

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

### Episode 211

### Was Cain the Seed of the Serpent?

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### Episode Summary

In 1 John 3:11-12 the apostle warned believers, “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.” Does this passage mean that Cain was fathered by Satan? The idea is indeed found in some ancient Jewish texts. Is there any evidence for that in the Old Testament account of his birth? This episode of the podcast answers those questions.

### Transcript

**Trey Stricklin:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 211: Was Cain the Seed of the Serpent? I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. How you doing, sir?

**Dr. Michael Heiser:** Well, I would be doing better if I wouldn't have had to wade through all this crazy stuff about Cain this week. But here we are. (laughter)

**TS:** Oh yeah? Did you actually learn anything new?

**MH:** No, I didn't learn anything new. I was just reminded that there's no antidote to prevent people from believing crazy things and making up stuff about scripture. So you just have to more or less deal with it. Yeah, this is one of them.

**TS:** I'm ready for it, if you are.

**MH:** I get this question too often in email [laughs], which is why it went on my list of topics. But here we are. So yeah: Cain as the seed of the serpent or the seed of Satan. And if you've never heard of this before, I apologize for putting it in your head. But there are a lot of people who have heard of this before, and it's at least as old as the 7th or 8th century AD. And that's going to be important because when you talk about the Old Testament, even at the very latest... When it comes to the composition or the editing of the Torah (specifically the Book of Genesis), that's 1,200 years later. So for 1,200 years, nobody had an inkling of this sort of weirdness. But somebody did in the 7th or 8th Century in a Targum, which is an

Aramaic translation of the Old Testament. And when we get to this particular Targum, you'll see that this is a whole lot more than a translation. It actually has a lot of extra stuff thrown into there. So "translation" is kind of a misnomer. But for 1,200 years, we weren't plagued with this. And since then, we've had one person come up with the idea. And then there are people in the modern world, both contemporary to us and in centuries preceding that, who are doing theology by anomaly.

So they'll take this one item in the whole history of scholarship. Ignoring this 1,200 year gap, they say, "*That's* the truth." So that's what you get. Again, it's nonsense. But we need to go through the topic because I get asked about it. It's good to do episodes like this because then I can refer people to the episode and say, "Hey, you know, we talked about that on the podcast." And listeners get a little exposure to this kind of thing, because if they're out there on the web, they may get exposed to this, too.

So, let's just start with a New Testament passage and get into what we're even talking about here. In 1 John 3:11-12 we read this:

**<sup>11</sup> For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. <sup>12</sup> We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.**

That's 1 John 3:11-12. So Cain is "of the evil one." Now if you go back to the birth of Cain, this is Genesis 4:1. Here's what you read in the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible):

**Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."**

That's the ESV. That's the whole verse. You say, "What? I don't see anything in there about Cain being fathered by the serpent or Satan. It's pretty clear. Adam knew Eve his wife. She conceived and bore Cain." That's correct. It is straightforward. But as we're going to see in one particular Aramaic Targum, this gets really, really muddled. Really, it essentially gets changed. You know, the Aramaic "translator" injects theology—injects ideas into his Targum, and then the rest, as they say, is history.

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So again, the issue before us is this notion that Cain was fathered by Satan—fathered by the serpent. After reading those two passages, you might ask the logical question, "Well, why would anybody think that? You know, 'of the evil one?' That's kind of ambiguous. It could be easily metaphorical. Where's the literalness going on here?" Nothing in Genesis 4:1 really says this. Again, then that suggests very strongly that 1 John 3 should be taken metaphorically. I mean,

if it's not taught in Genesis (and John has obviously read the his Old Testament before and he knows about Cain)... Since the idea of Cain being fathered by the serpent or Satan is not in the Old Testament, then we can't read John's statements as though it was written in the Old Testament.

So why does anybody think this, when this is just really odd? Well, this view that Cain was the offspring of Satan focuses on some unusual things in the Hebrew text of Genesis 4:1 *and* the statement in Genesis 5:3. Let me read Genesis 5:3. It says:

**<sup>3</sup>When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.**

Okay Seth, of course, replaces Abel who was murdered by Cain. Now, here's how the reasoning goes: "Well, here in Genesis 5:3, Adam fathers a son in his own likeness—after his image. Those phrases were not used of Cain in Genesis 4:1, therefore Cain is not really the son of Adam." Now if you're thinking "Boy, that's like a textbook *non sequitur*," you would be correct. It *is* a *non sequitur*. It's a conclusion which does not follow. But again, we're getting into why this view is even out there. So let's start with what we find in Genesis 4:1. I'm going to try to make this digestible. We're going to be doing some Hebrew talk here. Hopefully I can convey what the problem areas are and how those problem areas get handled in things like the Targums, leading up to this one particular Targum that sort of (pardon the pun) is the genesis for this whole nutty idea.

So you have a couple issues in Genesis 4:1. You have the Hebrew verb *qanah*—that's the one translated, "I have *gotten* a man." *Qanah* is an unusual verb to describe birthing. We can put it that way. *Qanah* (and the ESV actually reflects this) is usually translated in English "to get" or "acquire" or "possess" or something like that. The noun that that's formed from *qanah* is *miqneh*, which means "possession," like cattle and herds and stuff like that—things you own. So it's a little bit of an odd verb to describe the bringing forth of a child.

Now, there are places though, where *qanah* can mean "create." One of them is in Deuteronomy 32, verse 6. Let me just go to that passage quickly. Deuteronomy 32:6. You think, "Boy, here we go back to Deuteronomy 32 again." Well, you know, kinda sorta. It's not Divine Counsel stuff necessarily, but there are issues here. So Deuteronomy 32:6 is that verse where the writer is going after the Israelites:

**<sup>6</sup>Do you thus repay the LORD,  
you foolish and senseless people?  
Is not he your father, who created you,  
who made you and established you?**

Now, the verb translated "created" there is, in fact, this lemma, *qanah*. Here's an

instance where *qanah* can clearly mean "create"—a reference to Yahweh raising up Israel, creating them out of nothing, as it were, with Abraham and Sarah. That translation is actually strengthened by noting (and this is getting real technical)... If people wanted to read more about this, they can. I'll just tell you where the reference is. Verses 6 and 7 of Deuteronomy 32, before the more famous verses 8 and 9, which we talk about a lot... Verses 6 and 7 have a number of words and descriptions (epithets) about the deity El in Canaanite and Ugaritic. And that's important when discussing Deuteronomy 32:6-7, because there are a lot of people out there that think verses 8 and 9... That the Most High, when he distributes the nations, and then verse 9—Yahweh's portion is Israel his people... There are a number of scholars who say, "Well Elyon, the Most High, and Yahweh are separate deities; they're distinct deities." Well, the problem is that if you look back in verses 6 and 7, you have El epithets there, used ultimately of Yahweh. You have the Lord. "Do you thus repay Yahweh? Is not he your father, who created you?" El is described as the Creator, the *qny*. It's the same word in Ugaritic as in Hebrew, *qanah*. So this is an El epithet. And El, again, is technically the Most High, and it gets into all sorts of really technical things with Israelite religion.

But we have a phrase here used to Deuteronomy 32:6 to describe Yahweh as the Creator in sort of classic El language. There are two or three other El elements in verses 6 and 7; I'm not going to bother with that. If you wanted to read about this, you can just Google my last name, Heiser, and then something like "El and Yahweh distinct deities." I did an online article... There's actually two online articles that get into this issue that I wrote for academic journals. We're just going to set that aside.

For our purposes here, Deuteronomy 32 shows us that *qanah* could very well be translated as "create." So, if we take that back to Genesis 4, we have Eve saying, "I have created a man with the help of the Lord" or, "with the Lord." The rest of the verse is an issue. The lemma is an issue. And the rest of the verses are an issue because literally in Hebrew, here's what you have: Eve says *qaniti*—"I have created"—and then "a man," and then it has the little two-letter particle *aleph-tav*, which usually marks a direct object. If you've heard my little thing on the *aleph-tav* or read it on my blog, you know that. It's not Jesus folks, it's just two letters. It's an accusative marker or a preposition. And in this case, here it is nestled in Genesis 4:1, and so its translators are like, "How should we translate this?" "I have created a man" and then the direct object is Yahweh. It doesn't make any sense. First of all, Yahweh isn't a man, and even if we're talking about the angel of the Lord here, Eve didn't create him. It's just weird. So scholars look at this and say, "Okay, we have to take the *aleph* and *tav* here as a preposition." But even that sounds weird: "I have created"... I have either "gotten" or "created" or whatever, "a man with Yahweh." See how the ESV has "with the help of the Lord"—with the help of Yahweh? Well the English word "help" there has no Hebrew equivalent in the verse. It's just "I have created a man with Yahweh." That's literally what you have in Genesis 4:1.

You say, "Well who cares?" You're like, "How does that relate in any way to Satan? Because Satan isn't Yahweh. I mean, what does it matter?" You're thinking well there to ask questions like that. You're going to see why it matters in a moment: because people who are translating the scriptures into Aramaic obviously come across this, and they don't quite know what to do with it because it's just sort of awkward. How do we understand this? I've already hinted that you could sort of look at this and say, "I've gotten a man with the Lord" or "I have gotten a man, Yahweh"—just considering it as a direct object marker. And if you're thinking that thought, then you're going to be thinking about the angel of the Lord. And there are translators, as we're going to see in the Targums, that put the angel of the Lord into the passage. And you say "Well, that's still not Satan." Yeah, I know. I know. But there's going to be one guy, as we're going to see, that thinks, "Oh, we've got a divine being there. We're just gonna pretend..." (I'm being a little pejorative here, but it really gets down to this)... "We're just going to think of that divine being not as Yahweh or not as the angel, but we're going to think of that divine being as Satan in my translation." And it literally just gets invented.

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So again, what we have here is we have a few oddities—a few difficulties, a few awkward things in the Hebrew of Genesis 4 that we don't quite know what to do with, or that least present something of a translation challenge. And then we've got this statement over in Genesis 5:3 about how when Seth's born, the Hebrew text refers to Seth as being in the image of Adam or in Adam's likeness, and it doesn't say that of Cain, so Cain can't be from Adam. Again, we have this *non sequitur* logic operating. So between the difficulties of how to translate Genesis 4:1 and then Genesis 5:3—again, really an argument by omission and a *non sequitur* argument at that—that becomes the basis for this idea. And then people will go to 1 John 3 and say, "Aha, Cain is of the evil one." And then you can ask them, "Well, there's still no evil one back in Genesis 4:1, even with these difficulties." And you'd be right, and they would basically say, "Oh, well, we've got this one Targum in the 7th or 8th century that has the devil in there. That wins the day." You know, all the other stuff can be ignored that's contrary, including the Hebrew text itself. We can ignore all that. We're just going to go with what this one—what popped into this one guy's head. And then we're going to build our belief on that. That's literally what we have going on here. Again, it's just really odd.

Now, I'm going to be referencing a couple of sources here, and one is an article by Scarlata (last name is Scarlata). And I'll put this in the folder for newsletter subscribers. You can read the article if you want. It's pretty technical because it's really getting into Aramaic translation here. There's a section on the Septuagint and one on the Vulgate and what do they do with Genesis 4:1. The article is really about how this idea evolved—just essentially came into being—about Cain being fathered by the devil. So it's a technical article, but I'll put it in there in case

people are interested in it.

Let me just pull a few things out of this. Scarlata makes a comment about our little two-particle word. It's pronounced 'et, so it's *aleph-tav*: 'et (אֶת). So when I say "et" from this point forward, I'm talking about this two-letter particle. Usually, it just marks the direct object. It can also be a preposition. They're two different things but they're spelled the same way, so that we have a homograph issue there. Hebrew is just like any other language; it has homographs. So there's a difficulty in knowing, "How do we take this or not?" Scarlata says this:

If אֶת ('et) is taken as a predicative accusative, the sentence could be translated, "I have acquired/created a man, *who is* YHWH," which could signify that Eve believed she had given birth to the promised seed of Gen 3:15.

Now, that was actually Martin Luther's view. We'll stop there with Scarlata. Luther was seeing in this issue—this grammatical issue in reference to Genesis 3:15, the promised seed. Because Luther's already thinking that the promised seed is God as man. And so Luther is actually reading a lot into Genesis 3:15. Again, I'm not saying that it can't go that direction, but it's kind of difficult to look at Genesis 4:1 and think to yourself that the writer is trying to cryptically telegraph the promised seed of Genesis 3:15. That's pretty much a leap to get that from the awkward grammar here, but that's what Luther did. So Luther said, "Hey, you know, we're just going to take this as an accusative marker. And Eve says, 'I have acquired or gotten or created a man, Yahweh (who is Yahweh). In other words, I've given birth to the promised seed which will be God as man.'" It's quite a leap. But for you Lutherans out there, this is how Luther took it. Now back to Scarlata. He writes about Dillman, a famous Semitic grammarian:

Dillmann takes אֶת ('et) (cf. Gen 26:3; 28:15; 31:3) as a synonym for עִם ('im) ["with"] cf. Gen 21:20; 26:24; 39:2; Jer 1:19; Ps 12:4) and argues that they are interchangeable, but, as Westermann notes, in all the passages Dillmann cites, "with" is always used of God helping man and never the reverse.

Now, I'm going to break in here. I don't think this criticism that Scarlata issues here makes any sense. Because in Genesis 4:1 you don't have the reverse. You don't have man helping God. You don't have Eve helping God. So I don't think his criticism works here. I'm with Dillman here. These could be interchangeable, in terms of their semantics. You could have "with the help of Yahweh." And Scarlata (to be fair to him) adds this thought. He says:

Despite the fact that we have no other occurrences of אֶת ('et) + YHWH meaning "with the help of YHWH," most commentators agree with this sense of the passage (Delitzsch, Speiser, von Rad, Wenham, Sarna).

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These are famous Genesis commentators. So again, you can look at it that way and say we've got a preposition here and Eve is saying, "I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord," or "with the Lord" or "with the Lord's assistance." There's no sense of cohabitation here, like with Genesis 6. It never says that Yahweh went into Eve—that Yahweh had sex with Eve. In fact, it actually says the opposite. The verse begins, clarifying that:

**Now Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain.**

I mean, there's no ambiguity here. So the preposition "with" has to be... It could refer to some divine assistance that Eve believes is taking place here. Yahweh is enabling her to have a child. (Because this is her first child, okay? So it's a new experience.) So that is very likely what it means, but it doesn't have any sense of cohabitation here.

Now, there's one ancient Near-Eastern parallel that I want to throw in here before I kind of tell you how I'm thinking about this—where I land. And Scarlata brings this up in his discussion. He notes that... 'et Yahweh, 'et Adonai, 'et Yahweh (where you have the preposition *et* and then a divine name)... There's a notable parallel in the ancient Near-Eastern literature to this. He says:

With no further biblical evidence for the construction יהוה את (*'et yhwh*) others have turned to ANE parallels to find a possible solution. Skinner argues that the Babylonian account of Aruru creating the seed of humankind "together with" Marduk demonstrates that Aruru, the mother goddess of the Babylonians, is a likely parallel to Eve who represents "not a mortal wife and mother, but a creative deity taking part with the supreme god in the production of man." A closer correspondence may be found in the Atrahasis epic where the goddess Mami is commanded by Enlil to create humankind. She responds, "It is not possible for me to make things, skill lies with Enki" (*ittiyāma lā naṭ? ana epēši itti Enkīma ibašši šipru*)...

So she's like "Hey, this is a little bit beyond my job description." So Scarlata adds:

If we understand Gen 4:1 in the light of the Atrahasis epic, the difficulty of יהוה את (*'et yhwh*) is resolved with the parallel *itti Enkīma*, which implies the meaning "with" or "together with," thus potentially clarifying Eve's declaration as a celebratory pronouncement of her ability to bring forth life together with the help of YHWH.

Remember Mami had said, "It is not possible for me to make things. Skill lies with Enki." Skill lies *itti Enkīma*. That's the Akkadian equivalent of 'et with the divine name (*itti* with a Divine name—in this case Enki). So Scarlata says this

potentially clarifies Eve's declaration as a celebratory pronouncement of her ability to bring forth life with the help of Yahweh.

I think the parallel does have some significance because it aligns well with a biblical pattern—a biblical idea. Think of it this way: there are many other births in the Old Testament that are credited to supernatural help or intervention. You have Sarah giving birth to Isaac. Sarah couldn't have kids. She's too old. It took divine help to do that.

You had Hannah, with the birth of Samuel. She was barren, she cries out to God. And it says the Lord remembered Hannah and then Samuel was born. So there's something going on there where God enables the woman, and the woman acknowledges it. God enables the woman to have a baby—have children. So there are other examples of this where you have supernatural help or intervention being credited to the birth of a child without direct intercourse—divine intercourse—which we've already seen. Genesis 4:1 actually rules it out.

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As a result, the door is open to Eve “crediting” God for the procreation of the child. That's a very normal Old Testament idea—this notion of procreation. Eve says, “I have procreated a man with the help of the Lord. I have created a man with the help of the Lord.” This idea again comes down to whether we think Eve presumed divine intervention of some sort in the birth of her child. We know who the father is; it's Adam. The text is very clear. So in that sense, *qanah* might actually make sense here as a verb of choice to convey the creation idea. Our weird preposition is just there to make the point that Eve's crediting Yahweh with helping. It's that simple. And again, I think it *is* that simple.

But people aren't content, in many cases, with simplicity and clarity. They will just want to make stuff up. I would also point out again that in verse 25... You go down to 4:25 and it's very clear that Adam is the father, because in 4:1, Adam knew his wife, Eve, and she conceived. You get down to verse 25, which a lot of people skip, and it says, “and Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth.” Now isn't that interesting? See, remember back at the beginning of our episode here we read Genesis 5:3:

**<sup>3</sup>When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.**

And then the people who want to have this Cain-comes-from-Satan idea will say, “Well, that was never said of Cain—being fathered by Adam and Adam's own likeness and after his image—and so Cain can't be Adam son.” Well, that's just blown to bits by verse 25:

**Adam knew his wife *again*. She bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel.”**



So it's very clear that Adam is indeed the father of Seth. We don't have this image-language in Genesis 4:25, and we don't need it. Verse 25 connects back to verse 1. So Adam is the father of both Cain and Seth. And this language of Genesis 5:3 doesn't telegraph anything different. It is in concert with Adam being the father of both. But again, let's not let the clarity of the text muddy the theology that we want to angle for.

So now we get into the Targums. This is really where the rubber meets the road. What we've talked about to this point is essentially how people try to basically baptize this view, going back to Genesis 4:1 and essentially monkeying with it or... I'll be so bold: when it comes to the people who are doing theology on the internet, they basically just bungle it. They misunderstand what's going on in the text. And I'll just be honest: they don't care. They have a view they want to argue for and anything that is sort of a little out of the ordinary in terms of an expression... They're not going to do research as to how it makes sense in the context of Old Testament theology. They have found the little anomaly-thing that they're looking for and they're going to ride it to the end. That's how it's done.

So let's get into the Targums. We can actually get into some ancient material here. Targums again, ostensibly, are Aramaic translations of the Old Testament. I say "ostensibly" because that's what's meant by the term, but where we're going to end up in our episode here is finding that some of them go way, way beyond translating the words of the Hebrew text to inserting whole sentences (several sentences) into the material. And that is not a translation. That's like, in the course of making a translation, you also are writing a commentary. You're editorializing in the work, and then you're passing off the results as though it's translation. It's well beyond a translation.

But let's start with one that's not so wacky: a Targum called... These are all Targums of Genesis—again, Aramaic forms of Genesis. Targum Onkelos. There's a whole commentary series on the Aramaic Targums, edited by McNamara. In this particular volume on Targum Onkelos, the editors are Cathcart, Maher, and McNamara. They date Targum Onkelos very firmly to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. They actually say that "the final redaction of Targum Onkelos occurred in the third century AD," so this is late material. This is after the New Testament period. This is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible—Old Testament material—but it's actually pretty late. Keep that in mind as we discuss this. This is not as though you have people putting things in Aramaic right when the scriptures are getting written. That is not the case. Now Targum Onkelos reads this in Genesis 4:1. This is a literal rendering from McNamara's volumes:

And Adam knew his wife Eve. And she conceived and gave birth to Cain. And she said, "I have acquired a man from before the Lord."

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So it's pretty literal until you get to that little 'et particle. Is it a direct object marker or is it a preposition? So Targum Onkelos has Eve saying "I have acquired a man from before the Lord." Not "from the Lord" or not "with the Lord." It's "from before the Lord," which is a little odd. Scarlata comments here about this translation. He writes:

There is a widespread Targumic tendency to eliminate anthropomorphic and anthropopathic phrases descriptive of God and this sometimes involves the use of קדם (qedem; "before") as a circumlocutionary device to place an appropriate distance between God and human beings. The preposition thus helps create a "buffer" between the human and divine.

Other scholars don't agree with that estimation. They don't think that there's any real pattern here. But the idea is that the Targum translator (whoever translated Targum Onkelos) is translating along... "I have acquired a man." And then it's like, "Okay we have 'I have acquired a man 'et Yahweh.' Well, she can't be acquiring Yahweh or creating Yahweh. And we don't want it to really sound too much like Yahweh is a man—the product of a birth process. That's just kind of weird." So he takes the little two-particle 'et, doesn't translate it as "with the Lord," like "with the help of the Lord." He wants to even remove God from sort of being too close to the birth process. So instead, the translator opts for "I have acquired a man from before the Lord," like in the Lord's honor or something like that. So it distances Yahweh from the birth process a little bit. That's Scarlata's point. And, you know, I think in this verse, that works. Whether that's a wholesale pattern in the Targums is what scholars object to. But it's a fairly literal translation. It's a little interpretive there at the end, but not too bad.

Let's go to the next Targum. This is also a Targum of Genesis: Targum Neofiti. This is a Palestinian Targum—in other words, a Targum that originated in that region of the world. Neofiti is the name of the codex. And the date from Cathcart, Maher and McNamara... They write this:

We have very strong evidence from rabbinic sources that written texts of the Targums of the Pentateuch (therefore Palestinian Targums) existed at least in the late third and early fourth centuries of our era [AD, the common era], and there are indications that they were known there earlier still.

And that's the ambiguous part. How early? A century or two? Who knows? But it's still in the AD side of things—it's still centuries removed from the actual composition and final form of the Old Testament. So that's the end of their quote. So again, it's first few centuries AD.

Now here's what Targum Neofiti does. Genesis 4:1:

And the man knew his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. And she said, "Behold, a son will be given to me from before the Lord."

So now we have *another* idea inserted here. It's odd because this translation ignores the word play between Cain (that's *qayin* in Hebrew) and the verb used for the birth *qanah* (*qnh* are the lemma consonants). Personally, I think that's another big reason why *qanah* was chosen as the verb here. It's a little odd to use *qanah* for bringing forth children, but I think the writer deliberately chose this because it looks like the name. It has basically the same consonants as the name. We call that "assonance." It's an auditory similarity. I think that's what's going on here.

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But the translator here, in any case, of Targum Neofiti ignored all that. They ignored *qanah* as a verb lemma and ignored its similarity to *qayin*. And instead of translating *qanah* as "create" or "acquire," the translator actually sort of presumed the idea of being given the child. Not *acquiring* the child or not *creating* the child, but "being given." It's a passive idea. The Aramaic here substitutes... instead of *qanah*, it substitutes a different verb. That's *yth* in transliteration—*yathab*. It means "to give." So this is just a translator decision. And the form is actually in passive reflexive. It's in the *ithpeel* if you're into Aramaic. But that's the rendering: *Behold, a son will be given to me from before the Lord*. So you have that distancing language of Yahweh. And in this case, Eve doesn't even get the credit for bearing the kid. You know, the son is being given. Now, of course, she's the mother. No one's denying that; the translator didn't deny it. And you could argue that, by wording it this way, more credit is given to God ("a son will be given to me from before the Lord") and less credit is given to Eve, or something like that. So it's not awful. But it just shows you that they're trying to express a certain idea in the way they translate things.

Now we finally get to the Targum that just throws a stick of dynamite into all this. This is Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. That's its name. This reading in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan for Genesis 4:1 is the earliest known text that has Cain being fathered by Satan. As for its date, Cathcart, Maher and McNamara write this: they write that various studies...

"allow us to accept with confidence the view that this Targum, in its final form, cannot be dated before the 7th or 8th century."

Now, if you read their commentary on Targum Pseudo-Jonathan there, some will argue that you could move this particular Targum back to an era similar to the other ones—second, third, or fourth century AD. But with confidence, they say that in its final form, you can't date it before the 7th or 8th century. And there are different reasons for that. It actually has some things in it that are only... Let me put this way: it actually has some things in it that draw on the activity of Islam. This is 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Century stuff and beyond. So it's very evident that somebody

was working on this thing after the point at which Muhammad was around and Islam became an issue. So that's what really pushes it well into the AD period as far as what we have today. But again, there are parts of it that could be earlier.

So, enough about the dating. Even if we accept the earliest (second, third, fourth century, something like that).... We'll use 500 BC. If 500 BC is sort of your cutoff point for the final form of the Torah, that's still 800 years. It's still 800 years after the fact. 500 BC to... let's just call it 300 AD for round numbers. That's 800 years. It's almost a millennium before this idea pops into anybody's head. 800 years, at best. 1,200 years if we're going by the final form of the text.

Now, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is known to us primarily in two editions. I'm going to make comments about both of them. The first one is Clarke's Edition, and that was published in 1985. I'll just read Genesis 4:1-2 from Clarke's edition. You're going to think, "Boy, what was this guy smoking when he did this?" But here's what it says:

Adam knew his wife Eve, who had conceived from Sammael, the angel of the Lord. [laughs] Then, from Adam her husband she bore his twin sister and Abel. Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a man tilling the Earth.

40:00

That's Genesis 4:1-2 in Clarke's edition of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. It's overtly and bizarrely interpreted. Think about what's in and what's not in. What's not in: Eve's exclamation, "I have gotten a man from..." Eve's exclamation isn't even in the verses. They're just gone. The translator actually dismisses Eve's own words and inserts his own idea. Her exclamation is just absent. Scarlata writes here:

We are left with no explanation as to why Eve's declaration is omitted, apart from the possibility that the translator wanted to diminish her prominence or authority in the naming of Cain. The inclusion of Sammael...

Now, Sammael is a Satan figure known from pseudepigraphical texts, like *The Ascension of Isaiah* or *Martyrdom of Isaiah*. That goes by both titles. Back to Scarlata:

The inclusion of Sammael may be linked to PsJ Gen 3:6, where Eve sees the "the angel of death"...

If you look back in your Old Testament, this is nowhere present. Whoever produced Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is just literally inserting the material. Eve sees the angel of death in Genesis 3:6, and back to Scarlata:

...where Eve sees the "the angel of death" and fears before she eats the fruit of the tree. The effect of her sexual encounter with the angel, as it is revealed in Gen

4:1, signifies her moral deterioration, which is marked by the birth of Cain, the murderer.

So Scarlata's trying to get inside the head of this guy—whoever produced this Targum. And he says, “well, you know, we see Sammael here (the Satan figure) in Genesis 4:1 because he inserted him back in Genesis 3:6.” Well, that's nice. But look at what else we get: we get a twin sister. We get a twin sister to whoever was “from Sammael.” Let me go back and read it again:

Adam knew his wife Eve, who had conceived from Sammael, the angel of the Lord. Then, from Adam her husband she bore his twin sister...

Well, you wonder, “How can they be twins if they have different dads?” But let's just move on from that:

Then, from Adam her husband she bore his twin sister and Abel. Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a man tilling the Earth.

We don't even get Cain referred to. We don't know that Cain is the product of this presumed union with between Eve and Sammael until verse 2, when Cain gets mentioned. Verse one doesn't even say that Cain is Sammael's kid. We have to assume that. We have to assume that since Abel is from Adam... remember? Let me read it again:

From Adam her husband she bore his twin sister and Abel.

We have to assume that we've got Adam producing Abel and a twin sister, and then Cain is just injected into the narrative in verse 2. We have to assume that Cain, therefore, was from Sammael. And that's what the writer wants us to do. So, we've got a twin sister (and again, how could they be twins if they have different dads?). And where's any of this in the Hebrew text—in Genesis? Answer: it's not there. Sammael is not there. He's not there in Genesis 3:6, either. He's not there in Genesis 4:1. I mean, what in the world is going on here?

Again, Sammael is a Satan figure, and he is just literally... I can't put it any other way. He is literally inserted into the text. Now, Scarlata and others will say, “Well, maybe the translator here thought that was appropriate because of Genesis 5:3—because of this talk about how Adam gives birth to Seth and Seth was in Adam's own image and likeness, and that's not said of Cain” (again, ignoring Genesis 4:25 where Adam knew his wife *again*). She bore a son called Seth. Okay, ignoring that. Let's just pretend that doesn't exist. So Scarlata's trying to get inside his head, like, maybe it's Genesis 5:3 that's influencing him here. And that's probably the case. Because here's Genesis 5 in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. You ready? As if Genesis 4:1-2 weren't enough. As if Genesis 3:6 weren't enough, where we get the Angel of the Lord (who to this guy is Sammael,

the devil). Just Genesis 5:3, in the first part of it (because it's actually long), he throws a lot of stuff in the verse. Here we go:

When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he begot *Seth*, who *resembled* his image and likeness...

45:00

So far so good... kind of normal.

For before that, Eve had borne Cain, who was not from him and who did not resemble him.

So this tells you that the translator... I'm using that term loosely—the interpretive translator, the interpreter, the translator interjector—looked at Genesis 5:3 and very evidently thought, "Okay, we have the language here about Seth being in Adam's image and likeness and we didn't read that back in Genesis 4:1 with Cain. So that must mean that Cain was not from Adam, so I'm going to make that point here in my 'translation.' I'm going to make that point here. I'm going to extrapolate on it here in Genesis 5:3 and I'm going to insert it back in Genesis 4:1. And for a candidate for the father, I'm going to put Sammael in Genesis 3:6. Ta-da!"

There we go: how to invent a doctrine. That's literally what's going on here. He is *inventing* something. Again, you look at this and you go, "Well, how in the world?" We'll get to the larger "why." Why do people even bother with this? It's just so obvious. Hey, we'll get there.

What we have here, again, is an interpretive paraphrase. It's like a hybrid between a translation and a commentary. But that was just one edition. That was Clarke's edition that we were discussing there. The second edition of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is the *editio princeps*, which is a Latin term for the first printed edition of any particular work. And this was actually produced much earlier than Clarke's. This was produced in 1598. And that one has this... Here's what the very first printed edition of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan had:

Adam knew Eve his wife, who desired the angel, and she conceived and bore Cain. And she said, 'I have acquired a man, the angel of the Lord.'

That's the end. Now, again, that's bad enough. But you could see how Clarke... it's not Clarke's fault. He's just assembling manuscript data. You could see how somebody added the elements in what wound up as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan for us... how they would look at that. If they began with this statement:

Adam knew Eve his wife who desired the angel and she conceived and bore Cain...



And then he just drops names in there. You could see how this sort of thing could have developed, or “devolved” is probably a better term. “The angel, who? Uh, Sammael. Had to be Sammael. Had to be a bad guy.” Why? Because they want to establish the point that Cain did not come from Adam, because that's what they believe. That's how they believe Genesis 5:3 should be read. “He didn't come from Adam. Didn't come from Adam, had to be a bad guy. Had to be an intervening angel. And that would be against God's will, so we're going to make him Sammael—the devil, the Satan figure.”

50:00

Again, you see how these theological ideas concatenate together and are transmitted, in this case, in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan through the hand of a translator who's doing a lot more than translating. He's literally just inserting the content—literally thinking thoughts and inserting those thoughts into the text. It's classic eisegesis, presented to the world as a translation in Aramaic. That's what you have. It's just sad, to be honest with you. But you could see how they could get there, you know? Again, let's ignore Genesis 4:25 about Seth being from Adam. Let's ignore that. If we interpret Genesis 5:3 (because of the imaging language) there to exclude Cain... If that's what we're thinking out of the gate (that Cain cannot be from Adam because of Genesis 5:3), then we've got to have another actor in the play. We've got to have someone else on the scene. It can't be another human, because Genesis 4:1 says, “I've gotten a man ‘et Yahweh.” “Okay, we've got to have a divine being that we can use to explain this, and it must be an angel who looked like a man. The Angel of the Lord. He looks like a man in the Old Testament. So we'll call him the Angel of the Lord (or an un-angel of the Lord) and we'll postulate that Eve met another divine being in human form. Forgot the serpent stuff. Okay, Eve met another divine being in human form who was evil. She got attracted to him. She got turned on. They had sex and the product of that was Cain”. Okay that's a concatenation of ideas that literally burst forth in somebody's head and then gets inserted into the text, minimally 800 years after the text was produced, and maybe even more than a millennium. This is the only Targum like this—this blatant as far as Satan. Yet, “*That's* the truth. *That's* going to be our source of theology. Who cares about the actual Old Testament? We would rather speculate about the Old Testament and then insert our speculations into the Old Testament and call it teaching. Call it doctrine. Call it truth.”

Now you might be thinking what I'm thinking right at this point: “Well, you know Mike, we got people today who do that, too.” Yes, we do. Yes, we do. And those same people *love* to come across stuff like this because it's sort of validates their method—their speculation. Calling the fruit of their own imagination “teaching.” Now, I don't want to drift off into a diatribe about Christian Middle-Earth or just Middle-Earth in general, but it's Ground Zero for this kind of stuff. And there were people doing it in antiquity, as well. And we are living with the results of it—even more bizarre. You think “Well, how could it get more bizarre than this, Mike?” Oh, it can.

Let's leave the Targums and go to rabbinic tradition. Well, I love to point out things like this when people say, "Mike, we should be interpreting the Bible like the rabbis did." Really? Sure.

I'm going to be referring here to Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer. This is, this is *aggadic* material. *Aggadah* is an Aramaic term that means "tales" or "lore." Stories and that kind of stuff that gets... They're expansions. It's like Talmud and Midrash in this respect. You know, you get rabbis that pull a few lines out of a biblical story and then they just expound on it. They make up interpretations of it. And then that gets written down, and that becomes sort of part of the... It becomes oral Torah. I mean, that's what Talmud and Midrash and all these things are. And there's plenty of this stuff going on with Genesis 4. One of these sources is this source I just mentioned: Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer. You can look him up on Wikipedia, but his own material is 2nd or 3rd century, so it's kind of right in this same period. And you could look this up in the Babylonian Talmud in *Shabbat* 146a (738), *Yebamot* 103b (711), *Abodah. Zarah* 22b (114).

Those sources say that the serpent copulated with Eve—had sex with Eve and/or infused her with lust. But they don't actually say that he fathered Cain. That's going to be Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. Remember, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is the oldest piece of writing that makes that connection. But there are these other rabbinic sources that have the serpent having sex with Eve and filling her with lust. But they don't make the connection to Cain. That's the province of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

Then there's more. Now, Rabbi Eliezer goes on. The Talmudic material doesn't really make the connection with Cain. But Rabbi Eliezer says this. He says in his particular storytelling here that Sammael came to Eve riding on the serpent, and then somehow she conceived. What does that mean? We're not told what it means. Sammael—this angel, this divine being, the devil figure—comes to Eve riding on the serpent and she gets pregnant. Again, it's just bizarre. It's just bizarre. You think, "Where in the world are they getting this stuff?? They're getting it from their own heads, their own imagination."

55:00 A few minutes ago, we just walked through the set of ideas that people might have been thinking to fill in gaps that they imagine. "Let's imagine how this could have happened." Again, that's one thing, and lots of people did it in antiquity and they do it today. But here, in this situation in antiquity, it becomes oral Torah and it becomes part of a Targum. I mean, it takes on sort of an inscripturated status. And that's really the danger. That's really the sinister thing. Now you could say, "Well it's not real dangerous, Mike. Only one Targum did it. And you got a rabbi or two that are just kind of nutty." You know, people in the Jewish community would say, "Look, the rabbis say all sorts of weird stuff and we ignore them, or we gravitate toward one that had a good reputation and the other ones we just, whatever." You know, I get that. I understand that because we do the same thing with commentators today and scholars. I understand that. But for the community,

this material has inscripturated status. You know, oral Torah. The Targums purport to be translations of the inspired text. It's a little more serious than the way we sort of can either dismiss or embrace a commentator today. Because commentators today, unless they live in Middle-Earth, are not saying "Hey, I have a corner on the truth," or "God spoke to me," or "God directed me to do X, Y or Z." Real scholars and real commentators aren't doing that. What they write can be really kind of nutty, but they're not saying that this should be at the inscripturated level for the believing community. But that's what happened in antiquity with this kind of stuff.

So again, I like stuff like this because I just roll my eyes when you get people who never run into this because they don't read rabbinics. They never run into this crazy stuff that rabbis do with the text. And they say, "Well, they're rabbis. They should know what's going on in the Hebrew Bible. Its Hebrew. We should listen to them." Not really, okay? Not really.

What we should be doing is what we try to do here in the podcast. We try to take scripture in its own context, not a rabbinic context that comes 800 years later. Because honestly, the rabbis are looking back. They're commentators. They're looking back on a text that could be a millennium old and they are filtering that text through their own tradition, just like Christian denominations do. They filter the biblical text through their own context—their own set of traditions. Just because they're Jewish doesn't mean they do it any better. They don't. It can be downright bizarre and completely miss the boat. What we should be doing is trying to take scripture in its *own* context—its contemporary context, the context of the writer and his original audience. That is the goal.

We're not saying that that nobody later ever has any insight. That isn't the point. If you're thinking that, then you just want to think that, because that's not what I'm suggesting. It's not an all-or-nothing proposition. But it's an overwhelming proposition to say it's better to understand scripture in its own context, not a later one—especially something a thousand years later. That should be self-evident. Honestly, that should be so obvious that there would be no argument about it, but it's not because people in the Christian community are used to their denominations filtering the text of them. They also have this mystique about Hebrew, and about Jews and about Judaism. You know, "Oh, oh, we gotta listen to the rabbis because it's their language." Look, I can take you to Israel today and a six-year-old can sight-read the text. You want him to be your interpreter? Is that your commentator now because they can sight-read Hebrew? Again, let's think about the assumptions that we're making. Some of them are just not very sound. And this is a good case in point.

Now, let's go back to 1 John 3 to wrap up the episode here, or at least try to navigate toward the end here. What about 1 John 3:11-12? I'm going to quote from Scarlata again; he has a little section on this. He writes,

1:00:00

Another New Testament text that may imply that Cain was born of unnatural means is 1 John 3:12. Since the entire epistle of 1 John deals with the theme of brotherly love, the figure of Cain, the murderer, provides the perfect antithesis to Christ, the one who laid down his life for others. The author exhorts the believers not to be “like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.” The question of Cain’s origins arises from the phrase “who was of the evil one” which may be considered a reference to his Satanic descent. Following the lesson of Cain, however, v. 15 states in more general terms that “everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.” The word for “murderer” (ἄνθρωποκτόνος; *anthrōpoktōnos*) is employed only here and in John 8:44, when Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees children of the devil, who was a “murderer” from the beginning...

In vv. 1–9 there is a sharp contrast delineated between the “children of God” as those who no longer sin and those “of the devil” who continue to sin. This polemic is summed up in v. 10.

I would say verse 10 is, in fact, the key to understanding 1 John. Okay, let me read it to you:

**<sup>10</sup>By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.**

The contrast in verse 10 is between the children of God and the children of the devil, Cain being the archetype figure of the children of the devil because they don't do righteousness and they don't love the brethren. Think about verse 10.

**It is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil...**

And then it's delineated by references to conduct. To behavior. The point is, verse 10 makes it clear that we are not physically spawned by God. We're not physically spawned by God, we were physically spawned by our parents. Okay, we are not physically spawned by God. And so, that contextually dictates that the oppositional group—the Cain group—are not physically spawned by the evil one, either. What delineates, what describes... The point of both groups (children of God, children of the devil) is laid out in verse 10. The children of the devil are those who don't practice righteousness. It doesn't say that they're the ones that respond to Satan or that genealogically are in the line of Cain. It doesn't say that at all. It's the one who doesn't practice righteousness, the one who doesn't love his brother. Those are the children of the devil, so it's behavioral. It's a characteristic. It refers to... The language is metaphorical. It's

about a spiritual state, not a physical point of origin. And we know that, again, because we are not physically spawned by God. Believers are not physically spawned by God. They are born again. They are born from above. They are made new internally, spiritually. And as John is describing in his letter, these are the ones who love the brothers. They're the ones who are going to be righteous and follow the Lord, be discipled, and all this kind of stuff. That's the point. The point is not physical origin. And honestly, everything I just said there is supported by Genesis 4:1. There's a complete absence in Genesis 4:1 or any other passage that Cain was fathered—physically spawned—by Satan. It is not present in the Bible. It is inserted there in one Targum and then exploited.

So, why do people promote this idea today? To be blunt: it's because they want the Bible to endorse their anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic conspiracy nonsense. They want the Bible to teach that 1 John 3:11-12 should be taken literally so they can look back to the bizarre Targum tradition about Cain being fathered by Satan and not being Adam's son. So they can drive a wedge between the Adamic line—the Adamic race—and a Satanic race. You say, "Well, Mike, wouldn't it make sense to have the Jews be the Adamic line? Because look at those genealogies, you know, in the Old, New..." Yeah, it would. It would. But that isn't where the anti-Semites go. This is part of the tradition to lump Jews (and blacks in certain contexts as well) in a less than Adamic racial status. "Well, surely Adam's race is the master race, is the best race, because it's closest to God and those other races aren't." They will take Adam's line, which produces Jesus, ultimately, because of the New Testament genealogies... They will drive a wedge, beginning back in Genesis, and then argue that Jesus wasn't a Jew. The 17th, 18th, 19th and frankly 20th and 21<sup>st</sup>... You know, people are still doing this.

1:05:00

This is how people try to baptize anti-Semitic conspiracy nonsense, and racial nonsense as well. They love stuff like this. They don't care. Honestly, their hearts are hard. They don't care whether they can justify it from scripture now. They don't care. If you go to Genesis 4:25, it sort of wipes out the Genesis 5:3 argument that is the basis for Genesis 4:1's argument. They don't care about any of that. They want to believe what they want to believe, and they are just looking for ways to make it sound like it's Bible. They want to baptize it in some way and then foist it on their unsuspecting or equally willing followers. That's what they want to do. That's why people promote this idea today. They haven't discovered any lost knowledge. What they're doing is adopting and absorbing made-up stuff and calling it truth. That's what they're doing.

So again, this topic's a bit off the beaten path, but I think it's an important one. You run across this on the internet, and you should know what is behind it. What is behind it, in terms of text, is a misunderstanding of the actual biblical text and a gravitation toward one particular Targum that goes leaps and bounds beyond translating a Hebrew text. It goes leaps and bounds beyond translation to the insertion of ideas that popped into the translator's head. And they become inscripturated and they take on the character for some, again willfully, who

desperately want their idea to attach somewhere to some text in antiquity, like this one text born 800 to 1200 years after the Old Testament was done. This one aberration now captures the truth. They believe it because they want to, not because it makes any sense and not because it's exegetically defensible. They believe it because they want to.

**TS:** Mike, we could have saved our listeners a whole bunch of time and just simply wrapped up this with one coined phrase. And that is: "Fake Targum."

**MH:** (laughs) Yep. Fake Targum, fake translation. Yep. That's what you got.

**TS:** Fake news, fake Targum. There you go, plain and simple.

**MH:** Yep.

**TS:** All right, Mike. Well, next week... Can you let us know what we're gonna be talking about as far as Joshua 1-8?

**MH:** Yeah, several months ago, a listener asked my opinion on the stories of Joshua—part of the conquest narratives (specifically Joshua 1-8)—and the Ugaritic Keret epic. Keret was a king in Ugaritic literature. And so, that's going to be our topic: how we should think about the fact that Joshua 1-8 has some pretty clear similarities to this Ugaritic text. So we'll get into that next week.

**TS:** All right, Mike. Well, with that I just want to remind everybody if you haven't done so, please go rate and review us wherever you consume our podcast. We appreciate the over 500 people that have given us a review on iTunes. I know that's the most popular, but it really does help wherever you listen to the podcast. Even if you're on social media, Twitter, Facebook, you name it. If you wouldn't mind giving us a shout-out if you like our show to help other people that might find our podcast useful, we would appreciate it. And with that, Mike, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.