

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, 9

### “The Rock Which Followed Israel in the Wilderness”

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Messiah...Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.”

In 1 Corinthians ch. 8 preceding, there were those presumed “knowledgable” in Corinth who thought that they could eat of idolatrous sacrifices and attend various functions in pagan temples.<sup>112</sup> What is discussed now in 1 Corinthians ch. 10 serves to highlight how participation in idolatry and fornication was met with disaster by Ancient Israel, and that there are lessons to be learned by the Corinthians, **not to be repeated**. That God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian servitude, and His provision of them through the wilderness sojourn (Exodus 13:21; 14:22), would be invoked to the Corinthians, should hardly be a surprise. The work of Yeshua of Nazareth, in being sacrificed for human beings, depicts a second exodus, of how men and women are delivered from their slavery to sin and brought into a new life of reconciliation and communion with their Creator.

Paul asserts to his Corinthian audience, “For, brothers, I don’t want you to miss the significance of what happened to our fathers. All of them were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they all passed through the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:1, CJB/CJSB). To a mixed Corinthian audience of Jews, Greeks, and Romans, Paul actually labels those of the Exodus generation *hoi pateres hēmōn* (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν), or “our ancestors” (NRSV/TNIV).<sup>113</sup> The story in the Tanach or Old Testament of Ancient Israel in the Exodus, is a quantitative part of their spiritual experience. Non-Jewish Believers in Israel’s Messiah are grafted-in to Israel’s olive tree (Romans 11:16-17), co-members of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or Israel of God (Galatians 6:2) with Jewish Believers, reckoned as a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:15-18).

Paul says of the Exodus generation, “They all were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:2, TLV). Some kind of a parallel with the immersion or baptism of Believers into Yeshua is intended (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). The point, as will be elucidated in statements which follow (1 Corinthians 10:5ff), is how even though the whole population crossed the Red Sea, many of them subsequently committed idolatrous and promiscuous rebellion against the Lord. Morris notes, “All the Israelites shared the common baptism, but that did not prevent most of them from perishing on account of their subsequent sin.”<sup>114</sup> Bruce draws the further conclusion, “It is emphasized that **all** underwent this experience to show that their ‘baptism’ did not preserve them *ex opere operato* from premature death when they later rebelled against God, nor guaranteed their entrance into the promised land.”<sup>115</sup> Simply because a Corinthian might consider himself or herself to have been immersed or baptized into Yeshua, does not mean that acts of outright rebellion against the Lord will not merit exclusion from His Kingdom.

The provisions, which the Exodus generation had in their wilderness journey, are detailed by Paul to be things ultimately “spiritual”: “and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank

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<sup>112</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>113</sup> For a further review, consult the discussion of 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, 18 in the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

<sup>114</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 139.

<sup>115</sup> Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 90.

the same spiritual drink” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4a). The principal food that the Israelites had was the manna that they were to collect every morning (Exodus 16:4, 35), although Deuteronomy 8:3 does assert, “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.” As significant as such food was, Yeshua Himself had to say, though, “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died” (John 6:49). A rock is also noted to have been present with the Israelites in their wilderness journeying, which provided a continual source of water for them (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:7-11). Yet, even though the population of Israel clearly benefited from these provisions, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the Exodus generation was not permitted to enter into the Promised Land. The analogy to be made is that simply because people benefit from the Lord, with food and drink likened unto the body and blood of Yeshua (John 6:35, 48-52), does not necessarily mean an ultimate entry into His Kingdom.

An important assertion about Yeshua the Messiah, and His actual role in the Exodus and wilderness generation, is made by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:4b: “for they were drinking from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the Rock was Messiah” (TLV). Yeshua is labeled to be *pneumatikēs akolouthousēs petras* (πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας), “a spiritual rock-following” (Brown and Comfort),<sup>116</sup> which certainly poses some important questions about the Messiah’s pre-existence. Psalm 78:15-16 offers the general exclaim, “He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave *them* abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers.” Throughout the Tanach, it is witnessed numerous times how the title rock or *tzur* (צור) is directly associated with the LORD (YHWH):

“The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—you are grown fat, thick, and sleek—then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation” (Deuteronomy 32:15).

“You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth” (Deuteronomy 32:18).

“How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up? Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, even our enemies themselves judge this” (Deuteronomy 32:30-31).

“Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, *we have* an everlasting Rock” (Isaiah 26:4).

“Do not tremble and do not be afraid; have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, or is there any *other* Rock? I know of none” (Isaiah 44:8).

There were some significant ancient Jewish traditions regarding the identity of the rock which provided water for the Ancient Israelites in the wilderness. The Apocrypha and Philo both identify this rock with the figure of Wisdom:

“When they thirsted they called upon thee, and water was given them out of flinty rock, and slaking of thirst from hard stone” (Wisdom 11:4).

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<sup>116</sup> Brown and Comfort, 660.

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

“[F]or the 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” (Philo *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.86).<sup>117</sup>

A Jewish tradition which is thought to mainly post-date the Second Temple asserted that the rock, as a well which provided water for the Israelites, was a literal rock that indeed physically followed the population throughout their journeys:

“And so the well which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was a rock, the size of a large round vessel, surging and gurgling upward, as from the mouth of this little flask, rising with them up onto the mountains, and going down with them into the valleys. Wherever the Israelites would encamp, it made camp with them, on a high place opposite the entry of the Tent of Meeting” (t.*Sukkah* 3:11).<sup>118</sup>

Generally speaking, examiners of 1 Corinthians 10:4b, “for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ” (NIV), tend to conclude that Paul is speaking metaphorically, and that while partially reliant on ancient Jewish opinions, he was approaching the rock in the wilderness as more of a Divine presence which sustained the Israelite population. Garland is reflective of this, in his thought, “He is not thinking of a material rock following them, or a moveable well but of the divine source of the water that journeyed with them. He understands the replenishing rock in a spiritual sense, not a physical sense.”<sup>119</sup>

What is most important, for sure, is that the assertion “the rock was Messiah” (*hē petra de ēn ho Christos*, ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός), does provide sure proof for the Messiah’s pre-existence, a definite component of Yeshua being God. Bruce’s observations on what is seen here connect the Tanach title “Rock” being used for the Lord God of Israel, to an association of Yeshua being the Angel of the Lord who is indeed the Lord:

“Paul...affirms that Christ accompanied his people as a spiritual source of refreshment throughout this period. This interpretation was facilitated by the use of the title ‘The Rock’ for Yahweh (in the Hebrew text but not in LXX) in the Song of Moses (Dt. 32.4, 15, 18, 30, 31) and elsewhere (e.g. Ps. 18.2, 31; 19.14; 28.1; 62.2; 78.35; 89.26; 144.1; Isa. 26.4), and by the identification of Christ before his incarnation with the angel of Yahweh’s presence who accompanied Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 14.19; 23.20ff.; 32.34; 33.2; 14ff.; cf. Act. 7.30, 38), if not indeed with ‘the Lord (LXX *kyrios*) who went before his people, rescued them from their enemies and healed them in the wilderness (Exod. 13.21; 14.30; 15.26). This goes far beyond the conception of the Messiah as a second Moses, supplying his people with bread and water (cf. Jn. 6.14; 7.37-41a).”<sup>120</sup>

Morris similarly concludes, “[Paul] refers to Christ and sees him as following the Israelites and continually giving them drink. He transfers to Christ the title, ‘the Rock’, used of Yahweh (Dt. 32:15; Ps. 18:2, etc.), a transfer that is significant for Christology, as of course is the clear implication of Christ’s pre-existence.”<sup>121</sup> Sampley, making note of the Philippians 2:5-11 *Carmen*

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<sup>117</sup> *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 47.

<sup>118</sup> Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew With a New Introduction*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1:576.

<sup>119</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, pp 456-457.

<sup>120</sup> Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 91.

<sup>121</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, pp 139-140.

*Christi* hymn, also asserts, “Paul clearly thinks of Christ as having been with God from the very beginning (cf. Phil 2:5-11).”<sup>122</sup>

Paul summarizes a number of the terrible things which befell Ancient Israel during the wilderness sojourn, as critical lessons for followers of Israel’s Messiah to take instructive warnings from (1 Corinthians 10:5-8). 1 Corinthians 10:9, as it appears in a version like the NASU, reads, “Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.” There is a notable textual difference in 1 Corinthians 10:9, appearing in a variety of modern versions (NRSV, ESV, HCSB, TNIV, 2011 NIV), which rather than reading with “Lord,” instead read as “Christ”<sup>123</sup>: “We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes” (TNIV). The principal scene is recorded in Numbers 21:6, although the act of testing or tempting is something witnessed in Exodus 17:7 and Deuteronomy 6:16, with the waters coming out of the rock at Massah and Meribah.

The reading of 1 Corinthians 10:9 with “Christ” rather than “Lord,” is the more difficult of the two, as it poses some more questions about the Messiah’s pre-existence, as He has previously just been considered the Rock which followed the Israelites in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4). If the reading of “Christ” in 1 Corinthians 10:9 is the older and more authentic reading, then it only adds to the high Christology held by Paul, who would affirm that Yeshua of Nazareth is none other than the Lord of the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* (1 Corinthians 8:6). Paul could have said in 1 Corinthians 10:9 that the Corinthians were not to put the Messiah to the test, as the wilderness generation put the Lord to the test. But the evidence indeed supports “And let us not put the Messiah to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes” (CJB/CJSB). Fee further observes,

“[He] refers to it as putting *Christ* to the test. That ‘Christ,’ not ‘Lord,’ is the word used in the original text is almost certain. That means that Paul once again, as in v. 4, is purposely tying the situations of Israel and Corinth together christologically. It was Christ whom Israel was testing in the desert. At the same time it is Christ whom the Corinthian are putting to the test by trying to eat both at his table and at the table of demons.”<sup>124</sup>

## 1 Corinthians 11:3

### “Messiah is the head of every man...God is the head of Messiah”

“But I want you to understand that Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah.”

The Apostle Paul opens his argument about heads and hair on men and women in the assembly, in what has become a very dissected and debated statement in recent theological discussion.<sup>125</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:3 appears in most English Bibles along the lines of, “**But I want you to know that the head of every man is Messiah, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Messiah is God**” (TLV). 1 Corinthians 11:3 is frequently viewed from the perspective of a hierarchical order to be present between God, the Messiah, males, and females.<sup>126</sup> A frequent conclusion drawn is that Yeshua the Son is permanently (or even

<sup>122</sup> Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:915.

<sup>123</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 560; Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), pp 506-507.

<sup>124</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 457.

<sup>125</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>126</sup> There are indeed versions which reflect this, including: “But I want you to understand that Christ is supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ” (Good News Bible); “In a marriage