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The Old Testament Background of ‚Desire‘ in 1 Cor 10:6¹

Starozavezno ozadje ‚poželenja‘ v 1 Kor 10,6

Abstract: In 1 Corinthians 10:6, Paul recalls the events described in Num 11:4-34 (with its respective variants in Ps 106:14), using the expression ἐπεθύμησαν which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew הָאָה. This desire represents the highest religious meaning in the Old Testament, on the one hand (Strola 1999, 371); on the other hand, in texts relating to the tradition of the Israelites' journey in the wilderness, to which Paul refers in 1 Cor 10, the same desire marks the rejection of the Lord (Num 11:19-20). In 1 Cor 10:6, by echoing the rebellion in Num 11, Paul wants to sum up the essence of sin. He does not understand desire as one sin amongst others but as a ‚God-like‘ sin, as a source of all the others. If the desire for food of the Israelites' own choosing stands for rejection of the Lord in Num 11, then the desire for food sacrificed to idols in 1 Cor 10 *ipso facto* stands for the rejection of Christ.

Key words: 1 Corinthians 10, Num 11, desire, ἐπεθύμησαν, הָאָה, Old Testament, wilderness, food, sin

Povzetek: V 1 Kor 10,6 se Pavel sklicuje na dogodke, opisane v 4 Mz 11,4-34 (in njeno različico v Ps 106,14), z uporabo izraza ἐπεθύμησαν, ki je grški ekvivalent hebrejskega הָאָה. Ta želja ima v Stari zavezi po eni strani vrhunski religiozni pomen (Strola 1999, 371), po drugi strani pa v besedilih, povezanih z izročilom iz puščave, ista želja označuje zavrnitev Gospoda (4 Mz 11,19-20). Pavel hoče v 1 Kor 10,6 s sklicevanjem na upor v 4 Mz 11 zajeti bistvo greha. Želje ne razume kot nek določen greh, ampak kot ‚izvirni‘ greh, kot vir vseh drugih. Če želja po egiptovski hrani v 4 Mz 11 pomeni zavrnitev Gospoda, potem želja po hrani, žrtvovani malikom v 1 Kor 10, *ipso facto* pomeni zavrnitev Kristusa.

Ključne besede: 1 Kor 10, 4 Mz 11, želja, poželenje, ἐπεθύμησαν, הָאָה, Stara zaveza, puščava, hrana, greh

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1. Introduction

In 1 Corinthians, Paul deals more passionately than in his other letters with the collision between the evangelical kerygma and the Greco-Roman culture. In doing so, he draws heavily on the Jewish tradition from the Old Testament which he uses as a basis for the formulation and justification of the new 'mind of Christ' (νοῦς Χριστοῦ) (1 Cor 2:16). (Ciampa and Rosner 2007, 695–752; Wilk 2019, 88–95) In the central unit of the letter (1 Cor 8:1–11:1), Paul deals with the Corinthians' attitude towards pagan rituals, especially with the »eating of food offered to idols« (8:4), and connects this food with the warning not to »desire evil as they did (ἐπιθυμητάς κακῶν, καθὼς κάκεῖνοι ἐπεθύμησαν)« (10:6).

This raises many questions which we shall try to address in this article: where does this desire originate and to where is it directed? In what sense and in what context does Paul use the term ἐπιθυμεῖν? What and whom did Paul actually have in mind when referring to the Old Testament passage in question? What does the Old Testament background of this term convey, and what does Paul want to accomplish with it? What role does the Old Testament play in Paul's argumentative process in general? (Matjaž 2019, 924–927)

2. Paul's use of ἐπιθυμεῖν

Paul uses the verb ἐπιθυμεῖν 5 times – Rom 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor 10:6; Gal 5:17; 1 Tim 3:1 (and Heb 6:11) – not entirely systematically, as it seems.² Paul tends to emphasize the 'effect', i.e. the meaning and applicability of the term and context rather than holding on to complete consistency always and everywhere. For example, in Rom 13:9, we encounter οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις, the Tenth Commandment in this abbreviated form, as a single example of the Ten Commandments (Räsänen 1992, 108), while οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις in Rom 7:7 is a reference to the seductive power of the forbidden fruit (cf. Gen 3). Bultmann argues that Rom 7:7(-11) does not reflect only over the question as to whether desire tempts man to transgress the Law but as to whether, rather, it misleads him into a false zeal for fulfilling it; it misleads him into the attitude of being 'blameless' with respect to »righteousness under the Law« (Phil 3.4-6). In this case, in Rom 7:7, the desire is a reference to the unenlightened zeal for God of Rom 10:2 (Bultmann 1955; Räsänen 1992, 96.98–99).

According to Paul, indeed, the human being is defined essentially by desire (Hübner 1981, 79). However, desire is not forbidden or sinful *per se* but depends on the object to which it refers or the entity from which it originates. (Schrage 1995, 397) In Gal 5:17, ἐπιθυμεῖν describes both the working of the Spirit and the working of the flesh, and also highlights the positive aspect of the desire (of the Spirit). In 1 Cor 10:6, the term is used in a typological context which, on the one

² See Räsänen 1992, 95–111 (Chapter 4: The use of ἐπιθυμία and ἐπιθυμεῖν in Paul). See also Hübner 1981, 68–71. Büchsel also points to a Stoic influence on Paul's understanding of the term, though he claims that, in most cases, the influence of the Jewish tradition is prevalent (1967, 171).

hand, justifies God's judgment in the wilderness (v. 5) and, on the other, serves as a call for the conversion of those in the (present Corinthian) community who do not recognize the danger of idolatrous rites (v. 7). The term ἐπιθυμεῖν refers not only to the desire for the delicious food of Egypt, »the fish /.../ the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic« (Num. 11:5), but rather to basic human arbitrariness (Merklein 2000, 248).

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, Paul recalls the events described in Num 11:4-34 (and its variant in Ps 106:14). Thus, an analysis of these texts, especially the Hebrew term נָאָה, which indicates desire, is crucial for the interpretation of the Pauline use and understanding of the term ἐπιθυμεῖν.

3. Dynamism of desire in the Old Testament

3.1 The lexical root נָאָה – the Old Testament background of ἐπιθυμεῖν

The term 'desire' in the Hebrew Bible (BHS) covers a wide range of human longings, emotions, and cravings. Although, in the BHS, desire is indicated by a variety of lexical forms (roots), the direct and explicit term indicating desire is limited to only two roots – the verb forms of the lexical roots נָאָה and נָאָה, which reflect not only the dynamics of desire occurring in human beings but also those found in God. The roots describe natural human desires, such as hunger for food and sexual longing, on the one hand, and the desire for God, as well as God's own desire, on the other. These roots can also describe human desires or cravings with a negative moral connotation. (Skralovnik 2017, 273–284)³ In the context of 1 Cor 10:6, where Paul is echoing Num 11:4.34 with the root נָאָה, we shall focus here on the root נָאָה.

3.2 The Lexicographic Definition

The root נָאָה occurs in the BHS in its verbal form 27 times; it is found 11 times in the Piel (Deut 12:20; 14:26; 1 Sam 2:16; 2 Sam 3:21; 1 Kings 11:37; Job 23:13; Ps 132:13–14; Prov 21:10; Isa 26:9; Mic 7:1)⁴ and 16 times in the Hitpael (Num 11:4; 11:34; 34:10; Deut 5:21; 2 Sam 23:15; 1 Chr 11:17; Ps 45:12; 106:14; Prov 13:4; 21:26; 23:3; 23:6; 24:1; Eccl 6:2; Jer 17:16; Amos 5:18),⁵ without a semantic difference between the two conjugations. The root נָאָה literally expresses

³ For more about the above mentioned roots, see Skralovnik's other articles: „The Use of Root hmd in the Religious Field: A Semantic Analysis of the Lexical Root hmd in Isaiah“ in *Bogoslovni vestnik* (2019, 909–921); „The Dynamism of Desire: The Root hmd in Relation to the Root 'wh“ in *Vetus Testamentum* (2017, 273–284); „The Meaning and Interpretation of Desire in the Tenth Commandment (Exod 20,17)“ in *Biblische Notizen* (2016, 13–25); „The Tenth Commandment (Deut 5:21): Two Different Verbs, the Same Desire“ in *Bogoslovni vestnik* (2016, 89–99); „God's Desire in the Psalms: A Semantic Study of the hmd and 'wh Word Fields in Ps 68:17 and Ps 132:13-14“ in *Bogoslovna smotra* (2016, 181–193).

⁴ According to the Masoretic Text.

⁵ The number of verbs in the Hitpael is reduced by one if we accept Rudolph's suggestion to amend Num 34:10 in BHS (Rudolph was the editor of BHS).

the diverse, essential desire which is typical of all living creatures (Strola 1999, 362–363). The nominal derivatives – 7) אָהַב (times), 21) אָהַבָה (times) – essentially have an identical meaning.

3.3 The Basic Semantic Range

Described by the root אָהַב and its derivatives, desire has different aspects; it can depict the attraction of objects of appetite, but sometimes also sexual desire. Hunger is a universal phenomenon, shared by all living beings, so it can be understood as a general metaphor for desire. It can be extended to other (natural) tendencies, too: for example, the desire to rule (1 Sam 23:20; 2 Sam 3:21; 1 Kings 11:37), the desire to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Deut 18:6) or the desire for »the day of the Lord« to come (Amos 5:18). The same root can also be used to convey a religious desire that lifts the soul to God (Isa 26:8–9) and the (secret) desire of prayer (Pss 10:17; 21:3; 38:10) (Strola 1999, 364–365).

3.4 The Application of the lexical root אָהַב

The verbal form of the root אָהַב basically corresponds to the various needs and desires of human beings (אָהַב). Either in its verbal or nominal form, the root is almost always tied to the term אָהַב, which testifies to a special semantic relationship between the root אָהַב and the term אָהַב. The term אָהַב represents the existence of humans with all their needs, i.e. the totality of human life. Therefore, the desire conveyed by the derivatives of the root אָהַב can be identified predominantly as the vital desire for preservation typical of living creatures and found in numerous forms. The derivatives express the dynamism of life which is manifested in many forms and drives human beings towards the fulfilment of their vital needs. This dynamism usually characterises the basic needs related to existence and preservation and is closely linked to instincts such as that for survival. In 14 examples in the BHS (out of a total of 26), dynamism marks desires pertaining to physical needs (Num 11:4.34; Deut 12:20; 14:26; 1 Sam 2:16; 2 Sam 23:15; 1 Chr 11:17; Ps 45:12; 106:14; Prov 13:4; 23:3–6; Eccl 6:2; Mic 7:1).

In texts relating to the tradition of the Israelites' journey in the wilderness, to which Paul refers in 1 Cor 10, the root אָהַב is used in a quasi-technical sense to label the egocentric and rebellious desire of the people of Israel (Num 11:4.34 and its variation in Ps 106:14) (Strola 1999, 366). The root thus denotes negative moral inclinations in Old Testament passages where desire (physical need) becomes the principle that defines human beings, their worldviews and also their actions – as opposed to following God's will.⁶

⁶ All the remaining examples indicate either other instinctive tendencies that arise from human beings (or God), for example, the aspiration to rule and exercise power (2 Sam 3:21; 1 Kings 11:37), the desire for a good quality of life (material prosperity) and happiness (Prov 24:1), and religious desire (Isa 26:9; Jer 17:16; Amos 5:18) or else God's own desire (Job 23:13; Ps 132:13–14).

4. A semantic analysis of the selected Old Testament texts containing verbal forms of the lexical root אָוָה

4.1 Num 11

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, Paul recalls the events described in Num 11:4-34, using the expression ἐπιθυμητὰς (κακῶν)⁷ taken from Num 11.4 and 34. According to Lyonnet, the Old Testament episode concerned, which occurred during the time of the wandering in the wilderness, has a special significance. Israel despises the food that God has provided and demands Egyptian food instead. (Räsänen 1992, 103) Israel prefers meat of her own choice (Num 11:4-6) and refuses to incline to God's plan as to what was to constitute the experience of the desert (Deut 8:3; cf. Mt 4:4). In fact, like Adam, Israel wants to substitute her ways for those of God. (Lyonnet 1962, 160–161)

Some scholars would not agree with this opinion – see below that of Räsänen (1992, 103):

»The text [Num 11] cannot support this construction. The emphasis on Israel's 'own choice' and its own ways /.../ is completely imported. The people simply lust after better fare, after meat. Finally, those of the people who gave in to desire were killed; even if there were many of them, they were still obviously only a minority. But the misdemeanor of a minority, to which they were seduced by the lusts of the non-Israelite 'rabble', is not particularly well suited for succinctly expressing the essence of *sin* itself. This sin is a far cry from 'wanting to be like God'.«

First, we must at least assume that the matter was not really that straightforward as »the people simply lust after better fare«. Num 11 describe the desire with the verbal form of the root אָוָה. The occurrence of the verbal form of the root אָוָה at the beginning and at the end of the second rebellion (Num 11:4-34) forms a thematic *inclusio*.⁸ The second rebellion, in Num 11:4-34, puts the *primary human need for food* to the test.

The narrative subject in Num 11 is the 'rabble' (רָבָב) who desired to eat meat instead of the manna God had supplied as food for the Israelites. In the entire Old Testament, the term rabble appears only once, so its precise meaning remains unclear. Although the term relates to only one part of the community, the rabble influenced the destiny of the *entire* nation of Israel (cf. Num 11:10-15). Even though the Israelites were expected to trust in God, they began to complain. Instead of thinking of their future freedom, they looked back to the time of slav-

⁷ The noun ἐπιθυμητής is a NT *hapax legomenon*.

⁸ Most of the Book of Numbers deals with the period when the Israelites lived in the wilderness. Life in the wilderness was a special religious experience for the Israelites because it shaped the nation during times of crisis. The first two crises are contained in Exodus (17, 32), while at least seven other 'rebellions' can be found in Numbers. The seven separate 'rebellions' unveiled Israel's lack of faith, and it took the Israelites 40 years to become ready to enter the Promised Land (Stubbs 2009, 112–113).

ery: »We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.« (Num 11:5) Their hunger was indeed relieved, but the food provided was the manna which was not as good and diverse as the food from the time of their Egyptian slavery: »there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.« (11:6)

Stubbs (2009, 117) argues that Israel was sinful because it placed its personal desires and needs (a full stomach) before the will of God:

»They allow a legitimate need and desire, the desire for good and tasty food, to become a craving that gets in the way of their calling as a people. Their faithfulness to God's purposes is choked by their desire for material and bodily comfort, a desire that becomes a roadblock in their journey to the fullness of the life God intends for them.«

Here, the desire, reinforced by the repetition of the root אָוָה, i.e. the combination of the verb and the noun (הִתְאַוָּה תִּתְאַוָּה), stands as a declaration of human arbitrariness and marks the rejection of God and the manna He provided. Even more, in texts relating to the tradition of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness, the root אָוָה is used in a quasi-technical sense to label the egocentric and rebellious desire of the people of Israel (Num 11:4-34) (Strola 1999, 366).

Therefore, the desire in Num 11 did not 'simply' arise from an empty stomach (hunger); it was not 'simply lust after better fare', as Räisänen claims. The human need for food is a natural desire, which is not sinful, but it must not become the criterion and goal of human life:

He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deut 8:3).

If such a desire becomes a guideline in life, it leads to death: »So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah (קִבְרוֹת הַתַּאֲוָה), because there they buried the people who had the craving« (Num 11:34). Although the spelling of the verbal form of the root אָוָה in Num 11:34 differs from the form in 11:4, the meaning of the root remains unchanged. As we have mentioned, the occurrence of the verbal form of the root אָוָה at the end of the second rebellion (Num 11:34) forms an inclusio with the beginning of the description (Num 11:4). The narrative of the second rebellion begins and ends with the same theme and thematic focus:

Num 11:4	The rabble among them had a strong craving (הִתְאַוָּה תִּתְאַוָּה); and the Israelites also wept again, and said, »If only we had meat to eat!«
Num 11:34	So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had the craving. (הִמְתַּאֲוִים)

Table 1: *Inclusio between the first and last verses of the narrative on the rebellion in Num 11:4-34*

In 11:34, the narrator notes that the rebellion gave the place a new name, which includes the root אָוָה – Kibroth-hattaavah (קִבְרוֹת הַתַּאֲוָה) - and means 'graves of craving'. On a narrative level, the desire for food from Egypt equals the rejection of God's manna whereas, on a deeper level, it stands *ipso facto* for the rejection of God:

»You shall eat not only one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you—,because you have rejected the Lord' who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, »Why did we ever leave Egypt?« (Num 11:19-20)

A desire such as this, which tricks life into succumbing to physical influences rather than obeying God's will, must be understood as apostasy (idolatry). The phrase »to have a strong craving« (Num 11:4.34) alludes to behaviour that is directed by physical impulses. However, the root does not only denote a bodily impulse, hunger, which disappears with its fulfilment, but also outlines a state of mind (arising from uncontrolled desires). This argument is confirmed by the unfolding of the narrative and the telling name of the place of the rebellion which also contains the root אָוָה. Thus, the root indicates physical death on a narrative level and rejection of the Lord on a deeper, spiritual level.

Having said this, let us return to Paul for a moment. In 1 Cor 10:6, by echoing the rebellion in Num 11, Paul wants, apparently, to distil the essence of sin, to point to a whole context. This is also Mauser's claim. (Räsänen 1992, 108). Desire here does not appear as one sin amongst others, as in Rom 13:9. Therefore it seems that Num 11 is particularly well suited for succinctly expressing the essence of sin itself.

4.2 Ps 106:14

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, Paul refers to Ps 106:14 where we find the expression ἐπεθύμησαν ἐπιθυμίαν (which is identical to the LXX of Num 11:4). Originally, in Ps 106:14, the root אָוָה is in the Hitpa'el imperfect, third person masculine plural. The verse being analysed, Ps 106:14, appears in the unit 106:13-15, which testifies to the desire for food and drink and originates in the text of Num 11.

In Ps 106:11, the psalmist states that, soon after the »waters covered [the Israelites'] adversaries«, that is, after the pharaoh's army was defeated, they forgot about God's acts of salvation (cf. Jer 3:21; Hos 2:15). The psalmist is alluding to Israel's complaining due to thirst (Exod 15:24) and hunger (especially Num 11; also see Exod 16), something which expressed the nation's arrogance and rejection of God. The *motif* of rejection, which is illustrated by the desire to meet physical needs, has already been discussed in the analysis of Num 11:4.34 above.

The 'motif' of rejection in this verse is presented by the repetition of the root אָוָה, i.e. in a verb-noun combination (הִתְאַוָּה תִּתְאַוָּה), as in Num 11:4, which portrays the »overpowering desire for fleshly food« (Briggs and Briggs 1976, 350). The

Israelites committed sin by allowing physical needs to lead their lives instead of God's Word. Here, desire denotes the desire for Egyptian food: this stands for the rejection of God (His manna) because the Israelites placed their personal desires and physical needs (a full stomach) before the will of God.

In Ps 106:14, the psalmist is reviving the historical experience of Israel's distrust of God by duplicating the root אָוָה (וָאָוָה וָאָוָה) – i.e. by using the same terminology as in Num 11:4. Also and this is very important – Ps 106:14 stresses that the Israelites had »put God to the test in the desert« (106:14b). This verse clearly shows that the Israelites were led not by hunger but by the desire for different food; they were not food-deprived (Ps 78:29-30), but ,only' dissatisfied (disgusted) with the manna (Num 11:6).

Passage	The repetition of the root אָוָה
Num 11:4	וָאָוָה וָאָוָה
Ps 106:14	וָאָוָה וָאָוָה

Table 2: Comparison of the repetition of the root אָוָה in Num 11:4 and Ps 106:14

The repetition of the (verbal and nominal) forms of the root indicates a strong desire for food, a physical need, which is basically legitimate and not sinful. However, since the Israelites decided to follow their desires first, and not God, this is also the reason for their rejection of the Lord.

4.3 Gen 3

As we have seen above, in the context of 1 Cor 10:6 (respectively Num 11), some authors refer to »Adam's sin« (Lyonnet 1962, 160–161), the sin of »wanting to be like God« (Räsänen 1992, 103), »kernel of sin« (Mauser 1972, 157) ... This seems to be along the right lines, since Gen 3 (3:6) includes the same close links between disobedience, guilt and punishment as in Num 11:4-34 (and Ps 106:14) (see below). Like the first human beings in Eden, the people of Israel, in the wilderness, prefer (better, different) food and bow down to their own desires (Lyonnet 1962, 160–161).

The desire in 1 Cor 10:6 is, therefore, also *ipso facto* a reference to the desire in Gen 3, perhaps the most important one, since Gen 3 presents the prototype of human temptation through desire and not just a typological example (τύπος) of a certain experience in the history of Israel. Gen 3 is not a historical event; it does not even rely on an actual historical event Israel has witnessed. It is an ,archetype' of desire which portrays the basic human temptation. Typology, as used with Num 11, can indeed link the Corinthians' experiences with that described in the wilderness, but archetype also reveals a basic pattern in the dynamism of human life and addresses human beings as such. This is worth a closer look.

The subject of desire in Gen 3 is a woman, but also indirectly her husband, so human beings in general. The object of desire is the »tree of the knowledge of good and evil« (cf. Gen 2:9). The pair, good-evil, can, most likely, be understood

as an example of merism. This merism does not reflect omniscience or the moral discernment of an innocent man (because God cannot dispossess a rational human being of discernment), but the pair's own ability to judge over what is good/evil and the consequential handling thereof (to be like/own God) (Krašovec 1999, 69–70).⁹

In the preceding chapter, Gen 2:9, desire pertains to the object, which is presented with a strong emphasis on its beautiful and attractive outer appearance. This claim is supported by Eve in Gen 3:6, yet in a slightly different form and with the emphasis on other elements (Brayford 2007, 238).

Gen 3:6
»So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight (תַּאֲוָה) to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired (וְנִחְמָד) to make one wise (לְהַשְׁכִּיל), she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.«
The root אָוָה (noun feminine singular absolute; תַּאֲוָה) is oriented towards the sight, the appearance (לְעֵינַיִם).
The root חָמַד (Niphal participle; נִחְמָד) is oriented towards understanding; to be keen, clever (לְהַשְׁכִּיל).

One must notice that both roots, חָמַד and אָוָה, appear in Gen 3:6, each with its own object; the noun form of the root אָוָה (תַּאֲוָה) is oriented towards the tempting appearance (of the fruit), whereas the verbal form of the root חָמַד (וְנִחְמָד) pertains to knowledge, which is primarily a matter of the intellect and will, not the senses. The presence of the *motif* of knowledge (לְהַשְׁכִּיל) in Gen 3:6 clearly reveals the transition of desire to another level. The verse takes us through the woman's intensifying perception of the object: from the primary temptation to satisfy physical need (‘good for food’, ‘delight to the eyes’) to the culmination of temptation – the coveting of knowledge. The desire for knowledge here equals the temptation to »be as god(s)« (Gen 3:5).

Although the *motif* of desire in Gen 3:6 embraces knowledge, we must not overlook the very important fact that outer appearance and attraction play an essential role because this emotionally-visual combination constitutes the *entry point* of the desire that turns the human's attitude (towards God) into one of vacillation. The desire for knowledge is only the final stage of temptation in Gen 3 whereas the first stage refers to the body and sensory perception.

In Gen 3, we witness the same pattern as in Num 11 (and its variant in Ps 106:14):

- first stage: a (natural) desire for food, triggered by the visual impression of food (Gen 2:9; 3:6) or the tempting remembrance of food in the time of slavery (Num 11:5);
- second stage: deliberate and conscious rebellious activities (Gen 3:6; Num 14:3-4);

⁹ Experts have failed to reach unanimous agreement over the specific meaning of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, nor have they provided an answer to the question of whether they are supposed to be considered as one tree or two separate ones. See Krašovec (1999, 69–72; especially see the cited bibliography).

- final stage) both narratives match with their ending in death or the threat of it (Gen 2:17; 3:3-4; Num 11:34).

5. Desire, food and idolatry in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1

It is now time for us to return to Paul. There is considerable agreement among experts that the central unit of the letter (1 Cor 8:1–11:1) represents a thoughtful rhetorical structure with a clear conceptual orientation (Ciampa and Rosner 2006, 205–218; Collins 1999, 304–307; Fotopoulos 2003, 195–206). In it, Paul connects the themes of desire, food and knowledge with the Old Testament and faith in the one God. Having in mind the problematic practices of the Corinthian community, such as eating the meat of animals sacrificed to idols (8:4.7; 10:25) and eating in idols' temples (8:10; 10:14-22), Paul reveals that the Corinthians have not yet acquired the new »mind of Christ« (cf. 2:16); at least not in practice. This is a key issue that Paul has already opened up at the very beginning of the letter (chs. 1–2). The wisdom of God does not reveal itself as a »wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age« (2:6), but is proclaimed through »Christ crucified« (1:23). Christ is the sole foundation of the new Christian community (cf. 3:11) and also a foundation for their actions and desires. (Matjaž 2019, 930–933)

For the Corinthians, the separation between the spiritual (πνευματικός) and the fleshly (σάρκινος) (cf. 3:1) is fatal, since such thinking ultimately results in their slogan »all things are lawful« (10:23), and, finally, in their »liberty« (ἐξουσία) to attend temple feasts (8-9). They are obviously still influenced by the thinking of the pagan environment that »food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food« (6:13). However, Paul does not allow any compromise with pagan cults, as this would lead to a conflict between ethics and faith. The faith in one God, »from whom are all things and for whom we exist«, from whom everything originates, does not allow a different valuation of the physical and the spiritual, and thus the separation of the material from the sphere of God. Through Christ, human bodies are also redeemed (8:6b). That is why these bodies are a »temple of the Holy Spirit« (6:19) and a key part of worship: »therefore glorify God in your body.« (6:20b) Participation in the pagan feasts (8:10; 10:14-22) is, therefore, idolatry: not because of the food itself (8:8), and not because of the idols, which do not even exist (8:4; 10:19), but because of the participants' unbelief. In what they sacrifice, they do not recognize the gift of God, and God as the origin of everything (8:7; 10:20). Knowledge – that idols do not exist and that »food will not bring us close to God« (8:8) – is not enough. This knowledge only »puffs up« (φυσιοῖ) (8:1b) and cannot »build up« (10:23) either a relationship with God or a relationship with a human being. On the contrary, it ruins such relationships (cf. Gen 3; Num 11).

While, in 8:1-6, Paul presents the problem of idolatry in a subjective aspect (knowledge / love), he presents it in a Christological way in 10:1-6. (Merklein 2000, 240). Here, the situation in the Corinthian community is compared with the situation of Israel in the wilderness which Paul presents as typology, as a pre-image.

In v. 6, Paul says that the examples listed in vv. 1-5 occurred in order to serve as a lesson: »Now these things occurred as *examples* (τύποι) for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did«. The word Paul uses for ,examples', τύποι, provides the background for the concept of typology, the understanding that patterns found in persons, actions, events and institutions in the past can be expected to find correspondences in God's future redemptive works. (Goppelt 1982, 17–20). »Typological interpretation goes back to the Old Testament and the way the prophets described God's postexilic redemption in terms of a second exodus.« (Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 453) Goppelt argues that Paul was the first to use these words for »the prefiguring of the future in prior history« (1982, 4). Goppelt understands Paul's point to be that, by his dealings with the first people of God, the forefathers (1 Cor 10:1), God reveals to the people of God what they may expect from him. (1982, 146). In vv. 1-4, Paul clearly wishes to establish a typological relationship between Israel (in the wilderness) and the Christian experience in Corinth. The typology mentioned is a restoration of the past, a retrospective interpretation by Paul which establishes a correspondence between the Corinthians' experience and that described in the Old Testament.¹⁰ However, Paul is not primarily concerned with the past but with the future; the Corinthians do not need a destructive experience similar to that of the Israelites.¹¹

In v. 7 (and the following verses), Paul connects bodily desires with idolatry, and, as a proof, reproduces the LXX of Exodus 32:6. This quotation proves that the Israelites committed idolatry. We must agree with Collier, who suggested that Num 11 was Paul's main text with Exod 32:6 being a supplementary one. Paul is not merely interested in idolatry in general but carefully chooses only references that mention *eating and drinking* – the behaviour that raised the issue of idolatry in Corinth (Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 457). As Hays suggests, Paul thus »links the

¹⁰ »Paul points to a variety of ways (all related to food and drink) in which different groups of Israelites offended God and brought his severe judgment on themselves. In each case, the judgment came about in a different way. Paul mentions three of these judgments: the thousands who died from the plague in Numbers 25 (v. 8); those who were killed by serpents in Numbers 21 (v. 9); and those who were killed by ,the Destroyer' in Num 21 (v. 10). God used a variety of methods, but, in each case, those who rebelled against him suffered utter destruction.« (Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 461)

¹¹ This may be illustrated by another Old Testament text containing the root 2, אָוָה Sam 23:15. Here, David desired water (in Exod 15:24, the Israelites also complain owing to thirst). The desire (אָוָה) in 2 Sam 23:15 expresses a physical need which must be interpreted as thirst, something which is confirmed by the root's pairing with the term נָחַץ. When David's call for water (the object of desire) had been heard and the rebels had safely returned with the water, their leader unexpectedly decided to refrain from quenching his thirst. David believed that the water, which had put human lives at risk, could not be wasted for his own satisfaction. David compared the value of the water with the blood of heroes (2 Sam 23:17). The consumption of blood was strictly forbidden in Israel (cf. Lev 17:10-13; Deut 12:23-24), so David offered the water to God. By doing so, David did »what is right in the sight of the Lord« (cf. Deut 12:25) as he placed the Lord's will before personal desire, even before his own physical needs. When it comes to the satisfaction of primary needs, any effort to reach the desired object is only natural. But David fulfilled his desire by addressing a request to his companions who risked their lives to bring him water. This is also the reason why David – referring to the Lord – declined to drink the water and showed that the satisfaction of his bodily needs (desires) was not the highest principle of his actions. We can see here the same pattern as in Num 11 and Gen 3. First stage: a (natural) desire, i.e. the thirst for water. Second stage: David's deliberate and conscious refusal. Finally: the death threat: »If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people.« (Lev 17:10)

present Corinthian dilemma /.../ to the larger and older story of Israel in the wilderness. This metaphorical act creates the imaginative framework within which Paul judges and invites his readers to judge the proper ethical response to the problem at hand.« (1989, 92) The text, then, serves as a warning for the Corinthians to avoid fulfilling a potential typological role by repeating the experience of Israel (Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 458). Ciampa and Rosner (2010, 460) argue that, in this and the previous verse, Paul connects desire and idolatry, suggesting that idolatry tends to follow from a lack of self-restraint with respect to the appetites of the stomach.

This assertion is confirmed in v. 9, for example: »We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents«. Here Paul is alluding to Num 21:5-6, where the Israelites are complaining about a lack of food and water. Interestingly enough, in this passage, we encounter once again the same pattern as in Num 11 (Ps 106; Gen 3). God indeed had ensured the Israelites' physical satisfaction, as the narrative(s) make(s) clear, but they are still complaining: »For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.« (Num 21:5) This verse is parallel to Num 11:6: »There is nothing at all but this manna to look at.« (11:6). Elsewhere in the Old Testament, such complaining is described as 'testing the Lord' (see Exod 17:2-3.7; Pss 78:18.41.56; 106:14) (Ciampa and Rosner 2010, 462). We thus suggest that, by recalling the wilderness story, Paul is trying to keep the Corinthians from responding inappropriately to 'restrictions' in the area of diet.

6. Conclusion

In 1 Corinthians 10:6, Paul recalls the events described in Num 11:4-34 (with its respective variants in Ps 106:14), using the expression ἐπεθύμησαν which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew אוה. The verbal form of the root אוה characterises the basic tendency for (self-) preservation, on the one hand, and the *equivalent* aspiration for God on the other. This means that longing for God and bodily needs are both described using the *same* terminology of existential attraction (cf. Mt 5:6). This desire, therefore, represents the highest religious meaning in the Old Testament, on the one hand (Strola 1999, 371); on the other hand, in texts relating to the tradition of the Israelites' journey in the wilderness, to which Paul refers in 1 Cor 10, the same desire marks the rejection of the Lord (Num 11:19-20). This desire must not become the sole criterion and goal of human life since »one does not live by bread alone« (Deut 8:3).

Without a doubt, in 1 Cor 10:6, Paul is alluding to this life force that is dictated by physical impulses rather than God's Word. If the desire for food of the Israelites' own choosing stands for rejection of the Lord in Num 11, then the desire for food sacrificed to idols in 1 Cor 10 *ipso facto* stands for the rejection of Christ. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, or Adam in Eden, the Corinthians are placing their bellies before God. Like Gen 3, therefore, in 1 Cor 10:6, Paul is addressing the

basic human temptation, to judge what is 'good and evil' and the consequential behaviour on the basis of the 'empty stomach', i.e. on the basis of physical desires.

In 1 Cor 10:6, by echoing the rebellion in Num 11, Paul wants to sum up the essence of sin. He does not understand desire as one sin amongst others but as a 'God-like' sin, as a source of all the others. This outlook is supported by the Temptations of Jesus, a narrative which certainly recalls Israel's temptation in the wilderness. In Matthew 4 and Luke 4, the first and, therefore, basic temptation is represented by hunger, i.e. the desire for food. Interestingly, Jesus answers by citing Deut 8:3: »One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God«. Here, like Paul in Cor 10:6, Jesus is referring not only to the specific event in Israel's history, i.e. the desire for the delicious food of Egypt in the wilderness, but, more broadly, to human arbitrariness, to 'Adam's sin', and the resulting rejection of God (Merklein 2000, 248)

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