An evil eye means you're not—you're greedy.

... a person with a “bad eye” refrains from helping his or her neighbor. He offers food and drink but does not wish his guests to enjoy them (Prov. 23:6–7); he strives to obtain goods but does not share them (Prov. 28:22). The references in Deuteronomy are probably also idiomatic; when disaster comes, the one who “does bad with the eye” withholds food from his neighbor, wife, and children in order to preserve his own life (Deut. 15:9; 28:54; see also the refined woman who “does bad with the eye” in Deut. 28:56). Neither phrase refers to the physical harm caused to another via the eye; they refer to the individual’s moral character.

Tilford is going to transition now and say, "That's all true, but it's only part of the picture. It's only part of the story."

40:00

These idioms do, however, derive from the affective nature of physical sight, either the ability of sight to affect its object or its perceiver [MH: **the one who sees the eye**]. Presuming that the eye can affect the object of its gaze, the Deuteronomic passages map the effects property onto the abstract experience of selfishness.

I'm going to improve on her wording here a little bit: the Deuteronomic passages map over the properties of the gaze onto the abstract experience of selfishness.

Withholding food from another, even if due to dire straits, becomes a visual activity, a doing “bad with the eye” (Deut. 15:9; 28:54, 56). A similar sentiment is found in Prov. 10:10. There, it is noted that “whoever *bites with the eye* gives injury” (Prov. 10:10; see also Prov. 6:13, 16:30). Although often translated as “wink,” the Hebrew verb used here (קָרַץ) literally means “to bite” or “sting.” Thus, as Zacharias Kotze argues, the action of the eye described here is like to that of a “devouring animal or stinging insect”; it goes forth and “bites” its object, causing injury. To “bite with the eye,” then, reflects the hostile *intent* of the individual, a desire to negatively affect the person upon whom the glance falls (see also “sharpened eyes” in Job 16:9)."

I'll read you the passage:

**⁹ He has torn me in his wrath and hated me;
he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.**

So Tilford's point in all of this is that we can read these passages and sure, they reflect stinginess, they reflect greed, they reflect selfishness. There's no doubt about that. So translators, when they don't render these things literally, that's the flavor they're looking for. And it's legitimate. But her argument is that some of the language just goes a little bit farther than that where, apparently, the person who is doing the stingy act or being greedy is actually (according to a literal reading of the text) looking at a person with hostile intent. "I'm going to withhold this to get you or to get even or hurt you or harm you." So she says it's not really this passive thing that people do without thinking because they're just inherently selfish. She's arguing that there's just something a little more active, a little more intentional, a little more deliberative to it. And the fact that this is conveyed with the language of the eye or the eyes, in her view, reflects this idea—reflects very generally the notion of the evil eye and that the look of a person could cause harm or that a person looks at another person a certain way to affect them negatively. Again, the evil eye idea.

The New Testament will get some of this, as well, in some surprising places. In Matthew 6:22-23, this is what we read:

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad [evil], your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Parallel passages to this (with Jesus as the speaker, obviously)... Luke 11:34-36 says this:

³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad [evil], your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. [MH: That's an odd phrase.] ³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

The vast majority of commentators here (at least the ones I've looked at) would say something like, "the eyes are like a window letting light in." But that's a modern view of the eye! That's an interpretation of the language of these passages based on modern knowledge of how the eye works. They didn't have

45:00

that modern knowledge. This is a modern view of the eye. Ancient Jewish texts (operating from a pre-scientific perspective here about how an eye actually works mechanically) have a different view. If there is light within, light will show *from* the eye. Consider the consistency of this idea when juxtaposed with the lamp idea in the same passage. A lamp doesn't transmit light from another source. A lamp is its own light source. In other words, the modern understanding of the eye: light comes into the eye and passes through the hole there and it hits this and that and it sets off this or that part of the eye and you're able to see and all that... That isn't what the passage is talking about because that presupposes a modern knowledge of how the eye works. Rather, the eye is the one giving off the light. If there's light within, the light will show *from* the eye. The light comes *from* the eye. It sounds a little bit like that energy stuff that Plutarch was talking about, but that would be an overstatement as well, I think. (We'll get to why in a moment.) But if you juxtapose the talk about the eye with the lamp, it's kind of obvious. A lamp doesn't receive energy (light) from another source and then cast it out to illumine the room. the light *is* the source. The lamp *is* the source of the light. So the eye *is* the source of the light, to keep the comparison consistent.

I'm going to reference something here from the *International Critical Commentary* that I think goes along with this. Just a brief comment. It says:

There are several [roughly six] Jewish texts which liken the eye to a lamp, namely, in Dan 10:6...

I'll just read that one, which describes a divine being.

⁶His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches...

Again, the idea of the eye emitting light. The article also references Zechariah 4, the Testament of Job 18:3, 2 Enoch 42:1A, and 3 Enoch 35:2. So this idea is contained in Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish texts and even a little bit beyond the Second Temple period. That's his point. Now the writer says about the eye/lamp:

The comparison never has to do with the eye conveying light to the inward parts [MH: like letting light in—the modern view of the eye]. On the contrary, *in all six instances it is used to create the picture of a light coming forth from the eye.*

It's just an interesting observation. The idea, then, is that the eye emits what is within already. So in these passages in the Gospels, Jesus is contrasting (in Greek) the *haplous* (απλούς) eye (the single, sound, generous eye that you can translate *haplous* in any number of those ways) with the *ponêros* (πονηρός) eye—

the evil eye. *Ponêros* is just a standard word for evil. They are contrasted, hence their meanings need to make contrastive sense.

We saw in the Old Testament that the evil eye has something to do with stinginess or hostile intent—disregard for the person being gazed at. The way one looks at someone else affects them. It can cause them harm because they suffer as a result of the state of the hostility. They're obviously going to suffer if you withhold something from them or if you do something after your gaze (the way you look at them). But let's look at it this way: people can actually be harmed by the way you look at them. That's not the standard evil eye thing in the pagan world where we're talking about spells and all this kind of stuff, but we know from experience that we can be affected by the way people look at us. So that's kind of what's in play here. We don't want to forget about that.

Now, there's another aspect to this that several of the authors bring up, and I think Fiensy's article is the one that does the most with this, even though several of them mention it. That is, this is also part of the larger cultural picture that anthropologists and biblical scholars who take a look at this sort of thing (who do what is called in academia a "social scientific approach" to reading Scripture) point out, and that is the shame/honor culture, which is pretty important. A lot of cultures today operate based on shame/honor systems—the Middle East, especially, but you have Asian and South Asian cultures that are going to do this, as well. Let me just read a little bit from Fiensy article so you get the idea:

50:00

The evil eye grows out of the core Mediterranean values of honor and shame and the limited good. Honor is the greatest value in this society [MH: I always think of the Japanese when I think of a shame/honor culture.], and the worst horror is shame. Likewise, in a peasant culture there is a sense of limited good. Food is limited, space is limited, and even honor is limited. Thus, if someone has too much wealth, too much food, or too much honor, then he is taking from you. This causes envy, and envy leads to the evil eye, the putting of a curse or spell on the one who has too much or flaunts too much of what he or she has. Today, Mediterranean people do not, for example, like their children to be praised too much in public as beautiful or intelligent because that might provoke the evil eye from someone and cause a curse to be put on their children.³⁵ Not everyone casts the evil eye on others. Only envious people would do that, but there are plenty of envious people to go around in any culture.

Jesus' saying now takes on a somewhat different meaning. It is not the light coming into the eye that is the issue but what goes out from it. The ἀπλούς person, or good person, is a person who has no double motives. Such a person is single-minded. No envy lurks in the shadows; what appears to be actually is. This person's gaze causes genuine good to others. However, the one with the evil eye causes evil. This one is envious of another's success or possessions or family and

either quietly or audibly casts a spell on him or her. This is a dangerous person whose whole body is in darkness and evil.

In other words, when they cast the evil eye against a person, what they're casting is what's inside them. What's inside them is darkness. Another article by Bridges picks up on this idea, and I want to include a little bit of what this one says.

Recent scholarship has also documented the aspect of the ancient Mediterranean worldview which some call the idea of "limited good." In a world where people believed the good things of life existed in short supply, one person's prosperity meant another person's poverty. One person's honor meant another's dishonor. The pie, to use a modern metaphor, contained only so many slices, and if one person got a bigger slice, someone else necessarily got a smaller one. In such a world, the vice of envy ran rampant, and envious people might cast the evil eye on neighbors who made them jealous by prospering at their expense, as they thought.

Hence, the evil eye becomes associated with envy.

In other words, this is why it's associated with envy in Middle Eastern culture. You look bad at a person, you give them the evil eye because they have something that was taken from you. If they are something that you're not, that was something that they took from you. Like he says, it's an inherently envious sort of system. If you think things are in limited supply and the person who has wealth or who has honor... We can't be happy for them because the more honor/wealth/whatever they have, that was something taken from you. In that cultural system, you would look at them with envy. You would look at them wanting their downfall. You would look at them in such a way that you want to take from them. This is where the evil eye mindset comes from and why it's linked in an ancient document like the Bible with envy and greed, etc. Again, what Jesus is saying is that a person with the *haplous* eye... what comes out of their eye tells us who they really are, tells us what's really inside them. And the person with the evil eye... well, it tells us the same thing, doesn't it? It tells us what's inside them. Back to Bridges:

One who envied a neighbor's prosperity might cast a withering look in the neighbor's direction in an attempt to undo the neighbor's success. In such a social context, the "evil eye" became an idiom for the kind of greedy, grudging, self-serving attitude Jesus contrasts with the "generous eye."

To take "evil eye" as an idiom in Matt 6:22-23 does not mean to deny that people of Jesus' time believed in the harmful effects of a baleful look. Both people who believed in the evil eye and people who did not could use the expression as an idiom for greed. To make a modern comparison, both people who believe in

ghosts and those who do not can use the expression, "You look like you've seen a ghost." Belief or disbelief in ghosts does not change the figurative nature of the language.

55:00

Let's move to Galatians 3. In all the sources I've looked at, this is probably the example that most scholars consider the best one as far as the one that gets closest to "evil eye thinking" in nonbiblical civilizations/peoples (the pagans and that kind of idea). This passage gets closest to it. Remember this is Paul's letter to the Galatians. What's the context? The context is Paul's opposition to converts (people he or somebody else has won to the Lord) being enslaved by the idea that either obedience to the rules of pagan faith mean salvation, or if there are Jews in the mix, the belief that obedience to the law brings salvation. He doesn't want people enslaved by these ideas—this works salvation sort of thing—on either side. So he writes in Galatians 3:1:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched [*baskaino*] you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

He turns again to the fundamental Jewish example there. The key phrase here is "who has bewitched you?" The verb here (*baskaino*) is rare. This is its only use in the New Testament. It shows up twice in the Septuagint. One of those is a non-canonical book, at least for Protestants (Sirach 14:6), and it's kind of vague. It doesn't really tell us much about what's going on here.

There's no one more evil than him who begrudges himself, and this is the repayment of his evil. Sirach 14:6

Okay, that doesn't really tell us much. However, the second one is really interesting. It's a passage we've run into already. It's Deuteronomy 28:54. I'm going to read 54 and 55 here from the Septuagint translation:

⁵⁴ **The tender *one* who *is* among you and the very delicate *one* will begrudge with his eye *his* brother and the wife in *his* bosom and the remaining young children who were left behind,**

The term "begrudge" there is the one translated in the Septuagint with *baskaino* (the bewitching verb). Think about that: "the tender one who is among you and the very delicate one will *bewitch* with his eye his brother and the wife in his..." You get the flavor here of this being an evil eye, like for real kind of thing going on here. So the one who bewitches with his eye his brother and his wife and his remaining children:

⁵⁵ **so as to give one of them from the flesh of his young children whom he may be devouring, because there was nothing left behind for him in your distress and in your oppression that your enemies afflicted you in all your cities.**

This is a reference to judgment for apostasy and things get so bad that we have cannibalism. You say, "What in the world is going on here? Why would Paul use this really rare term?" It's the only time it's used in the New Testament, twice in the Septuagint, one is kind of neutral, but the Deuteronomy 28:54 one is kind of really gross. It's in a pretty terrible context. Why would Paul use this term in Galatians 3:1? Some scholars think Deuteronomy 28 is the answer to that question. Another article by Eastman entitled "The Evil Eye and the Curse of the Law: Galatians 3:1 Revisited" from the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* in 2001 says this:

Paul's use of the verb βασκαίνω here is unique in his letters, as in all of the New Testament. The verb's rarity makes its occurrence at such a critical juncture striking. Is it possible that Paul's peculiar description of his Galatian converts here in Gal. 3.1 might contribute in a particular way to his argument in chs. 3-4 of his letter?

1:00:00

My argument will be that the verb βασκαίνω does indeed function within Paul's appeal to his Galatian converts, but as an inter-textual echo which evokes the Deuteronomic curse in which it occurs in Deut. 28.53-57. Whether through the preaching of the law-inscribing Teachers who have come into the Galatian churches, or through Paul himself, the Gentile converts have learned about the blessings of obedience, and the curses for disobedience to the law of Moses, as set forth in Deut. 27-28. Among those curses is one in which starving parents in a besieged city 'cast the evil eye' on their next of kin. Deut. 28.53-57 describes the cannibalistic actions of such parents:

We're going to quote it again, but this is more reflective of the Septuagint here.

You will eat the offspring of your body—the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the Lord your God gave to you, in your distress and the affliction with which your enemies afflict you. The tender and very delicate man among you will cast the evil eye (βασκανεῖ τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ) on his

brother, and on the wife in his bosom, and the remaining children which may be left with him, so as not to give one of them any of the flesh of his children which he is eating... And the tender and very delicate woman among you, whose foot never ventured to tread the ground because of her delicacy and tenderness, will cast the evil eye (βασκανεῖ τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ) on her husband in her bosom, and on her son, and her daughter, and the afterbirth which comes out between her thighs, and the child which she bore, for she will eat them secretly, in her need of all things, in your distress and your affliction with which your enemies will afflict you in all your cities.

If indeed Paul's use of βασκαίνω in Gal. 3.1 echoes the horrifying curse described in Deut. 28.53-57, how would such an association contribute to Paul's argument against those who preach law-observance [works]? I propose that it operates on two levels: first, in the immediate argument about blessing and curse in Gal. 3.1-14, and second, in the larger development of the complex imagery of parents and children, slaves and heirs, woven throughout chs. 3-4. That is, Paul appropriates the vivid Deuteronomistic context of βασκαίνω for his own argument, and uses it to introduce both the theme of blessing and curse, which he develops in Gal. 3.8-14, and a horrifying image of the consequences of the 'curse of the law'.

On the first level, as an echo of Deut. 28.53-57, Gal. 3.1 might be translated as: 'You foolish Galatians! Who has put you under the curse, you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?' This anticipates the theme of the curse in 3.10-14, and of Christ crucified as the cursed one who is the antidote to the curse in 3.13. The translation of βασκαίνω simply as 'bewitched' in the sense of a harmful, sinister or jealous gaze, would imply that Paul holds up the cross of Christ as an antidote to the evil eye, similar to the protection afforded by amulets, incantations and gestures.

I'm going to stop there. You see what he's saying here? He's saying Paul uses this really rare verb drawn from this horrific passage in Deuteronomy 28 for a couple of reasons. He wants the Galatians to think of the people telling them that they need to observe the law to be saved as casting a spell on them—like it's witchcraft! He draws on the idea of the evil eye as part of a witchcraft tradition (like in ancient Mesopotamia) to do that. In other words, Israelites (people, Jews) knew where the evil eye came from. They knew it was associated with witchcraft and sorcery. In their thinking, yeah, it was associated with greed and selfishness and what-not, and if you look at someone askance or you look at someone with evil intent, it's because you think they stole from you (the shame/honor thing). All that social stuff is relevant.

But the argument here is that when Paul uses this verb (especially drawn from this horrific passage about cannibalism), it's as though he trying to say that for

1:05:00

people to do this kind of thing described in Deuteronomy 28 you've got to be so desperate. Or really, you have to be controlled by evil. You'd have to be under a spell or something to behave this way. That's why he uses it. He wants the Galatians to think of the Judaizers (dare I say the Hebrew Roots people?) as though they're casting spells. They're putting people under some spell to convince them to turn away from the Gospel and trust in works. So Paul kind of wants to shake them up. He wants to shake up his readers with this reference and creep them out by doing it.

I would put it this way: If Paul's doing this, it's pretty clever. The image he's trying to plant in their mind about what's being done to them is pretty shocking. And then in Galatians 3 he's going to present Christ as the one who breaks the spell. He's the antidote for this. You want to avoid the evil eye? You want to get out from under the spell? Well, the answer to that is Jesus. He's the antidote for it. He's immune from the evil eye, and you belong to him. It's just this sort of idea where Paul tries to use this image in its horrific sense to make this point.

For our purposes here, we're not... I'll just give you one more paragraph from Eastman. He makes another really interesting point. Then I'll kind of summarize it here. He says:

On the second level, an echo of Deut. 28.53-57 in Gal. 3.1 would identify Paul's missionary competitors [his opponents] in Galatia not only as 'bewitchers' in an insulting rhetorical sense, nor simply as 'misers', but as those who themselves are acting under the 'curse of the law' and thereby inflicting it on their [spiritual] 'children' in the faith—the Galatians themselves... The verb *βασκαίνω* itself evokes images of helpless children who, according to popular evil-eye belief, were especially susceptible to the evil eye. The implication is that the Galatians are acting like children... By evoking Deut. 28.53-57, Paul has set the stage for this contrast: not only are the Galatians acting like children susceptible to the evil eye [victims of it], but their very susceptibility is evidence that they are going under the curse and abandoning the blessing of the Spirit.

Again, Paul's point is that he wants the Galatians to think of the Judaizers a certain way, and he draws on certain evil eye traditions to do it. And the evil eye tradition is partly in Deuteronomy. It's not just that the guy in Deuteronomy 28 who's in trouble because Israel has apostasized... "Look our city is surrounded now by the conquerors and God said we would be punished, that he'd destroy the nations and drive us from our land. Boy we're desperate! I'm going to hoard my resources here and stick it out as long as I can. I'm going to take from people I would otherwise give to." Paul is saying it's actually worse than that. It's so desperate that you would resort to something as unthinkable as cannibalism. People who do that sort of thing... the degree of desperation is like they're not themselves anymore, like they're under a spell. They're like zombified or something like that. Something wicked has overtaken their senses and they've

become like animals. They don't behave in a rational sort of way. So Paul wants them to think about all these things, but to make the point he has to draw on this notion about the evil eye. It's something that's more than just stinginess in certain contexts. It is malicious, it's evil, it's designed to make people helpless. It's designed to cause them harm.

Again, it's not spell-casting. None of these passages are promoting the evil eye idea like that pagans would, where there are spells and amulets and all this other voodoo kind of stuff that goes with it. You don't see that in any of these passages. It's really about someone that is so wicked or mesmerized or desperate or brainwashed (or whatever term helps you here to think about it) that what's inside them is so dark that if they could kill somebody by looking at them, they'd do it (like our common expression).

1:10:00

So that's the idea that the evil eye passages in the Old and New Testament convey. It tells you about what's inside of a person and what they're slaves to. They are imprisoned by darkness. That's what a person is who thinks this way and who tries to harm people and does look at them in such a way to pit themselves against them—to be malicious to them. When it comes to spiritual stuff like doctrine (like Paul here in Galatians 3), he's using it to make a theological point that "You Galatians are *fools* if you turn from the Gospel to a system of works now. It's like you're under a spell. And you know what's going to happen to you if that's the road you go down? You're going to die. You're going to die like the helpless children in Deuteronomy 28. You're going to be (metaphorically here) consumed. You're done." He's trying to get them to think those thoughts by appealing to that passage with its rare language and its connection to the evil eye idea.

That's a pretty basic survey of the evil eye thinking. I think that's probably the best way to cast this episode. How does Scripture reflect and (maybe we can add a word here) repurpose, or demonstrate a sensibility to the fact, that evil eye thinking was a big part of the biblical worldview—a big part of the ancient world in which the biblical events take place and biblical writers do their thing. The evil eye idea was a big part of that. It was part of the culture and was very deeply imbedded in the culture, as some of the sources we began the episode with pointed out. It's ubiquitous. It's just all over—not only the Middle East and ancient Near East, but even today it's all over the world. And there are different reasons why it's all over the world. There are different points to it. In antiquity, it was associated with magic and casting spells. Later on it's going to be this idea of looking at a person to cause malicious intent. You get flavors of both. You get a little sprinkle of both in the Bible. You get the references to Balaam and how he had to apparently gaze at someone to do his thing. He had to lock on to them, so to speak. There's some sort of witchcraft element in that, perhaps. And it's Balaam! He's not the best example of a biblical prophet, to be sure. The traditions associated with Balaam and the Moabite issue certainly don't improve his profile. So you get some of that in it, but you get this sense of bewitching

darkness in a spiritual sense. And in Paul's case, in a theological sense—that you are in the grip of something that's just going to bring about your death. To try to wake the Galatians up, he appeals to this passage back in Deuteronomy 28, as awful as it is, to try to get them to see his point. But all of that, again, draws on the evil eye idea in the ancient world.

TS: All right, Mike. That was kind of fun to go off the rails there a little bit to talk about some...

MH: It is an off-the-rails topic, yeah.

TS: Yeah, it's one we normally wouldn't do, so it's kind of neat. I enjoyed it.

MH: We could do... (laughs) If you're going to get into magic and divination and all that stuff, there are plenty of places to park in all that material. Maybe at some point we'll pick another one out.

TS: Absolutely. Well, next week we've got another interview coming up. You want to tell us about what we're going to talk about with Dr. McDermott?

MH: I'm really looking forward to this. Gerald McDermott is the guy that I've mentioned in several episodes before. He wrote *God's Rivals*, which in simplistic terms focuses on the discussion among the Church Fathers of why God allowed the other nations to worship other gods. It gets into the mix of perspectives in the Early Church in regard to what we would call on this podcast (what I have called in *Unseen Realm*) the "Deuteronomy 32 Worldview." In other words, what was God thinking? How would this help? Did God like plant truth into these foreign religions and their gods that would sort of plant the seeds for them to come around and recognize who the true God was, or is like a total apostasy thing here? In other words, how would this system somehow work itself together for good to God, working with the nations and reclaiming them, so on and so forth? How should we understand this?

1:15:00

I get questions like this in Q&A's and different events, and this book actually tells us (at least it gives us a glimpse) of how the post-apostolic generation (the Early Church Fathers) and beyond (we're going to get into Middle Ages theologians, etc.) and how they tried to think about this topic. We're also going to get into some other stuff that Dr. McDermott has written about the nature of Israel (how do we define Israel and all that sort of stuff). He's written a couple of books on things that we've talked about on this podcast before. *God's Rivals* is really interesting because you wonder (and again, I get emails like this all the time), "Is this new? Did the Church Fathers ever say anything about this stuff?" Well, actually they did. They didn't recognize it as well as we can today because they didn't have the primary sources, they didn't have those languages deciphered and all that stuff, so we actually do have more material where we can pick up on a lot of things better than they could. But they did pick up on certain things, and

they did have discussions. So I think a little foray into church history stuff will be worth it.

TS: All right, Mike. That will be good, and this episode was fun. We appreciate it. I just want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.