

## Genesis 19

Written by K B Napier  
Tuesday, 31 March 2015 14:42

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### “...the overthrow.”

This chapter contains major accounts – the first, of a ‘mini-exodus’ of one family, and the other of two daughters who sinned; in their minds they had good intentions, but they went about them in an ungodly way.

When you read this chapter try to put yourself into the scene, because so many Christians think they could not possibly end up in such situations, or commit such sin. It is not helpful to bury our heads in the sand about sin. There are times when circumstances change rapidly, maybe for the worse. When we are disorientated\* by events like this we can do some rather odd things, and when ‘strict’ Christians suddenly sin dramatically, they cannot then regain their spiritual posture, because they think they have moved beyond forgiveness. We must have a clear view of ourselves! (\**Grammatical point – some prefer to use ‘disoriented’. Both are correct*).

This does not mean we must dwell on sin, or the possibility of sinning gravely. It just means that we understand our human make-up, and we know that any one of us can commit the most heinous of sins. We must thank God that this is not our usual position, and that these wrongs are not an automatic part of our nature. We should acknowledge they exist and are possible.

When we realise that we can do those awful things we read about in the newspapers, then we come to know ourselves and can fight against evil within our own minds and hearts. We can even prepare ourselves for what may be sudden and terrifying to our souls. “What would we do if...?” is a question we should rehearse – not continually or with shattering realism, but simply as and when the thought arises, because we have read about it elsewhere, even in scripture. Then, when the black cloud of temptation or force comes upon us, we may be able to resist and do what is right.

Extreme conditions arise. When they do, we must be ready to respond as Believers. There are times when things happen so fast and furiously, that we collapse inwardly and do things we would never dream of doing normally. That is part of life, especially modern life, when terrors and evil abound and we are unprepared inwardly.

Know yourself, and you will start to know your enemy, whoever or whatever he/it is. Know that you can fail, possibly dramatically, but that God knows your weaknesses, and yet has saved

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you, despite your sin, and the sins He knows you will commit before your life on earth ends! (A fearful thought).

I am thankful that I do not yet know the sins I will perform before my life has ended! However, knowing that I will repeatedly sin should spur me on to do better and to live a holy and upright life, avoiding those things that might cause me to wander from the true path. And even if I do, I must remember to stop, repent, and change again.

So, read these texts in truth, without rose-coloured spectacles. You and I are sinners saved by grace, and can falter. In this chapter you read of the spectacular judgement of God upon an evil generation, followed by two very personal acts of sin within a family. Both occur today, if only we have eyes to see and are honest.

### Verses 1-3

1.

“And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

2.

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

3.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.”

In the previous chapter we saw that Christ was accompanied by two angels. Here, Christ is not present, but there are two angels. It is reasonable to assume that these are the two angels who were with Christ earlier, and that it is probably at the end of the same day.

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The angels, or *mal'ak*, were deputies sent out to accomplish a specific task. This is the meaning of the Hebrew. It is obvious from the previous narrative that they were sent by Christ, and they arrived at the gate of Sodom at sunset. The word for 'gate' can mean the entrance to the city, or the area just within the gates, where markets were held, or where the public met.

Lot was sitting at the gate, and when he saw what appeared to him to be two men, he went to greet them, bowing as an act of respect – a normal custom. As Lot used the lesser greeting of 'lords' (small 'l') we may assume that his bow was a 'normal' one, and not a full prostration on the ground.

Lot invited them to 'turn in', *cuwr* – to come with him into his house for the night. He offered to wash their feet, again the custom before they slept. Then, they could arise early and be on their way. The angels refused at first, saying they would remain in the street all night.

We then see Lot urging them most strongly to stay with him inside the house. I get the distinct impression that he was trying to save them from harm and was anxious that they should be locked indoors. He "pressed upon them greatly" to stay. That is, he pushed them with obvious force to listen. As a result they entered the house, which he no doubt then locked up. He made them a 'feast' or *mishteh* – a banquet or sumptuous meal. He baked unleavened bread (or, probably, his wife did!), and they sat down to eat.

### Verses 4-9

1.

"But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

2.

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

3.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

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4.

And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

5.

Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

6.

And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.”

The angels finished their meal (itself an interesting fact – they were able to eat as human beings did) and prepared to go to sleep. But, before they did so, an unthinkable nightmare began. The men of Sodom, of every age, and from all parts of the city, gathered and surrounded Lot’s home. They banged on Lot’s door and shouted to him. Someone had noticed the strangers entering the city: ‘Where are the two men who entered your house? Bring them out to us so that we can know them!’

Modern Sodomites abuse this text just as they abuse each other. They pretend that the men of the city merely abused the custom of friendship and good hospitality! The wording and scenario do not portray a genial meeting – but a gathering of homosexuals who wanted to physically attack the two strangers! It was a scene of evil, violence and unrestrained sexuality.

The word ‘know (them)’, *yada*, means, amongst other things, to know by experience, or ‘carnally’ (sexually). This is undoubtedly the meaning – sexual predation by physical attack.

Lot, fearing for his guests, opened his door and went into the street, being careful to shut the door behind him. His words are further proof that sexual violence was meant by their gathering. “I urge you, brothers – do not act so wickedly!” (to be evil, to hurt or to injure).

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Lot could not allow his guests to be so violated, and, though a good father, he uttered words that should chill all right thinking people: 'Look – I have two virgin daughters. Let me give them to you, so that you can do what you wish with them. But, don't touch these two men...I brought them into my house to protect them.'

Lot, then, offered his own daughters to the vicious citizens of the city, rather than subject his guests to a sadistic sexual attack. We cannot fathom such an awful scene, or how a father could offer his own daughters in this way. But, Sodom was utterly wicked, Lot had regard for godly custom, and he knew what would happen to the angels if they set foot outside his door. We cannot tell what our own response would be in the same circumstance (and culture), when the unthinkable becomes the unspeakable... as has happened in our modern day.

The evil men pushed forward and told Lot to get out of their way. 'Let the stranger judge the situation – get out of our way or we will do even worse to you!' They all pushed toward Lot and tried to break down his door. Lot was close to being mobbed and killed for the sake of their sexual gratification. Even today, vicious sexual attacks are on the increase, so there is a loose parallel in this text.

### Verses 10-14

1.

"But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

2.

And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

3.

And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:

4.

For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the

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LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

5.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. “

The two angels opened the door and pulled Lot back inside the house, saving his life. Then, they blinded the men outside. This was very swift, *canver* – sudden blindness. But, this did not stop their evil... they exhausted themselves trying to find the door!

The angels asked Lot if anyone else was in the house, and if he had any other relations elsewhere in the city. ‘Get them out of this place, because we will destroy Sodom, whose evil is known to God. He has sent us to destroy Sodom completely!’

Hearing this, Lot escaped from his house as the Sodomites continued to try to get in. He ran to find his sons-in-law and called them to get out quickly because God was about to destroy the city. Sadly, they all thought their father-in-law was joking! As a result, his sons-in-law and his married daughters were lost in the ensuing fire and destruction.

### Verses 15&16

1.

“And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

2.

And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.”

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At sunrise, the angels urged Lot to get up quickly and to take his wife and two unmarried daughters out of the city before they began their gruesome work of 'consuming the iniquity of the city'.

Possibly because he was worried about his married daughters, he dithered about going. So, the angels took him, his wife and his daughters, by the hand, and guided them outside the city, to safety. This was done because the Lord was merciful to them. Very often, in situations of the most extreme kind, God will show mercy to us and allow us to escape the trial to come, even though we are reluctant. By this time Lot must have known who the 'men' really were... after all, two human beings could not destroy a whole city on their own!

We see a vital point being made: when God gives us instructions, we must obey *now*, not tomorrow, or next week, but immediately. It could be the only time He gives us that opportunity, so we must do whatever it is straight away, or lose the moment.

### Verses 17-23

1.

"And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

2.

And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

3.

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

4.

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

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5.

And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

6.

Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

7.

The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.”

The most peculiar wordings are found in this text, but they are not so odd if we read the account in Genesis of God speaking as ‘I’ and yet as ‘we’. When ‘they’ brought the small family out of the city, ‘he’ said...the two angels appear to have assumed a single identity, and the reason seems to be that ‘they’ were manifestations of the one Christ, as the next verse suggests!

‘They’ sent them away from the city: ‘Escape for your lives and don’t look back! Get away from the plain, too – get to the mountain or you will be destroyed with the city and the plain.’! Lot then used language that tells us the two men were actually now one: ‘And Lot said unto them, oh not so, my Lord.’”

Note – he began his statement addressing a plurality, and completed it with the singular! So, ‘them’ became ‘Lord’, *adown* (with a capital ‘L’), or “my Lord God”. Thus, Lot appears to now know who the ‘two’ men are – Christ. He begged with Christ not to consume him and his family. ‘You have shown me great mercy by saving my life, because I have been accepted by You... there is no way I can reach that mountain in time; please allow us to get to that small city over there. Look, it is only a very small town; let me escape to it and live!’

Christ replied: ‘I accept your request and will not destroy that small city.’ The city was on the plain, and it was the only place not to be destroyed that day. ‘Now, hurry up and run to the city,

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for I cannot start to destroy until you are safe.' From that day the small city was known as Zoar ('insignificance'). It was at the southeast end of the Dead Sea, one of the five cities of the plain alongside Sodom, Gomorrah, etc., and the only one to escape the judgement of God. I wonder if its inhabitants repented after what happened to Sodom?

A very weary and frightened Lot entered the small city, as the day dawned. The other four cities of the plain were still asleep, their citizens steeped in their vile sins and unaware of the awful punishment that was about to literally fall upon them from the skies. Judgement **MUST** come upon the wicked. It is an inviolable law of God, and nothing can stop God's judgements when He has uttered them.

### Verses 24-26

1.

"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

2.

And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

3.

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

As soon as Lot was safe in Zoar, God (in this text, Jehovah) sent a hail of 'brimstone' upon the remaining four cities of the plain. Modern theorists claim that the brimstone and fire came from below ground, as a natural phenomenon caused by boiling asphalt, but the text says otherwise – it came down from 'heaven' in a hail of destruction.

The 'brimstone' is *gophriyth* (feminine of gopher, or gopher wood, possibly cypress) which carries the meaning of 'judgement of God' or God's anger in the form of divine fire. It is a common Christian belief that the brimstone was actual brimstone or sulphur, but the text refers to an act of God, a fire sent divinely in judgement, designed to completely burn up everything

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and everyone in its path. That is, the destruction was not caused by anything earthly, but came suddenly from the skies, sent by God, with the appearance of brimstone.

By this means, God 'overthrew' or *haphak*; 'transformed' the cities, and the surrounding country, the people and everything that grew, by turning them all into ash.

Though there is no real grammatical reference to Lot, 'his' wife speaks of Lot's wife (verse 26). She "looked back from behind him". That is, she *nabat* – showed regard to the scene when following behind Lot. They were already in the city of Zoar, but she disobeyed God and turned to look at the fire. As a result she "became a pillar of salt." What can this mean? It means exactly what it says: she became a standing post of

*melach*

– salt! Given that God sent divine destruction upon the land, there is no reason to reject the notion of a person suddenly becoming a block of salt.

You might ask why God should save her, only to destroy her. The reason is simple: God is to be obeyed. If He made a condition, i.e. that no-one should look back, then that was final. When she looked back she defied the condition and so had to pay the consequences. God had no option, for He *is* God, and cannot lie or make exceptions. For us today, this should be a salutary warning, to obey Almighty God when we know His will.

### Verses 27&28

1.

"And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD:

2.

And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

Abraham had a favourite spot where he went to pray to God. On the morning Lot escaped to Zoar, Abraham went to his prayer position and glanced toward Sodom and the plain, and saw the whole area covered with smoke rising as if from hundreds of furnaces. Abraham was told

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two days before that the destruction would occur, so he was not surprised. The only surprise was the method God used to destroy.

### Verses 29-38

1.

“And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

2.

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

3.

And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

4.

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

5.

And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.”

6.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our Father.

7.

And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him;

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and he perceived not when she laydown, nor when she arose.

8.

Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

9.

And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.

10.

And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.”

Later, when the entire area (apart from Zoar) had been razed to the ground, God ‘remembered’ Abraham. This does not mean that God had forgotten him. This is an awkwardly-phrased statement when translated into English. Perhaps we may paraphrase it as follows: ‘God removed Lot from Sodom before He destroyed it, as a memorial to Abraham.’ In other words, Lot was saved because of Abraham’s plea to Christ the day before.

When all the fury of the destruction was over (we are not told when), Lot and the remainder of his family left Zoar and headed for the nearby mountain, where he decided to live in a cave. He was afraid that what had happened to the cities and the plain, might also happen to Zoar (he did not know of Christ’s promise to Abraham not to destroy a place if only one righteous man lived in it). There was now only himself and his two daughters.

After a while living in isolation, the eldest daughter took her sister aside and said that as they lived in a cave and their father was now old, they had no chance of meeting men who would marry them and give them children, so the family line would die-out with them. They hatched a plan to get him drunk, and to cause him to make them pregnant whilst he was unaware of what he was doing. The eldest did this first, and Lot did not even realise what had happened. The younger sister did the same, the next night. I believe their minds had been corrupted by their stay in Sodom.

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In this way both sisters became pregnant. The eldest daughter had a son named Moab ('of his father'), who became the founder of the Moabite tribes. The youngest daughter had a son named Benammi ('son of my people'), who was the founder of the Ammonite tribes.

Scripture is not concocted. No word of God would make this kind of sin up, if it were only trying to impress! This is real life, at a time when disaster overtook a family and God had destroyed the entire region they lived in. Even so, there can be no excuse. God never excuses sin, but He understands when we do fall. When we repent, sin is forgiven, and that is the main thing to remember.

Also in this narrative we have a righteous man – the only righteous man in the area – being deceived by his daughters. The sin was not his. It was customary to drink alcohol, but he did not know that the girls were giving him extra-strong drink and he was unaware that sin had taken place. There are times when righteous men and women are crushed by the sins of others. They may even retaliate or respond inappropriately. If this happens, do not tut-tut from a distance or become super-pious... how would *you* react in the same circumstances? If a wrong is returned for a wrong, when under extreme pressure, I have no doubt that the righteous person will repent in anguish. Then, all is well. But, we are not rendered guilty by the sins of others, only by our own hearts.

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