

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 19

Chapter 19

Angels in Sodom

Genesis 19:1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them and bowed down *with his face to the ground.* ² And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." ³ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

In chapter 18, the two angels mentioned in this passage had left the LORD and Abraham in Hebron and journeyed to Sodom. The LORD and Abraham remained in Hebron for the conversation concerning the LORD's destruction of the righteous with the wicked in Sodom. Abraham had finally asked the LORD if He would save Sodom if "just ten righteous" lived in the village and the LORD confirmed that He would not destroy Sodom if "ten righteous" were found. He left Abraham alone. The LORD did not go to Sodom.

In chapter 18 we learned that the LORD and the two angels arrived at Abraham's tent in the heat of the day. The Hebrews divided the day into two major parts, night and day. They did this because the LORD created "night" or "darkness" before he created "day" or "light." The day was divided into two parts, morning and evening. We think of evening as the cool of the day after sunset, but the Hebrews did not. The time from dawn with the sunrise until high noon was called "morning"; the time from high noon until sunset with the twilight was called "evening." We call this same period "afternoon." Twilight was the time from the setting of the sun until three stars could be seen in the sky. Later, the Hebrews divided the daylight hours into four sections called "watches" and, likewise, the dark hours of the night were divided into four watches.

Nevertheless, the LORD and the two angels arrived in the heat of the day, near high noon, waited for the meal to be prepared and ate it under an oak tree in front of Sarah's tent. The two angels left Hebron and traveled twenty miles to Sodom that afternoon and arrived at its gate. Just to be clear, these were angels; people could not travel twenty miles in the last hours of the afternoon. A twenty-mile trip was a hard-day's journey from sunup to sunset.

The gates of all villages were the customary places where the men gathered late in the afternoon as they returned from the fields. Shepherds who had been in the fields with their flocks would come to the gates after their replacements arrived to take their turns watching the flocks. At the

gates the shepherds could catch up on the news of the day and/or sell or trade sheep to raise the means to purchase or trade for other things that were needed for the family. We do not know specifically why Lot was at the gate; he was an alien in the village, a Semite among Canaanites. We can be assured that Lot was there because of some personal business.

We must not make too much of Lot's "bowing his face to the ground." This action was as common in that culture as shaking hands today. Also, Lot did not bend his knee or prostrate himself with his face to the ground in this greeting; he simply dropped his head forward and parallel to the ground in the common respectful greeting.

The village was not so big that a stranger could enter unnoticed. These two angels were not local people and, by this time, Lot knew all the locals and they knew him. How could they not? His uncle Abram had rescued them from their impending exile at the hands of the four Semite kings of the Babylonian Kingdom. He knew they were strangers and he offered his home for the night.

The angels rejected Lot's offer and replied that they would "stay in the square." Hebrew renders the word "square" as "street." They would just stay in the "street" all night. As the chapter will reveal, these two angels would not have had any problem spending the night in the street, but not wanting to reveal their identity to Lot, they decided to accept his invitation and join him in his house for the night.

Lot prepared a meal for the angels which included unleavened bread, indicating that the meal was prepared quickly. The bread dough could not rise; we can associate this bread product with our tortilla, pita or flat bread. Notice that the angels ate the meal. Do angels eat? Evidently so! But for what reason? Angels are spirits? Do spirits need to eat? Later in Exodus we will learn that the manna fed to the Israelites in the wilderness was the "food of angels." Do angels need to eat? Do these angels need the food prepared by Lot? We really do not know.

Request of Men of Sodom

Genesis 19:4 *Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter;⁵ and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."*

As the night progressed, the hour approached for the house of Lot to go to bed for the night. Before that occurred, the men and boys of the entire village of Sodom arrived at Lot's house and demanded that Lot send out the two visiting men so they could "have relations with them." The Hebrew word is *yada*; it means to "know sexually." The English hides the true meaning; it should say, "that we may have intercourse with them." Here, the commentator of the early 1800's says the following:

This account justifies the character given of this depraved people in the preceding chapter, Genesis 18:20, and in Genesis 23:13. As their crime was the deepest disgrace to human nature, so it is too bad to be described; in the sacred text it is sufficiently marked; and the iniquity which, from these most abominable wretches, has been called Sodomy....

Adam Clarke's Commentary

The men and boys of Sodom wanted to have an immoral homosexual relationship with the two male visitors in Lot's home. It was the single sin that was "exceeding grave" to the LORD reported in Genesis 18:20. All have sinned; all have come short of the glory of God; all people are flawed, all people are sinners. We miss the mark; we hit the mark but sin by driving our point in too hard; we accidentally or sometimes purposefully, transgress the property of others; we deal falsely with others; mentally or physically, we have all committed murder, hatred, lust, greed, adultery, idolatry, dishonor, or theft. Do not misunderstand, Sodom was full of all those sins within its boundaries, but it was going to be destroyed because of one sin and one sin only, the desire and act of an immoral homosexual relationship. We must ask the following question. "Did Lot perform the same act of sin with the men and boys of Sodom"? How could he not have? He no longer lived on the outskirts of town; he lived among them. To make this worse, he had enlisted his uncle Abram who risked his life and household to rescue these immoral men and their families and return them safely to Sodom. Did Abram know their sin? How could he not? What application can we make from this story? We should follow the example of Abraham to protect and guard such sinners even through the LORD may send His angels to punish them later. It is not the position we want to take; however, it is the example in the Scripture.

Response of Lot

Genesis 19:6 But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, 7and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. 8 "Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof."

Can it be that Lot risked his life for the two visitors? How was it that Lot could safely exit his house, shut the door and be safe among these wicked men and boys? How can Lot be so brave as to say to them, "**Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly.**" Why did Lot call these men and boys brothers? They were Canaanites; he was a Semite; they were not brothers. Perhaps Lot had become one of them by participating in the same sin in order to be accepted. How dare Lot say to them, "**do not act wickedly**"! Lot knew their intent and confirmed it by trying to offer his two virgin daughters to be used sexually by the men and boys. Lot's plan to defend the safety of his two visitors, which was and is still expected today in Asiatic nations, was fraught with

increased sin. To defend his guests, Lot was willing to prostitute his daughters. Homosexuality and prostitution were and are still sins against the LORD, wicked in every way.

Reply of the Men of Sodom

Genesis 19:9 **But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door.**

The Sodomites had accepted Lot into the city as long as he kept his proper place. Lot had crossed the line by saying, **"Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly."** Lot was not a Sodomite; he was not a Canaanite; he was a Semite; he was an alien trying to persuade the Sodomites not to follow their sexual drive for male flesh with these two visitors. If Lot did not stand aside and deliver the men, the men would rebel against Lot and do to him what they had intended to do to the two angels, and even worse. They did not want the females. They pushed to get by Lot to enter the house.

Actions of the Men from the LORD

Genesis 19:10 **But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied *themselves* trying to find the doorway.**

The two angels did not need the help of Lot, but Lot needed them. Lot could not protect angels, but they could protect Lot, and they did by pulling him into the house and blinding all the men and boys of the town. At that point, Lot had to know that these angels were not ordinary men.

Question of the Men from the LORD

Genesis 19:12 **Then the men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring *them* out of the place; ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."**

Lot, his wife and two daughters were in the house in Sodom with the two angels. The visitors questioned Lot about his family who lived in other homes in the village; they could be saved from the coming destruction if they chose to join Lot in his home that night.

Lot's Plea to Extended Family

Genesis 19:14 **And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.**

Lot took the angels seriously and left his house to warn all his sons-in-law. We do not know how many daughters Lot had besides the two still at home, but because the Scripture says “sons-in-law,” we can be assured there were at least two. Because of Abraham’s plea with the LORD in Hebron, it was most likely that Lot had at least five daughters, maybe more. When Abraham negotiated with the LORD to save the village of Sodom if ten righteous people were found, Abraham might have felt assured that with Lot, his wife, the two unmarried girls and at least three sets of daughters and sons-in-law, ten would be found and the village saved. But the sons-in-law did not believe Lot and refused to join them in leaving the village.

Instruction at Dawn

Genesis 19:15 *And when morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city."* ¹⁶ **But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.**
17 *And it came about when they had brought them outside, that one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, lest you be swept away."*

The village of Sodom was not going to be saved but Lot and his immediate household would. The angels forced them to leave at dawn, the time when the sun lights the land but has not peaked over the horizon. They were told to get totally out of the valley of Siddom, to go to the mountains for safety and not to look back at the destruction. Just as a reminder, five villages were in the valley; in order from north to south, they were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (Zoar).

Lot’s Request

Genesis 19:18 *But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords! ¹⁹ "Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake me and I die; ²⁰ now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved."*

On the way, Lot and his family were becoming tired and they did not think they could make it to the mountains. As they neared the small town which was about six hours from their home, Lot negotiated with the angels to allow his family to enter the small town and be safe.

Men's Warning

Genesis 19:21 **And he said to him, "Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. ^{22a} "Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there."**

The angels approved Lot's request to enter the small town and escape the destruction. It, too, was in the valley of Siddom and should have been destroyed, but because of Lot's plea, it would be saved. Nevertheless, Lot had to hurry to get to the small town; the destruction of the other villages was about to begin.

Zoar

Genesis 19:22b **Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar. ²³ The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.**

The LORD did not hide the name of the small town which Lot requested to be his city of safety. It was Zoar, the southernmost city in the valley of Siddom. Zoar means *insignificance*. As Lot's family arrived in Zoar, "the sun had risen over the earth." It means the sun was high in the sky or it was high noon.

Brimstone and Fire

Genesis 19:24 **Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, ²⁵ and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.**

As promised, the destruction in the valley of Siddon waited for Lot's arrival in Zoar. But it was not the angels who "rained" the destruction; it was the LORD Who rained "brimstone and fire ... out of heaven." Today, we call the brimstone of the Bible sulfur. It is a yellow material that can be ignited by sparks. The valley of Siddom had great deposits of sulfur; it also had great deposits of flammable tar found in pits. If ignited, the tar would burn and cause the sulfur to explode as it burned, emitting deadly gases. How did the sulfur and tar ignite? From the flaming meteorite stones that rained down through the atmosphere. Large meteorites have made great craters on the earth and at this time, the LORD rained down fiery meteorites that ignited the tar pits and caused the sulfur to explode so that it burst into the air and rained back down on the valley. The once beautiful valley of Siddom was turned into the lowest, most desolate place on earth by the time the day was over. No one survived except Lot and his family.

Lot's Wife

Genesis 19:26 **But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt.**

Not all of Lot's family survived the journey. Lot's wife disobeyed the order of the two angels; she looked back at the destruction of the village that was her home. She "became a pillar of salt." How did she turn into a pillar of salt? What did she look like as a pillar of salt? Opinions abound about this phrase. For this lesson, the simple truth will be held to; she turned into a pillar of salt; we know nothing more about the miracle.

Abraham and Destruction

Genesis 19:27 **Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD; ²⁸ and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.**

The destruction, which began when Lot arrived at Zoar, must have taken all afternoon and gone well into the night. By morning, the 31-miles-long Siddon Valley was still burning with rising smoke. Abraham stepped from his tent and returned to the place where he had begged the LORD not to destroy the cities if just ten righteous people could be found. Evidently, ten righteous people were not found in the village.

God's Memory

Genesis 19:29 **Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.**

This passage answered an important question. Why did the LORD save Lot and his family? Was it because of Lot's righteousness? No. It was because of the righteousness of Abraham and his request of the LORD.

Requests of the LORD are important and have great effect! Abraham did not ask for the safety of Lot specifically, but the LORD knew that when Abraham was negotiating for the cities, he was really concerned about his nephew. We do not always ask the LORD for the right things but He knows what we mean and what we need; He answers our prayers for the good of all who belong to Him.

Departure from Zoar

Genesis 19:30 **And Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.**

Zoar may have been saved from destruction because of the request of Lot, but it was still too close to the destruction in the valley. Lot, with his remaining two daughters, left Zoar for a cave located in the mountains to the east of the town.

Plan of Lot's Daughters

Genesis 19:31 **Then the first-born said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth.** ³² **"Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."** ³³ **So they made their father drink wine that night, and the first-born went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.** ³⁴ **And it came about on the morrow, that the first-born said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."** ³⁵ **So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.** ³⁶ **Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.**

Perhaps the two daughters truly believed that Lot was the only male left on earth; perhaps they believed the entire world had been destroyed; perhaps they thought that the only possible way to continue life on earth was to give birth to children as a result of having a sexual relationship with their father Lot. Could such excuses negate the sin that would result if they executed the plan they had devised? At this point, we must remember that the moral laws of the LORD concerning incest had not been put in place. For at least 2078 years, males had married sisters, nieces, and cousins. Men had married multiple wives, including multiple sisters of the same family in some cases. But to this point, we have not seen a sexual relationship between parents and children although it would be foolish not to admit that it probably occurred before and after. May we just leave this topic with the statement that the daughters were desperate to have children and continue human life on earth. Did they know that Shem, who rode on the ark, was still alive in Shinar? Probably not. There is no point in naming all the great patriarchs of the pre-flood existence; these girls could not imagine that the world had survived.

Notice that Lot was not part of the plan. The daughters gave him wine in excess and the drug rendered him senseless during the sexual acts.

Nine Months Later

Genesis 19:37 **And the first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.** ³⁸ **And as for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.**

Both daughters were successful in their plan. The name Moab means *waters of the father*. The name Ben-ammi means *son of my people*. We must wonder if the daughters worried about how they would obtain offspring as spouses for their children if they were the same gender. Would they have to drug their father again? But wait! How can it be that they might have thought the whole world was destroyed? The small town of Zoar survived and they knew it. They were in the town when the destruction occurred and left only after the destruction ceased. Males were alive, but they were Canaanites and evidently the girls wanted full-blooded Semite offspring.