

The slippery slope

" Oh, no my Lords! "

[For those online, there is the text of Scripture at the end also more links/ resources, including a news article from the NY Times on Sodom and a bonus sermon on Lot's wife by JC Ryle}

## Introduction

Sodom and Gomorrah may be two of the most known linked cities in human history. More famous than Minneapolis-St Paul, The Hague/ Amsterdam or even Albury Wodonga! And in our story today we will learn about the end of these two cities, of Lot and his wife and daughters, and about God's continuing history with humanity even through the likes of our ancestors of questionable faith.

Listen to this poem from the Russian translated in 1996 by Dmitry Karshedt. It was written in 1922.

Holy Lot was a-going behind God's angel, He seemed huge and bright on a hill, huge and black. But the heart of his wife whispered stronger and stranger: "It's not very late, you have time to look back. At these rose turrets of your native Sodom, the square where you sang, and the yard where you span. The windows looking from your cozy home where you bore children for your dear man." She looked -- and her eyes were instantly bound By pain -- they couldn't see any more at all: Her fleet feet grew into the stony ground, Her body turned into a pillar of salt. Who'll mourn her as one of Lot's family members? Doesn't she seem the smallest of losses to us? But deep in my heart I will always remember one who gave her life up for one

single glance. 1922 - 1924 © Copyright, 1996 Translated from Russian by *Tanya Karshedt*, Edited by *Dmitry Karshedt*, August 1996

What was it that caused this woman to look back at what she had? What is it that makes folks want both what was and what lies ahead? Today as we read and review the case history of Lot and his family, we will see the pain of seeking to do both. We will also see the hand of the Almighty making someone you and I would barely notice into what he will later deem "righteous" (2 Peter 2.6-8). And then we see the promise of the Messiah to come even from such unlikely ancestors as those involved in sexual incest. All the while ponder this question in your own mind... "How can I live clean in the Kingdom of the Ever-clean God?"

Let's read Gen 19.

## 1. The background: Sodom, Lot and Lot's wife

SODOM AND GOMORRAH UPDATE: Two geologists think they know how the infamous biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Graham Harris and Tony Beardow argue in the Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology that the land near the Dead Sea on which the cities may have stood literally liquefied in an earthquake, swallowing them up ca. 1900 B.C. A similar event, in which loosely packed, waterlogged soils liquefy under seismic force, destroyed an area of nearly 30,000 square miles in China in 1920. Harris and Beardow admit that the "analysis of a past earthquake event, especially one for which there is a lack of data, or even credible eyewitness accounts, is difficult," particularly "when the event is speculative and occurred in the dawn of history." But they suggest that a tidal wave caused by the earthquake might have stranded a large block of salt on shore, inspiring the tale that Lot's wife, ignoring God's command not to look back at the burning cities, was turned into a pillar of salt. Few scholars are likely to believe this hypothesis. "This is Noah's Ark stuff," says ARCHAEOLOGY Contributing Editor Neil Asher Silberman. "The real challenge for biblical archaeologists

today is not to search for long-lost cities, but to understand why the ancient Israelites formulated these powerful myths."--ANDREW L. SLAYMAN From the journal *Archaeology: NEWSBRIEFS* Volume 49 Number 4 July/August 1996

Although Silberman thinks there is no historical relevance to such theory, the Bible says it without reservation. And the ancients and people in our day continue to look for meaning and the purpose of the formulation of such stories. In the Zohar, Lot is portrayed negatively from when first we see him. He is introduced to the reader by saying of him, "...he attached himself to him (Abraham) to learn his ways, and in spite of this he did not learn them too well. As long as Abram was with him, he did not associate with the wicked, but as soon as he left him what do we find? 'And he moved his tent as far as Sodom.'" [Zohar I 78b-79a].

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has been one of historical notoriety since its day 4000 years ago. Y'shua commented in a warning passage, "Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:32) He added nothing to that warning, since everyone who was listening understood the context. I would doubt he could do so today. But even in 1962, Director Robert Aldrich gave us 148 minutes of movie history in his movie *Sodom and Gomorrah*. It starred Amouk Aimee and Stewart Granger among others.

For those among us who don't know, then, who was Lot? Let's review. So far in our story, we've seen a litany of troubles associated with him. Lot's backsliding :

- 1) 'Coattails faith', i.e. hanging on to Abram
- 2) Lot separated himself from brethren
- 3) Fighting with brethren
- 4) Chose the better places of life, had an earthly concern
- 5) Chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom, which is toward evil.

6) Moved into town and was then captured with Sodomite kings

Today we will add the rest of the list and it's not a pretty one.

Gene Blakely says, " It also seems to confirm that Lot's wife is a Sodomite. Had Lot's wife been a woman from Ur or Haran or from Abraham's house, or even an Egyptian, one would believe she would look forward to deliverance from Sodom. The angels had warned her not to look back. She looked back because her heart was in Sodom. GOD was willing to save her totally if she believed sincerely in GOD. Looking back to her old life indicated that she still wanted that life and place, and indeed had not been regenerated or had righteousness imputed to her by the LORD.

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Although she had married Lot, whose only knowledge of GOD apparently came from Abram, she never became a Believer, even a carnal Believer. Looking back, she became a pillar of salt."

The rabbis join in the chorus of naysaying about Lot. Genesis Rabbah is concerned to portray him as negatively as possible. Lot sits at the city gate because he has been appointed chief justice that day. Expanding on the Sanhedrin reference to the evil judges in Sodom , the text declares "Lot was chief justice of them all!" [GR 50:3:5]. Lot is negatively contrasted to Abraham when the angels initially reject his hospitality - "People may decline hospitality of an ordinary person, but they may not decline the hospitality of a great person" [GR 50:4:3]. Lot's tardiness in fleeing Sodom is attributed to his unwillingness to part with his great wealth of "silver and gold and precious stones and pearls" [GR 50:11:1]. Lot is again negatively compared to Abraham through his refusal to flee to the hills. Lot says

Before I went to Abraham, the Holy One, blessed be he, looked at my deeds and the deeds of the people of my town, and my deeds were more numerous than the deeds of the

people of my town. Now that I have gone to Abraham, his deeds are more numerous and I cannot stand his burning coal [GR 50:11:5].

## 2. Unlikely but righteous

Lot separated himself from Abraham and from the God of Abraham. Lot sees the land and chooses bounty and materialism for himself. He ends up living there. The Bible says that Sodom is exceedingly wicked. The Hebrew says of their sin it is, "very heavy" More likely weighty in its horror and evil.

Abraham negotiated last week with the Lord for 10 men to outweigh the sins of Sodom and thus to spare the city. This minyan would have been enough, but alas, there were not 10 righteous men there at all. So today our story begins with Lot sitting in the gates (Gen. 23.10, 34.20, Deut. 22.24) as Chief Justice, offering some strangers hospitality. He doesn't know they are angels. In fact, we saw these 2 men last week as God and as men, but today we find out they are angels also. This is as I said last week intentionally disorienting. God wants His nature at times revealed and at times concealed, as He wants only the humble and not the pedestrian to understand His ways and His nature.

Everyone, young and old, is knocking at Lot's door to get to know the strangers in a sexual way. The text is clear. Some rabbis want to make the sin of Sodom into something about hospitality, but the text doesn't allow that. The sin is wanton sexual activity. They don't want to make love to the men, they want sex with them. Most sexual sin occurs in the nighttime and this is not different.

Lot does a horrible thing. He offers to trade his virgin daughters to the Sodomites in exchange for their desires. Look how he whispers (verse 6-8). Protecting the strangers and being hospitable to them, these are both good things Lot learned from his uncle Abraham, but my oh my, imagine this one, daddies! Imagine trading your virgin daughters to the lusts of the townspeople in a rage in a mob?

The crowd is enraged. They say, "you are a stranger and now you "lay down the law for us?(Moffatt)" The Hebrew says it more sportingly, "You now judgingly judge us?" (yishpot

shafot) meaning you mock us with your own justice? The mob lunges forward and Lot is trapped against his own door. (BTW, notice that Abraham lived in a tent, but Lot in a house).

The angels then reach out their hand and grab him and save him from imminent disaster. The angels struck the townspeople with blindness and immediately you gotta figure that Lot would have seen the hand of God in this, amen? You would have guessed that he wasn't blind. They asked, 'anyone else home?' and Lot mentioned his sons in law. Where were they? Outside. They were part of the mob of homosexuals on Oxford Street, Sodom. Shame.

Lot implored them to join him, but they thought he was joking. Hebrew is (kimtsachek) from 'yitzhak', that is, they thought he was laughing. His religion was unrecognizable as serious at such a time. No wonder his sons in law mocked him.

The angels made it clear it was urgent and the next morning they shouted marching orders to Lot and his wife and daughters. Listen to the shocking sloth of the one on the slippery slope. The Bible says, "Lot hesitated" (Heb: vayitmahmah). Even the Hebrew sounds a slow rhythm, when urgency required haste. What is he thinking? What is he doing? Collecting his valuables? Expressing his reluctance? No one knows, but the angels grabbed him again.

Why? God had mercy on him. 2798 [2550 & 2565] <sup>ל</sup>חַמַּל, ḥāmal, v.  
[root of: 2783, 2784, 2799, 2800, 2857, 4720?]. [Q] to spare, take pity on, have mercy on. This Qal infinitive absolute is used twice to describe God's mercy in delivering from danger. God was merciful to Lot's family. In Isa 63.9 it is parallel to ahav as God's feeling sorry for Israel issuing from his love. God spared Lot. This is always the bottom line of anyone being a righteous person. It's "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3.5-6) What grace! What joy! What privilege!

No wonder the Newer Testament calls him "righteous Lot." (2 Peter 2.6-8). On what basis? First and foremost because God made him so. Secondly, he welcomed strangers. Third, he protected the strangers. Fourth, he left Sodom. Now that may have been with great reluctance, but still he left. And he did not look back. We might liken him to Charlie Brown, ,

more wishy washy and milk toast than the mighty Abraham, but still he left. And God honored him with the characterization of being named 'righteous.' Praise to the Lord who shows no favoritism in His choices.

### 3. Messianic hope even through Lot

The story doesn't end there. And it really does appear to get worse. The angels have rescued our reluctant hero. And his wife and girls went along. They urged him, "Escape for your life." Do you see how he replied, "Oh no my lords." What? ! ? What is this? Outrageous... isn't it? God has come to you. God has spared your life. God has demonstrated mercy to you. And what do you do? You hesitate, you hem, you haw, and you admonish God saying, "not necessary" when he urges you to get out of town. If anyone doesn't deserve to be deemed righteous, it's this man. Do you see God's love for you here? Do you see how far He extends mercy and grace?

Wait, we're not done. Lot does a little negotiating like his uncle did last week, and he is sent to the mountains nearby in the small town Zoar, which means Little. His wife turns as they are on the escape route and is turned into a pillar of salt, contrary to the current conclusions, or shall I say, preconceptions of Mr Silberman of Archaeology magazine. Lot's wife wanted to return, as we learned earlier. Lot was done with Sodom. Good for him!

But do you see the logical epilogue to the drama of progressive moral deterioration? Up on the mountain Lot's daughters, now the mothers of the house, get him drunk and sleep with him and have babies by him. He got with them what he wanted to give to the men of Sodom, his virgin daughters. This incestuous relationship of one night should have ended in ignominy. And usually we see that. For these sons are trouble for the Jews in the centuries to come, Ammon and Moab. They end up living in what is modern Jordan. And that is no peaceful land to this day.

If you were one of the two angels, would you have brought Lot's wife and daughters with Lot? 4 times Lot was indebted to Abraham. 4 times Lot's seed (Ammon and Moab) is hostile to Abraham later (Balaam, Jehosophat, Jephthah, destroy Temple). 4

prophets talk about punishment (Isa., Jer, Ezek, Zeph), and 4 times their sin is decried in the Bible. Why would you ever have spared the daughters? What good comes from this?

Remember a little Moabitess named Ruth? She eventually became the mother of David and the Messiah. Oh, and do you know another member of the genealogy of Messiah was named Na'amah? (2Chr. 12:13 ¶ So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned. Now Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. (Naamah is the Hebrew word for 'pleasure')) Rehoboam and Abijah are in the list (Matthew 1) for various reasons, but I'm sure this Ammonite is a huge statement.

God said no Ammonite or Moabite shall stand in the Temple. (Deut. 23:3 "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD) What, you say, another mistake in the Bible? Nope, another grace in the Scripture. God's word is overarched with His Grace and His power to override it. So Y'shua, the Messiah, born from both a Moabitess and an Ammonitess stood in the Temple and declared himself greater than the Temple. Y'shua, the Messiah, is the only One who can make good out of such evil. And He does it each day, with the likes of us!

## Summary

Here are some things I see as we conclude today, and you can add your thoughts to your own list.

- 1) God makes people for His own pleasure and His own purposes
- 2) One little sin really does grow into others

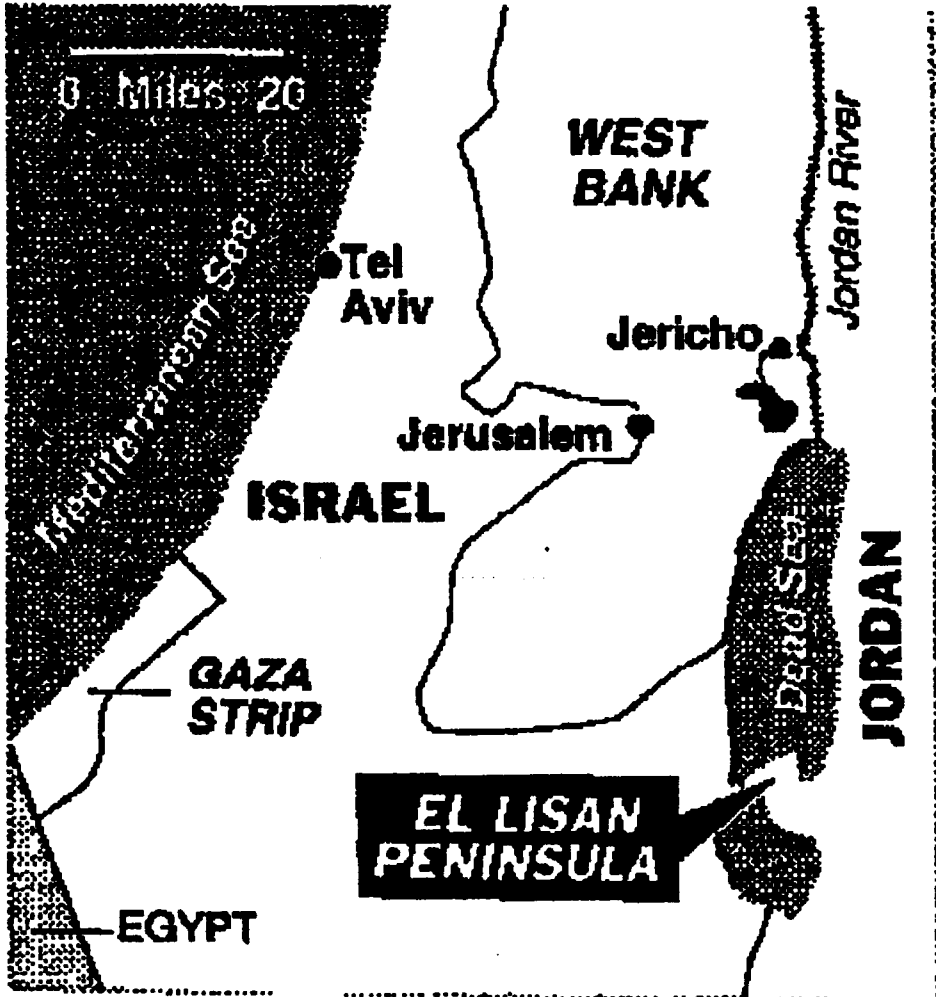


- 3) Homosexuality is against God's laws and original plans for humanity
- 4) God can make the most unrighteous into His people by His grace and love.
- 5) Stop somewhere on the slippery slope. Ask God to forgive you your sins and come clean before Him before you are destroyed along with the wicked.
- 6) Wickedness really will be destroyed.

Dear friends, we have eternal life due to the Saviour, due to His love and forgiveness. His Resurrection has proven His new covenant. His teaching is great, but it goes well beyond that to His life and death. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God, which will in turn give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into fellowship with Him, maybe God is removing a veil from you today. Won't you pray this prayer and ask God to forgive you of your sins, whatever they might be, and come home to pleasure with God? Lord forgive me in the name of the Messiah, the Serpent Bruiser, Y'shua himself. Forgive me for all my sins, and make me clean again. Give me eternal life in the name of Y'shua and make me born again. I trust you.

Next week is Rosh Hashanah and we will dedicate the new sefer Torah. What a beautiful venture of faith this is. In two weeks, we will be participating in the Chatswood festival by handing out shopping bags with gospel tracts after the service. You won't want to be apart from us the next couple weeks. Bring a friend next week, especially a Jewish friend, to hear another message of God's love and grace, and forgiveness of sins. That's what we celebrate each week in Y'shua's name.



The New York Times

A geologists' report says Sodom was on the El Lisan Peninsula.

## **LOT'S BACKSLIDING**

- 1) 'Coattails faith', i.e. hanging on to Abram (13.1-5) [Easy Religion]**
- 2) Lot separated himself from brethren (13.11) (no fellowship)**
- 3) Fighting with brethren (13.7) (argumentative)**
- 4) Chose the better places of life, had an earthly concern (13.10) (materialism) [Easy Rest]**
- 5) Chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom, which is toward evil. (13.12) (wrong desires)**
- 6) Moved into town and was then captured with Sodomite kings (14.1, .16, 19.1) (wrong friends) [Easy respite]**
- 7) Family decay (19.8, 14)**
- 8) Rejected God's word (19.18) [Easy reality]**
- 9) Illicit sex (19.33ff) [Easy relationships]**