

Exodus Concerns for Corinthian Idolatry: An Exegesis of 1 Corinthian 10:1-5

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Exegesis of 1 Corinthians
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Introduction

Boundaries and Coherence. 1 Corinthians 10 finds itself in a middle section of the book, comprised of chapters 8-10,¹ which addresses the Corinthians' problems of idolatry and participation in meals with meat offered to idols.² The prelude, "now concerning things sacrificed to idols..." (8:1), marks this section as Paul's response to their corresponding questions they had about meat offered to idols (cf. 7:1ff). Chapters 8-10 are chiasmic in structure:³

A Paul's Theology of Idols, Food, and Conscience (8:1-13)

B Paul's Appeal to the Example of His Life (9:1-27)

B¹ Paul's Appeal to the Example of Israel (10:1-13)

A¹ Paul's Instructions for Idols, Food, and Conscience (10:12-11:1)

"For I do not want you to be unaware..." (10:1) begins a new line of argumentation, or at least presenting new material, within 8-10 (cf. Rom.1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor.12:1; 2 Cor.1:8; 1 Thes.4:13). Many extend Paul's appeal to Israel from 10:1-11 to 1-13. The contrast in 10:1 ("our fathers") and 10:11 ("[us] upon whom the end of the ages has fallen), and the inclusio use ταῦτα δὲ τύποι/ in vs. 6 and 11, provide closure to the specific example of Israel (as the structure below with affirm), whereas the ὡστε in 10:12 indicates inferential transition to a paraenetic summary. Διόπερ in 10:14 is a stronger inferential conjunction and marks a more formal transition. This is strengthened by the endearing term ἀγαπητοί μου in 10:14 (cf. ἀδελφοί in 10:1).

¹ The section is widely viewed as ending at 11:1, considering Paul's appeal to imitate him is based on the preceding (8-10) and not the subsequent (11:2-16) material. Thus, this will be assumed throughout this paper in any given mention of 8-10 for convenience.

² See Bruce Winter, "Theological and Ethical Responses to Religious Pluralism-1 Corinthians 8-10," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (1990): 209-226 for good background material to this section.

³ Many contend that 10:1-13 is either digression or return from digression in Paul's bigger argument of ch.8-10 or even part of a separate letter (cf. C.K. Barrett *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, [BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1968], p.219, Yeo Khiok-khng, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8-10: A Formal Analysis With Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic* [BIM 9; Leiden: Brill, 1995], p.156, F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* [NCB; London: Oliphants, 1971], p.90), Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], p.718, Robert F. Collins *First Corinthians* [SP 7; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999], p.364). This simply overlooks the integral features that make this section coherent: law/freedom motif, eat/drink language, Scripture pattern (esp. 9:10 and 10:6,11), idolatry topic, and partake/share references. See also David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), p.446 and Wayne Meeks, "'And Rose Up to Play': Midrash and Paraenesis in 1 Cor.10:1-22," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 16 (1982): 74.

The focus of this paper is on 10:1-5, and we will attempt to examine the meaning of Paul's appeal to Israel based upon an exegesis of the text.⁴ This will include exploration of his use of Deuteronomy 32 in the broader context of 1 Corinthians 10 and its ramifications for our passage. As the following will reflect, vs.6 is an explanation of vs.1-5, which recounts certain features of Israel's Exodus, whereas vs.7 begins a series of instructions (two imperatives and two hortatory subjunctives), and is summarized with an explanation in vs.11.

Structure. The schema of 1 Cor.10:1-13 unfolds from the general to the specific. It progresses from 1) Israel's Typological Connection to the Corinthians (1-6), to 2) Comparative Commands to the Corinthians (7-11), and finally 3) Distilled Significance for the Corinthians (12-13). This progression is evident in the explanatory verses where one mentions the events (vs.6, "happened") and the other the text (vs.11, "were written") so as to divide vs.1-5 as historical correspondence and vs.7-10 as textual correspondence.⁵ Verses 1-6 also form a parallelism with vs.7-11, as evidenced in the following structure:⁶

- A Israel's Surprising Experience of Judgment (1-5)
- B The Interpretation of their Experience (6)
- A¹ Commands Reflecting Israel's Judgment (7-10)
- B¹ Reiteration of Interpretation (11)

Verses.1-6 may reflect, at face value, a simple form of Idea (1-5) and Explanation (6) or Idea (1-4), Conterexpectation (5), and Explanation (6). This would seem clear from the coordinate use

⁴ Following the studies of Richard Davidson (*Typology in Scripture: A Study of the Hermeneutical τύπος Structures* [AUSDDS 2; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981]), E. Earle Ellis (*Paul's Use of the OT* [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957]), Leonhard Goppelt (*Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982]), Andrew Bandstra ("Interpretation in 1 Cor.10:1-11." *Calvin Theological Journal* 6 [1971]: 5-21), Bruce Longenecker (*Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975]), Richard Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale, 1989]), and A. McEwen ("Paul's Use of the OT in 1 Cor.10:1-4." *Vox Reformata* 47 [1986]: 3-10). All of these works appreciate the genuine use of typology as an exegetical method employed by Paul (contra David Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament" in G.K. Beale (ed.), *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], p.324).

⁵ Wayne Meeks divides 10:1-11 by the quotation of Ex.32:5 so that 10:1-6 corresponds with Israel "they sat down to eat and drink" and 10:7-11 corresponds with "and rose up to play" (p.69).

⁶ See also Gary Collier's helpful structure ("That We Might Not Crave Evil': The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians 10:1-13." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 55 [1994]: 60-61).

of καὶ πάντες in vs.1-4, the adversative 'αλλ' in vs.5, and ταῦτα δὲ in vs.6. A closer look at the grammar and overlapping vocabulary, however, reveals a more nuanced form:

- I. Typological Account of Israel's Exodus (1-5)
 - A. Israel's Experience of Blessing (1-4)
 - i. Blessing Manifested in Baptism (1-2)
 - ii. Blessing Manifested in Meals (3-4)
 - B. Israel's Experience of Cursing (5)
- II. Explanation of Israel's Exodus Experience (6)
 - A. Simple Telling (6a)
 - B. Specific Purpose for Us (6b)

Translation. ¹For I do not want you to be unaware,⁷ brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea ²and all were baptized⁸ into Moses by⁹ the cloud and by the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the rock with accompanied¹⁰ them, and the rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with the majority of them, since they were killed in the wilderness.

Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 10:1-5

10:1 Οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν πάντες ὑπὸ τὴν νεφέλην ἦσαν καὶ πάντες διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διήλθον. Paul begins this section here with a standard disclosure formula. Some translators render it positively (“I want you to know”) to smooth out the double negative (cf. ESV). He uses the same formula in 12:1 which yields a connection to the two passages given the idolatry theme (cf. 10:7 and 12:2). This formula could also stress Paul's agenda with the knowledge/arrogance problem he addresses elsewhere in the epistle (especially 8:1ff; comp. 10:12). The introduction frames the discourse unit as an important point

⁷ As opposed to “ignorant” (NIV, YLT), which carries too many negative connotations not intended by this formula.

⁸ This reflects the passive ἐβαπτίσθησαν as the original as opposed to the variant middle ἐβαπτίσαντο (P⁴⁶ ἐβαπτίζοντο). It is tough to say why this would be changed given the parallel usage of the passive in 12:13 (ἐβαπτίσθημεν), but Metzger suggests perhaps the background of proselyte baptism (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [New York: United Bible Society, 1971], p.559). Robert Collins suggests that the reading sprung from a desire to distinguish baptism into Moses and baptism into Christ (*First Corinthians*, p.368). The external evidence weighs heavier for the passive reading with old and well distributed witnesses (see appendix). The internal evidence is extremely strong for the passive since each time it occurs in 1 Corinthians, other than in the active, it is passive (1:13, 15; 12:13; 15:29). See Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), p.427.

⁹ Both uses of ἐν are taken as instrumental. See below.

¹⁰ Instead of “follow” which could imply chronology to mean “later in redemptive history”. See exegesis below.

in his argumentation. He had just been talking about freedom and self-control and his efforts not to be disqualified (9:24-27). The γὰρ as well as vocative form ἀδελφοί connect his discussion with the immediate preceding context.¹¹ The first bit of information that he reveals to his readers is that attention will be focused on “our fathers” (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν) and their actions, which anticipate a correlation with them. There is no question that “our fathers” here is a reference to ancient Israel because they “were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea”. This is an obvious reference to the Exodus event proper where Israel was led by God, manifested in a cloud theophany, through the Red Sea (Ex.13:21; 14:19-21). Being “under the cloud” (ὑπὸ τὴν νεφέλην ἦσαν) may connote the “authority of God,” but is probably just a locative designation as they were literally “under it” as they “passed through the sea” (διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διήλθον; Ex.14:19). The fact that Paul included the Corinthians, and thus all Gentiles, in the ancestry of Israel (“our fathers”) significantly informs his perception of the Church as (NT people of God) in continuum with Israel (OT people of God).¹² This is strengthened in the next verses, which provides typological grounds for appeal in the following section (vs.7ff.)

10:2 καὶ πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ. The use of βαπτίζω in this verse certainly doesn't carry its normal semantic force,¹³ “to dip, immerse,”¹⁴ but, as in Romans 6:1ff. and later in 1 Corinthians 12:13, it takes on an illustrative character for Paul. The parallel use of the preposition ἐν for both the cloud (ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ) and

¹¹ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p.443. So Bandstra, “Interpretation in 1 Cor.10:1-11,” p.5.

¹² So Fee, p.444

¹³ “The exodus judgment was then an ordeal by fire-cloud and water, and it was this ordeal that Paul identified as a baptism. If there were any doubt that ‘baptized’ in 1 Corinthians 10:2 is to be taken not as a common verb but in its technical sense, it would be dispelled by the addition of ‘into Moses,’ which unmistakably carries through the parallel to the Pauline phrase, ‘baptized into Jesus Christ.’ Besides, none of the non-technical meanings of βαπτίζω (e.g., dip, immerse, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm) would accurately describe the physical relationship that actually obtained between Israel and the fire and water” (Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968], p.69).

¹⁴ BDAG, p.164

the sea (ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ) signifies that they are the means of this baptism into Moses. They both, metaphorically, “immerse” or “encompass” Israel as they cross the sea.¹⁵ There is no Jewish tradition regarding any kind of baptism into Moses *per se*, although there was an established tradition that used the “water crossing” as a basis for proselyte baptism.¹⁶ Baptism for proselytes was something still being developed during the first century A.D., and it seems likely that Paul (with John the Baptist and Jesus for that matter), imported this understanding.¹⁷ Baptism “into Moses” (εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν) could be understood as “initiation into Torah,” “under the leadership of Moses,” “in the name of Moses,” “in the fellowship of Moses” and is almost certainly an anticipatory parallel with baptism “into one body” (12:13). The “covenant/law of Moses” is to be the preferred understanding of this because the context has already linked to Moses this way in the previous chapter (9:9) and the Ex.32:6 quotation presupposes the ratification of the Sinai covenant.¹⁸

¹⁵ Contra Fee, p.445, who prefers to view it as locative. The locative sense of ἐν would be redundant since εἰς already carries this.

¹⁶ G.R. Beasley-Murray (*Baptism in the New Testament* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1972] argues convincingly that proselyte baptism was not the norm in first century Judaism. One penetrating question he asks is: “If proselyte baptism was a universally accepted institution in Judaism before the Christian era, how are we to explain the fact that there is not one clear testimony to it in pre-Christian writings and its complete absence of mention from the writings of Philo, Josephus and the Bible, particularly the New Testament? The silence of these authorities is the more unexpected when it is recalled how interested they all were in the relations of Jews to Gentiles” (p.19). So Scot McKnight, “Proselytism and Godfearers,” in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), p.845. Although proselyte baptism might have been more rare than is commonly understood, this does not detract from our point that the Exodus of Israel served as the imagery for both proselyte and Christian baptism. “Israel’s baptism ‘into [eis] Moses’ corresponds to our baptism ‘into [eis] Christ’ and it is interesting to note that Paul’s use of this argument would appear to have been a legacy from his days as a Hillelite rabbi, for this was the established exegetical tradition by which Jewish proselyte baptism was derived” (J.K. Howard, “‘Christ Our Passover:’ A Study of the Passover-Exodus Theme in 1 Corinthians.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 41 (1969): 104. Bruce Longenecker (*Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, p.118-9) concurs with this understanding and provides support from the Talmud (*b.Ker.9a*, *b.Yeb.46a*). Whether or not sources confirm an Exodus understanding of proselyte baptism before or after Paul is of little concern given the prominence of Jewish oral tradition that was expressed in later Jewish writings (like the Talmud, Mishnah, Tosefta, and Midrash). “It is reasonable then to argue that baptism, as an initiation rite, was a symbolic rite of passage in Judaism when John, probably Jesus and certainly early Christians like Paul began to use the rite as the prevailing entry rite into the newfound movement” (McKnight, *ibid*).

¹⁷ So McKnight, *ibid*

¹⁸ The theophany of the Glory-cloud also lends itself to our bias here, as it is typical of covenant making. See Jeffrey Neihaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SOTBT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1984), and Meredith Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

10:3-4a καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν βρῶμα ἔφαγον καὶ πάντες τὸ αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν ἔπιον πόμα. After Israel “immersed” from their deliverance in the Red Sea, they came to the wilderness where they were nourished by God. Paul’s concern, however, is not with the physical, as is consistent with vs.2, but the realities that lie behind.¹⁹ He reinforces the universality of Israel’s experience adding τὸ αὐτο to his already emphatic use of πάντες. These verses form a nearly perfect balanced parallelism:

	1	2	3	4	5
A	καὶ	πάντες	τὸ αὐτὸ	πνευματικὸν	βρῶμα ἔφαγον
	1	2	3	4	5
B	καὶ	πάντες	τὸ αὐτὸ	πνευματικὸν	ἔπιον πόμα

This feature pairs these two things together and accents their complementary nature. The reference to “eating the same spiritual food (αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν βρῶμα ἔφαγον) and drinking the same spiritual drink (αὐτὸ πνευματικὸν ἔπιον πόμα)” is not necessarily based on any one text of Scripture, as the actions are viewed as a whole (both ἔφαγον and ἔπιον are aorist). It would seem reasonable to take πνευματικὸν to mean “supernatural”²⁰ since Israel was both fed miraculously (cf. Ex.16:1ff.) and watered miraculously (cf.Ex.15:22ff.). This seems to be, however, beyond the semantic range of this word.²¹ Rather, keeping with the use of it within 1 Corinthians, the “spiritual” as opposed to “physical” makes the best sense (9:11; 15:44,46). Paul’s use of “eating” and “drinking” together in light of the context inextricably link to the Lord’s Supper.²² This sacrament is brought to light at the start of the next section in 10:16 (“cup of blessing,” “bread which we break”) for the purpose of demonstrating to the Corinthians that there is a

¹⁹ So Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, p.91

²⁰ So Thiselton, p.726, Garland, p.454, Bruce, p.91, Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997), p.160, Ben Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p.219

²¹ cf. BDAG, p.837 and Louw & Nida 12.20. We are not bound to preclude this take but the context doesn’t support it. Cf. 1 Cor.2:13,15; 3:1; 9:11; 12:1; 14:1,37; 15:44,46.

²² So Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Eng. trans. by James W. Leitch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p.166, Fee, p.446, Bandstra, p.9, and Bruce, p.91

spiritual connection between God and his people as expressed in eating and drinking (10:16-22). The tie that may, perhaps, bind the picture of “food and drink” in Israel’s Exodus with the Lord’s Supper is the concept of covenant. “Eating and drinking” was a common oath-sign in Ancient Near Eastern covenant forms, and Israel partook of such “communion meals” during the Exodus period.²³ Paul uses “eating and drinking” this way in 10:7, as quoted from Ex.32:6 where Israel, offered sacrifices and had a “feast to the LORD” (Ex.32:5) after ratifying their covenant with God (Ex.24:7). This squares with the Lord’s Supper as the proclamation of the *New Covenant* death of Christ (11:23-26), and accounts for the severe penalty for eating and drinking unworthily (invoking curse; 11:27-32).²⁴ Paul argues on both sides of our passage that one is a “sharer,” or “partaker” of the sacrifices from which they eat (9:13; 10:17,18,20). It is the partaking of sacrifices that bind people to their gods/God covenantally, which is why he is so adamant that they should not knowingly eat what is sacrificed to idols (10:22).²⁵

10:4b ἔπινον γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας, ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός.

Israel’s food and drink were “spiritual” (πνευματικὸν) because (γὰρ) their source (ἐκ) was

²³ “Given widely acknowledged cultural attitudes regarding shared meals evident throughout the Old Testament, such an association with covenants seems entirely appropriate. This is not to suggest that every instance of a common meal within the Old Testament is fraught with significance. Even seemingly incidental references to such meals, however, often betray important cultural presuppositions of expected behavior and attitudes to which the reader should be alert...where it is stated or implied that a common meal was eaten in the presence of the Lord, the reader has warrant to suppose that the meal may have functioned as a covenant-ratifying oath-sign” (Gordon Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* [BSL; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], p.205, 207). Support for this is found in Ancient Near East Texts such as the Vassal-Treaty of Esharhaddon with Ramataya (Ins.151ff.). See also Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p.117.

²⁴ “Paul’s threat that whoever eats and drinks unworthily will ‘eat and drink judgment upon himself’ (1 Cor.11:27ff.) supports a self-maledictory symbolism underlying the Lord’s Supper (our infidelity deserves the same dreadful curse which overtook Christ, whose death is symbolized in the elements” (Hugenberger, p.209). Cf. Alan Millard, “Covenant and Communion in First Corinthians,” in W.W. Grasque and R.P. Martin (eds.), *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) and C.F.D. Moule, “The Judgment Theme in the Sacraments,” in W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology (Festschrift for Charles Harold Dodd)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

²⁵ This is exactly parallel to Paul’s concerns about immorality in 6:12-20. He argues that since a man is “one body,” bound to his wife (covenantally joined by marriage), that to commit sexual immorality with a prostitute (sex being the oath-sign of marriage covenant) would join him with her. Thus Paul is using graphic pictures like temple and body to illustrate covenant realities.

“spiritual” (πνευματικῆς). The verb ἔπινον (“they drank”) doesn’t necessarily exclude the idea of “eating,” but is here implied, as “they drank” is probably a synecdoche for the whole of “eating and drinking,” and is used for rhetorical purposes to draw out the “rock” (πέτρας) imagery playing on the miraculous production of water from the rock in the wilderness.²⁶ To drink “from a spiritual rock which accompanied (ἀκολουθούσης) them” is pregnant with meaning.²⁷ Jewish tradition loomed with midrash about a moveable “well” that followed Israel in the wilderness as a consistent source of water. E. Earle Ellis summarizes this legend well:²⁸

A movable well, rock-shaped and resembling a sieve, was given to Israelites in the desert. As to origin, it was one of the ten things created on the evening of the Sixth Day. About the size of an oven or beehive, it rolled along after the wanderers through hills and valleys and, when they camped settled at the tent of meeting. When the princes called, “Rise up, O well” (Num.21:17), water flowed from its many openings as from a flask.

In Philo’s allegorical reflection on the wilderness wanderings he surmises:²⁹

[T]he abrupt *rock is the wisdom of God*, which being both sublime and the first of things he quarried out of his own powers, and of it he gives drink to the souls that love God; and they, when they have drunk, are also filled with the most universal manna; for manna is called something which is the primary genus of every thing.

The Wisdom of Solomon concurs with Philo, and may even be a source of his thought. Anthony Thiselton compresses Wisdom 10:15-18 and 19:1-8:³⁰

²⁶ “A major consideration for understanding Paul’s words about the food and drink provided in the wilderness is how to interpret the words in 10:4b, ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός. This is important not only because the verse equates Christ and the Rock, but also because the use of πνευματικῆς to describe the rock must be considered in defining the same word in 10:3,4 where it describes the food and drink. The repetition of πνευματικῆς cannot be unintended” (W.L. Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Cor.8 and 10* [SBLDS 68; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985], p.132).

²⁷ See Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p.727 for a summary of the various views.

²⁸ *Paul’s Use of the OT*, p.67. Cf. *Mid.Numb.21:16-18*, *Mid.Rab. Numb.1:1*, *Trg.Onk.on Numb.21:16-20*, et.al.

²⁹ *Leg.A.II. 2.86* as translated by Charles Duke Yonge, *The Works of Philo : Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996)

³⁰ p.729. He offers the most convincing case for the Philo/Wisdom view of “the Rock is Christ” (cf.727-30). Paul’s interpretation that “the rock was Christ” (ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός) does resonate with the Philo/Wisdom approach since Paul has already referred to Christ as “wisdom from God” (1 Cor.1:30) and he seemingly mocks them in 10:15, “I speak to you as wise men”.

Wisdom “delivered a holy people...from oppressors...guided them...[was] their shelter by day...their starlight through the night and brought them across the Red Sea, leading them through immensity of water”.

“Overshadowing the camp was the cloud (σκιάζουσα νεφέλη)...they all passed across...seeing the wondrous miracles (θαυμαστὰ τέρατα).”

At Qumran, the sectarians understood the “well” as the law:³¹

But God remembered the covenant of the very first, and from Aaron raised men of men of knowledge and from Israel wise men, and forced them to listen. And they dug the well (Num.21:18), a well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved with a staff. *The well is the law.*

These Jewish approaches represent both a literal (midrash) and a typological (Philo/Wisdom/DSS) understanding of the “rock” in the wilderness.

The nature of Paul’s description of the Exodus and his mention of Scripture in 10:7 and 10:11 may signal that there is a biblical text driving his language. To investigate this we must work backward, then forward, and then backward again, as the whole context is mutually interpretive. First, working backward, there is a reference to “the cloud” (τὴν νεφέλην) in 10:1 and 2, which are obvious references to the Glory-cloud which lead Israel in the wilderness. Thus, from the phrase “followed them,” it would seem natural to interpret the “rock” here as a reference to God (cf. Deut.32 via Ex.17; see below). Going further back, in chapter 8 he develops the uniqueness of the Godhead as distinguished from the plurality of pagan gods (8:4-6). In his development, he demonstrates the unity of the Godhead (“one God, the Father,” and “one Lord, Jesus Christ;” 8:6), and that the Godhead is the source of all things (“from whom are

³¹ *Dam.Doc.6:2-4* from Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (sec.ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996). “This demonstrates that the sectarian community had equated the well with the law and had related Numbers 21:8 to the task of Torah interpretation...It is also noteworthy that in Deuteronomy 1:5 it says: ‘Moses undertook to expound this law.’ The Hebrew word that is here translated ‘to expound’ is probably a cognate of the Hebrew word that is here word meaning ‘well.’ It is interesting to speculate that by the time Deuteronomy was written there was already a verbal connection between the act of explaining Torah and the image of the ‘well.’ As the ancient Israelites were sustained and nourished by the life-giving water of the ‘well’ that followed them in the desert, so now the people of God are given sustenance and life by that that which flows from the Torah. The evidence suggests that there was within Israel a fairly widespread identification of Torah with the desert ‘well’, and, as the connection between the ‘well’ and the ‘rock’ was firmly established. Thus the connection between Torah and the ‘rock’ would certainly have been a natural association” (J.W. Aageson, *Written Also for Our Sake: Paul and the Art of Biblical Interpretation* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993], p.123-24).

things,” “by whom are all things;” 8:6). He plays on this source language here in 10:4 (“drank from a rock”). Moving forward, this “source” (“rock”) is identified as Christ (ἡ πέτρα...ἦν ὁ Χριστός). It would follow, that since the Father is one with Christ (“there is no God but one;” 8:4), he could identify the God of the Exodus (our interpretation of the “rock which accompanied them”) as Christ. God is called “the Rock” many times throughout the Old Testament (cf. 2 Sam.22-23; Ps.18:2; 19:14; 28:1; 31:2; Isa.17:10; 51:1; Hab.1:12). The first time He is addressed as “Rock” is in Deuteronomy 32. Moses refers to God as “Rock” five times in Deuteronomy 32 where he recounts the Lord’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness:³²

32:4 The *Rock*! His work is perfect, for all his ways are just...
 32:15 Then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the *Rock* of his salvation.
 32:18 You neglected the *Rock* who begot you and the God who gave you birth.
 32:31 How could one chase a thousand and two put then thousand to flight unless their *Rock* has sold them, and the Lord had given them up
 32:37 Indeed their rock is not like our *Rock*, even our enemies themselves judge this.

Moses’ reference to God as “Rock” becomes, no doubt, the precedent for the title elsewhere in Scripture.³³ Moving further forward, Paul’s use of Deut. 32 in the following context support an allusion to it here. He quotes Deut.32:17 and 21 respectively in 1 Cor.10:20 and 22.³⁴

Dt.32:17	ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶ	1 Cr.10:20	θύουσιν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶ
Dt.32:21	αὐτοὶ παρεζήλωσάν με	1 Cr.10:22	παραζηλοῦμεν τὸν κύριον

³² From ESV. One reason that Moses might have viewed God as a “Rock” is the watering scene of Ex.17. In this passage God says that He will stand before Moses “on the rock at Horeb” and instructs Moses to “strike the rock” (17:6). God postured Himself to metaphorically receive “judgment” (expressed in the language of “standing before” Moses and the judges) as a means to the people drinking, thus becoming identified as the Rock (cf.Ps.78:16,20,35).

³³ Cf. Ps.78, 105, 106

³⁴ So Bandstra, p.13, McEwen, p.7. The textual variant κυριον in place of Χριστόν in 10:9 was no doubt edited to be consistent with 10:22 and its identically sounding synonym (comp. ἐκπειράζωμεν, “put to test,”10:9 and παραζηλοῦμεν, “provoke,” 10:22). The use of two concepts of such similarity may evidence *kayotse bo bemaqom aher* implying a common background. Kyle Snodgrass defines *kayotse bo bemaqom aher*: “‘something similar in another passage,’ meaning that a text may be interpreted by comparison with a similar text” (“The Use of the Old Testament in the New” in G.K. Beale [ed.], *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], p.43). Most correctly point to Psa.78:18 and Num.21:5 as the texts Paul had in mind in 10:9. This does not, however minimize the reach of Deut.32 in these verses, since Num.21 is among the events summarized in Moses’ song (cf. “serpent” link in Deut.32:33 as in 1 Cor.10:9), and the Exodus Psalms (like 78,105,106, et.al), it can be argued, find their pattern in this Moses Exodus Psalm.

That Deut. 32 also stood behind the second half of 10:22 (“are we stronger than he”) is attested to by the lexical link of the cognate ἰσχυ (“strength,” Deut.32:13), as well as, the interpretation of “the Rock” by the Targumim as “a figure of God’s strength”.³⁵ Also, “eating and drink” is referred to Deut.32:13 providing a close parallel:

and he *ate* the produce of the field,
and he suckled him with honey out of the rock
and oil out of the flinty rock (ἐκ στερεᾶς πέτρας)
...the *Rock* of his salvation (Deut.32:13,14)

and all *ate* the same spiritual food,
and all drank the same spiritual drink.
for they drank from the spiritual Rock (ἐκ πνευματικῆς πέτρας)
...the *Rock* was Christ (1 Cor.10:3-4)

Given all these significant indicators, it seems likely that Paul is framing his appeal in 1 Cor.10 with the heartbeat of Deut.32.³⁶

As to how we understand this verse as a whole, the context gives us the greatest insight. Paul is arguing that eating of sacrifices joins people to sacrifices (1 Cor.9:13; 10:17-21). So when the Corinthians “eat and drink” the Lord’s supper, they express their union with the body of Christ (10:16-17). Thus, we are prompted to understand here that Israel’s “spiritual eating and drinking” was the eating of covenant sacrifices which typologically anticipated Christ and joined them to Christ (1 Cor.5:7).³⁷ The purpose of the use of Deuteronomy 32, at least importing its language, anticipates the unfaithfulness of the people of God.

10:5 Ἄλλ’ οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεός, κατεστρώθησαν γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. Even though (Ἄλλ’) all Israel enjoyed the blessings provided for them in the wilderness

³⁵ Brian Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (AGU 22. Leiden: Brill, 1994), p.199. He subsequently quotes all the relevant Targumim for this passage and points out connections of Deut.32 to “strength” in 1 Cor.10:1-22 (p.200-201).

³⁶ Collier’s view that Numbers 11 is the main text driving this section is well noted and this text is certainly significant for 1 Cor.10:1-13 (“That We Might Not Crave Evil,” p.63ff.). But again, given Deut.32’s sweep of the whole context and its perception of Israel’s unfaithfulness as a whole, Deut.32 seems to be the best possibility.

³⁷ This implies that they experienced the forgiveness of sins as we do (Rom.3:21-26).

(ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ), God (ὁ θεός) did not particularly enjoy (εὐδόκησεν) most of them (ἐν τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν). The grounds (γὰρ) for this statement is God's killing (κατεστρώθησαν) almost all of them in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ). Paul had been setting this sharp contrast by using καὶ πάντες five times,³⁸ establishing that the body of Israel was unified both in their experience together as being delivered and in covenant with God, and united to us, as they were partakers of Christ as we were. God not being “pleased” (εὐδόκησεν) is emotive language speaking of God's rejection of them.³⁹ His use of κατεστρώθησαν (“were killed”) has echoes of the LXX Numb.14:16 which was spoken of the first generation's exclusion from the promised land.

Conclusion

Paul chose to discipline himself so that he would not be “disqualified” (1 Cor.9:27). He points the Corinthians attention to the experience of Israel. They all partook in the same kinds of experiences and covenant realities that Israel did (10:1-4). The first generation of Israelites was mostly wiped out and failed to enter the promised land (10:5).⁴⁰ As Moses wrote the law again (Deuteronomy) for the second generation, he recounted that their fathers fell in the wilderness and were idolatrously unfaithful to their “Rock” (Deut.32). So Paul, in his desire to see the New Israel (10:1,4) not be disqualified (10:12), recasts the story of how their fathers were idolatrously unfaithful to their “Rock” (10:4), with the design that they would not do the same (10:6).

³⁸ So Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, p.249, Thiselton, p.730

³⁹ So Conzelmann, p.167, Willis, *Idol Meat at Corinth*, p.143, Garland, p.458.

⁴⁰ “God was not pleased with ‘most of them’ is an understatement since only two, Joshua and Caleb, survived and entered the promised land (Num.14:29-32)” (Garland, p.458).

Text-Critical Chart for 1 Corinthians 10:2 in NA²⁷

Century	I-s/I-n+	I-n/I-f	II	III	IV	V	Unknown
II	<i>P^{46*}</i>	P^{46c}					
III		B					
IV		<u>ξ</u>					
V		<u>A</u>	<u>C</u>				
VI				D			
VII-IV		<u>33</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>G Ψ 0150 2495</u>			
X-XI	1175	1739	<u>81 256 1881 2127</u>	<u>104 424 436 459 1912</u>			
XII-XVI			<u>1881 2127</u>	<u>6 263 365 630 1241 1319 1573 1852 2200</u>			

Note:

1. Underlined witnesses support the NA²⁷ reading of the passive ἐβαπτίσθησαν.
2. **Bold** witnesses support the reading of the middle ἐβαπτίσαντο.
3. *Italicized* witnesses support the minor variant of the middle ἐβαπτίζοντο

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