

Eyeing Idols: Rabbinic Viewing Practices in Late Antiquity

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I was crushed by their wandering heart that turned away from me, and their wandering eyes that turned after their idols.

Ezekiel 6.9

The streets, the market, the baths, the taverns, even our houses are none of them altogether clear of idols. The whole world is filled with Satan and his angels.¹

Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 8.9

WE ARE TOLD THAT PAUL, while walking through Athens, was “provoked in spirit” when he “saw (*theōrountos*) the city was full of idols (*katei-dōlon*).”² Through Paul’s affronted eyes we get a glimpse of how people in the late antique Mediterranean liked to *see* their gods. One way of doing this was by rendering them in material form: in statues, in paintings, in mosaics, in temples, on street-altars, on vessels, on bathhouse walls, over gateways and above entrances. However, the notion that sight was a fundamental means by which to access the divine did not necessarily lead to a theology of images. Philo, another first-century Jew, makes it very clear that the eyes, while crucial to the discovery of and journey

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1. Tertullian, *Disciplinary, Moral, and Ascetical Works*, trans. R. Arbesmann et al. (Washington, D.C., 1959), 69.

2. Acts 17.16.

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toward divinity, must not stop at the material realm but must reach beyond to acquire true vision.³ Like Paul, and in equally strong terms, Philo repudiated idolatry or material representations of the divine.

While the Jewish critique of, and rebuke against, certain divine images was hardly new to Paul or Philo, what begins to surface in their writings and what gains currency in the writings of later Jews and Christians is a concern that is more specifically about *looking* at idols. In this essay I hope to show that this concern was triggered by a twofold problem. One aspect of the problem was a broad sensitivity toward the dangers of sight itself. From this perspective, “idols” were among a variety of potentially problematic objects that crowded the visual field of a late antique person. The other part of the problem pertained to the viewing of sacred images *per se*.

“Idols” are a subclass of those things we call “images.” Images themselves are only a subclass of “visual objects,” which include anything visible to the eye.⁴ By the term “images” I mean material objects such as statues, paintings, frescoes, mosaics, and reliefs.⁵ The so-called Jewish problem of images was not necessarily about images *per se* but about those images designated as “idols.”⁶

On one level, I am concerned with how such images or “idols” make their way into texts. Texts—in this case, late antique rabbinic texts—have a role to play beyond corroborating material evidence. They can supply answers to certain kinds of questions about images and viewing habits that the extant images alone do not necessarily guarantee.⁷ This point is

3. Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.34–35; *Migration* 29; *Unchangeable* 19.

4. For the point that the image is not *the* quintessential visual object, see William J. Thomas Mitchell, “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture,” in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, ed. M. A. Holly and K. Moxey (Williamstown, Mass., 2002), 231–50.

5. In contemporary terms we might use the term “art.”

6. This distinction is made by Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2005), esp. 60–81. Most claim that both textual evidence and the relative dearth of material evidence of figurative art from the late Second Temple period indicate strict observance of the second commandment. For an account that questions this view, see Eric Meyers, “Jewish Art and Architecture in the Land of Israel, 70–c. 235,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. S. T. Katz (Cambridge, 2006), 174–90. Most concede that by the second century C.E. we begin to see a distinctively permissive attitude toward images among the Jews in the material evidence.

7. For this approach, see Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton, N.J., 2007), 21–22.

consonant with the shift in the practice of art history away from the analysis of objects (in terms of connoisseurship, technique, style, and even iconography) toward an analysis of the habits, practices, framing devices, and modalities through which viewers give life to images—in other words, from a history of images to a history of looking.⁸

I refer to a history of looking in its cultural sense rather than to vision as an unchanging capacity reducible to a stable physiological account. As David Michael Levin puts it, “Vision has a history and this history is one of both seeing and of making things to be seen.”⁹ Terms like “visuality,” “viewing practices or habits,” “modes of seeing,” or what the art historian Michael Baxandall called “the period eye,” indicate the ways in which meanings, understandings, and seeing itself shift according to differing cultural conditions.¹⁰ Thus, in the Renaissance, developments in mathematics and architecture, particularly the invention of single-point perspective, gave rise to new ways not only of representing the visual but also of experiencing it.¹¹ Likewise, in the nineteenth century, emergent representational and scientific technologies made for new ways of understanding how vision worked and new modes of seeing itself.¹²

Late Antiquity has been subject to a “visual turn,” both as a scholarly trend and as a characterization of the period itself.¹³ This has mostly focused on Greco-Roman modes of viewing, whether in terms of representational and stylistic shifts between the late Roman and early Byzantine period or in terms of new forms of visual piety in Christian circles emerging in the fourth century. Rabbinic texts, in turn, provide a rich

8. See Norman Byrson’s introduction to *Looking In: The Art of Viewing*, ed. M. Bal (New York, 2001), 1–40; and Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* (Manchester, 2006), 185.

9. David Michael Kleinberg-Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 129.

10. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1972), 29–103.

11. Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. C. Wood (New York, 1997); originally published as “Die Perspektive Als Symbolische Form,” *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924–25* (1927): 258–330.

12. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990).

13. Recent examples of this work include Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2009); James A. Francis, “Living Icons: Tracing a Motif in Verbal and Visual Representation from the Second to Fourth Centuries C.E.,” *American Journal of Philology* 124.4 (2003): 575–600; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000).

corpus of responses and attempts to frame and tame that which is seen. These sources exclude or occlude certain perspectives, persons, and objects from their purview. Precisely because of their partial vision, rabbinic writings allow us to account for the rabbis' viewing habits as well as to trace how they sought to legislate vision as part of a wider effort to impose their perspective on their world.

One important example of the ways in which rabbinic sources make images visible and viewing habits manifest, particularly as sites of conflict and resistance, is through the concept and vocabulary of idolatry or *'avodab zarab*. While the notion of idolatry is biblically based, one cannot underestimate the ways in which the rabbis and others granted it ongoing life and reinvention. Idols are obviously not born but are made in both senses of construction.¹⁴ The web of rabbinic laws on idolatry itself situates the idolatrous nature of an image chiefly in the eye of the beholder (rabbi, as well as worshiper). It is precisely this eye that is my focus here.

One reason why I choose to focus my inquiry on idols is because these visual objects seem to have elicited a particular kind of visual response and framing, not only on the part of ancient rabbis but also on that of modern scholars. Idols are troubling images, having played an important role in the writing of Jewish history and having served as a curious kind of red herring. Their prohibition has given Jews a reputation for iconoclasm and aniconism, and even for antipathy toward the sense of vision itself. Conversely, idols have been represented as a particularly Jewish vice.¹⁵ The

14. How different images were determined to be idols is not the concern here. For work on the rabbis and idolatry, see (including bibliographic references therein) Gerald Blidstein, "Rabbi Yohanan, Idolatry and Public Privilege," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 5.2 (1974): 154–61; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 60–81; Seth Schwartz, "The Rabbi in Aphrodite's Bath: Palestinian Society and Jewish Identity in the High Roman Empire," in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. S. Goldhill (Cambridge, 2001), 335–61; 99–115; Yair Furstenberg, "Idolatry Annulment: Rabbinic Dialogue with Paganism under the Roman Empire" (Hebrew), *Reshit: The Shalom Hartman Institute Academic Annual* 1 (2009): 117–44; Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "The Polemic on the Obligation to Destroy Idolatry in Tannaitic Literature" (Hebrew), *Reshit: The Shalom Hartman Institute Academic Annual* 1 (2009): 91–116; Emmanuel Friedheim, "Historical Studies on the Sages' Halakhic Negotiation with Greco-Roman Culture in Mishnaic and Talmudic Israel" (Hebrew), *AJS Review* 33.2 (2009): 1–18; Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia: Between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York, 2006), 103–20.

15. See Jeremy Cohen, "The Jews as Killers of Christ in the Latin Tradition, from Augustine to the Friars," *Traditio* 39 (1983): 8–10, 22.

rhetorical figure of the sacrilegious, blind, or idolatrous Jew has yet to be utterly dislodged from our own historical lenses.¹⁶

The ancient rabbis are often the locus classics of this supposed antipathy toward images (and, by logically fallacious extension, vision more broadly). Others have already complicated the picture of the late antique “artless Jew” and the iconophobic rabbi.¹⁷ I wish to show how even the most “extreme” forms of rabbinic disengagement with “idols” partook in the contemporary visual *koine*.

At the risk of oversimplification, but at the gain of categorical convenience and clarity, one might talk of three rabbinic modes of idol-viewing. The first is “halakhic forensics.” Rabbinic sources, especially in the tractate *‘Avodah Zarah*, provide a rabbis’-eye view onto a world full of religious objects, images, statues, and gods. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, the rabbis attended to and recorded various details of the appearances of objects. This is part of the wider realm of visual discernment through which the rabbis attempt to identify and categorize things in the world, for epistemic and evidentiary purposes. However—and this is the main reason that I am not treating this mode here—the act of viewing in this case is only treated implicitly through description and presentation of graphic details of visual objects, but it is not addressed, described, or announced, in and of itself.¹⁸

The second viewing strategy might be simply termed “looking away.” The third strategy, “looking awry,” addresses one problem that surfaces

16. See, e.g., John 9.40–41; 2 Cor 3.14–16; Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue with Trypho* 67.8; Tertullian, *Against the Jews* 12, 13; Edward Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2010), 65–67; Averil Cameron, “The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation,” *Studies in Church History* 28 (1992): 1–42. On Augustine’s comparison of Jewish literalism or blindness to their own texts with gentile idolaters, see Robert Markus, *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool, 1996), 25–27.

17. See *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 40, ed. L. I. Levine and Z. Weiss (Portsmouth, R.I., 2000); Fine, *Art and Judaism*; Kalman Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual* (Princeton, N.J., 2000).

18. This is not always the case with halakhic forensics. Examples in which the forensic eye *is* explicitly thematized include laws of *niddah*, witness testimony and evidence, observation of rabbis’ actions for halakhic determinations. Charlotte Fonrobert attends to vision in menstrual matters in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, Calif., 2000), 16–17, 96, 154.

with “looking away.” By not looking one might actually be affirming the power of the “idol” and granting it a grudging sanctity. We will see how this potential critique of “looking away” surfaces in the Palestinian Talmud. An alternative would be to deliberately engage the image through the eyes in a way that negated reverential gazing and neutralized the image’s power by “looking awry.” A mode related to “looking awry” is “liturgical looking”—a viewing practice in which the visual object is seen and ritually encoded with a curse.

In this essay I will concentrate on examples of “looking away” and “looking awry,” with a brief look at “liturgical looking.” I argue that all these viewing modes—even, or especially, “looking away”—were attuned to contemporaneous ideas about the physical and spiritual mechanics of vision in general, and as they pertained to sacred images in particular.¹⁹

LOOKING AWAY

“Do not turn (*tifnu*) toward the idols” (Lev 19.4).

A. Do not turn to worship them.

B. R. Judah says: do not turn to *see* them (*lir’otan*) literally (*vada’y*).²⁰

This tannaitic source attempts to explain the biblical prohibition in Lev 19.4.²¹ The first interpretation reads “turn” (*p-n-y/b*) in the sense of turning toward in worship. R. Judah claims to understand *p-n-b* in its literal sense (*vada’y*), thus reading the verse as a prohibition against the very *looking* at idols.

19. I will be focusing on Palestinian sources here. I treat the relevant Babylonian sources in my book *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

20. Sifra *Kedoshim* 1 (ed. Weiss, 87a); par. tShab 17.1.

21. Lev 4.19 is a curious basis for a visual prohibition of idolatry. While the Pentateuch rarely talks of idolatry in such terms, other more obvious examples are Num 15.39 and Deut 4.19. Ezekiel tends to imprecate against idolatry in ocular terms (esp. “raising the eyes”) (e.g., Ez 6.9; 18.6, 12, 15; 14.4, 7; 20.7, 24; 33.25). Another possible instance in which idolatry and vision are linked is Ps 101.3. In general terms this expression refers to an intentional “activation of the eye” rather than to a literal elevation of the gaze. See Stefan C. Reif, “A Root to Look Up? A Study of the Hebrew NS’ ‘YN,” in *Congress Volume: Salamanca 1985*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden, 1985), 230–44, and references to earlier works cited therein. When referring to deities it denotes supplication, reverence or worship” (cf. Is 40.26, Ps 121.1, Ps 123.1). More common terms related to idol-worship are “service,” “sacrifice,” and “prostration.” The majority of statements regarding idolatry constitute instructions to refrain from their construction, to desist from their worship and to destroy them (i.e., Ex 20.2–4; Ex 23.14; Ex 34.13–17; Num 33.52; Deut 5.6–8; Deut 7.5, 25, 26; Deut 12.1–4; Jgs 2.2; 2 Kgs 11.18, 19.18).

There are several ways to understand R. Judah's intervention. It could be extending the reach of the prohibition in A by enacting a precautionary measure so that even actions short of worship (such as looking) are prohibited.²² Another possibility is that R. Judah specifically focuses on vision as something meaningfully related to idolatry. His interpretation may point to looking part of what it means "to worship" (in A). Before weighing in on these possibilities let us unpack R. Judah's apparently simple intervention.

As a hermeneutic term, *vada'y* signals that the relevant interpretation follows the "plain meaning" of the biblical text, sometimes in contrast to a figurative reading.²³ Thus R. Judah's reading is marked as consistent with the literal meaning of *p-n-y*, so that the command *al tifnu el ba-'elilim* directly forbids looking at idols.²⁴ The root *p-n-y* commonly means to "turn" in either literal or figurative senses (as in A); in some contexts it can have the narrower meaning of "look" (as in B).²⁵

In this particular case to "turn" would conform to the "plain meaning" of the text as much as, if not more than, to "look."²⁶ R. Judah's ostensibly

22. Eli'ezer b. Samuel of Metz sees R. Judah as elaborating rather than contradicting the statement in A. See *Sefer yere'im ba-shalem* (Jerusalem, 1973), 351 (cited in Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutab*, 3:282).

23. On the term *vada'y* as plain meaning, see David Weiss Halivni, *Pesbat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (New York, 1991), 17–18, 76–77, and references in 197; Raphael Loewe, "The 'Plain' Meaning of Scripture in Early Jewish Exegesis," *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 1 (Jerusalem, 1964), 140–85; and Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutab*, 3:282: "do not turn with your face toward the idols in order to look at them."

24. If this is the case it is harder to argue that the Sifra presents R. Judah's interpretation as a precautionary, *extra* measure.

25. *P-n-y* in biblical Hebrew means "to face" or "to turn" in *kal*. See Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1907), 815–17; A. Even-Shoshan, *Ha-milon be-hadash* (Jerusalem, 1980), s.v. *p-n-b*. In some contexts it can mean "to look" (e.g., Ex 2.12, Ex 16.10; Num 12.10, 16.42, and see Dov Sadan, "On the Substitution of the Term of *'pniyab'* as an Expression of *'re'iyab'*," [Hebrew], *Sinai*, 88.3/4 [1981]: 184–91). However, in its local context of Lev 19.4, *p-n-y* is not being used in its visual sense. Lev 19.31 and the nearby Lev 20.6 use *p-n-y* to warn against "turning to" mediums and soothsayers. These instances use the root *p-n-y* in the sense of "turn towards," in a metaphorical or affective fashion rather than in the literal sense "facing" or "looking." However, early rabbinic midrash did not necessarily concern itself with the larger contexts of meaning, preferring to treat smaller units (words, phrases, verses) of the biblical text.

26. To my knowledge the characterization of "looking" as the common or plain sense of the verb *p-n-y* is unusual in tannaitic sources. The Sifra provides other interpretations of this verb including "turning towards in worship" (as per

literal (and also hyperphysical) reading of the root is somewhat strained. All this is to say that explaining the content of his prohibition as an unremarkable hermeneutic reflex or standard rigorist precaution does not sufficiently account for the particularity of claiming that a ban on looking at idols plainly arises from Lev 19.4.²⁷

The parallel in tShab 17.1 suggests that R. Judah's interpretation is not a run-of-the-mill rabbinic stringency:

A. Writing that goes under figures (*tsurot*) or icons (*yokna'ot*) one does not look (*en mistakelin*) at it.²⁸

B. And not only that, but even on weekdays one does not look (*en mistakelin*) at icons, as it says, "do not turn towards the idols" (Lev 19.4).²⁹

above) and "clearing away" (in its sense of vacate). The Targums and the Peshitta on Lev 19.4 use the Aramaic cognate *p-n-y* but the fourth century C.E. Samaritan *Memar markab* 3 has an emphatically visual reading, "and an image (*pe'el*) or any likeness (*damab*) that is not proper you shall not see. You shall not fill your eyes (*lo temale' 'enekba*) on an evil altar." See Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, ed., *Tibat Marke: A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Jerusalem, 1988). Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti and fragments read Ex 2.12 as *s-k-l* (Onkelos uses the Aramaic cognate *p-n-y*). All targums use the Aramaic cognate in Ex 16.10; and all but Neofiti marginalia read the cognate for Lev 20.6 (the Neofiti marginalia has *s-k-l*); Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti have *s-k-l* for Num 12.10; Onkelos and Neofiti have *k-b-l* and Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti marginalia, P and V have *s-k-l* for Num 16.15; Onkelos uses *p-n-y* and Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti have *s-k-l* for Deut 9.27. In general Onkelos prefers *p-n-y* for *p-n-b*. Sokoloff gives "turn, remove, pour out, empty, release, complete" for *p-n-y* (Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* [Baltimore, Md., 2003], 438).

27. The reading is sufficiently an imposition onto the verse-phrase for us to seek explanations outside of rabbinic hermeneutic considerations alone.

28. The prohibition of *looking* (*s-k-l*) at inscriptions under images is noteworthy. The common verb is *reading* (*k-r-a*), which literally means "cry out." This reflects the fact that in antiquity texts were usually read out loud. For the view that the prohibition against "looking" refers to reading, see Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutab* 2:282 and references therein. When one considers the way *s-k-l* is used again in the second part of the sentence, this reinforces a visual understanding of the verb (i.e., looking). Looking even without the ability to read would have been enough in order to approximate the content of inscriptions under sacred images, which usually contained dedications and, often, invocations of deities. As Lehmann puts it, "One did not have to read the inscription to know that it contributed to the Roman system of values," Clayton Lehmann, "The City and the Text," in *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, ed. A. Raban and K. G. Holum (Leiden, 1996), 388. Examples of "looking" at image-related inscriptions include Acts 17.23, Mk 12.13–17. Cf. bShab 149a, which substitutes "look" for "read;" tShab 13.16.

29. The form "do not do X, and not only this, but do not do Y" appears repeatedly in Shab. So does the form "do not do X on the Sabbath, and not only this, but do not even do X during the week (e.g. tShab 2.9; 7.23; mShab 6.10;

In this case, *looking* at legends underneath an image is forbidden on the Sabbath, on top of a general weekday prohibition not to look at the images themselves. There is no metahermeneutic gloss of *vada'y* even as the Tosefta indicates the exegetical derivation by citing the lemma. In this context, the purpose is to justify the ban on looking at idols rather than to interpret the biblical phrase. As such, the ban against looking assumes its own integrity here as an everyday baseline of acceptable behavior vis-à-vis idolatrous images. There is no sense in which it is presented as a precautionary ban designed to prevent one from “turning toward idols.”³⁰ In its language and its reference to legends beneath images, the Tosefta gestures more to contemporaneous Greco-Roman visual, sculptural, and inscriptional culture than to biblical hermeneutics.³¹

This brings us back to the possibility that R. Judah’s ban on looking at idols may be a commentary on what it means “to turn to worship them.”³² It is noteworthy that in the third century, Hippolytus claimed that the (first-century) Essenes did not “carry, look at (*borān*) or make images (*eikona*).”³³ This possibility that looking alone was understood as part of the worship of idols seems to be realized in later sources, as our tannaitic tradition spawns and is linked to a line of rabbinic reasoning that highlights the withholding of the gaze and its relationship to idolatry.

There is evidence that ancient Jews, and among them the tannaim, understood that looking at certain visual objects (in general) could have very real effects upon the beholder (or the object).³⁴ Certainly, belief in

tShab 16.22). tShab 17.1 cannot be read (solely) in the context of bans on reading business documents since the prohibition is against looking rather than reading. Moreover, those prohibitions against reading on the basis of inappropriateness for Sabbath tend to explicitly declare themselves as such, as do the precautionary prohibitions (e.g., mShab 1.3; mShab 16.1; tShab 1.8). Compare the reading prohibition in tShab 17.8, as well as the restriction on consulting figures for calculation from certain sources “as one does during the week,” in tShab 17.6. For additional reading prohibitions, see mShab 16.1, tShab 1.13, tShab 13.1. For prohibitions against carrying or showing commercial documents, see tShab 8.11, 13.

30. There is no implicitly figurative interpretation or contrast with “turn to worship.”

31. On the practice of placing inscriptions at the base of a statue, see John Henderson, *Pliny’s Statue: The Letters, Self-Portraiture and the Arts* (Exeter, 2002), 33–36, 163–64. Inscriptions often contained dedications invoking the gods or honoring a person.

32. See SifreNum. 115 (ed. Horowitz, 126), s.v. Num 39.15: “and you shall not go astray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you go astray” links the gaze with heresy, lust, and idolatry.

33. Hippolytus, *Book of Heresies*, 9.26.1–2 (ed. M. Marcovich).

34. E.g., mZav 2.2 (arousal); LevR 20.1 (ed. Margalio, 1:443–44), (memory); tNaz 4.7, SifreNum 22 (arousal); mAvot 2.9 and 11, mAvot 5.13 and 19; tHag 2.3–4; tSot 1.7; LevR 23:13 (ed. Margalio, 2:548); tBM 2.30, tHor 2.5

the dangers of vision, exemplified in notions like the evil eye or the erotic power of sight, is attested in early Roman Palestine and beyond.³⁵ Underpinning such concerns about vision were both popular and philosophical understandings of its workings.

ANCIENT VISUAL THEORY

In the ancient and late ancient world, vision was generally understood to be intromissive (caused by something entering the eye), extramissive (enabled by something coming out of the eye), or a combination of both.³⁶ Atomists thought that vision was intromissive, believing that it occurred through material *eidōla* or *simulacra* being conveyed from physical objects to the eye.³⁷ Plato was an extramissive visual theorist whose understanding of vision continued to have great currency in Late Antiquity. He theorized that when there is light, a “visual current” issues from the eye, coalesces with the light, and strikes the object of vision.³⁸ He believed that the object emanates particles and that ultimately the data is transmitted to the soul. Stoic philosophy held that vision was a combination of visual currents that emitted from the eye and light. Rays emitted by the eye were thought to interact with the illuminated air forming a tensed field (in the shape of a cone). This “extension” of the eye touches the shapes of objects and transmits the information back to the eye. Along with Platonism, stoicism was a vital philosophical tradition in Late Antiquity, informing ideas about vision from the Gospels to Galen.

(“enlightening the eyes”); yMK 3:1, 81d; SifreDt 343; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, *Baḥodeṣh* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 210–11), and 9 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 235).

35. The concept of the evil eye is founded in an extramissive theory of vision. See Sinai (Tamas) Turan, “‘Wherever the Sages Set Their Eyes, There Is Either Death or Poverty’: On the History, Terminology and Imagery of the Talmudic Traditions about the Devastating Gaze of the Sages” (Hebrew), *Sidra* 23 (2008): 137–205; Richard Kalmin, “The Evil Eye in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” in *Judaea/Palaestina, Babylon and Rome: Jews in the Roman, Parthian and Sassanian Empires*, ed. B. Isaac et al. (Tübingen, forthcoming). Unlike Turan, Kalmin believes that ‘*ayin ba-ra*’ in tannaitic sources signifies stinginess and is not of the “magical” sort. For a discussion of the evil eye and visual theory in the early Roman Empire, see Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago, 2006), esp. 69–71.

36. See Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 7.7, ed. and trans. P. De Lacy *Corpus medicorum graecorum* V 4, 1, 2 (Berlin, 1980), 472–75.

37. For example, Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius. Aristotle’s theory of vision was also intromissive. His theory persisted through his late antique commentators (such as Porphyry and Iamblichus), albeit through a filter of Neoplatonism.

38. See Plato, *Timaeus* 45b–c.

The highly influential Galen (129–200 C.E.) adopted and adapted elements of stoic understandings of vision (together with the findings of the Alexandrian anatomists such as Rufus of Ephesus). He argued that visual spirit (or *pneuma*) comes from the eye, which combines with the air to “become for us the kind of instrument that the nerve in the body is at all times.”³⁹

All of these ancient theories of how the eye works assume an intertwining between vision and touch, and a corporeal contact between viewer and visual object. Hence the malevolent gaze can negatively impact what is seen, and the seductive gaze or striking object can stimulate or affect the visual object or subject. Evidence from all levels of cultural production from the elite and rarified to the more popular and widespread—including medical and gynecological writings, optics, mathematics, philosophy, romances, magical materials, graffiti, religious texts, and material artifacts—shows that some combination of these ideas were current in the cultural *koine* of the late antique Mediterranean and Near East.⁴⁰

Such notions of sight also operated in a variety of Greek Jewish sources.⁴¹ For instance, Philo worked with platonic notions of sight. He not only granted it a central role in his religious philosophy but also presented it as a peculiarly Jewish capacity. He describes the vision of the divine as the eyes “touching the Eternal.”⁴² In his account of Gaius’s attempt to erect his image in the Jerusalem Temple, Philo also considers the perils of vision. Petronius, who was to carry out Gaius’s order, knows that the Jews,

39. Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 7.5, p. 461. On the eye as sentient rather than a mere transmitter of data, see Gerard Simon, *Le Regard, l'être et l'apparance dans l'optique de l'Antiquité* (Paris, 1988).

40. The evidence for these theories is ubiquitous and varied, ranging from Ptolemy’s *Optics* to Galen’s *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, Pliny’s *Natural Histories*, Achilles Tatius’s *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and many magical charms amulets and spells that invoke the eye (good or evil). The enormous secondary literature on this topic includes Morales, *Vision and Narrative*; Frank, *Memory of the Eyes*, 114–33.

41. For the appearance of certain beings as a bodily source of light, heat, or fire, see Joseph and Asaneth 14, Revelation 19.12; 2 Enoch 39; 3 Enoch 15. For sources that highlight a link between vision and desire, see Matt 5.28, 6.22; *Joseph and Asaneth* 23.1–2; *T. Reuben* 3.10, 4.1, 6.1.

42. Philo, *Abr.* 76. On Philo’s use of Platonic physiological theories of vision, see Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen, 2001), 198. See also Gerhard Dellling, “The One Who Sees God,” in *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel*, ed. F. E. Greenspahn, E. Hilgert, and B. L. Mack (Chico, Calif., 1984), 27–41.

understanding their laws to be oracles delivered by God, and having been taught this lesson from the earliest age, they carry as a statue in their souls (*agalmatophorouwi*) the images (*eikonai*) of the ordained laws. Then, beholding (*kathorōntes*) the visible (*enargeis*) figures and forms of these, they are continually amazed at them.⁴³

These heart-borne images of the Torah laws elicit a positive form of visual piety that is contrasted with the negative and idolatrous beholding of Gaius's images. Philo's Jewish leaders refuse to even look upon the latter, declaring that they would rather have their eyes (*ophthalmois*) struck out before "seeing (*theasōmetha*) what no one of our ancestors ever saw (*eide*)."⁴⁴ In order to emphasize the very real effect that beholding idolatrous images would have upon their sensory and spiritual sensibilities, they invoke the Gorgon:⁴⁵

Consider, if some of our people should see (*theasinto*) the statue (*andrianta*) escorted through into the shrine, would they not turn into stones, with their joints becoming frozen, their eyes (*ophthalmōn*) becoming frozen, so that they were unable to move?⁴⁶

Here is a graphic example of intromissive visual theory in which seeing an object has a mimetic effect upon the beholder: by beholding a statue the (literally) petrified viewer becomes one.⁴⁷

The seriousness with which vision was taken was bound up with its haptic nature. Sensitivity to sight is at play in Philo and in the writings of the early Church fathers. Writing in North Africa and in Egypt around the end of the second century, Tertullian and Clement focused on violence (the spectacles) and sex (women, idolatrous images) as dangerous visual objects. Tertullian argues that if we are careful about what goes into our mouths and stomachs, we should surely keep our "nobler organs" free from the defilement of idolatry and that we ought to have no

43. Philo *Legat.* 31.210–12 (L. Cohn et al., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* [1915, repr., Berlin, 1962], 6:155–223); trans. based on F. H. Colson, Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* (Cambridge, 1962), with minor changes.

44. *Legat.* 31.224. The visual language in this section is repetitive and emphatic.

45. *Legat.* 31.237.

46. *Legat.* 31.238.

47. Compare Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song*, Sermon 5, ed. H. Langerbeck and W. Jaeger (Leiden, 1960), 147; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 253a.

part “whether by beholding or watching, in what we renounce.”⁴⁸ In his exhortation to virgins to cover their heads, Tertullian is even more explicit regarding the relationship between vision and touch, describing how the uncovered virgin is “penetrated by the gaze of untrustworthy and multitudinous eyes.”⁴⁹ The Palestinian amoraim would have recourse to similarly graphic understandings of the (male) gaze.

Clement of Alexandria advises that “the eyes especially are to be sparingly used, since it is better to slip with the feet than with the eyes.”⁵⁰ He cautions that “languishing looks, and ogling, which is to wink with the eyes, is nothing else than to commit adultery with the eyes, lust skirmishing through them.”⁵¹ On the other hand, he admits that “the eye contemplating beautiful objects (*kala*) gladdens the heart; that is, the eye which has learned rightly (*kalōs*) to see, gladdens.”⁵² Rabbis and Christians attempted to guard their prospective followers’ eyes from risky objects about the landscape, understanding that “good” seeing not only entailed vigilance but was something that required cultivation.⁵³

LOOKING AS WORSHIP

If late ancient notions of vision underscored sight’s sensitivity, then perhaps the important role that this sense assumed in the realm of the sacred is unsurprising. It is by now a commonplace that central to late antique religion was the impulse to “see the gods,” whether in sculpture, painting, dream, or apparition.⁵⁴ We see this desire played out from the biblical

48. *De Spectaculis* 13, trans. R. Arbesmann; *Tertullian: The Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works*, 81–82. For rabbinic notions of consumptive vision, see mMid 4.5 and LevR 23.13 (ed. Margaliot, 2:548).

49. Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins*, 14, trans. S. Thelwall, in ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 4, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, Mass., 1994), 36. The dangers of lustful looking are enhanced when the visual object is a sentient being, but in principle other visual objects could be affected by the gaze.

50. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 4, trans. W. Wilson, in ed., A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 2, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York, 2007), 288.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. This visual vigilance flowers in post-tannaitic writings and is productive as well as prohibitive. For the rewards of not looking at certain objects, see LevR 23.13 and bMeg 28a.

54. James Francis shows that this visual engagement with divine images emerges in the first few centuries of the Common Era. See Francis, “Living Icons,” 575–600. On the gap between looking at the god directly and looking at its image, see Arnobius of Sicca, *The Case against the Pagans*, 2:460. On seeing the image of a god in a dream as equivalent to seeing the god himself, see Artemidorus of Daldis, *Oneirocritica* 2.33, 35, 37, 38, 39.

psalms, to ancient Greek pilgrimage rituals, to a flurry of second- and third-century sources including Lucian's *De Dea Syria*, Pausanias's descriptions of statues' display or concealment, and Philostratus's descriptions of images.⁵⁵ The same is true for rabbinic traditions about the pilgrimage sights in the halcyon Temple days.

In the third century, Plotinus exploited the importance of the visual, sensory, and material nature of the divine images in his mystical philosophy. He commended the sages of old for this way of capturing the *eidos*, form or image of the gods in matter.⁵⁶ Almost a century later Julian vividly expressed the delight in seeing images, particularly those of the gods:

Therefore, too, whoever loves the gods, does he not gaze steadfastly (*borōntai*) upon the statues (*agalmata*) and the images (*eikonai*) of the gods, worshipping and at the same time shuddering at the gods looking at him (*borōntai*) from the unknown (lit. unseen, *aphanous*).⁵⁷

Seeing is bound up with pleasure, deep affect, and physical responsiveness. It is a reciprocal experience in which one not only sees but is also seen. All of this points to a flowering of what Elsner calls "mystic" or "ritual-centered viewing."⁵⁸ Elsner shows how cult images from the second century mandated this viewing. He notes an increase of symbolic (rather than naturalistic) depiction of figures in cultic contexts from late Roman to Byzantine periods (that ultimately culminated in the Christian visual idiom of the icon). These, with their frontal gaze, incorporate the viewer, "eyeballing those that approach into submission."⁵⁹ Key to this sacred viewing is a shared gaze between viewer and image.⁶⁰ That the tannaim thought of the divine-human ocular encounter in terms of a reciprocal vision of this kind comes through in their (re)invention of the thrice-yearly pilgrimage, particularly in what they designated as *re'iyah* or *re'ayon*:⁶¹

55. My discussion of Greco-Roman visual pieties is indebted to Francis, "Living Icons," 575–600, and to Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 1–28.

56. Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.3.11. See Francis, "Living Icons," 584–85.

57. *Oration on the Mother of the Gods* 294c–d, trans. W. C. Wright in Loeb 2.310–11 = Bidez-Cumont, *Ep.* 89b, Budé 1.2.162. Francis emphasizes that Julian stressed the distinction between the images and the gods themselves ("Living Icons," 584–93). However, the line between image and the god was not always so clear; see Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 1–28.

58. Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 3 and passim.

59. *Ibid.*, 22.

60. See Lucian, *De Syria Dea*, 32; Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 23–24.

61. On the physically reciprocal nature of this encounter, see Aharon Shemesh, "'The Holy Angels Are in Their Council': The Exclusion of Deformed Per-

“He will see the face of the Lord (Ex 23.14)” —just as he comes to see (*yir'eb*) so he comes to be seen (*yera'eb*).⁶²

In such a visual economy, one way out, perhaps the only way, is to disengage the eyes. The prohibition of looking per se would make sense—even beyond rigorisms—in a world in which vision is no casual affair and in which seeing is essential to the ritual experience of the sacred.

AVERTING THE GAZE IN THE YERUSHALMI

The rabbis increasingly worked with such notions of sight to picture and frame a world of their own. We see a marked turn toward the visual by the amoraim, as well as explicit invocation of visual theories, and in our particular case of idol-viewing, an expansion of ocular options available.⁶³ In the later sources we find the ban on looking embedded and modified in new settings. The prohibition is limited to “idolatrous” images in certain contexts, and there may be cause to look if the circumstances are right.

A. Asyan the carpenter in the name of R. Yoḥanan: Why are the images (*ikoniyot*) forbidden? Because they offer incense to them at the time that they go up.

B. Said R. Yoḥanan: it is permitted to look at them (*lir'otan*) at the time that they go down.

Why? “When the wicked are cut off you shall look (*tir'eb*).” (Ps 37.34)

C. Writing that goes under figures and images one does not look (*miw-takelin*) at them on the Sabbath.

And furthermore one does not even look (*mistakelin*) at images (*be-ikonot*) on weekdays.

What is the reason? “Do not turn towards the gods” (Lev 19.14)—do not turn to worship them.

R. Judah says: do not turn to see them (*lir'otan*) literally (*mama'eb*).⁶⁴

Prior to this passage the Yerushalmi narrows the underlying Mishnah's prohibitions against images to those that have been presumptively wor-

sons from Holy Places in Qumranic and Rabbinic Literature,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 4 (1997): 179–206, esp. 189–90.

62. SifreDt 143 (ed. Finkelstein, 196).

63. This is an instance of a much broader trend toward a richer engagement with and deployment of the visual in the realms of piety, theology, and sociality in rabbinic culture, which I treat in *The Sense of Sight*.

64. yAZ 3.1, 42b. *Talmud Yerushalmi According to Ms. Or. 4720 (Scol. 5) of the Leiden University Library with Restorations and Corrections* (Jerusalem, 2001), 1393–94. Unless otherwise noted, I cite from this manuscript.

shipped.⁶⁵ Besides determining which *objects* are forbidden, the Yerushalmi seeks to discover which *acts* are proscribed (whether they constitute worshipful behavior or benefit, *bana'ab*).⁶⁶

The initial prohibitive logic in A depends on the occurrence on cultic activity. R. Yoḥanan works on the presumption that incense is offered to a cult image upon its erection. Even after a cult image had been consecrated, offerings of fruit, incense, flowers, cakes, wine, or grain were presented to objects (ranging from imperial images to small paintings of domestic gods to grander statues of divine beings).⁶⁷

The ensuing tradition in B, also attributed to R. Yoḥanan, implies what follows in C; part of the prohibition with respect to these presumptively idolatrous images is their beholding. While the editorial logic of the pericope (read as a whole) puts exception (B) before rule (C), the literary effect is heightened: the consecration upon the ascent of an image that forbids it to the Jewish gaze (“when they go up”) is reversed upon its comeuppance or descent (“when they go down”). It is following this that our tannaitic tradition is cited.⁶⁸

What was a blanket prohibition now grants the opportunity to look in the right circumstances. These are those that cannot possibly be conceived of as cultic viewing, and which allow the Jewish witnessing of idoloclasm. The rise and fall of an idol is choreographed via two Jewish ocular responses based on two different biblical verses mandating looking away and looking toward (Lev 19.14; Ps 37.34). It is hard not to think about what later scholars refer to as *damnatio memoriae*—desecration or destruction of imperial images, or in later times similar destruction of “idols” by Christians—gleefully documented in various sources.⁶⁹

Even if a viewer was thought to absorb what was seen, we can understand (as the Yerushalmi’s editor did) that in certain contexts an image’s status and power are neutralized.⁷⁰ R. Yoḥanan, who is demonstrably sensitive to the way worship invests an image with (illicit) sanctity (in

65. The question “why are icons forbidden?” (A) continues to address the concerns of the underlying mishnah (mAZ 3.1). The Yerushalmi goes on to narrow and refine the worship-based criteria of the prohibition, distinguishing between categories of images that can be presumptively identified as subject to worship (e.g., imperial cult images vs. images of local authorities).

66. See Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutab*, 3:282–83.

67. E.g., Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 10.96–97.

68. It is a blend of the Sifra *Kedoshim* 1 (ed. Weiss, 87a) and tShab 17.1.

69. E.g., Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.54–57. See Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture*, Monumenta Graeca et Romana (Leiden, 2004).

70. Cf. mAZ 3.4.

A), “permits” looking with a proof-text that goes so far as to prophesy that those who turn to God *shall* see the wicked fall. This is similar to Eusebius’s emphatically visual descriptions of Jewish and pagan downfall as visible witness (to both victims and Christians) to fulfillment of God’s promises.⁷¹ In this regard, one might say that the gaze participates somehow in the destruction itself.⁷² That looking is crucial here rather than incidental or merely a rigoristic precaution is evinced by the implication in R. Yoḥanan’s statement (B)—that the default position is to not look at idols—as well as by the way sight repeatedly surfaces in this portion of the tractate.

What immediately follows these halakhic deliberations is obviously linked by the thematic of this idolatrous visuality: “When R. Naḥum bar Simai died, they covered the icons (*ikonta*) with mats. They said, just as he did not look (*ḥamtun*) at them when he was alive, so he should not look (*yaḥminun*) at them during death.” A few lines later we are informed that this is the rabbi who was called “Naḥum the holy of holies” “because he did not gaze at the image on a coin (*shelo’ bibit betsurat matbea’*) his whole life.”⁷³ Even if such behavior was seen as super-saintly, as is clear from R. Naḥum’s title, it is also one very logical outcome of a ban on idol viewing. In spurning all images it does not distinguish between cultic and other images. Undeniably, it thereby answers the potential problem inherent in making that very distinction: how to identify the status of an image without perchance coming to gaze upon an idol?

What is so interesting about R. Naḥum’s vigilance, even postmortem, is the implication that the dead continue to see. The Yerushalmi addresses this and concludes that the righteous dead do actually see and hear. In making this determination the Yerushalmi highlights *sensory* perception—reminding us of what is at stake in the refusal to see. Following this exemplary anecdote is the report that Rabbi was called “our holy rabbi” because he never gazed (*shelo’ bibit*) upon his circumcision. While one could understand the refusal to look at the penis as a precaution against

71. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.54–57; Eusebius, *Theophany* 1.18; 4.3, 16, 20.

72. The rabbis even invest the removal of idolatry with liturgical significance as per mBer 9.1 and tBer 6.2.

73. yAZ 3.1, 42c (par. yMeg 1.11, 72b.) Given that R. Yoḥanan has just implied that all looking at idols is forbidden other than in specific circumstances, why does R. Naḥum bar Simai deserve special praise? This is probably due to R. Naḥum’s abstention even from images on coins (a few lines below). Given that the Yerushalmi does distinguish idols from images in terms of veneration, it is questionable whether images (even of gods) on coins fall into the category of idol.

touching, it seems, especially in this context, hard to ignore the common view that vision itself was intertwined with touch.⁷⁴ That the rabbis understood the gaze as haptic is graphically expressed in yḤal 2.4, 58c, which equates looking at female genitalia with intercourse.⁷⁵

The feasibility of walking around in the Mediterranean and managing to avoid casting one's eye on images is hard to imagine, perhaps as hard to imagine as going through one's life without gazing upon the body. And yet we know that late antique people trained their bodies—including their eyes—in precisely such ways.⁷⁶ In the fourth century, John Chrysostom recommended ocular dieting, so that one "let the eyes fast . . . for looking is the food of the eyes."⁷⁷ Whether as a form of *askesis* or as self-protection or both, rabbis, Church fathers, and monks guarded their gazes.

Thus when it came to idolatry, Clement warned polytheists that they sinned not only in making images but also by looking at, or even hearing about, them.⁷⁸ For Clement, as for other apologists, this was connected to the very illogic of worshipping objects "apprehended by sight," whether humanly produced or found naturally.⁷⁹ Cyprian situates the sin of idolatry amid a vivid array of sights—good, bad, ugly, benign, beneficent, and dangerous.⁸⁰ Elsewhere he castigates idol worshippers in visual terms, enumerating "looking upon idols" as part of the sin and recommending repentant tears as a way to wash such sinful eyes.⁸¹

A deep sense of the participatory nature of vision coalesced around an abhorrence of the spectacles. Tertullian reasoned that by watching one

74. mNid 2.1 (par. bNid 13a) exhorts men not to touch their genitalia.

75. In the Babylonian parallel (bShab 118b) this equivalence is arguably enhanced when the Talmud adds, "Rabbi's hand never went under his tunic." Note that the heightened sacred accolade of the innermost sanctum ("holy of holies" as opposed to "holy") is awarded to the one whose eyes are averted from idols. A similar hierarchy and juxtaposition of gaze aversion in an erotic and idolatrous contexts is present in bBer 61a.

76. On guarding the monastic gaze, see Pachomius, *Precepts* 2, in Armand Boon, *Pachomiana latina: Règle et épîtres de saint Pachôme, épître de saint Théodore et Liber de saint Oraïsius, texte latin de saint Jérôme* (Louvain, 1932), 13; Shenoute, *Canon* 3, codex YA 257–58.

77. E.g., John Chrysostom, *Homilies Concerning the Statues*, 3.11.

78. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.

79. Clement, *Protrepticus* 4, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass., 1919), 142–43.

80. Cyprian, *Epistola ad Donatum de gratia Dei*.

81. Cyprian, *The Lapsed*, 30. He also points out (ibid., 28) that part of the sin is being seen worshipping. This is a concern for the rabbis (e.g., tAZ 6.6, cf. Augustine, *Ep.* 153) present even when one is not actually sinning (i.e., *mar'it ayin*, e.g., mShab 19.6, mKil 9.2, yYev 2.4, 3d; bBets 9a).

not only became violent but that one was thereby implicated in the violence: intromissive visual theory at work.⁸² Athenagoras put it bluntly, “We see little difference between watching a man being put to death and killing him. So we have given up such spectacles.”⁸³ Sight is not passive—it participates in, even affects, reality. The witness of violence becomes party to it. So, too, the rabbis declared that “he who sits in the stadium, behold this one is a murderer.”⁸⁴

Those such as Tertullian did not only inveigh against bad sights but also attempted to divert the gaze with the promise of goodly sights.⁸⁵ Tertullian’s strategy recalls that of the Yerushalmi; he redirects the good Christian gaze away from the spectacles by promising righteous (non-) viewers the tantalizing “free sight” of the lurid and graphic writhing of sinners being punished (this is a good kind of violent spectacle).⁸⁶ The extramissive nature of vision allows us to understand these as punishing gazes. It was not just the viewer who was impacted by seeing but also the visual object. It is to this insight about the active power of the gaze that we now turn.

LOOKING AWRY: Y’AVODAH ZARAH 3.8, 43B

In a later passage in the same tractate of yAZ we find a trio of anecdotes about promenading pairs of rabbis that encounter idols.⁸⁷ In each case a rabbi asks his senior colleague about the appropriate behavior in the face of the image. In the first two instances, the latter tells the former to “pass in front of it and blind its eyes.”⁸⁸ In the final anecdote of the trilogy, R. Jacob bar Idi says the following in answer R. Joshua b. Levi’s inquiry:

82. Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 15.2–6.

83. Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* 35.5, trans. C. C. Richardson (Philadelphia, 2006), 338. See also Theophilus of Antioch, *Theophilus to Autolytus* 3.15.

84. tAZ 2.7. That this pronouncement does not only point to homicidal omission in light of the exception to the rule that follows which allows one to go to the stadium to save lives is clear from the way it is also linked to participation in idolatry (tAZ 2.5) and to “seeing the sorcerers and enchanters” (tAZ 2.6).

85. Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 30.

86. *De Spectaculis* 30 and see *ibid.*, 29. Cf. LevR 13.3 (ed. Margalio, 1:277) in which the reward of those righteous persons who refrain from watching the spectacles of wild animals in combat is the viewing of the Behemot and Leviathan fighting in the world to come. See David Frankfurter, “Martyrology and the Prurient Gaze,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17.2 (2009): 215–45. On eschatological spectacle in Tertullian and Jewish sources, see Joshua Levinson, “The Athlete of Piety: Fatal Fictions in Rabbinic Literature” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 68 (1999): 61–86 and references therein.

87. The underlying mishnah concerns forbidden benefit (*hana’ab*).

88. yAZ 3.8, 43b.

“Naḥum, the holy of holies, passed, and will you not pass? Pass in front of it and blind its eyes.”⁸⁹ The memory of the visual virtuoso R. Naḥum bar Simai is the paradoxical exemplar for passing in front of the image. The logic here seems to run along the following lines: If even such an unusually visually vigilant sage had no problem passing in front of such images, who are you to quibble? But of what does the injunction to “pass in front of it and blind its eyes” consist? Before answering this question let us consider, along with the Yerushalmi, what the opposite of this behavior might be.

CONTRASTIVE VISUAL PIETIES: YMO'ED KATAN 3.7,
83C AND YBIKURIM 3.3, 65C–D

A variation of this story is embedded in a different narrative context, in yMK 3.7, 83c, with instructive additional elements.⁹⁰ The story features R. Yoḥanan walking along with R. Jacob bar Idi (the same person who invokes Naḥum bar Simai). They encounter R. Elazar; Yoḥanan is insulted when Elazar sees him (*ḥame leb*) and runs away instead extending the customary deference.⁹¹ In a midrashic explanation that stresses vision, R. Jacob argues that unlike Palestinian rabbis, the Babylonians express respect toward their teachers by fulfilling the verse, “the young men saw (*ra'uni*) me and withdrew (Job 29.8).” This is the opposite of the apparently customary (Palestinian) greeting, such as repeatedly emphasized in a veritable manual for rabbinic respect rituals in yBik 3.3, 65c–d.⁹² Here, Lev 19.32, “you shall rise before the hoary head and honor the face of the elder,” is the basis for a basic rule of rising and greeting the rabbinic teacher.

Amid its halakhic determinations yBik 3.3, 65c–d presents several anecdotes about rabbis who not only rise upon seeing their masters but also deliberately try to position themselves so that they might “see” them and then “rise.”⁹³ We witness a shift from the tannaitic rule in which

89. Ibid. In bAZ 50a–b R. Yohanan invokes the holy Naḥum to encourage people not to refrain from walking on flagstones made out of recycled idolatry (*mercurius*). Compare Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porypbry*, 76, in which marble from a destroyed temple is recycled into flagstones so as to be desecrated by being trodden underfoot, which caused people not to walk on them.

90. Par. yBer 2.1, 4b; yShek 2.6, 47a; bYev 96b–97a. On this anecdote, see Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, N.J., 2010), 135–36; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 114.

91. Compare yKil 9.3, 32b in which R. Ishmael is offended by R. Ḥiya's failure to greet him.

92. However, see bKid 33b.

93. For an analysis of this *sugya*, see Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?*, 149–61.

rising is a *response* to the visual encounter, to the notion that that sight of the sage can *itself* be a worthy goal.⁹⁴ Such emphasis on seeing the sage, and on attendant forms of veneration, puts us in the realm of visual piety, defined by Georgia Frank as “practices in which a lingering gaze conjures a sacred presence.”⁹⁵

yBik 3.3, 65c–d sharpens this focus on visual piety by contrastive means. It presents an anecdote of two amoraim who conspicuously continue to study instead of rising and greeting a Jewish official who bought his office. To such a pretender, these rabbis apply Ex 22.20 forbidding the making of idols of silver and gold, as well as Hab 2.19, “Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake! To a dumb stone, arise! Can this give revelation?”⁹⁶ If the good visual object (the sage) carries with it attendant visual pieties, then the bad visual object is the false idol who claims veneration where it is undeserved.⁹⁷ Deliberate and conspicuous disrespect is mandated.

EYE-BLINDING BEHAVIOR: YMOED KATAN 3.7,
83C AND Y’AVODAH ZARAH 3.8, 43B

In yMK 3.7, 83c a similar strategy of contrast is deployed. Babylonian-styled visual veneration of “seeing and fleeing” is contrasted with behavior appropriate toward an idol. After R. Yoḥanan complains to R. Jacob bar Idi about R. Elazar’s disrespectful behavior, the pair go on to encounter an idolatrous image. When R. Jacob asks how they should proceed, R. Yoḥanan answers with the stock phrase: “Would you accord it honor? Rather pass in front of it and blind its eye (*same ‘eneb*).” The phrase “blind its eye” has been understood in various ways. Some have revised it to “blind *your* eye,” a form of “looking away,” in order to harmonize it with R. Naḥum’s visual vigilance. Particularly in light of the associated anecdotes in which Naḥum bar Simai is invoked, this might suggest passing in front of the idol but with an averted gaze.⁹⁸ Others read straightfor-

94. For the tannaitic treatment of rituals of respect including rising before the sage, see Sifra *Kedoshim* 3.7 (tMeg 3.4). The source also prohibits one from “closing one’s eyes as if one has not seen” the “elder” in order to escape the obligation to rise.

95. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes*, 174.

96. Jacob of Kefar Nevoraya contrasts the pretender/idol in Hab 2.19 with the rabbi/God in Hab 2.20, “And the Lord is in his holy sanctuary,” claiming that the latter refers to R. Yitshak bar El’azar while he is in a synagogue.

97. The text adds “does he know how to teach?” and forbids rising for, or calling, such a person “rabbi.”

98. Peter Schäfer, “Jews and Gentiles in Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah,” in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture*, vol. 3, ed. C. Hezser and P. Schäfer (Tübingen, 2002), 348 (“close [your] eyes”), and Christine Hayes, *Between the*

wardly as “blind *its* eye.”⁹⁹ The material evidence of late antique iconoclasm against all kinds of images reveals that the eyes were among the most often struck organs, showing how “the desecration of vital sensory organs . . . negates the ‘power’ of these images to see.”¹⁰⁰ However, most have understood “blind *its* eye” metaphorically, as an instruction to act with deliberate disrespect that is tantamount to defacing the image.¹⁰¹ In yMK 3.7, 83c, R. Yoḥanan must acknowledge that walking up to an object of worship (with no obeisance) constitutes this form of disrespect. He must therefore concede that by contrast R. El’azar’s disappearing act was indeed a form of veneration.

EYE BLINDING THROUGH EXTRAMISSIVE
VIEWING: SONG RABBAH 2.5

How is this eye blinding accomplished? An additional Palestinian source indicates that the eye of the viewer works extramissively to blind the idol’s eye. Here the priest of an idol is said to have cast a malevolent (literally, “narrow”) eye upon his cult image (*she-baytab ‘eno tsarab*).¹⁰²

Babylonian and Pastinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah Zarab (Oxford, 1997), 214–15, n. 34; Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 173.

99. Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 113–14: “put its eyes out.” To my knowledge, no one reads this literally, as mandating an act of iconoclasm.

100. See Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 3. See also *ibid.*, 217. Such mutilation makes the sensory powerlessness of idols visible as per the oft-cited critique that “they have eyes but do not see” (Ps 135.16).

101. While this last translation is in fact the literal one, it is discomfiting and hard to assimilate with the mostly noniconoclastic Palestinian amoraic trend. See Blidstein, “Rabbi Yohanan, Idolatry and Public Privilege,” 158, “spit in its eye”; Fine’s discussion of this phrase in the context of Jewish resistance to the imperium (Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 114); Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, has “in fig. sense to ignore.” *Same ‘eneb* is also used in the context of corruption and bribery and personal injury law, e.g., mBK 8.7. In tannaitic sources the expression is used in the context of personal injury. In most other iterations in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac this word combination is either used adjectively to describe blindness or blind people, or (verbally) to refer to metaphorical acts of blinding—such as in bribery (e.g., Deut 16.19, “a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise”). However, in contexts related to idolatrous images, the Bavli deploys the phrase in a literal fashion. Thus in b’AZ 43b (par bRH 24b) Samuel instructs Rav Judah, who has a seal with a protruding image on it, to “blind its eye” and deface the image, thereby “nullifying” it and making it permissible for use. What may be a related expression, usually directed at Satan, is “an arrow in your/his eye” (bKid 81a, 30a, bSuk 39a, bMen 62a). The eye in this context seems to be related to the evil eye.

102. SongR 2.5 (ed. Vilna). For partial parallels, see yBer 9.2, 13d, ySan 11.5, 30b. In GenR 38.13 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 3:360–64) Abraham uses similar lan-

The anecdote relates how he would embarrass potential worshippers, discouraging them from worshipping it. The priest describes what he does: “I take my payment and I blind its eye.”¹⁰³ This is clearly not a literal act of iconoclasm, and it is terminologically and causally related to the priest’s malevolent gaze toward his ostensible object of veneration. It is tempting to think that this expression, which describes what might be called an “oculoclastic gaze,” might have its source in acts of image desecration or violence so often expressed by gouging out the eyes of images. Such literal acts of violence were another way to cut off the circuit of the reciprocal gaze upon which image worship depended.

In order to understand the power of the malignant gaze, we might also look to apotropaic images designed to neutralize the evil eye, which were plentiful in late antique Palestine, Syria, and Egypt.¹⁰⁴ These often depict spears, snakes, and other creatures attacking and piercing an eye (itself sometimes depicted as bleeding or weeping). The evil eye is neutralized by blinding.

The narrative of the idol and the priest shows that the effect of the priest’s “narrow eye” was to “blind the eye” of the idol. An extramissive gaze strikes the cult image at its core—in its eyes—negating its capacity “to look back” at the cultic viewer.¹⁰⁵ In the narrative, the priest also seeks to accomplish this with caustic comments to his constituents, for example, “Someone as old as you worships something that is but a few days old!” In sapping the image of its power he also takes away its worshippers’ capacity to receive it, another strike at the reciprocal viewing. The story therefore not only uses an extramissive model of vision but also turns the more specific dynamic of sacred viewing on its head.

This eye-blinding negation of the image is the behavior recommended by R. Yoḥanan (along with all of the senior sages of the three pairs who

guage and tactics to dissuade potential image consumers from buying idols. He ends up committing physical (not just metaphorical) iconoclasm.

103. Cf. bBB 109b–110a.

104. There are two examples of such eyes among the ceiling tiles in the Dura Europos synagogue. See Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, vol. 8, part 1 (New York, 1979), 41–45, 48–49, figs. 11–12, and Karen B. Stern, “Mapping Devotion in Roman Dura Europos: A Reconsideration of the Synagogue Ceiling,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 114.3 (2010): 473–504. Kraeling suggests that these two designs are of good and evil eyes. The latter is depicted with knives, snakes, and insects attacking it. See further *Testament of Solomon* 18.25.

105. GenR 87.5 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 3:1068) describes how Potiphar’s wife covers the face of an idol above her bed (presumably so it shouldn’t witness her adultery). Joseph warns that she ought to be far more concerned about the one whose “eyes . . . run forth throughout the whole earth (Zech 4.10).”

encounter idols). Perhaps something of the power of this confrontational viewing practice is present in an anecdote about R. Yoḥanan's funeral: "When R. Yoḥanan died, the icons folded over. They said it was because no icon that was like him."¹⁰⁶ This, together with Naḥum bar Simai's refusal to gaze at idols in death as in life, appears in the same series of rabbinic funerary legends consisting of postmortem miracles that strike at the heart of Roman imperial symbols. The whole unit follows on the heels of our prohibition against looking at idols. In the narrative in *yMK* 3.7, 83c, R. Yoḥanan is implicitly cast as an icon of sorts to which visual piety is due and which is contrasted with the deserved disrespectful treatment toward the idol. Here, he continues in death as in life, confronting idolatry (rather than avoiding it) and perhaps even becoming an object of *its* piety.¹⁰⁷ Or perhaps the icons bow to R. Yoḥanan's better looks.¹⁰⁸ The implication is that R. Yoḥanan somehow registers for the icons, who are shamed into bowing to his superior iconicity.¹⁰⁹ This account of his death follows in close proximity to that of R. Naḥum bar Simai, who took the route of ocular aversion rather than confrontation.

Side by side (at least editorially speaking) we have two models for idol viewing—avoidance (looking away) and confrontation (looking awry). In the later Palestinian sources we have so far seen evidence of (1) visual prohibition or total asceticism; (2) and situational permission to look and circumstantial permission to look down upon; and (3) a disrespectful

106. *yAZ* 3.1, 42c (par. *bMK* 25b). Just before this we find, "when R. Ḥanan died the statues bent over."

107. An unusually iconoclastic anecdote also features R. Yoḥanan as the person who instructs Bar Derosai to break the images (*ṭalmaya*) in the bathhouses (*yAZ* 4.4, 43d). See Schäfer, "Jews and Gentiles in Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah," 350.

108. My interpretation rests partly on implication. It also rests, first, on this anecdote's proximity to the R. Naḥum Bar Simai funeral anecdote, which indicates the visual proximity of images to the funeral procession and dead sage; and second, on the proximity and terminological similarity of *yAZ* 3.1, 42b, in which R. Yoḥanan opines about (not) looking at images.

109. For a reverse dynamic, in which idols turn around and nullify their worshippers, see *yAZ* 4.7, 44a: "R. Naḥman in the name of R. Mana: 'In the time to come idols will come and spit in the face of those who worship idols and cause them to be nullified from the world . . . R. Naḥman in the name of R. Mana, 'in the time to come idols will come and bow down before the holy one, blessed be he and then be nullified from the world.'" See *mAZ* 4.5 on the insufficiency of spitting to technically nullify the idolatrous nature of an image. Cf. *yAZ* 4.4, 44a (par. *bAZ* 43a), in which Bar Kapara urges a gentile boy to spit or urinate upon an idolatrous image on a ring.

gaze. In the last instance, the viewing is active and potentially damaging and is contrasted with appropriate visual pieties to sages.

LITURGICAL LOOKING

A final example of looking awry at idols finds its origins in the lists of “vision” blessings in mBer 9.1–2 and tBer 6.2–6.¹¹⁰ An all too brief foray into these novel liturgical formulae must suffice. In these blessings, the rabbinic viewer is brought through a series of sights including the miraculous, the aesthetic, meteorological, topographical, astronomical, anthropological, zoological, arboreal, and the marine. For each sight (*re'iyab*) the utterance (*amirab*) of a blessing is mandated. These utterances are not passive responses to what is seen; they actively bring various components of the viewscape into focus, *effecting* that which they purport to *describe*.¹¹¹

Importantly, when read as a textual unit, each list, with its iteration of the phrase “*ba-ro'eb* X, *omer* Y,” constitutes an instruction manual on how to perform vision. In other words, the ostensibly responsive nature of these blessings ought not occlude the fact that in their careful writing and instruction, these texts *themselves* anticipate and frame vision before the occurrence of any actual encounter. The content of the tannaitic list poses itself as if in response to spontaneous events, but in its careful composition it is anything but spontaneous.

Among the visual objects effected liturgically are idols. The Mishnah instructs: “[One who sees] a place from which idolatry had been uprooted says, ‘blessed is he who uprooted idolatry from our land.’”¹¹²

110. For an excellent analysis of these “vision blessings” in terms of their relationship to the other blessings, see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, “Responsive Blessings and the Development of the Tannaitic Liturgical System” (Hebrew), *Jewish Studies: An Internet Journal* 7 (2008): 1–29.

111. Such collaboration of verbal and visual techniques was also crucial to the work of Christian pilgrimage in the enlivening of contemporary locations with biblical pasts. On ritual, performance, and the senses in late antique Christian sources, see Georgia Frank, “Taste and See: The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century,” *Church History* 70.4 (2001): 619–43. In addition, there is much evidence from neurocognitive, psychological, and linguistic studies to suggest that what humans see is very much a function of what and how they are trained to see, and that the brain of the viewer may contribute more to vision than the sense data given at any moment. See Nicholas Wade and Michael Swanston, *Visual perception: An Introduction* (Philadelphia, 2001), and David H. Hubel *Eye, Brain, and Vision* (New York, 1995). In this sense, blessings might be understood as not just a discursive aspect of a scopic regime but rather as having reality-granting effect themselves.

112. mBer 9.1.

The Tosefta presents a slightly different formulation for seeing the remains of idolatry and provides for an additional scenario:

- A. One who sees idolatry says: “blessed is he who is slow to anger.”
 B. [One who sees] a place from which idolatry was uprooted says: “blessed is he who uprooted idolatry from our land. May it be your will Lord our God that idolatry be uprooted from all places in Israel and turn the heart of your servants to serve you.” (tBer 6.2)

These halakhot register and ritualize both the visible presence and absence of an idol. The formula for the former (tBer 6.2A) is a curse; the object of sight is liturgically erased. For the blessing over sight of idolatry’s removal, the Tosefta includes a longer formula which is far broader in its hopes for the total annihilation for all idolatry. By seeing and uttering the blessing or curse, the spectator entreats God to carry out the physical act: seeing and uttering is thus also proscriptive.¹¹³

These collections of sight-triggered and constituting blessings are greatly expanded in later sources. For example, what starts life as “one who sees a place where miracles had been done for Israel” (mBer 9.1) becomes the basis for veritable sight-seeing itineraries whose liturgical and performative visual techniques bear striking affinities to those in Christian pilgrimage sources.¹¹⁴ Similar expansions occur with respect to seeing idolatry and the signs of its removal.

The Yerushalmi expands mBer 9.1 (incorporating tBer 6.2B) into three types of visual encounters of idolatry’s removal, each with its own liturgical formula: (1) one in which all idolatry is wiped out of the land; (2) one in which it is uprooted from only one place; and (3) one in which it is uprooted in one place only to be reestablished in another.¹¹⁵ It also goes on to extend the requirement to recite upon seeing idolatry and its erasure even outside the land of Israel.

yBerakhot’s attention to the destruction and reemergence of idolatrous

113. In second- or third-century late Roman Palestine it is unlikely that more actively destructive behavior than prayerful gazing would have been contemplated. Nullification (*bitul*) of an idol (rendering it permissible) could only be accomplished by its owner. In other hypothetical scenarios the rabbis include abandoned (and potentially usable) idols (or fragments thereof) which are consigned to destruction (e.g., mAZ 3.3). However, in these scenarios the property is ownerless.

114. yBer 9.1, 12d, bBer 54a. I develop this idea in “Pilgrimage Itineraries: Seeing the Past through Rabbinic Eyes,” *JSQ* 19 (2012): 1–33.

115. yBer 9.1, 13b (par. bBer 57b).

sites finds companionship with the scenario in yAZ 3.8, 43b. Both of these sources echo with what we know of the upheaval of the material landscape of fourth-century Palestine. This was a time of removal and replacement (and sometimes recycling) of “pagan” objects with Christian ones.¹¹⁶ In this context in which idolatry shifted rather than disappeared, an imagined future of its total erasure from the land of Israel, and even beyond, must have been particularly appealing.¹¹⁷ The kind of active seeing guaranteed by late antique understandings of extramissive vision allowed a minority to project its alternative vision upon a shifting view-scape whose material elements were largely controlled by others. Liturgical (or wishful) looking, then, is another example of an active gaze that affects, as much as it effects, the object of its glare.

CONCLUSION

Thus far I have laid out several modes of visually encountering idols. Perhaps the most idealized is gaze aversion, but there is also a form of gazing in situations in which the idol’s status is compromised. We also find a mode of deliberately defiant looking. And finally, rabbinic texts show liturgical methods of negating (the sight of) idols, ultimately—in the Yerushalmi’s dearest hopes—quite completely from the land. Thus we have come full circle from the notion that to look at an idol can be to worship it, to the notion that to look at an idol can be to denigrate it. This makes sense in a world in which vision can affect viewer and viewed.

I have treated the viewing strategies that “idols” elicited and which in turn helped to constitute “idols.” The archaeological record makes it clear that people in places such as Sepphoris, Scythopolis, Beth Shean, or Caesarea would have encountered a variety of images from statues to

116. On the material and textual evidence, see Nicole Belayche, *Judaea-Palaestina: The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine (Second to Fourth Century)* (Tübingen, 2001); Béatrice Caseau, “Sacred Landscape,” in *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and Oleg G. (Cambridge, 2001), 30. On Christian destruction of pagan cult images and spaces, see Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.26–28 and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 5. For a rabbinic narrative about *spolia*, see bAZ 50a–b. For biblical curses to be recited upon “passing in front of a house of idolatry,” as well as upon “seeing them sacrificing to idolatry” (as per the fourth-century amora R. Yose b. Abun), see yBer 9.1, 63b. On reciting “blessed is he who is slow to anger” when “one sees *mercurius*,” see yBer 9.1, 12d and bBer 54b.

117. Religio-political shifts in the Palestinian viewscape have as much explanatory power over the Yerushalmi’s expansions of idolatrous sites as its general hermeneutic bent toward dialectical elaboration of tannaitic and biblical materials.

mosaics to images on more modest domestic objects like oil lamps. If, as Jaś Elsner has argued, our contemporary impulse to designate images one way or another (as Jewish, Christian, or pagan) is beset with problems and does a certain violence to the complexity and fluidity of the way objects appeared to and functioned for their contemporaneous viewers and users, then this makes even more vivid the urgency with which some ancients, such as rabbis, must have desired to know and control their material world.¹¹⁸ In a basic sense the project of thinking through *‘avodab zarab* was part of an attempt to control the environment, at the very least on epistemic and ontic levels. The very designation of an object as an “idol” rabbinized it, even if under the veil of prohibition.

Such an object was to be viewed—literally—rabbinically (even for those rabbis who advocated that one should *not* look at all). Like Philo, like the Church fathers, rabbis increasingly sought to cultivate ways of seeing that marked not only the world and its objects but also themselves.¹¹⁹ This is, in part, how we might understand the later valorization and honorific sanctification of visual virtuosos such as R. Naḥum bar Simai and R. Judah. In general, the rabbinic preoccupation with idolatry and its viewing is part of a larger effort to mark the gaze as Jewish. This gaze was, even at its ostensibly most disengaged and prohibitive, still deeply indebted to Greco-Roman visual theories, if not visual pieties. Vision, the sensory apprehension of an object, is never solely neutral or natural. The anxieties about the power of others’ sacred images make their way into rabbinic texts in the vocabulary of idolatry and in the attempt to shape their visual encounter.

118. Jaś Elsner, “Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Antique Jewish Art and Early Christian Art,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003): 114–28.

119. For an analysis of visuality that attends to the political aspects of vision by minorities under empire, see Simon Goldhill, “The Erotic Eye: Visual Stimulation and Cultural Conflict,” in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. S. Goldhill (Cambridge, 2001), 154–94. For warnings to not wander about the streets idly and “gaze at the vain spectacles of those who behave badly” and to train the mind on things proper, see *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 8 and 14, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, vol. 1, chaps. 1–10, trans. A. Vööbus, *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 401, *Scriptores Syri* 176 (Leuven, 1979), 8, 14.