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## “I Myself am an Israelite”: Revisiting Paul’s Use of Ζῆλος in Romans 9-11

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# “I Myself am an Israelite”: Revisiting Paul’s Use of Ζῆλος in Romans 9-11

## Abstract

Previous attempts to account for Paul’s language of ζῆλος in Romans 9-11 focus too narrowly on the occurrence in 10:2 (Dane C. Ortlund [2012]), rely on a difficult distinction between παραζηλώω as “provoke to anger” in 10:19 and παραζηλώω as “emulate” in 11:11, 14 (Richard H. Bell [1994]), or wrongly insist that the meaning of παραζηλώω in 10:19-11:14 must be restricted to its semantic value in Deut 32:21 LXX (Robert Jewett [2007]). A way forward is to recognize—by harnessing insights recently formulated within the framework of relevance theory—that the ζῆλ- word group in Paul’s usage is monosemic. Within this framework, all of the occurrences in Romans are viewed together, and attention is given to the way the term is “shaped” to serve Paul’s theological and rhetorical purposes. Then, rather than asking only what ζῆλος “means” in 10:2 (or “What is wrong with Israel’s ζῆλος?”), readers may ask, “What is it about ζῆλος that enhances the rhetorical thrust of Paul’s reflections on Israel in Romans 9-11?” This paper argues that viewing the occurrences together underscores the connection between Paul’s own experience (in the sense of the “paradigmatic I”) and the ζῆλος of Israel (understood in light of Deuteronomy 32). Paul’s discourse (especially in 7:13-20 and chs. 9-11) shows that Israel’s ζῆλος, just as in Paul’s own life (cf. Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6), is to be reinterpreted by the gospel. Therefore (1) “zeal without knowledge” in 10:2 is to be equated with “hardness” (11:7, 25) and involves a failure to recognize the restructuring of the categories of the world in light of the Christ event (particularly the boundaries that separate Jew and Gentile), and (2) Paul’s own ministry is bound up with moving Israel to rightly-directed ζῆλος (11:13-14).

## Keywords

Paul the Apostle, Romans 9-11

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## Comments

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## “I Myself am an Israelite”: Revisiting Paul’s Use of Ζῆλος in Romans 9-11

BENJAMIN J. LAPPENGA

Annual Central States Regional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature

St. Louis Marriott West, St. Louis, MO

March 23, 2015

### *Abstract:*

Previous attempts to account for Paul’s language of ζῆλος in Romans 9-11 focus too narrowly on the occurrence in 10:2 (Dane C. Ortlund [2012]), rely on a difficult distinction between παραζηλώω as “provoke to anger” in 10:19 and παραζηλώω as “emulate” in 11:11, 14 (Richard H. Bell [1994]), or wrongly insist that the meaning of παραζηλώω in 10:19-11:14 must be restricted to its semantic value in Deut 32:21 LXX (Robert Jewett [2007]). A way forward is to recognize—by harnessing insights recently formulated within the framework of relevance theory—that the ζῆλ- word group in Paul’s usage is *monosemic*. Within this framework, all of the occurrences in Romans are viewed together, and attention is given to the way the term is “shaped” to serve Paul’s theological and rhetorical purposes. Then, rather than asking only what ζῆλος “means” in 10:2 (or “What is wrong with Israel’s ζῆλος?”), readers may ask, “What is it about ζῆλος that enhances the rhetorical thrust of Paul’s reflections on Israel in Romans 9-11?” This paper argues that viewing the occurrences together underscores the connection between *Paul’s own experience* (in the sense of the “paradigmatic ‘I’”) and the ζῆλος of Israel (understood in light of Deuteronomy 32). Paul’s discourse (especially in 7:13-20 and chs. 9-11) shows that Israel’s ζῆλος, just as in Paul’s own life (cf. Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6), is to be reinterpreted by the gospel. Therefore (1) “zeal without knowledge” in 10:2 is to be equated with “hardness” (11:7, 25) and involves a failure to recognize the restructuring of the categories of the world in light of the Christ event (particularly the boundaries that separate Jew and Gentile), and (2) Paul’s own ministry is bound up with moving Israel to rightly-directed ζῆλος (11:13-14).

Paul famously introduces Romans 11 by stressing the inextricable bond between himself and Israel: “I ask, then, has God rejected his people? *μὴ γένοιτο! I myself am an Israelite,* from the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom 11:1). This statement is straddled by several intriguing references to Israel’s ζῆλος (“zeal”) in chapters 10-11, prompting a closer look at the connection between Paul’s emphatic claim about his identity as an Israelite and the motif of “zeal.” In this paper, I ask how adopting a monosemic bias within the framework of relevance theory might contribute to our understanding of Paul’s use of the ζῆλος word group in Romans 9-11 [Rom 10:2; 13:13 and παραζηλώω in Rom 10:19; 11:11, 14]. After addressing two important monographs on

the topic, those of Dane Ortlund and Richard Bell, I argue that viewing all of the occurrences of the ζῆλος word group *together* underscores the connection between Paul's own experience (in the sense of the "paradigmatic 'I'") and the ζῆλος of Israel (understood in light of Deuteronomy 32). Specifically, I conclude that (1) "zeal without knowledge" in 10:2 is to be equated with "hardness" in 11:7, 25, and involves a failure to recognize the restructuring of the categories of the world in light of Christ, and (2) Paul's own ministry is bound up with moving Israel to rightly-directed ζῆλος (11:13-14).

#### 1. "ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE": DANE C. ORTLUND AND ROMANS 10:2

One difficulty with "word studies" as currently practiced by many biblical scholars is that words are sometimes artificially partitioned into multiple senses. One example of this is the 2012 monograph by Dane C. Ortlund, which handles "the concept of zeal" in Paul by considering only the instances Ortlund deems "Jewish zeal" (Rom 10:2; Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6).<sup>1</sup> Ortlund scarcely mentions the occurrences of *παραζήλω* that follow the instance of ζῆλος in Rom 10:2.<sup>2</sup> Ortlund does not disagree with the assessment of Bell and others that

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<sup>1</sup> *Zeal Without Knowledge: The Concept of Zeal in Romans 10, Galatians 1, and Philippians 3* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 62-3 n. 5; 115-16. Ortlund's thesis is that James D. G. Dunn has mischaracterized "zeal" as primarily horizontal (separating Jews from other peoples) when its primary direction is vertical (directed toward God and God's Law). The problem here, as I see it, is that Ortlund's examination of "the concept of zeal" is too narrow in its scope because it assumes that the meaning of "Jewish ζῆλος" in Rom 10:2; Gal 1:14; and Phil 3:6 is unaffected by other occurrences of ζῆλος in Paul's writing (Rom 13:13; Gal 4:17-18; 5:20; etc.).

<sup>2</sup> In Ortlund's entire monograph, Rom 10:19; 11:11, 14 are mentioned only twice. The first is a passing reference to Bell's monograph ("Whereas our specific focus is 9.30-10.3, [Bell's] is mainly 11.11-14"); the second is in a footnote in Ortlund's survey of Second Temple texts, where *παραζήλωσις* is viewed as "a more general zeal" in *T. Zeb.* 9.8 (*Zeal Without Knowledge*, 4, 89).

the *παρα-* prefix simply makes ζηλόω transitive (“move to ζῆλος”).<sup>3</sup> Rather, he omits these passages because he assumes that they have no bearing on his reading of “zeal without knowledge” (ζῆλον... οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν) in Rom 10:2.<sup>4</sup>

Ortlund’s thesis is that zeal in Paul should not be limited to nationalistic concerns. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the opposing view, represented most prominently by James Dunn. Rather, my interest is in the way that Ortlund’s linguistic assumptions lead to a truncated understanding of Paul’s discourse. The methodological framework within which my reading operates is what may be called a *monosomic bias within the framework of relevance theory*, which I develop at length in a forthcoming monograph.<sup>5</sup> In essence, adopting a monosemic bias means that we give attention to all the occurrences of the ζηλ- word group in Romans, especially in chs. 10-11. Instead of asking only “what ζῆλος means in 10:2,” we must ask “how is the ζῆλος word group shaped throughout the letter?” Rather than asking, “What is wrong with Israel’s ζῆλος,”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9-11* (WUNT 2:63; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 27-43; cf. BDF, 83 (§150). See also Robert Jewett, who believes that “Bell is justified in placing the use of *παραζηλοῦν* in relation to ζῆλος” (review of Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, *CRBQ* 8 [1995]: 172; cf. *Romans: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 645). It should also be noted that in the Patristic period the verb is also taken in an intransitive sense (e.g., John Chrysostom, *Hom. Col.* [PG 62:363], citing Ps 36:1).

<sup>4</sup> *Zeal Without Knowledge*, 62-63 n. 5; 115-16; cf. my treatment of Ortlund’s rationale in *Paul’s Language of Ζῆλος and the Rhetoric of Christian Identity and Practice* (BibInt; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 97-100. Ortlund overtly excludes *παραζηλόω* in a previous article (“‘Zeal Without Knowledge’: For What Did Paul Criticize his Fellow Jews in Romans 10:2-3?” *WTJ* 73, no. 1 [2011]: 23 n. 2).

<sup>5</sup> Lappenga, *Paul’s Language of Ζῆλος*, 8-85; cf. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (2d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Thorstein Fretheim, “In Defense of Monosemy,” in *Pragmatics and the Flexibility of Word Meaning* (ed. Németh T., Enikő and Károly Bibok; Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2001), 79-115; Agustín Rayo, “A Plea for Semantic Localism.” *Noûs* 47, no. 4 (2013): 647-79.

<sup>6</sup> The subtitle of Ortlund’s above-cited article (“For What Did Paul Criticize his Fellow Jews in Romans 10:2-3?”) puts the focus on Israel’s fault; see further below.

we should ask “what is it about ζῆλος that enhances the rhetorical thrust of Paul’s reflections on Israel in Romans 9-11?”

First, though, it will be helpful briefly to summarize Ortlund’s reading of Rom 9:30-10:3. Ortlund makes much of the parallel between 9:31-32 and 10:2-3, which I translate here along the lines of Ortlund’s analysis:

Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν... ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ ἔργων.

Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not succeed in fulfilling that law... because [they pursued it] not from faith, but as from works (9:31-32).<sup>7</sup>

ζῆλον θεοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀλλ’ οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν· ἀγνοοῦντες γὰρ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν ζητοῦντες στήσαι...

They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God,<sup>8</sup> and seeking to establish their own... (10:2-3).

Ortlund notes: “Each clause speaks of Israel’s earnest devotion as not only undeniable but even commendable, yet undertaken in the wrong manner,” and says each is rendered defective “due to its being undertaken ‘as of works’” (9:32) and “due to its lack of knowledge” (10:2).<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the phrase οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν (10:2), then, Ortlund concludes that ἐπίγνωσις in 10:2 “appears to be the spiritual perception... that right standing with God is freely given, appropriated through trust in the ‘stone’, Christ, and *thus requiring personal*

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<sup>7</sup> Ortlund takes ἔργα in 9:32 to be a “cipher for general obedience to Torah” (*Zeal Without Knowledge*, 122).

<sup>8</sup> Ortlund thinks “it makes most sense to see the main denotation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in 10.3 as the gift of right standing before God, accessed by faith in Christ” (*Zeal Without Knowledge*, 131).

<sup>9</sup> *Zeal Without Knowledge*, 126. Most interpreters agree that there is a parallel, but to see a *parallel* between “pursuing” and “zeal” is not to say that these terms are used synonymously or interchangeably in the logic of Paul’s argument; see further below. In any case, “works” and “seeking to establish” are not necessarily the same thing.

*divestment of all self-resourced contribution to that standing.*<sup>10</sup> It is not clear that Ortlund has sufficiently corroborated such a reading,<sup>11</sup> and it is here that Ortlund's commitment to a traditional understanding of works-righteousness most comes to the fore.<sup>12</sup> However important such theological commitments might be, if we refrain from importing such a definition into the meaning of ἐπίγνωσις in 10:2, we are bidden to read further, since questions remain about why Paul has chosen to invoke Israel's ζῆλος as he unpacks what is lacking among his people.

## 2. "PROVOKED TO JEALOUSY": RICHARD H. BELL AND ROMANS 10:19-11:14

Since Ortlund gives no attention to the remainder of chs. 10-11, we now turn to Richard H. Bell's comprehensive treatment of the motif of "jealousy" in Romans 9-11. Bell's

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<sup>10</sup> *Zeal Without Knowledge*, 133-34; italics mine. Ortlund concludes this section: "In brief, the zeal of Rom. 10.2 is a Jewish ardency to keep Torah which, when divorced from knowledge of the gift nature of God's righteousness, funnels into the misplaced attempt to establish one's own righteousness" (136). Vincent M. Smiles offers perhaps a more nuanced assessment of Dunn: "Paul's primary target was not 'nationalism' but 'activism' [in the sense that it depends on anything other than God's grace]" ("The Concept of 'Zeal' in Second-Temple Judaism and Paul's Critique of it in Romans 10:2," *CBQ* 64, no. 2 [2002]: 297). Ortlund and Smiles are not too far apart here, but whereas Smiles rightly shifts the meaning to the larger question of what Paul means by "works of the law," Ortlund brings in language that seems somewhat premature ("personal divestment of all self-resourced contribution to that standing").

<sup>11</sup> On this point Ortlund cites Douglas J. Moo's observation that μὴ εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου in Rom 10:6 is drawn from Deut 9:4 LXX, which he claims "goes on to speak of a self-achieved righteousness" (*Zeal Without Knowledge*, 133; cf. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 650-1). This individualization of the Deuteronomist's words is difficult to sustain, since Deut 9:8-29 shows that the emphasis here is clearly on Israel as a nation. This is not the place to address Ortlund's reading of δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ in 10:3 as a "status," but as N. T. Wright observes, one would "receive" a status, not "submit" (ὑποτάσσω) to it. Wright takes δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ as shorthand for the covenantally loyal actions of God, and translates 10:3 as follows: "For, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" ("Romans," in *New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. X* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 654-55).

<sup>12</sup> Ortlund commendably wishes to "receive what is valid in, and yet move critically beyond, the New Perspective" (*Zeal Without Knowledge*, 176), but it is clear enough that he views works-righteousness as a principal target of Paul's words about the law. N. T. Wright likewise characterizes Ortlund's monograph as an attempt to reinstate an "old perspective" reading (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013], 1169 n. 495).

monograph argues that Paul's reading of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 is the primary contributor to Paul's reflection upon Israel in Romans 9-11.<sup>13</sup>

Bell's investigation of the  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$  and  $\zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  word fields in the relevant literature is exhaustive, but he gives no attention to the linguistic theory underpinning his analysis. Representative of his approach is the list of twelve (!) "possibilities" for the meaning of the verb  $\mu\alpha\rho\alpha\zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\nu}$  in Patristic literature: [(to provoke, to be envious, to become envious, to be jealous, to become jealous, to provoke to jealousy, to provoke to jealous anger, to provoke to jealousy [used in a good sense], to emulate, to excel, to be jealous/envious [middle voice], rivalry [noun form]).<sup>14</sup> A list of possibilities can be a helpful guide to account for various *ad hoc* meanings,<sup>15</sup> but Bell, like many others, relies too heavily on pinning down a specific "option" rather than acknowledging the monosemic value of the term and then giving attention to its shaping within a discourse.

In his exegesis, however, Bell shows an admirable (and uncommon) willingness to view the occurrences of the  $\zeta\eta\lambda$ -word group together.<sup>16</sup> Most important to our investigation here, Bell concludes his discussion of Rom 10:19 by noting the "striking" fact that the words  $\zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  appear in both 10:2 [(μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὅτι  $\zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\nu$  θεοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀλλ' οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν)] and in 10:19 [(ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ Ἰσραὴλ οὐκ

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<sup>13</sup> It is not necessary here to critique Bell's larger thesis, but one wonders if in Bell's careful argument for the pervasiveness of Deuteronomy 32 in Paul's thinking Bell downplays the importance of Paul's general perception of God's faithfulness.

<sup>14</sup> *Provoked*, 35-38.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Lappenga, *Paul's Language of Ζῆλος*, 8-85.

<sup>16</sup> Bell does not consider the occurrence in 10:2 an integral part of his examination of the influence of Deuteronomy 32 in Paul's reflections, but he refers to the verse some eight times in the monograph, including in a list of linguistic similarities between Deuteronomy 32 and Romans 9-11 (*Provoked*, 279; cf. 25, 53, 98, 103-4, 189, 309-10, 360).

ἔγνω; πρῶτος Μωϋσῆς λέγει· ἐγὼ παραζήλωσω ὑμᾶς ἐπ’ οὐκ ἔθνη, ἐπ’ ἔθνη ἀσυνέτω παροργιστῶ ὑμᾶς)]. Bell writes,

The answer Paul gives in 10.19 is...entirely consonant with 10.2: Israel has a zeal for God (or a jealousy for God, ζῆλος θεοῦ) but not according to knowledge (10.2). Israel will not be saved through zeal based on ignorance but through being provoked to jealousy, which, as Rom. 11 suggests, means being provoked to emulation. Israel sees that God has a closer relationship to the Church and therefore emulates the Church. In order to bring Israel back to the right sort of ζῆλος, it is necessary to go through παραζήλωσις.

Bell’s observation of the linguistic connection between 10:2 and 10:19 is exactly correct. Bell calls this a “possible word play,” but from the perspective of a monosemic bias, we can go farther: in Paul’s discourse, the ad hoc meaning of ζῆλος has been shaped by its repetition in such close proximity and by the collocate ἐπίγνωσις.

Three things follow. First, Bell’s willingness to examine “knowledge” in 10:2 in light of 10:19 exposes the difficulty with Ortlund’s exclusion of the other occurrences of the ζηλ- word group in Romans. “Knowledge” has to do with what God has revealed in Christ, of course, but more precision is needed.<sup>17</sup> Ortlund defines “knowledge” as assent to the claim that right standing with God requires “personal divestment of all self-resourced contribution to that standing.”<sup>18</sup> Bell, on the other hand, looks to 10:19 and recognizes that “knowledge” has to do with acknowledging God’s plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles. Second, Bell has hit upon a critical point with his contention that Paul

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<sup>17</sup> As Moo puts it, “what is involved is a discernment of the plan of God that enables one to recognize what God is doing in the world and to respond accordingly” (*Epistle*, 632).

<sup>18</sup> *Zeal Without Knowledge*, 134.

aims to “bring Israel back to the right sort of ζῆλος.” We will return to this in the reading below, but again, what is missing in Ortlund’s exegesis is the recognition that ζῆλος plays a key role in Paul’s answer to the perplexing question of how God plans to resolve Israel’s unbelief.

Third, Bell’s “suggestive” comments about the connection between 10:2 and 10:19 actually solve a criticism that has been lodged at the very heart of his thesis. Bell’s crucial interpretive move is to claim that in 10:19 ζῆλος is manifested as *jealous anger* (as in Deut 32:21, Israel is moved to a ζῆλος that is expressed as *anger* [παροργίζω]),<sup>19</sup> but in 11:11, 14 ζῆλος is manifested as *emulation* (unlike Deut 32:21, this provocation to ζῆλος results in Israel’s salvation).<sup>20</sup> This distinction between the meanings is precisely the point at which Bell has been criticized of violating James Barr’s famous dictums. Robert Jewett writes,

Unfortunately, there are significant difficulties with the translation of παραζηλοῦν as “emulation” in Romans. Bell is unable to detect a single hint that ‘emulation’ was implicit in Deuteronomy’s use of the term. . . . The entire case rests on the broad implication of Paul’s argument rather than the semantic connotation of the word itself: since Israel’s jealousy results in her following the Gentiles into salvation, παραζηλοῦν must mean ‘emulation’ of them in 11:11,14.<sup>21</sup>

Jewett seems to think that because Paul cites from Deuteronomy, the meaning of παραζηλοῦν is restricted to its semantic value in Deuteronomy. In light of the methodological framework assumed in this paper, Jewett is misguided to think that Paul’s

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<sup>19</sup> Bell notes the parallel between παραζηλώω and παροργίζω (*Provoked*, 39 n. 183).

<sup>20</sup> Rom 11:14: εἴ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν; cf. Bell, *Provoked*, 113.

<sup>21</sup> Review of Bell, 171; cf. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, 675: “Bell has a hard time explaining how ‘jealous anger,’ his preferred translation for 10:19, could have been thought to shift into the positive desire to emulate the behavior of the previously hated Gentiles.”

argument cannot shape the semantics of the word itself—that is precisely how language works.

### 3. PAUL THE ΖΗΛΩΤΗΣ AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

We are now poised to offer a reading of ζῆλος in Romans that incorporates the insights of Ortlund, Dunn, Jewett, and Bell but also points to additional ways the language of ζῆλος participates in Paul’s larger argument. Interpreters (including Ortlund) regularly connect Paul’s own ζῆλος (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6) with the ζῆλος he attributes to Israel in Rom 10:2. For most, however, this remains simply a conjecture, because Paul does not speak of his own ζῆλος in Romans in the overt way he does in Galatians, Philippians, and 2 Corinthians. By contrast, in what follows, I will show that we can support the *rhetorical* use of Paul’s own experience by examining the language of ζῆλος.

I propose that Paul’s experience is bound up with Paul’s reflection on Israel. That is, I mean to ask whether “Paul’s experience” (in the sense of the “paradigmatic ‘I’”)<sup>22</sup> plays a rhetorical role in Romans as a way of communicating effectively Paul’s intimate convictions about his own people.<sup>23</sup>

#### 3.1. Romans 7:13-20

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Brian J. Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’: Personal Example As Literary Strategy* (JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Wright hints in this direction (“this passage [10:2] has the strong tinge of autobiography about it, as the reference to ‘zeal for God’ makes clear”), though Wright like most others focuses on Paul’s “former self” (*Faithfulness*, 1169; cf. Wright, “Paul, Arabia, and Elijah [Galatians 1:17],” *JBL* 115, no. 4 [1996]).

To solidify the claim that Paul draws on his own experience as a rhetorical device, it will be useful briefly to consider Rom 7:7-25 before turning our attention to the primary passages in Romans 9-11. Much ink has been spilled over the question of the identity of the “I” in Romans 7, and there is no need to survey the debate here.<sup>24</sup> In recent years some alternative ways of examining this passage have appeared. For example, Paul W. Meyer argues that at the heart of Romans 7 is not the “I” (nor even the law) but rather Paul’s portrayal of *Sin* as a power that corrupts even God’s good law (7:12).<sup>25</sup> Meyer’s proposal rightly draws attention to the apocalyptic nature of Paul’s theologizing in Romans, and, importantly for our interests here, helpfully respects the *ambiguity* of Paul’s words in Romans 7. If the need for precision in identifying the “I” is mitigated, as Meyer suggests, we are prompted to consider further the rhetorical effect of Paul’s use of the first person.

Along these lines, N. T. Wright has defended the position that “I” represents the Jewish people, or more properly Israel in various stages of its biblical history.<sup>26</sup> Whether or not one agrees with all of Wright’s conclusions, most will concur that “I” is not a reference to Paul’s personal experience in the autobiographical pattern of Galatians 1 or

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<sup>24</sup> For a recent summary, see Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 681-91.

<sup>25</sup> “The Worm at the Core of the Apple: Exegetical Reflections on Romans 7,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martin* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 62-97.

<sup>26</sup> *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 197-98. Wright argues that “I” is principally referring to Israel in the same way Paul uses it in Gal 2:19-20.

Philippians 3,<sup>27</sup> and that the ambiguity at least implicitly links Paul's experience with Israel's as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

Brian J. Dodd has shown that this kind of rhetorical connection is common in Paul's writing. As Dodd has argued of Romans 7 specifically and Paul's letters more broadly, "Paul's literary self-portrayal serves as a vivid example for his readers to picture the main point of his argument.... His 'I' models the main contention of his argument."<sup>29</sup> Although Paul does not introduce the language of ζῆλος in Romans 7, his use of the "I" in Romans 7 has paved the way for Paul's own experience to inform the reflections that will follow.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2. Romans 9:1-5

Paul introduces Romans 9-11 by expressing his desire for the Israelites to accept their Messiah, and the language he uses is profoundly personal ("I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie" [9:1]) and passionate ("I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" [9:2]). Paul is so intimately bound up with "his own flesh" (to whom belong the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Werner Georg Kümmel, *Römer 7 und Das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament: Zwei Studien* (München: C. Kaiser, 1974), 118.

<sup>28</sup> Dunn notes a continuation of the "I" that was used in reference to Adam in the previous verses, but observes the (deliberate?) ambiguity caused by Paul's use of "we" in 7:14 (*Romans*, 1:404-5). Dodd argues that despite certain elements that seem to fit Adam better than Paul, "there still remains a personal aspect to this passage, an 'I' in which Paul expresses either himself or feelings he believes are common to the human experience of keeping the law. Thus Paul creates a composite character whom he labels 'I'" (*Paradigmatic*, 226). Dodd also claims that Rom 7:14-25 "has the most affinity with Paul's use of self-characterization in 1 Corinthians 1-4" (*Paradigmatic*, 233).

<sup>29</sup> *Paradigmatic*, 234.

<sup>30</sup> As Beverly Roberts Gaventa has noted in relationship to the "I" in Romans 7, first- and second-person pronouns are peculiar in that they only have a point of reference within a particular discourse; cf. Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 43-53, 194-201; cited in Gaventa, "The Shape of the 'I': The Psalter, the Gospel, and the Speaker in Romans 7," in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5-8* (ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 79.

adoption, covenants, promises, law, worship, glory, patriarchs, and Messiah [9:4-5]) that he would take their place as accursed and separated from Christ (“For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh” [9:3]). The effect of these statements, in my reading, is to blur the distinction between Paul and Israel.

In addition, interpreters have not given sufficient attention to the Scripture Paul seems to draw from in Rom 9:1-5. While there are no direct quotes in these verses, in 10:13 Paul quotes Joel 2:32 [3:5 LXX] (“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”). If this is taken as a clue to the texts that resonate throughout Paul’s discourse in Romans 9, it is striking how similar Paul’s passion for his people is to *God’s* passion for his people in Joel 2:18 LXX (καὶ ἐζήλωσεν κύριος τὴν γῆν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐφείσατο τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ [“And the Lord was zealous for his land and spared his people”]).<sup>31</sup> Paul does not use the word ζῆλος until the next chapter, but the emotion he expresses can reasonably be understood in the pattern of God’s own ζῆλος for Israel.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.3. Romans 9:30-10:4

Returning to the passage examined in conversation with Ortlund above, in Rom 9:30-31 Paul asserts that the Gentiles who did not pursue (διώκω) righteousness reached it by faith (9:30), but Israel who pursued it did not (9:31). Paul uses διώκω alongside ζῆλος in both

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Zech 1:14; 8:2, Ezek 36:6; 39:25.

<sup>32</sup> There are many surveys of ζῆλος/ἔκστασις as an essential aspect of God’s divine character, e.g., Smiles, “Concept,” 286; Ortlund, *Zeal Without Knowledge*, 30-36; Bernard Renaud, *Je suis un Dieu jaloux: Évolution sémantique et signification théologique de qin’ah* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963).

Gal 1:13-14 and Phil 3:6 (cf. 1 Cor 14:1; 15:9; Josephus *Ant.* 6.343), so there is little question that Paul’s language used to describe Israel mirrors language he has used elsewhere to describe himself. As Paul writes of the two-purposed “stumbling stone” placed by God as a “rock of scandal” and the source of salvation (9:33), his rhetoric remains both sharply personal and connected with Israel (“my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” [10:1]).

This brings us to the pivotal phrase in 10:2. The only other time Paul uses the phrase ζῆλος θεοῦ references *his own* ζῆλος in 2 Cor 11:2 (ζηλωτῶν γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζήλω; cf. Rom 10:2: μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὅτι ζῆλον θεοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀλλ’ οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν).<sup>33</sup> This is entirely in keeping with the pattern we have seen of Paul blurring the lines between his own experience and his rhetoric concerning Israel. That is, Paul uses an expression (ζῆλος θεοῦ) to attribute to unbelieving Israel a designation that coheres with Paul’s rhetorical presentation of *himself* in Romans as a figure like Elijah/Phinehas (as we will discuss below on Rom 11:1-6).

### 3.4 Romans 10:5-21

This fusing of Paul and Israel continues in the cluster of references to ζῆλος that follow, starting with the occurrence of in παραζηλώω in 10:19 that foreshadows the resolution to come (11:11-16). We have surveyed Richard Bell’s reading above, which is that Deut 32:21 provides Paul with a clear indication of how God intends to resolve the distressing

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Lappenga, *Paul’s Language of Ζῆλος*, 190-236.

riddle of Israel's unbelief: "he will provoke them to jealousy."<sup>34</sup> Here we can make two further observations. First, within these verses leading up to the occurrence of *παραζηλώω* in 10:19, Paul stresses in the strongest possible terms that "there is no difference between Jew and Greek" (they all call on the Lord).<sup>35</sup> Second, Paul draws attention to the proclamation of the good news (10:15), concluding that Israel has in fact heard the message (10:18). The citation from Ps 19:4 in Rom 10:18 ("Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" [NRSV]) recalls Paul's own apostleship, even if the mission to the diaspora is the primary referent.<sup>36</sup> Paul understands his ministry as specific to Gentiles (Gal 1:15-16; Rom 1:5), but above all, especially in Romans, Paul's ministry involves the proclamation of the good news (Rom 1:1; cf. 1 Cor 15:8-11). Already here, then, Paul connects the salvation of Israel with his own ministry.

### 3.5 Romans 11:1-6

Immediately following, in perhaps the most autobiographical verses of the entire letter, Paul insists that God has not rejected his people because he himself is "an Israelite" (11:1).<sup>37</sup> In 11:3 Paul quotes from the story of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:14-18 to speak

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<sup>34</sup> *Romans*, 2:633. Cf. Wright on 10:19: "[Paul] will in the next chapter use this key category of 'jealousy' as the fulcrum around which to turn his crucial argument" ("Romans," 669).

<sup>35</sup> There is no reason to reduce the "reasons for Romans" to one, but the arguments of this paper support the view that countering divisions between Jewish and Gentile believers is a significant concern; cf. 11:17-25; 12:3, 16; 14:3. This reading is defended by, among others, Johan Christiaan Beker (*Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 69-74); cf. the recent survey in Carl N. Toney, *Paul's Inclusive Ethic: Resolving Community Conflicts and Promoting Mission in Romans 14-15* (WUNT 252; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1-39.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans* 2:628.

<sup>37</sup> Paul's words here are highly reminiscent of Gal 1:14 and Phil 3:6, both of which refer to Paul's *ζηλος*.

of the remnant (λειμμα) that God has preserved (11:5).<sup>38</sup> Paul compares himself with Elijah in Galatians 1, but here it is important to emphasize that Paul's Elijah-like ζήλος should not be relegated to the status of a negative foil.<sup>39</sup> Paul of course utilizes this passage in 1 Kings 19 because of its testimony to God's continuing care for the people through God's preservation of a faithful remnant. But given the language of ζήλος that follows in 11:11, 14, the particular passage Paul cites from 1 Kings 19 strongly supports the reading that Paul also chooses this passage because it posits a parallel between Israel's famous zealot Elijah and himself.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.6 Romans 11:7-36

This further connection between Paul's ζήλος and the ζήλος of Israel leads us next to the occurrences of παραζηλώω we have considered in Bell's reading above. Bell takes pains to argue that "provoke to jealous anger" in 10:19 gives way to "provoke to emulation" in 11:11, 14, but a monosemic reading of ζήλος offers a more convincing explanation of

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<sup>38</sup> Paul's citation more closely follows the MT than the LXX. Other prophetic passages also speak of God's ζήλος for the remnant. For example, in Isa 11:11 LXX God is "zealous for the remnant" (ζηλώσαι τὸ καταλειφθέν), and Isa 37:32 LXX speaks of the "remnant" saved by the "zeal" of the Lord (οἱ καταλελειμμένοι...ὁ ζήλος). The passage about Sodom and Gomorrah in Isa 1:9 LXX, which Paul just quoted in Rom 9:29, also speaks of "leaving" (ἐγκαταλείπω) offspring.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Lappenga, *Paul's Language of Ζήλος*, 179-89. The impulse to view Paul's former ζήλος in negative terms is pervasive. We have discussed Ortlund's reading of Galatians 1 and Rom 10:2 above, and Bell writes, "Only through Paul's sudden conversion did he see that his jealousy was mistaken and οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν. After his conversion, he was probably critical of the zeal of Phinehas and Elijah" (*Provoked*, 310). Even Dunn insists (referring specifically to Phil 3:6) that "[f]or Paul the Christian, this former 'zeal' was something he could now only regret" (*Beginning From Jerusalem* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 342).

<sup>40</sup> This reading is endorsed by many interpreters, and Christian Müller even proposes that the Elijah *redivivus* myth lies behind the reference in 11:2-3 (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11* [FRLANT 86; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964], 44-45).

Paul's strategy.<sup>41</sup> Yes, Deuteronomy 32 shapes Paul's reflections here, and Paul certainly exploits the "jealousy" of which Deuteronomy 32 had spoken.<sup>42</sup> The step Bell does not take is to recognize that Paul's way of "exploiting" the motif is to shape carefully the language of ζήλος from 10:2 through 11:14. Bell connects 10:2 and 10:19, but ultimately leaves us with three distinct meanings of ζήλος in Romans 9-11 ("Jewish zeal" in 10:2; "jealous anger" in 10:19; and "emulation" in 11:11, 14). More precision is possible, however, when we take note that Paul's rhetorical "I" once again collapses with his reflections on the destiny of Israel.

This is important for two reasons. First, by allowing Paul's discourse (rather than the constraints of Deuteronomy 32 or a list of possible "meanings") to shape the *ad hoc* meaning of ζήλος, we realize that Bell is exactly right that "[i]n order to bring Israel back to the right sort of ζήλος, it is necessary to go through παραζήλωσις." In light of our investigation, we can push for more precision about what this means. The crucial passage is 11:13-14. When Paul declares, "Inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry in order to make my own people jealous" (NRSV), he leaves no doubt that it is Paul himself who will move "his own flesh" to ζήλος. Thus we have here the

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<sup>41</sup> Wright also endorses Bell's view that "whereas in Deut 32:21, and its quotation in 10:19, this 'jealousy' appeared purely negative, it is turned to positive effect in v. 14" ("Romans," 680); cf. David Lincicum's discussion of the positive sense in 11:11, 14 (*Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy* [WUNT 2:284.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 164-65).

<sup>42</sup> "Romans," 682.

culmination of the blending of the stories of Israel and Paul. It is *Paul's ministry* that “moves Israel to ζῆλος.”<sup>43</sup>

Second, we can return to 10:2 with further clarity about the question of what Paul means by “knowledge.” If we extend Bell’s connection between 10:2 and 10:19 all the way through to 11:11, 14, we do in fact have a plausible explanation of οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν. Bell sees here a system with two possible ways to God, a *direct* way (having ζῆλος θεοῦ; 10:2) and an *indirect* way (his calling as apostle to the Gentiles will move Israel to emulate the Gentile Christians; 11:14).<sup>44</sup> It is not clear how Bell then understands οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν, since presumably a direct way to God would be preferable to the indirect way, and in any case no indirect way seems necessary (the Israelites do in fact have ζῆλος θεοῦ). Part of the problem is that Bell uses the language of “a way to God,” when at issue here is not so much “a way to God” as the divine promise.<sup>45</sup>

More importantly, however, if we notice the way the language of ζῆλος connects 10:2 with the reflections in ch. 11, οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν should be equated with Israel’s “hardness” (11:7 [πωρόω], 25 [πώρωσις]) that Paul thinks needs no explanation (9:18: “he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses”). What is “wrong” with regard to ζῆλος, then,

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<sup>43</sup> Mark D. Nanos’ emphasis on the unquestionably positive connotations of Israel’s zeal in Rom 10:2 is admirable, but of 11:14 Nanos thinks the Jews are not jealous of the *salvation* of the Gentiles but rather are jealous of *Paul’s ministry* (*The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 113, 249-50). Jewett is correct to point out that Nanos’ reading of 11:14 is highly problematic given the evidence of violent reactions to the gospel (*Romans: A Commentary*, 646 n. 116), but more importantly Nanos’ suggestion that “a kind of positive competitive jealousy seems to be in view” runs directly counter to Paul’s consistent warnings against rivalrous expressions of ζῆλος.

<sup>44</sup> *Provoked*, 104.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Jewett, Review of Bell, 171.

is not some moral failing, but that God has chosen to harden Israel.<sup>46</sup> For Paul, ζῆλος enlightened by the gospel and delivered via his own ministry is the means by which Israel will be saved (11:14). *Paul's ministry*, insofar as it is bound up with Paul's own encounter with the risen Christ, moves Israel to have the gospel-transformed ζῆλος that is the mark of the Christ-believer.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen that Paul aligns his reflections on Israel with his own experience so that, just as in his own life, “Jewish ζῆλος” may be seen as reinterpreted by the gospel (now in part, but later in full) and thus *common* to both Jewish and Gentile believers. Israel's ζῆλος is not according to knowledge (10:2), and by knowledge Paul means recognition of the restructuring of the categories of the world in light of the Christ event, particularly the boundaries that separate Jew and Gentile. Paul himself experienced the implications of this apocalyptic gospel (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6), and sees his experience as paradigmatic for Israel. Paul also understands that his own ministry, as an extension of his calling, is bound with moving Israel to rightly-directed ζῆλος (Rom 11:13-14). [[stop?]]

To conclude, I must address a potential problem: if Paul makes so much of ζῆλος as an ongoing identity-marker for Christ-believing Jews, why would he conclude the letter with a wholly negative reference to ζῆλος in 13:13?

Rom 13:11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside

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<sup>46</sup> This is not to imply, of course, that Paul would not critique certain expressions of ζῆλος (cf. Smiles, “Concept”).

the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Paul's warnings about rivalrous ζῆλος in 13:13 are not at all out of place if we take chs. 9-11 as directed toward correcting the relations between Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome (cf. 1:16; 3:22 ["there is no distinction..."]). Just as in Galatians and 1-2 Corinthians Paul calls Gentile believers to a rightly-directed ζῆλος that has been transformed in light of the cross (Gal 4:17-18; 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 12, 39; 2 Cor 7:7, 11; 9:2), so Paul's ministry will move Israel to (gospel-transformed) ζῆλος (11:11, 14). At present, however, ζῆλος is overpowered by Sin and Death. Whether manifested as a lack of acceptance (10:2, 19) or as bitter envy (cf. φθόνος in 1:29),<sup>47</sup> for all, Jew and Gentile, wrongly-directed ζῆλος (13:13) is indicative of life in the "night," in the time of "flesh," and "not according to knowledge."

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<sup>47</sup> In this sense, ζῆλος is not unlike the law, good and holy (Rom 7:12; cf. 10:2a; 11:11, 14) but corrupted by Sin (e.g., Rom 2:15; cf. 10:2b; 10:19). Intriguing in this respect is Meyer's observation that after Rom 7:12 the law becomes "the good" (τὸ ἀγαθόν in 7:13 [2x], 18, 19; τὸ καλόν in 7:16, 18, 21); cf. Meyer, "Worm," 78. Since Paul relates ζῆλος with "the good" in Gal 4:18, perhaps a parallel could be made between the competing "laws" in Rom 7:21-25 (which immediately follow the substitution of "the good" in vv. 13-24) and the competing manifestations of ζῆλος in Gal 4:17-18.