

GENESIS

In this lesson, we begin our study of the separation of Abram and Lot as recorded in Genesis Chapter 13. It is a story that many of us are probably aware of, and have perhaps studied before. During my Ph.D. research on the life of Abraham and the patriarchs, I have spent many hours not only studying this passage, but also studying the geography—much of which I have been blessed to travel. I hope to integrate some of my first-hand travel experiences into the lessons that will follow. Accordingly, I pray that God will use them to expand your vision and understanding of Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, and Lot as we begin to look at events that will span well over twenty-five years, resulting in the creation of the Holy Land and the three major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

For our study of Chapter 13, I have included verses from the original King James Version (KJV) below (vs. from the NIV). Many students of Daniel222.com may find this surprising, but there is a lesson in this version that often gets overlooked if we use the NIV (my standard) or other contemporary versions.

Abram and Lot's Location

"¹ And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. ² And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. ³ And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai; ⁴ Unto the place of the altar, which he had make there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord." Genesis 13:1-4 [KJV]

Respond to the following:

1. List below what Abram was "very rich in" in Genesis 13:2 and compare it to what is cited in Genesis 12:5-6. What can we learn from this comparison?
 - a. ANSWER 1: In Genesis 12:5, we observe that Abram had possessions including the people that he owned.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In Genesis 12:6, we note that Abram, when he was leaving Egypt had much more than when he entered Egypt. He has sheep, cattle, male and female donkeys, camels, and servants that were all given to him by the Pharaoh, in addition to all of the possessions and people that he owned when he first entered Egypt.
 - c. ANSWER 3: We see in Genesis 13:2 that Abram was also rich in "silver and gold."
 - d. ANSWER 4: Finally, In both Genesis 13:5-6, as well as in Genesis 13:2, it is recorded that he also still has Lot with him.
2. When Abram leaves Egypt with his family, Lot, and all of his wealth, where does he travel to first, and what does he do there? (See Genesis 13:3-4.)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Abram travels south out of Egypt, however, his first thought isn't his freedom from Egypt nor his great wealth, but rather that he wants to head back to the altar that he had built when he first entered Canaan and worshipped God.
 - b. ANSWER 2: We see from his actions that in spite of his mistakes, i.e., his sin in lying to the Pharaoh, Abram is thankful that God has been faithful with him and has blessed him—even though he was a sinner.
3. Where were the two men located? Specifically, where were they standing and what would they have been able to see from this location? (See Genesis 13:3 and 13:10.)
 - a. ANSWER 1: They were standing between Bethel on the west and Ai (pronounced "I"). From here they could see all of the plain (the *kikar* in Hebrew, the disc) of Jordan. The river Jordan descends down from the Sea of Galilee feeding the Jordan plain just before emptying into the Dead Sea. Hence the English name Jordan—or *Ha-Yarden* in Hebrew—the descending river.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Looking down from the highlands, they would have had a great view of the Jordan river, the Jordan valley on both sides of the Jordan, and some of the northern end of the Dead Sea. Across the plain, built-up and fortified with high walls against Mt Pisgah (also known as Mt Nebo), was the great city of Sodom, probably the second largest city in all of the Levant. To its south was Zoar near the Dead Sea; and directly to the north of Sodom was Gomorrah.

Abram and Lot's Possessions

"⁵ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. ⁶ And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. ⁷ And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the

land. ⁸ And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. ⁹ Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Genesis 13:5-9 [KJV]

Respond to the following:

4. How do we know that Lot was also wealthy, and why was that causing strife among the herders of Abram and the herders of Lot? (See Genesis 13:5-6.)
- a. ANSWER: We are told that Lot also had "flocks, and herds, and tents" and that, referring to Abram and Lot, "their substance was great." The result was tension and trouble between both men's servants who cared for the livestock, as the grazing land was not able to sustain both men's animals.
- Clearly, Abram and Lot had become two of the wealthiest men in the land of Canaan. These are not two wandering shepherds arguing over grazing rights. These are two wealthy businessmen who recognize that the unrest among their servants is caused by a real estate issue which is impacting the care and feeding of both men's livestock.
5. What was Abram's solution to the problem, and were they men of "vision?" (See Genesis 13:8-9.)
- a. ANSWER: Yes, I believe that we can say that they were men of vision. First, note that Abram points out to Lot that "the whole land" is before him. Abram also says that whatever Lot will chose, to go left or right, that Abram will take the opposite direction.
- This shows us that Abram believed that with their herds and flocks they could travel anywhere. They could take any grazing land in any location and productively settle there. Neither his vision nor Lot's was hindered by geography or politics; they were only interested in finding good grazing land for their animals. Such was the life of the Middle Bronze age Hebrew, i.e., *Habiru*, who, in exchange for grazing land, would defend the towns and villages around them. Today, we would compare them to the Bedouin tribes of the Middle East, who recognize no political alliance or national boundaries. They go where good grazing land is available and settle there for a season, pitching their tents in that location.
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Abram and Lot's Vision

Lot Lifts Up His Eyes

¹⁰ And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. ¹¹ Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. ¹² Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. ¹³ But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Genesis 13:10-13 [KJV]

Respond to the following:

6. How do we know that, at the time Abram and his family entered Egypt, it was lush along the Nile and provided plenty of food and water in contrast to the famine in the Negev? (See Genesis 13:10.)
- a. ANSWER: Genesis 13:10 informs us that Lot "beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord; like the land of Egypt..." Lot remembered what it was like in Egypt and was comparing the land below him to Egypt and the Garden of Eden. This tells us how lush the Jordan valley and plain were, and how it must also have been in Egypt when he traveled there with Abram.
7. Much has been written about Lot's motives, but what do we see revealed about his motives in the decision to choose the Jordan Plain?
- a. ANSWER 1: Primarily, Lot was making a business decision. The land below and across the Jordan Plain offered very fertile grazing for his animals, and the city of Sodom would have been an excellent market for his livestock.
- b. ANSWER 2: Secondly, he would have been aware of the strategic importance of the city itself, as it was a crossroads for trade routes with a large population of people. He would have also been aware of the nature of their city life. Just as we know things about cities before we ever visit them, the reputation of Sodom and Gomorrah was well-known.
8. Completing his vision of this location was Lot's choice regarding where to pitch his tent. Where did he pitch his tent? (See Genesis 13:12.)
- a. ANSWER: We are told that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. He would eventually live in the city, sitting in the city gate with King Bera and his court. This is in dramatic contrast to where Abram pitched his tent.

Abram Lifts Up His Eyes

"¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵ For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. ¹⁶ And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. ¹⁸ Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." Genesis 13:14-18 [KJV]

Abram used the wisdom God had given him and allowed Lot to choose the land he wanted first, Lot made his choice based on man's wisdom and his desires.

Respond to the following:

9. Abram now lifts up his eyes. What did he see? (See Genesis 13:14-16.)
 - a. ANSWER: Abram sees all of the land—not just the Jordan river and the Jordan plain—and he sees it through God's eyes and not his own desires.
10. Where does Abram pitch his tent? (See Genesis 13:18.)
 - a. ANSWER: Abram moves south into the highlands and pitches his tent near Hebron, a small, relatively-young village with few inhabitants, and he dwells "in the plain of Mamre." This means that Abram would have traveled approximately thirty miles south from Bethel. Once settled there, he would have been approximately twenty miles south of Salem, another small village with a King Priest named Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18). Eventually Salem will become known as Jerusalem.

As we consider the parting of Abram and Lot, in order to keep things in perspective, we should ask ourselves when this decisive meeting—at a location between Bethel and Ai—would have taken place. Today, based on recent archaeological discoveries at Tall el-Hammam (the site of the ruins of Sodom), we now know that the destruction of Sodom and its sister cities, including Gomorrah, occurred between 1700 BC and 1650 BC. Given that the Bible indicates to us that Abram was ninety-nine years old when this occurred and that Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Egypt, we can surmise that their meeting took place approximately twenty-five years prior to the destruction, i.e., in 1725-1675 BC. We can then also assume that Isaac was born in 1699-1649 BC, as he was born when Abraham was 100 years old, and the destruction occurred one year earlier when Abraham was ninety-nine years old. We will examine these events further as we progress through the book of Genesis, but this helps us establish a timeline in history. Also of note is that approximately seven hundred years later David will become the first king of a united Israel in 1002 BC.

We close this lesson with a clear understanding that our vision—what we "lift up our eyes" to—is a very important and determining factor affecting our ability to have a fruitful walk with Jesus. The contrasts between Abram/Abraham and Lot are many and offer valuable insights into our decisions and how those decisions impact our lives. Let's choose to serve the Lord and follow the narrow path that leads to life, just as Joshua did, as recounted in Joshua 24:15.

In the next lesson, Abram rescues Lot.

In Christ,

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