

CLEMENT TO THE CORINTHIANS

Lesson One (1 Clement 1-4)

Clement of Rome

Clement mentioned in Philippians 4:3

The first three bishops of Rome: Linus, Anacletus, and Clement

Paul's disciple: Linus (2 Tim 4:21)

Peter's disciples: Clement and Anacletus

Linus died in 81 CE; Anacletus died in 93 CE

Other Clementine Literature:

Homilies, Recognitions, 2 Clement

Clement's adventures with Peter

God-fearer or Proselyte

Clement had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, their teaching was still ringing in his ears.
(Irenaeus)

Introduction to the Epistle

Reply to an epistle from Corinth

Schism and leadership change in the Corinthian community

Introduction to 1 Clement from *Torah Club Six: Chronicles of the Apostles*

1 Clement 1

Sudden repeated calamities and misfortunes. The persecutions under Emperor Domitian, circa 95 CE, in connection with the *Fiscus Judaicus* (Jewish Tax). Domitian discovered and arrested Christians in Rome “who did not publicly acknowledge the Jewish faith but lived as Jews” or had “drifted into Jewish ways” (Seutonius, Cassius Dio). The persecutions involved interrogations, confiscation of property, banishment, and in many cases, martyrdom.

Matters of dispute that have risen among you.

Apparently members of the Corinthian Christian community appealed to Clement and his colleagues in Rome to counsel them regarding a recent sedition in which new leadership rose and ousted the previous leaders of the Corinthian Assembly. The outbreak of the Domitian persecutions in Rome prevented Clement and his colleagues in the Roman Assembly from immediately composing a reply.

Your good name. That is, the reputation of the Corinthian Assembly among the believing communities.

Rightly-beloved. A compound Greek word (*aksiayapeton*, ἀξιαγάπητον) with *aksios*, “deserving” and *agapetos*, “beloved.”

Without showing partiality. Literally, “without respecting persons.” Cf. James 2:9.

Elders among you. Not just the elderly, but the leadership of the assembly, who are referred to as elders (*presbuteros*, πρεσβύτερος).

The Commandments of God, i.e., the commandments of the Torah.

Blamelessly and reverently. Some manuscripts (LSCO) omit “reverently.”

The rule of obedience. Cf. Ephesians 5:22, 28; 1 Peter 3:1.

1 Clement 2

Which Christ provided for you. One manuscript (A) reads “Which God provided for you.”

More happy to give than to receive. Based on a saying of the Master also reported by Paul in Acts 20:35: “He himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

His Chosen. The nation of Israel, i.e. the Jewish people.

Ready for every good deed. Cf. Titus 3:1.

Mercy and good conscience. One manuscript (C) reads, “with fear and good conscience.”

Commandments and ordinances of the Lord. That is the commandments of the Torah. Cf. Ezekiel 36:27.

Written on the tablets of your heart. A reference to the promise of the New Covenant: “I will put my Torah within them and on their heart I will write it” (Jeremiah 31:33). Cf. Deuteronomy 6:6; Proverbs 7:3; 2 Corinthians 3:3.

1 Clement 3

My beloved ate ... and kicked. A loose translation of Deuteronomy 32:15. The success and prosperity of the Corinthian community bred internal division.

The elders. The *presebuterous* (πρεσβυτέρους) of the community, that is the ecclesiastical elders of the congregation, recently displaced by the young usurpers. *1 Clement* 3:3 paraphrases of Isaiah 3:5.

Righteousness and peace stand at a distance. Cf. Isaiah 59:14.

A citizen of the kingdom of Christ. A Greek word (*politēnēsthai*, πολιτεύεσθαι) that means “to live in a manner befitting a citizen,” used in Jewish Greek to indicate living according to the commandments of the Torah. Cf. 2 Maccabees 6:1, 11:25; 4 Maccabees 5:16; Acts 23:1; Philippians 1:27.

Unrighteous and ungodly jealousy. Clement uses the word “jealousy (*zelos*, ζήλος)” to indicate envy and baseless hatred, like that of the Zealot party which lead to the destruction of the Temple. Cf. James 3:14–16. Compare: ““Why was the second Sanctuary destroyed despite the fact that people occupied themselves with Torah, commandments, and charity? Because baseless hatred prevailed within it. This teaches you that baseless hatred is considered more serious than idolatry, sexual immorality, and bloodshed together” (b.Yoma 9b).

Death itself entered into the world. “God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless through the devil’s envy, death entered into the world” (*Wisdom of Solomon* 2:23–24).

1 Clement 4

Our Father Jacob. Clement includes the God-fearing Gentile believers of Corinth in the spiritual family of Israel.

Even to the point of death. In Jewish tradition, Joseph’s brothers figuratively put him to death when they threw him into the pit. “Even though the pit had no water, it did contain serpents and scorpions” (b.*Shabbat* 22a). “One who falls into a pit containing serpents and scorpions may be legally presumed dead” (b.*Yevamot* 121a).

Jealousy forced Moses to flee. Moses had no fear of Pharaoh’s wrath (Hebrews 11:19). Midrash states that Moses was afraid and fled from Egypt only because he realized that there were wicked men among the people of Israel and that their sins of baseless hatred might forfeit the opportunity for redemption. Cf. Rashi on Exodus 2:14; *Tanchuma*, *Shemot* 10; *Shemot Rabbah* 1:30.

Who made you judge ... as you did to the Egyptian yesterday. Exodus 2:14. Cf. Acts 7:29.

Aaron and Miriam. In the Torah (Numbers 12:15), only Miriam was put outside the camp. Clement preserves an extra-biblical tradition that the punishment of leprosy also struck Aaron, forcing him to join his sister outside of the camp for seven days. The Torah did not mention Aaron’s punishment out of respect for the office of the high priest. The sages discouraged the legend. Yehudah ben Batyra taught, “Anyone who says that Aaron was also smitten with leprosy will have to give an account [in heaven]. When God has concealed the matter concerning Aaron [how dare we reveal it]?” (*Sifre* 105).

Dathan and Abiram. Leaders of the Reubenites in Korah’s rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Numbers 16; Psalm 106:17.

Hades. In Greek mythology, the underworld realm of the dead. In Jewish Greek, a standard translation for Sheol and Gehenna.

Envy of Foreigners. The Philistines. Cf. Lightfoot’s translation.