



If you have received a little blue glass "eye" in a recent fitness session of mine, I'd like to explain the story. While this is called the "Evil Eye," it does not GIVE away EVIL, but rather PROTECTS YOU FROM IT. The evil eye I've given you is handblown by a friend in Mykonos, Greece, where they call the evil eye protecting talisman a "matia," pronounced /MAH.tee.ah/.

The evil eye is a look that is believed by many cultures to be able to cause injury or bad luck for the person at whom it is directed for reasons of envy or dislike. The term also refers to the power attributed to certain persons of inflicting injury or bad luck by such an envious or ill-wishing look. The evil eye is usually given to others who remain unaware.

The "evil eye" is also known in Arabic as *al-ayn al-aswad* (الحسود عين), in Hebrew as *ayn ha-r'ia* (אין הרע), in Turkish as *Nazar*, in Greek as "*ματῖα*," and in Spanish as "*mal de ojo*."

The idea expressed by the term causes many cultures to pursue protective measures against it. The concept and its significance vary widely among different cultures, primarily the Middle East. The idea appears several times in translations (Targumim) of the Old Testament. It was a widely extended belief among many Mediterranean and Asian tribes and cultures. Charms and decorations featuring the eye are a common sight across Greece and Turkey and have become a popular choice of souvenir with tourists.

Greece

The evil eye, known as *ματῖα* (*matia*), "eye," as an apotropaic visual device, is known to have been a fixture in Greece dating back to at least the 6th century BC, when it commonly appeared on drinking vessels. In Greece, the evil eye is cast away through the process of *xematiasma* (*ματῖα ματῖα*), whereby the "healer" silently recites a secret prayer passed over from an older relative of the opposite sex, usually a grandparent. Such prayers are revealed only under specific circumstances, for according to superstition those who reveal them indiscriminately lose their ability to cast off the evil eye. There are several regional versions of the prayer in question, a

common one being: "Holy Virgin, Our Lady, if [insert name of the victim] is suffering of the evil eye, release him/her of it"[citation needed] repeated three times. According to custom, if one is indeed afflicted with the evil eye, both victim and "healer" then start yawning profusely. The "healer" then performs the sign of the cross three times, and spits in the air three times. Another "test" used to check if the evil eye was cast is that of the oil: under normal conditions, olive oil floats in water, as it is less dense than water. The test of the oil is performed by placing one drop of olive oil in a glass of water, typically holy water. If the drop floats, the test concludes there is no evil eye involved.

If the drop sinks, then it is asserted that the evil eye is cast indeed. An alternate form of the test is to place two drops of olive oil into a glass of water. If the drops remain separated, the test concludes there is no evil eye, but if they merge, there is. This is usually performed by an old lady, who is known for her healing, or a grandparent.

The Greek Fathers accepted the traditional belief in the evil eye, but attributed it to the Devil and envy. In Greek theology, the evil eye or *vaskania* () is considered harmful for the one whose envy inflicts it on others as well as for the sufferer. The Greek Church has an ancient prayer against *vaskania* from the Megan Hieron Synekdemon book of prayers (μ).

What is the Evil eye?

The evil eye is not only a well known subject in mysticism, but has also become a colloquialism in modern culture. When one looks upon another with jealousy or with maliciousness then that person is said to be giving the "evil eye." This figurative meaning is also closely related to the literal interpretation of the evil eye according to its historical origins. The evil eye has been associated with various faiths and nations throughout the years, from black magic and witchcraft to Judaism and Islam. Mainstream Christianity holds the evil eye as a pagan practice, but still refers to the term figuratively in both the Old Testament and New Testament as the state of enviousness or covetousness. (Compare the expression "thine eye be evil") The belief is mostly absent in Eastern Asian civilization, though a well known Usage curse is still widely held in some areas of the Philippines. Literally, the evil eye refers to the supernatural ability to cast spells or exercise power over the lives of others with a mere glance. By looking at another person and casting the evil eye, one can place a curse on his fellow man which will then bewitch him or harm his entire people. In ancient religious belief, individuals who were capable of this power had the ability to bring on great disaster, physical illness or even death to their victim. It was also perceived that the envy that was elicited by a person's good luck (or happy state of life) could result in their misfortune. What is interesting about this belief is that the causes, origins and protective measures of the eye vary according to culture.

Who Can Be Affected by the Evil eye?

Victims that are on the receiving end of the evil eye are generally thought of to be "lucky", though primary victims have traditionally been the very young, as in babies and toddlers. This is likely because youth is very often praised and commented on by the likes of strangers, and specifically, childless women who would have reason to be covetous. However, the victims of the evil eye are certainly not limited to the young, or even to human beings; evil eyes can also be cast on livestock or even an inanimate possession. That is why it is important to protect one's pet as well with an evil eye charm.

It should be noted that the word "evil" can be misleading, at least according to some cultures, who believe that one who casts the evil eye doesn't necessarily curse the victim intentionally. The original English term for "the evil eye" conveyed the idea of "overlooking." This could emphasize the point that a person is holding a covetous gaze so long that he or she is causing a calamity, rather than willing it to be. Some cultures believe that the evil eye is an involuntary curse and that it is cast by covetous people who themselves are cursed with such great power for calamity. Other cultures, however believe that only the "sin" of envy brings out the worst effects of the evil eye.

In traditional Judaism, the one who casts an evil eye may not be at fault, but may have an unbalanced quality of envy that only God perceives. God may then choose to redress the balance between two individuals, one lacking in good things and the other prospering, by reducing the lucky man's fortune. It is also theorized that the evil eye belief may be referenced in the tenth commandment of Moses, which states "You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor'sâ€¦ [his] house, field, manservant, maidservant, his ox, ass, or anything [else]â€¦"

A Berkeley professor (Alan Dundes) once stated that even when the evil eye is compared across various cultures there are still some similarities. The evil that is done as a result of a covetous glaze is somehow related to symptoms of drying. People or things that are affected by the curse tend to dry, wither away or completely dehydrate. However, in the past, most cures for the evil eye related to water or moisture.

The History of the Evil Eye

There is an abundance of archaeology and literary references referring to the evil eye throughout history, and much of it stems from the Mediterranean region. Hundreds of references to evil eyes were made by renowned philosophers including the following:

Hesiod, a Greek poet, lived in 700 B.C.

Plato, a Greek philosopher, lived in 400 B.C.

Aristophanes, Greek dramatist, 400 B.C.

Callimachus, a Greek poet and scholar, lived in 250 B.C.

Theocritus, a Greek poet who lived in 200 B.C.

Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian, lived in 50 B.C.
Pliny the Elder, a Roman author, lived in 50 B.C.
Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus, a Roman historian, lived in 100 A.D.
Aulus Gellius, Latin author, lived 150 A.D.
Athenaeus, a Latin Rhetorician, lived in 200 A.D.

All of these men alluded to the evil eye in their writings, showing that this belief is one as old as history itself. It can be difficult to form a concrete opinion on the subject from their references alone. Some of these men broached the subject of the evil eye from a folkloric standpoint, a theological one, or even an objective, cultural approach. What viewpoint remains common among all of these references is that certain individuals have paranormal abilities that allow them to hurt or kill others, and that the calamity can take place whether intentional or accidental.

The views of some of the later and more influential thinkers of the late B.C. and early A.D. era, categorize what is known as a "classic view" of the evil eye, a non-scientific and literal view of the Eye's power. Some historical references have indicated that Socrates, who lived in 400 B.C., actually possessed the evil eye and that all those who knew him were captivated by his striking eyes. It was said that Socrates' followers, called Blepedaimones had the "demon look" (the term literally translated) which could vouch for some of the association the evil eye has with black magic. However, sources claim that it is possible his followers were under some sort of hypnotic spell, hence, that they did not truly inherit these powers. This classic view of the evil eye's power was later challenged in Greco-Roman times with more scientific explanations. Plutarch though, felt compelled to analyze the evil eye scientifically and still determined that it was a phenomenon. By the time the Roman Empire reached its pinnacle, the evil eye was not universally feared as in past times. Nonetheless, there were still beliefs held that certain people, or even entire tribes, could possess and transmit the evil eye to others. Pontus and Scythia are two tribes widely believed to have been marked by other Romans as Evil eye transmitters.

The Religious History of Evil Eyes

The most ancient references to evil eye, or lucky eye, seem to trace back to Judaism and ancient Israel of the Old Testament. Though the origins are not clearly identified, instances of the evil eye occur in the bible book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 15:9 reads "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heartâ€¦; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother." There's no question that the evil eye belief was prevalent in Hebraic civilization, and there are many implications to the eye found in the Tanakh (bible) and the Talmud. The most recognized passages is the one prayer called the Ben Porat Prayer. When saying the prayer, one asks for angles to come and protect from harm or danger.

In Ashkenazi Jewish belief, the phrase evil eye translates to "Ayin Hara", while "Keyn Aynhoreh" (or "No evil eye!") is used to defend one's self against this curse, following excessive praise or in the event of good news.

The evil eye belief is also a part of the Islam religion and is based on references found in the Quran, as well as statements by Muhammad that read "The influence of an evil eye is a fact." Beliefs in the evil eye are evident in everyday Muslim behavior. For instance, it is customary for a Muslim man to say "Masha'Allah" or "God has willed it!" instead of pointing out how beautiful or handsome a child is. This is invoking God's blessing on the child, whereas simply praising him or her could result in evil eye consequences.

Catholic Biblical References to the Evil Eye

Deuteronomy 15:9: Warns against keeping a covetous eye and wicked heart.

Deuteronomy 28:54: Says that even a tender man shall give an evil eye towards his brother; a tender woman will also turn an evil eye towards her husband, son

and daughter. Proverbs 23:6: Warns against eating bread with a man who has an evil eye. Proverbs 28:22: States that a man with an evil eye will chase after wealth

and never see his own poverty coming. Matthew 20:15: One of Jesus' parables; asks if one does not have the right to his own possessions, and if the envious have evil eyes. Matthew 6:23: Indirectly hints at one having eyes that are bad or materialistic.

Luke 11:34: Says that an evil eye is full of darkness. Mark 7:22:

Lists having an evil eye as a major sin. Romans 1:29: Implies enviousness, as through one's eyes, is a sin.

Protective Talismans and Cures: In Greece

According to legend, one can protect him or herself from the evil eye by wearing certain amulets or talismans, or can be cured by following specific instructions.

Before reviewing some common protections and cures, first consider the importance of eye color. Light colored eyes on individuals were once rare in the Aegean, or Bronze Age of Greece. Therefore, people who had green or blue eyes were often thought to be possessors or transmitters of the curse, whether they knew it or not. Staring was not common in the region Mediterranean, so Northern Europeans who obliviously broke local traditions by staring at others or praising the beauty of a child to his parent, aroused suspicion.

Greece and Turkey were among the first civilizations to create amulets in defense of the evil eye. These amulets, or evil eye charm, were traditionally designed to showcase blue eyes, which sharply reflected back the light colored eyes that started the curse. These evil eye charms were common in ancient Greece and dated back to at least the 6th century of the B.C. era. Visual representation of blue eyes even appeared on drinking utensils.

However, the Greek approach to protection and cures was not in amulets alone, at

least not in the later years. Their belief was that the evil eye can only be cast away through a process called Xematiasma. That happened when a person with special healing abilities said a silent prayer, one that had been passed over from an older relative of the family, one of the opposite gender. Prayers were to be recited under particular circumstances, or else those reckless would lose their protective and curative abilities. According to legend, if a person really was afflicted with the evil eye after this prayer, then both the victim and healer would start to repeatedly yawn. Xematiasma, in later years would incorporate other religious traditions into the process, such as performing the sign of the cross, repeating the Virgin Mary's name and spitting into the air.

Another common practice to see if the eye were truly cast was by testing oil. Olive oil is supposed to float in water ordinarily. Therefore, if a drop of olive oil were to be put in water but sank, it would show evidence of an evil eye curse. An alteration of this test involved putting two drops of olive oil in water and watching to see if they merged, which would also point to the evil eye. Influential Greeks accepted the classic view of the eye, though they considered it to be from the Devil, not from God. The Greeks thought the evil eye to be very harmful to both transmitter and victim, and the term was referred to as Vaskania. Though it appears that Greek civilization was the first to create protective or curative talisman, this practice resulted in the production of numerous Evil eye charms throughout a variety of cultures and religions. These talismans and amulets are referred to as "apotropaic" because they ward off evil spirits or bad luck.

Protective Talismans and Cures: Throughout the Eastern World

Throughout the Middle East, apotropaic talismans have been far more subtle in design, usually resembling disks or spheres of concentric colors, which represent the Evil eye. Some stories in folklore suggest that the eyes on these talismans are made to deflect the Evil eye glare back to the magic practitioner (thus they took on the view that the Evil eye is an intentional weapon).

The blue eye symbol can also be found on the Hamsa Hand evil eye charm, an amulet shaped like a human hand, and one that means "five", as in five fingers. According to mainstream Jewish belief, this amulet is the Hand of Miriam, known in the bible as the sister of Moses and Aaron. It is alternately known as the Hand of Fatima by Muslims. This amulet has a blue eye inside the palm of the hand. Additionally, Jewish belief states that fish are immune to the effects of the evil eye, possibly because of their association with water. This explains why there are some images of fish found on Hamsa hand amulets.

Another Jewish tradition involves protecting newborn babies from the evil eye by way of placing a Kabbalah red string or a red thread on the baby's pillow. This

should be done at the first public presentation to the family. The practice descends from the biblical character of Rachel, who was the Matriarch of the Jewish faith, the wife of Jacob/Israel. One common custom is to wind a red string around the tomb of Rachel and then cut the string into pieces, handing them out as protective threads to be worn on a person's left wrist. The reason for this is because the left hand is thought to be the receiving side for body and soul. If this were true, then those who believe would be able to receive special protective energies, because of the link they have formed with the tomb of Rachel.

Islamic followers believe that the Quran contains the oldest references to the evil eye. It is still a tradition among many Muslims to say "MashaAllah" in response to praise of them or their children, and Persians are known to use the phrase "Nam-e Khoda" ("The name of God") or "Chashmi bad dur" ("May the evil eye be far"). In Turkey, you can still find many evil eye charms and evil eye jewelry, such as a nazar, which dates back to an ancient mythology. It is common to see a nazar on a variety of people, places and things, including evil eye bracelets, evil eye necklaces and evil eye pendants. One might also find a nazar on a house, a vehicle, a person, an animal and or even a evil eye cell phone charm.

Sometimes children will have black dots drawn on their faces in an attempted to protect themselves from the evil eye. It is common in areas like Bangladesh for young girls, who ordinarily receive many compliments, to have a dot drawn subtly behind their earlobes. In ancient Egypt, the Eye of Horus was said to be the eye of the Sky God. His right eye in symbolic form is also said to ward off the evil eye curse in Egypt.

Protective Talismans and Cures: Iran and India

Iran and its surrounding areas, like Iraq and Afghanistan, follow more traditional prayer related instructions to cure or deflect evil eye curses. One practice is to burn seeds of Aspand on charcoal, which releases fragrant smoke that will have curative effects among those afflicted, and many popping sounds that pop the evil eye, breaking its curse. After this step, then a Zoroastrian prayer must be recited. This tradition is still performed in some Iranian restaurants today, because of the fact that customers are constantly being exposed to the eyes of strangers.

In India, the evil eye is called Drishti and can be cured by Aarthi, though the removal process can be complex, depending on how the evil eye has affected the victim. One Hindu ritual involves a holy flame on a plate, which is moved around a person's face to take in all of the damaging effects of the curse. Another ritual involves people spitting into a handful of chilies inside a plate, and then throwing them into a fire. With inanimate objects, however, come different cures. To remove a curse from a vehicle, lemons or limes might be used; the first ones crushed and then the second re-hung by means of evil eye beads. As with other cultures who believe in the evil eye, some Indians guard their children who are

considered unusually beautiful or even perfect, thus inviting evil eye curses. Mothers may administer kumkum on the cheeks of their children or their forehead.

Protective Talismans and Cures: In Western Civilization

The evil eye belief was introduced in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and so it would take some years before widespread knowledge and curative practices would reach Western civilization. In Latin America, practices to cure evil eye curses were comparable to the practices of other nations in the Middle East. Infants were considered at high risk for curses and were given amulets with painted eyes as a means of protection. A tradition in some parts of Latin America is to allow the admirers of a child to touch him or her as a way to dispel any envy. The same would be true of physical items, like clothing, which is why even today a compliment on a suit may cause the wearer to call for touching.

In Mexico, there is an evil eye cure that sees a "curandero" healer perform a specific ritual: he takes a raw chicken egg and circles it around the body of the victim. This allows the egg to absorb the powers of the transmitter. The next day, the curandero breaks the egg and puts it in a glass. From the shape of the yoke, the curandero can deduce if the transmitter was a man or woman. Additional practices of this ritual may have also incorporated the cross shape into various steps.

North America was one of the last continents to be exposed to the Evil eye teaching, but throughout the 20th century, there have been reports of curative and protective methods already in existence, such as instructions for protection written by Henri Gamache. It is also believed that African slaves who were brought into the New World were the ones that introduced the belief to the New World, having been exposed to it by Europeans. In fact, Gamache's book was strongly marketed to African Americans.

Where Does the Belief of the Evil Eye Originate From?

Some claim it was introduced in Sumeria, or perhaps ancient Egypt, because of its affiliation with Horus, who had an eye affliction. Others believe the origin comes from a pre-scientific belief that the process of human vision comes from protruding rays of the eyes. This theory would also be supported by the longstanding belief that humans "feel" when they are being watched.

Other explanations as to the origin of the evil eye focus on scientific possibilities, with observations made among primate behavior as evidence. A dominant member in a group seeks to control submissive members with forceful gazes, while the submissive members avert eye contact. The longer the gaze, the more aggression is implied. This emphasizes very active power contained within a person's eyes. Another theory is that all beings have an invisible third eye that is located in the center of one's forehead. Therefore, the person sending the curse is

actually seeking to blind that third eye, and thus cause a streak of misfortune. While not everyone would profess strong belief in the evil eye, most would concur that unusual staring from a stranger or even a friend can be alarming. The glare could be unfriendly, hostile, indifferent or even devoid of expression. Nevertheless, it can be startling to a person, not only because it lasts a few seconds too long, but also because of a perceived subaudition from the one staring. Persons who experience this sort of stare may not be able to stop thinking about the other person or may even see an image of the person staring back for hours on end. Some have attempted to define this phenomenon as an assault on one's "aura", like a sharp sword penetrating through one's soul. Some teachings concerning the evil eye actually state that the transmitter can project an image onto the other person, perhaps related to a personal vendetta. Sufferers of this evil eye glance may not even be able to proceed with their ordinary lives; perhaps they feel compelled to make things right with the dissatisfied person.

Collecting Evil Eye Jewelry Today

Amulets and talismans are worn for protection and the appearance of these evil eye charms will vary according to culture. Some designs are very simplistic and may include red thread, cords or horseshoes. As discussed, some amulets take the form of a hand along with a representative blue eye. This is common today in lands like Greece and Turkey. Turkish women are fond of eye jewelry, and sterling silver evil eye charms. Not only are they available in blue colors, but they also come in much more fashionable Turkish evil eye designs.

In Egypt one might expect to find amulets made of various materials, including faience and steatite. Wall plaque sized horseshoes with blue colors are also common. Another type of charm to look for is the buckle of Isis charm, which represents Isis, the mother of Horus, nursing her young, a strong protective image for newborns.

The Middle East favors blue faience evil eye beads, also called donkey beads, which protect livestock from the curse. In addition to smaller eye jewelry The Middle East is also known for large, wall-hanging ceramics dedicated to protection against evil eye curses. These ceramics are usually blue in color and inscribed with prayers.

The style of an evil eye amulet is highly adaptable. One can wear this item as an evil eye bracelet, an earring, a finger ring, or carry it around as a keychain. It's not uncommon for people to carry around evil eye keychain to protect themselves, to wear an evil eye bracelet or necklace on their attire or even to put evil eye pendants on their cars or personal prized possessions.

One could find evidence of lucky eye belief in many of today's top celebrities. Popular movie stars and musicians have been spotted wearing evil eye jewelry on their wardrobe. Who are some of the biggest names? Among many others, Oprah

Winfrey, Jennifer Aniston, Demi Moore and Britney Spears, and among men, Brad Pitt and Richard Gere.

Why are some celebrities attracted to the mystique of kabala and evil eye charms? Obviously, celebrities are envied by millions of people on a daily basis. Any seemingly insignificant thing they do could be taken the wrong way by numerous individuals of various cultures and religious backgrounds. Not wishing to be cursed by a covetous or angry fan, they may wish to bear a talisman on their person, however subtle or unnoticeable it may be to average person. Why not? Celebrities can certainly afford to purchase the finest evil eye amulets, but cannot afford to dismiss the legends as superstitious and risk their career.

While many people believe the "evil eye" to be a meaningless expression that conveys anger or disgust, in actuality a seemingly innocent glare may convey much more. There are deeper spiritual implications involved including ancient religious rituals, historical understandings and personal issues that must be resolved. Whether you believe in the power of the evil eye today or just enjoy these charms for fashionable or curious purposes, they are visually striking works of art that demand attention.