

# Genesis

## Chapter 13



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**Theme:** Abraham separates from Lot; Lot goes to Sodom; God appears to Abraham and reaffirms His promise.

In chapter 13 we see the return of Abram from the land of Egypt. Abram and Lot leave Egypt and return to the land of promise. Lot separates from Abram and goes to Sodom, and then God appears to Abram for the third time. As long as Abram is in the land of Egypt and as long as he is still holding on to Lot, God does not appear to him. The minute that he comes back to the land and there is the separation from Lot, God appears to him.

Life can be difficult,” wrote Amy Carmichael, missionary to India. “Sometimes the enemy comes in like a flood. But then is the time to prove our faith and live our songs” (*Candles in the Dark*, p. 51).

A faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted. Peter compared the Christian’s trials to the testing of gold in the furnace (1 Peter 1:7), and the patriarch Job used the same image: “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10, NKJV). God’s purpose in allowing trials is not only to verify our faith but also to purify it and remove the dross. God knows what kind of faith we have, but *we* don’t know; and the only way to advance in the “school of faith” is to take examinations.

Like Abraham, as you progress in the “school of faith,” you will face three special tests: *circumstances* (Gen. 12:10), *people* (12:11–13:4), and *things* (13:5–18).<sup>1</sup>

The following will be a study from Torah Class. However before you read this I would like to say that I do not agree with this two house theory. I believe that there was a mixing and intermingling between all the tribes, and that there were no 10 lost tribes. This study does however help explain the prophecy of the returning of Israel from all tribes, and events taking place in our time, and why the study of this portion of scripture is so important and meaningful for us today.

The following verses help explain how the tribes intermingled:

**(2 Chron 11:13-16)** <sup>13</sup>And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. <sup>14</sup>For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest’s office unto the LORD: <sup>15</sup>And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. <sup>16</sup>And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.

The people from all tribes who wanted to worship the one true God, moved south to worship in Judah, and most likely, although it does not say, the people who wanted to worship idols moved up north to the house of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 12:10). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

### **Torah Class: GENESIS Week 13, chapter 13 and Ezekiel 36, 37**

While Torah Class is all about studying the first 5 books of the Bible....the Torah....it also is probably the most profitable for us when we can understand the relevance it has for us in our day and age, and apply it to our lives. It's said by many preachers and teachers that we, today, are in a very special time in history; that we are eye witnesses to age-old Bible prophecies coming to pass. And, they're right. But, to put that into perspective, it's good to realize that not every generation has witnessed prophetic events occurring; so, one would think that when a prophesy of God DID come to fruition, God's people would get all excited about it. Yet, The Church....and most of the earth's Jewish population....has for the most part, greeted two of the most important events in all prophetic history....the rebirth of Israel as a Jewish nation, and the return of the control of Jerusalem to the Jewish people....with a disinterested yawn. I think that is primarily because we don't realize that fulfillments of prophecy don't happen every day. In fact, with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., for all practical purposes the unfolding of Biblically prophesied events went into hibernation for an extended period of time. For better than 18 centuries not a single prophetic event that is outlined in the Bible occurred. Oh, there was much going on in the world in preparation for that day God would once again start the prophetic clock ticking, counting-down to the end of all things as we know them; but for almost 1900 years God's people had nothing from which to gauge just where in Bible history they stood. That is NOT the case for us living today, however....but to look around us, you'd think that nothing out of the ordinary was happening.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the next prophesied event that was to occur was *the return* of those who had just been dispersed and exiled .....from what is called the Roman dispersion, or Roman exile. Jewish people, Believers and non-Believers, kept their bags packed and waited expectantly for that return in the first few decades following the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, when they were outlawed from living in that city; but it didn't happen. The gentile Church and the Messianic Jews of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. thought certainly Christ would return at any moment; likewise the traditional Jews thought the return to their homeland and rebuilding of their Temple was imminent ....but it didn't happen. Those worshipping the God of Israel and lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century were getting restless and very worried about what was taking so long for God to call His people back to their Holy Land.....but their worries were not put to rest. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century the thoroughly gentile-ized Church of Jesus Christ was still awaiting the return of Christ; and the Jews of every nation to which they had migrated wondered if maybe the time was finally near when they could go back home.....as did those of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, right on up to about the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Christianity took a fateful turn and came to the conclusion that we must have been misreading those prophecies about the return of Israel to their homeland all along.

The Church concluded that in fact, Israel was NOT going to return; at the least, there wasn't going to be a *Jewish* Israel. And, that the Israel the Bible spoke of....both the people and the land....were but symbolic. Symbolic of what? The gentile Church. The new mainstream beliefs that arose and which today dominate the Christian world, began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; and these beliefs centered on the newly held conviction that Israel had been *replaced* by the Church. That Israel had been thoroughly and permanently rejected by Yahweh, because they had rejected His son. That all the promises of land and

salvation the Hebrews had received through Abraham and Moses were taken from them and handed over to the gentile Church. That the Church would now get all the blessings promised to Abraham; those promises that we read about in the first few verses of chapter 12; Israel, on the other hand, would get all the curses that would come from disobedience to the laws of Moses.

Let's fast-forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Uh-oh: "Houston, we have a problem". Because in 1948 Israel finally DID return to the exact same spot from which they were exiled; the Jewish nation was reborn just as prophesied. And, in 1967, Jerusalem WAS returned to the control of the Jewish people, just as predicted... and therefore ordained... by Jesus. And, what has been the Church's reaction to these staggering events? In general, nothing. The same replacement theological positions born from the lack of faith of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Church leaders, positions completely intertwined and imbedded within modern Church doctrine.....is to this day what is still being taught in the overwhelming majority of churches worldwide. It's as though the return of Israel to claim the promises made to Abraham, never happened.

You know, Christians have been taught from early childhood to express disappointment and shake our heads knowingly at those terrible Jews in Jesus day that had the unimaginable privilege of witnessing the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah, but then were blinded to it by their Jewish traditions. So blind that they killed the Son of God for claiming to be who He really was.

Well, today, we of the Church have witnessed that long-awaited day when Israel would be returned from their exile, reclaim their land inheritance, and be reborn as a nation; we watched on TV as the Israeli army defeated an alliance of 5 powerful Arab armies in a matter of only 6 days, and in 1967 reclaimed Jerusalem as their own Holy City for the first time since 70 A.D. The prophecy has happened; the Jews are back, and for the most part, due to our Christian traditions, the Church has been utterly blind to it. Interestingly, it was a little under 1900 years from the time God made His promises to Abraham until Yeshua the Messiah arrived; and was a little under 1900 years from the day God kicked His people out of the land, but promised He would bring them back, until the day that they came back to claim that promise once and for all. Maybe we ought to take notice. There are many mentions scattered throughout the Bible of these events, but for me, none has the impact of those spoken by that really weird prophet of God, Ezekiel. Ezekiel was one of those Jews taken from his home in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and exiled to Babylon, when the Babylonian Empire conquered Judah 597 B.C.

So, let's detour just a bit.....and at the same time connect the dots between the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 13, and Ezekiel's prophetic utterances of Ezekiel 36 and 37.....and then all that connected to the events of our time..... by reading the prophetic story of the FINAL return of the Jewish people to their homeland. A return that, after an 18-century hiatus of prophetic fulfillments, marks the resumption of the countdown to Armageddon.

### **READ EZEKIEL 36 AND 37**

Wow. I wish George Lucas or Steven Spielberg would make a movie out of just what is contained in those two chapters!

The first point I need to make is that the event talked about in Ezekiel is NOT about the return of the Jews from Babylon. The study of these two chapters of Ezekiel is a couple of weeks in itself; so, let me point out just a couple of important keys to understanding

these verses.

First and foremost is the meaning of the phrase “the whole house of Israel”, also at times translated as “both houses of Israel”, or even just “all Israel”. The words of Ezekiel were written over a span of about 25 years, beginning a little after Babylon conquered Judah in 597 BC. The part we’re looking at was written in the later years. About 130 years earlier, you need to know that the Hebrews were a divided nation; a 10-tribe confederacy lived in the northern area of the holy lands, and a 2-tribe group lived in the south. In fact, the northern area was a kingdom all its own, separate and apart from the southern area, each area ruled by its own kings. Let me be very clear: the unified kingdom of Israel, ruled over by David and then Solomon, became divided by means of civil war. The northern area went by several names: the Northern Kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, and some documents even refer to it as the kingdom of Joseph. But, for the most part, as was typical for that era, it was called after the name of the tribe that was dominant in that region: the tribe of Ephraim. From about 900 BC to the time of Ezekiel (about 590 BC), that northern region was called the Kingdom of Ephraim.....a name that most are not familiar with.

The southern kingdom, however, is one that we are more aware of: it was called Judah. Now, in Bible-speak, the northern kingdom was also called the “house of Israel”, or, more accurately “the house of Ephraim”.....and the southern kingdom was called “the house of Judah”. These two “houses”....the House of Ephraim and the House of Judah, together made up what the Bible calls the WHOLE house of Israel. Now, almost all Bibles will instead of saying “house of Ephraim”, say “house of Israel”, which is confusing. Indeed, house of Israel was a term used for a few years immediately following the civil war to denote the northern kingdom, but quickly fell out of use.

The point is that today, only one of the two houses of Israel has returned to their homeland: Judah. Judah is made up of what today we call the Jews. That other house of Israel, the one comprised of 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel, has not yet taken part in the return to Israel.

The part of Ezekiel 37 where he is talking about the two sticks.....one for Ephraim and one for Judah....being put back together, is referring to that time when BOTH houses of Israel will return to the Holy Lands, and be reunited. But, as of today, only ONE house....the house of Judah....has come back.

The common question is: well, isn’t Ezekiel really about the return of the Hebrews from their Babylonian exile? No. Because that exile was ONLY the exile of Judah; the other house of Israel...Ephraim... had been conquered by Assyria, the people deported and scattered throughout the 120 nations that formed the Assyrian Empire; that event happened almost one and a-half centuries earlier than Ezekiel, and basically they had ceased to exist as an identifiable people. In other words, the events spoken of in Ezekiel 36 and 37 were not about the return from Babylon but are yet to happen.

Yet (and soon in a 3 part evening class we’ll get deeply into the subject), the return of Ephraim IS beginning to happen. Barely 3 months ago, in March 2005, the Israeli government officially sanctioned the return to the Holy Lands of people who say they are NOT Jews....but they ARE Israel. That is, these people seeking to migrate to Israel are some of those long lost 10 tribes of Israel.....the 2<sup>nd</sup> house of Israel, Ephraim. Once more: Jews are only of the tribe....or kingdom....of Judah....which basically represents the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Ephraim represents the other 10 tribes (long

assumed to be lost and unidentifiable), and they are NOT Jews.....but they certainly are Israelites.

So, the events that we just read about in Ezekiel 36 and 37 are in process. Scary, huh? Today, we are in the throes of a rather severe argument over that land that the Jews have returned to, and in which Ephraim is just now starting to come; and that argument will someday throw the world into a final war, which is where the following chapters of Ezekiel would take us....though we won't go there for the time being. Some may want to argue as to the precise boundaries of the land God gave to Abraham for all time; but hear me: at the very *least* it included every inch of the land that the Palestinians now claim as theirs. You see, the area in which Abraham stood at the moment God made him that promise, is right in the heart of what is commonly today called the West Bank..... or, in the most ridiculous possible terms..... the occupied territory.

I cannot begin to tell you the downright sense of dread I have for America every time I hear our President, or our Secretary of State (decent and well-intentioned people, in my opinion), talk about severing the West Bank from the possession of Israel, through tremendous political pressure, and giving that land to the Palestinians as their own sovereign nation; and that in the hope of peace. We even have a large coalition of churches demanding the very same thing out of a doctrine of tolerance, fairness and mercy for the Arabs and the Palestinians. This is precisely the land God gave to Abraham and set aside for his descendants for all time. And, God has warned that those who go against his descendants (those that curse Abraham), He will come against and judge (they will be cursed).

Every indication, biblically, is that indeed somebody is going to force upon Israel the decision to surrender a portion of that land that is at the center of the Abrahamic covenant. At the moment, sadly, it appears it's going to be the United States government who will force it in order to attain President Bush's Roadmap to Peace. And, the peace that the world longs for in our time will occur..... for a VERY short time. But, the problem is, peace with the world means war with God. You see, God's pattern of dividing, selecting, and electing has never ended; we are living in one of those defining and dividing moments of God. And, part of that dividing and separating process God is using is based around each of our answer to a single question: where do you stand on Israel? And, like it or not, we must choose one side or the other. We can choose to obey God and honor His covenants and have peace with Him, or we can stand with the world and the apostate church. Standing with Israel *is* standing with God. *Not* standing with Israel is standing with the world, against God.

Let's finish up chapter 13, now, by re-reading verses 14 – 18.

**READ GEN.13: 14 –18**

Now that I have demonstrated to you that the words of these verses are *STILL* in effect, and will be until the end of all things, I hope you see the importance of them. The land God showed Abraham is to be UNCONDITIONALLY Israel's forever. Now, where exactly WAS Avram when he was to look around.....in every compass direction.....and all that was to belong to his descendants? The Genesis Apocryphon places him on Ramath-Hazor, which is about 5 miles northeast of Bethel. It is the highest spot in central Israel, with an altitude of almost 3300 feet. From this spot, even today, one can see the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and east, well into the kingdom of Jordan.

Now, verse 17 says that Abraham was to walk the length and breadth of the land, because

God gave it to him. What exactly does that mean? Was he literally to stop what he was doing, and visit every area of the land? Or was this just symbolic of something, or a Hebrew idiom or what? The Targum Jonathon (an early Hebrew commentary) says that what was happening was that Abraham was doing *chazakah*. Chazakah was a widespread legal custom of that era, and well before, and used throughout the various tribes and peoples of the Middle East. It was known by the Egyptians as well as the Hittites, and attested to in their ancient documents. And, the concept was that when a piece of property was acquired, the new owner had to walk the perimeter of the entire property, which was symbolic of marking his territory, if you would. Not until the new owner had done this was the transfer complete. Some cultures even required the king or ruler to walk the perimeter of his kingdom, from time-to-time to re-establish his sovereignty over that territory.

Now, WHY would God make Abraham do this? For Abraham's sake, and for the sake of the many who likely asked: "why are you doing Chazakah?" I have no doubt that Abraham did NOT make friends as a result of this procedure. For, within the outline of the territory he marked were MANY already established kingdom and city-states, and I suspect they were none too pleased by this foreigner's symbolic declaration of his ownership of their land.

But, there is another reason as well: we're going to see all throughout the Torah, the remainder of the O.T. and the entire Bible in general, that where manmade governmental systems exist, God tends to allow the people involved to use the laws, ordinances and customs of their system when transactions between God and men occur. Abraham would have been completely familiar and comfortable with Yahweh telling him to go and walk the land, because that's how things were done, then. In fact, it probably would have been very disquieting, and left much doubt in Abraham, if God had NOT ordered it. It would be as though we went in to buy a car, we filled out all the paperwork, laid a check on the table, and the dealer said, "no need for you or I to sign anything....just take the car and go and we'll just take each others word for it." We would be pretty uncomfortable doing that.....for one reason, it isn't customary. Normally, all parties sign the paperwork to make it legal. Signing the paperwork finishes the process of transferring the ownership of the car from the dealer to you. Same thing here with Abraham; by legal custom of that day, walking the perimeter of the land legally completed the transfer of the property and thereby left both parties fully feeling closure on the transaction.

The chapter ends with Abraham moving to Hebron, and building an altar there. Building an altar was customary to declare one god or another's authority over that territory.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida,

## **Genesis 13:1**

**And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.**

Results of backsliding:

He picks up Hagar in Egypt;

Ishmael, mocking Isaac (Gen 21:9).

Abram was rich in earthly possessions, but had strife and many sorrows (1 Tim 6:10).

**Abram went up out of Egypt—into the south**—Probably the south of Canaan, as In leaving Egypt he is said to come from the south, Genesis 13:3, for the southern part of the promised land lay north-east of Egypt.

### **Nachmanides; He and His Wife, and All That He Had:**

The purport there of is to let us know that they did not rob him of any of all the great gifts they gave him on account of Sarah who was to be for the king. They did not say, “You have tricked us, and the gift was given by mistake.” This was a miraculous event.<sup>3</sup>

## **Genesis 13:2**

**And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.**

**[Abram was very rich]** The first recorded rich man.

**Chrysostom; Providence and Abraham’s Virtue:** Let us not rush idly by this reading but rather recognize clearly the precision of sacred Scripture in recounting nothing to us as of no importance. “Now Abram was very rich,” the text says. Consider first of all this very fact that its habit had been to convey nothing idly or to no purpose. In this case is it not without reason that [the text] calls him rich. Nowhere else had it made mention of his being rich – this was the first time. Why, and to what purpose? For you to learn the inventiveness of God’s wisdom and providence displayed in favor of the great man, as well as his boundless and extraordinary power. The man who had gone into exile in Egypt under the pressure of famine, unable to sustain the privations of Canaan, suddenly became rich – and not just rich but very rich, not only in cattle but also in silver and gold. Do you not see the extent of God’s providence? Abraham left to find relief from famine and came back not simply enjoying relief from famine but invested with great wealth and untold reputation, his identity well known to everyone. Now the inhabitants of Canaan gained a more precise idea of the good man’s virtue by place – the stranger who had gone down into Egypt as a refugee and vagabond now flush with so much wealth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Shilo Publishing, Rabbi C. Chavel

<sup>4</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, IntVarsity Press, Thomas Oden

**very rich**—compared with the pastoral tribes to which Abraham belonged. An Arab sheik is considered rich who has a hundred or two hundred tents, from sixty to a hundred camels, a thousand sheep and goats respectively. And Abram being very rich, must have far exceeded that amount of pastoral property. “Gold and silver” being rare among these peoples, his probably arose from the sale of his produce in Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

### **Genesis 13:3**

**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 Hai;**

[**Beth-el**] Back to the starting point. Nothing was gained in leaving Canaan (Genesis 12:7-8).

**went on his journeys**—His progress would be by slow marches and frequent encampments as Abram had to regulate his movements by the prospect of water and pasturage.<sup>6</sup>

### **Genesis 13:4**

**Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.**

[**altar**] No altar or praying in Egypt was recorded.

### **Genesis 13:5**

**And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.**

**Ambrose:** Lot lacks Abraham’s Spiritual Riches. It remains to be seen of Lot too, his nephew was rich as one who belonged to the same family. But Scripture says only that he had many cattle. In fact, the text reads, “Lot also, who went with Abraham, had flocks, herds and tents.” He had no silver, because he was not yet just; in fact, “the tongue of the just man is like silver purified by fire.” He had no gold, which was the possession of the one who saw the posterity of Christ, of whom it is written: “And his posterity shines like gold.” Abraham saw him, as the Lord testified when he said,

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<sup>5</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ge 13:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>6</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ge 13:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

“Abraham saw my day and rejoiced”. This is why he deserved to shine like gold and to have gold as his endowment.<sup>7</sup>

### **Genesis 13:6**

**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.**

**[they could not dwell together]** 1. Because their flocks were great. 2. Because the Canaanites and the Perizzites had already occupied a considerable part of the land. 3. Because there appears to have been envy between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. To prevent disputes among them, that might have ultimately disturbed the peace of the two families, it was necessary that a separation should take place.

**Ambrose:** In fact, since [Lot] had already deliberately begun to deviate from his uncle, the land could not support both of them dwelling together; indeed, no space can be large enough for those who love discord... Even limited spaces are more than adequate for those who are meek and peace-loving, while for those whose mentality is one of discord even wide open spaces are too restricted.<sup>8</sup>

### **Genesis 13:7**

**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.**

**[Perizzite]** The Perizzites were one of several tribes usually listed with the Canaanites (cf. 34:30; Deut 7:1; Judg 1:4; 3:5).

**[strife]** Seven steps of Lot downward:

1. Strife (Genesis 13:7; the cause is seen in Genesis 13:6)
2. He saw Sodom-Gomorra territory (Genesis 13:10).
3. He chose to live there (Genesis 13:11).
4. He pitched his tent toward Sodom (Genesis 13:12).
5. He dwelt in Sodom (Genesis 14:12).
6. He sat in the gate (Genesis 19:1).
7. Drunkenness (Genesis 19:33)

**[the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land]** Emphasizing the fact a second time that giants were occupying the land to contest God's claim on it for His people (Genesis 13:7; Genesis 12:6).

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<sup>7</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas Oden

<sup>8</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas Oden

**Nachmanides; And There Was A Quarrel:** But I wonder: The gift of the Land declared to Abram was for his children, as it is said above, *Unto they seed will I give this land*, so how can Lot inherit it? Perhaps the shepherds heard of the gift and they mistook its meaning, for Scripture states that in the meantime, the land belonged neither to Abram nor to Lot. Accordingly, the verse stating at the outset, *for their possessions were great*, intended to say that because of their extensive possessions, the land could not support them, and Lot's shepherds therefore found it necessary to bring their cattle into fields that had owners. This was the cause of the quarrel.<sup>9</sup>

**Nachmanides; And There Was A Quarrel:** By way of the plain meaning of Scripture the quarrel concerned the pasture as the land could not support them both. When Abram's cattle were grazing in the pasture, Lot's shepherds would come into their territory and graze their cattle there. Now Abram and Lot were both strangers and sojourners in the land. Abram, therefore, feared that the Canaanite and the Perrizite, who inhabit the land, might hear of the abundance of their cattle, [whose great number was made apparent when Lot's shepherds encroached on Abram's land, thereby combining the flocks], and drive them out of the land or slay them by sword and take their cattle and wealth since the mastery of the land belonged to them not to Abram. This is the purport of the verse, *And the Canaanite and the Perrizite*. Scripture thus mentioned that there were many peoples dwelling in that land, they and their cattle being innumerable, and the land could not support them and Abram and Lot.<sup>10</sup>

**Chrysostom:** Notice how the abundance of their possessions proved to be a major cause for their separation, creating a division, sundering their harmony and undoing the bond of kinship. "Trouble developed between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. Now the Canaanites and the Pherezites inhabited the land at that time." Notice how the relatives are responsible for the first signs separation. Invariably this is the source from which springs all sorts of problems – discord among the brethren. The next says remember "Trouble developed between the herdsmen." They are the ones who provide the occasion for separation, who sunder the harmony, who give evidence of bad feeling.<sup>11</sup>

**And there was a strife**—Abraham's character appears here in a most amiable light. Having a strong sense of religion, he was afraid of doing anything that might tend to injure its character or bring discredit on its name, and he rightly judged that such unhappy effects would be produced if two persons whom nature and grace had so closely connected should come to a rupture [Ge 13:8]. Waiving his right to dictate, he gave the freedom of choice to Lot. The conduct of Abraham was not only disinterested and

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<sup>9</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Shilo Publishing, Rabbi C. Chavel

<sup>10</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Shilo Publishing, Rabbi C. Chavel

<sup>11</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas Oden

peaceable, but generous and condescending in an extraordinary degree, exemplifying the Scripture precepts (Mt 6:32; Ro 12:10, 11; Php 2:4).<sup>12</sup>

### **Genesis 13:8**

**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.**

**[strife]** *meriybah*, (H4808), *mer-ee-baw'*; from (H7378) (riyb); quarrel :- provocation, strife.

Abram's cautionary note—**Let's not have any quarreling** (*meribah*, related to the word for "rib")—Cf. Meribah (Ex. 17:1-7). In that wilderness there was no water to drink and the people strove with Yahweh so that Moses smote the rock. Thereafter, Massa ("testing") and Meribah ("quarreling") became ominous names because the people out of unbelief provoked YHWH and were sent to wander in the wilderness until they died (Ps 95:8-10). Their selfishness exhibited unbelief (Ps 95:10) so that they did not enter the land (Ps 95:11).

**[for we be brethren]** We are of the same family, worship the same God in the same way, have the same promises, and look for the same end. Why then should there be strife? If it appear to be unavoidable from our present situation, let that situation be instantly changed, for no secular advantages can counterbalance the loss of peace.

**[Lot]** Lot is mentioned 7 times outside of Genesis 11:27-19:36. He is named as an object lesson to others (Luke 17:28-32; 2 Peter 2:7). Whatever may have been his failures at other times, Lot kept so clean from homosexuality (Genesis 19; Romans 1:24-32) that he is called both just and righteous in 2 Peter 2:7-8.

**[Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren]** A real sermon on unselfishness. Note the spirit of the two men and the results (Genesis 13:7-13; Genesis 14:11-12,16-24; Genesis 18:16-19:38).

**Ambrose:** Rightly, then, devotion has claimed first place for itself. Let us consider now also the adornment of the other virtues. Holy Abraham enjoyed the presence of his nephew, to whom he showed fatherly affection. A conflict occurred between the servants of the nephew and those of the uncle. As a truly wise man Abraham was aware that disagreements among servants often break the peace among their masters. He broke the thread of discord so that the contagion might not spread. He thought it preferable that the two separate than that good harmony among them be broken. This is what you should do whenever you find yourself in a similar situation, to forestall a hotbed of discord. In fact,

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<sup>12</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ge 13:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

you are not stronger than Abraham. He thought it best to withdraw from the servants' disputes, not to treat them with contempt. And if you are strong enough, take care lest someone weaker than you gives ear to the whisperings of the servants. It often happens that by their undivided service they sow discord among relatives. Better it is to separate from each other so that friendship might remain. When two cannot live together in a house with common property, is it not better graciously to withdraw than to live together in discord?<sup>13</sup>

### **Genesis 13:9**

***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.***

**[Is not the whole land before thee]** As the patriarch or head of the family, Abram, by prescriptive right, might have chosen his own portion first, and appointed Lot his; but intent upon peace, and feeling pure and parental affection for his nephew, he permitted him to make his choice first.

Abram could be “generous” because he knew the prophetic outcome! [So can we (and you) be!]

**[Is not the whole land before thee]** Question 15. Next question Genesis 15:2. The same spirit is exhorted in the New Testament (Ephes. 4:1-3; Phil. 2:1-4).

**Chrysostom:** Notice how he addresses Lot on terms of equality – and yet I have the impression that the outbreak of trouble had no other origin than in the refusal of the patriarch's herdsmen to allow Lot to enjoy the same privileges as they. The Just man, however, handles everything with restraint, demonstrating the remarkable degree of his own good sense and teaching not only those present at the time but also everyone in the future never to settle their differences with our relatives by feuding. Their squabbling brings great disgrace on us, and instead of trouble being attributed to them, the blame reverts to us. So what fittingness could there be for brothers, sharing in fact the same nature, the same links of kinship and due at that point to dwell near to each other, to engage in hostilities when it was expected to them to play the role of teaching all these people restraint, gentleness and complete good sense? Let people who believe they are above such reproach give heed to this example when on the grounds of relationship they connive at their relatives' larceny, rapacity, scheming beyond measure, in the city and in the country, confiscation of one person's farm and another's home, and on that basis they show such scoundrels even greater favor.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intersity Press, Thomas Oden

<sup>14</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intersity Press, Thomas Oden

**If you go to the right, then I will go to the left:** Right or left, Abram knew he could trust God. He did it because he learned God would provide for his needs, and he did not have to worry about being too generous. Abram knew whatever Lot chose God would make sure Abram came out all right.

- i. In Egypt, Abram thought he had to take his fate into his own hands. He had to look out for “number one.” Now, he is wiser and is willing to let God look out for his interests. Right or left, it didn’t matter to Abram, because God would be there.
- ii. Because he trusted in God, Abram did not have to be obsessed with his own “rights” and neither do we. The only *right* we truly have is the right to go to hell. Everything else is the free gift of God and has nothing to do with our “rights.”

### **Genesis 13:10**

**And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.**

**[lifted up his eyes]** “Lifting his eyes”: Eyes are Satan’s portals (Gen 3:6; Josh 7:21; 1 Jn 2:16; et al.) Eyes tend to get people in trouble in the scripture. Ears are the portals of the Lord: Rom 10:17; “He that hath an ear...” etc.

**Lot lifted up his eyes**—Travellers say that from the top of this hill, a little “to the east of Beth-el” [Ge 12:8], they can see the Jordan, the broad meadows on either bank, and the waving line of verdure which marks the course of the stream.<sup>15</sup>

As paradise was watered by the four neighboring streams, and as Egypt was watered by the annual overflowing of the Nile; so were the plains of the Jordan, and all the land on the way to Zoar, well watered and fertilized by the overflowing of the Jordan.

**[the plain of the Jordan]** It would be possible to get a good view of the Jordan Valley and the northern area of the Dead Sea from the hills around Bethel. While the area around the Dead Sea is not a particularly hospitable region today, this verse makes it clear that prior to the Lord’s judgment the area had a far different quality. It should be noted that there are extensive areas along the Jordan Plateau that do provide ample grazing, and this may also be represented in this narrative.

**[before the LORD destroyed Sodom]** A great contrast before and after the curse on Sodom. It no longer is fruitful.

**Nachmanides; As the Garden of the Eternal, Like The Land of Egypt:** The verse states that the whole land of the plain was adequately irrigated from the Jordan by

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<sup>15</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ge 13:10). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

working with the foot, just as was done with the garden of God, concerning which it is stated, *And a river went out of Eden to water the garden*, and as is the way in the land of Egypt, concerning which it is stated, *And thou didst water it with thy foot*. The verse mentions both places: it says that the land of the Plain was adequately irrigated as the garden of the Eternal, which is the most perfect place on this earth, and it also mentions, *like the land of Egypt*, a place well known for pasture.<sup>16</sup>

**Ambrose:** Haughtiness is the companion of those who deviate from the truth. In fact, as Abraham was quite humble in that he offered the choice, so Lot was rather insolent in presuming to choose. Virtue humbles itself, whereas wickedness becomes arrogant. Lot should rather have relied on one more wise than he, to be on the safe side. Indeed, he did not have the knowledge to make a choice.<sup>17</sup>

### **Genesis 13:11**

**Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.**

**[Then Lot chose him all the plain]** A little civility or good breeding is of great importance in the concerns of life. Lot either had none, or did not profit by it. He certainly should have left the choice to the patriarch, and should have been guided by his counsel; but he took his own way, trusting to his own judgment, and guided only by the sight of his eyes: he beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered, etc.; so he chose the land, without considering the character of the inhabitants, or what advantages or disadvantages it might afford him in spiritual things. This choice, as we shall see in the sequel, had nearly proved the ruin of his body, soul, and family.

**Ambrose:** How appropriately the Scripture says, “Lot,” that is, deviation, “chose for himself.” Indeed, God has placed before us good and evil, so that each may choose what he wishes. Let us not then choose that which is more pleasing at first sight but that which is truly better, so that having been granted the ability to choose what is preferable, we lift up our eyes and be attracted by false beauty while we leave concealed the truth of nature, as one who looks the other way.<sup>18</sup>

**Then Lot chose him all the plain**—a choice excellent from a worldly point of view, but most inexpedient for his best interests. He seems, though a good man, to have been too much under the influence of a selfish and covetous spirit: and how many, alas! imperil the good of their souls for the prospect of worldly advantage.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Shilo Publishing, Rabbi C. Chavel

<sup>17</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas Oden

<sup>18</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Genesis, Intervarsity Press, Thomas Oden

<sup>19</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ge 13:11). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## **Genesis 13:12**

**Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom.**

### **Lot's Steps**

Beheld... Chose... Departed... Dwelt in the plain... Pitched...toward...Dwelt in Sodom... Seated in the gate (Councilman). Sin always occurs in small steps... Lot was saved from abduction (Chapter 14), but he still returns to Sodom. (Lot was still recorded “righteous” in 2 Pet 2:7-9, but vexed...)

*(2 Pet. 2:7-9) <sup>7</sup>And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: <sup>8</sup>(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) <sup>9</sup>The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:*

**[pitched his tent]** More than a physical dwelling place, it is where his heart, home, and thoughts were.

Of course Lot thought, “I can serve God as well there as here. They probably need a witness.” But he was deceiving himself. Beware of our ability to deceive ourselves! *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* (Jeremiah 17:9)

## **Genesis 13:13**

**But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.**

The people of Sodom were exceedingly sinful and wicked before, or against, the Lord—they were sinners of no common character; they excelled in unrighteousness, and soon filled up the measure of their iniquities. This is probably a understatement!

**[were wicked and sinners]** Homosexuals (sodomites or lesbians) and other perverts are always classed as wicked sinners. God cannot and will not tolerate their sin. He judged these sodomite cities as a lesson to others, and condemned those who followed their example with eternal hell (Genesis 18:20; Genesis 19:5,13; Isaiah 3:9; Romans 1:18-32; 2 Peter 2; Jude 1:7-19).

### **Genesis 13:14**

**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:**

The Lord did not talk to Abram until Lot split. Here is the third appearance of God to Abram.

**[the Lord said unto Abram]** It is very likely that the angel of the covenant appeared to Abram in open day, when he could take a distinct view of the length and the breadth of this good land. The revelation made Genesis 15:5, was evidently made in the night; for then he was called to number the stars, which could not be seen but in the night season: here he is called on to number the dust of the earth, Genesis 13:16, which could not be seen but in the day-light.

**[after that Lot was separated from him]** God may have been waiting for their separation before giving Abraham this additional revelation about the land. If so, this indicates God wanted him to leave all his kindred and be a separate people. Cp. Numbers 23:9. On the other hand, "after" may imply time only, not the condition of revelation.

### **Genesis 13:15**

**For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.**

**[for ever]** Israel must be an eternal natural people for this to be true.

God also wanted to remind Abram that even though Abram had been generous enough to "give" some of the land to Lot, God still said the land belonged to Abram.

### **Genesis 13:16**

**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.**

**[as the dust of the earth]** Abraham's seed compared to three things:

1. The dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16)
2. The stars of heaven (Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17)
3. The sand of the sea (Genesis 22:17)

## **Genesis 13:17**

**Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.**

The 15th prophecy in Genesis (Genesis 13:14-17). Next, prophecy Genesis 15:4. The second prophecy of Canaan as an eternal possession for Israel (Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 17:8; Genesis 24:7); and the second prophecy of Abraham's seed being an innumerable people (Genesis 12:2; Genesis 13:16; Genesis 15:5; Genesis 16:10; Genesis 17:2,4-5,16,19; Genesis 18:10,18; Genesis 21:12-13,18; Genesis 22:17-18). It is in process of eternal fulfillment.

**Nachmanides:** The meaning of the expression, *to thee... and to thy children*, is that you are to take possession of the gift now, in order to transmit it to your children, even as our Rabbis have said: "The land of Israel is an inheritance to the people of Israel from their patriarchs." By way of the plain meaning of Scripture, it is possible that the meaning of the verse is that Abraham was to be a ruler over the land and *a prince of God* in its midst, wherever he will go in this land.<sup>20</sup>

## **Genesis 13:18**

**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.**

[**Hebron**] *Chebrown*, (H2275), *kheb-rone'*; from (H2267) *cheber*; seat of association; Chebron, a place in Palestine, also the name of two Israelites :- Hebron. = "joined together; communion." A place of separation becomes a place of vision (2 Pet 2:6-7,9; Lk 17:26). This time near the great trees of Mamre; cf. 14:13, at Hebron. An ancient city in southern Judah, Hebron was 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem, at the junction of all the principal highways of the region. It stood out prominently on the landscape, 3,040 feet above sea level. Josephus speaks of it as being more ancient than the city of Memphis in Egypt. The cave of Machpelah, later bought by Abraham for a tomb for Sarah, was very near. It became the burial place not only of Sarah, but of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah, and Leah.

### **Abram vs. Lot**

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| • Abram: walked by faith                | Lot by sight                         |
| • Abram: generous and magnanimous       | Lot: greedy and worldly              |
| • Abram: looked for God's city          | Lot: home in a city destroyed by God |
| • Abram: "Father of all who believe"    | Lot: perpetual infamy                |
| • Abram: "Heir of the world" (Rom 4:30) | Lot: dwelled in a cave (Gen 19:30)   |
|   | All possessions destroyed in Sodom.  |

Abram was quite an altar builder. You could always tell where Abram had been because he left a testimony. Man has left a footprint on the moon. They've left a flag up there and

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<sup>20</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Shilo Publishing, Rabbi C. Chavel

a little motto saying, “We have come in peace”—but they did not leave the Bible, the Word of God. That reveals the difference between the thinking of Abram and the thinking of the age and period in which we live today. The important thing to Abram was an altar to the Lord, and that is exactly what he built.<sup>21</sup>

## Be Obedient:

### *Famines, Flocks, and Fights*

Life can be difficult,” wrote Amy Carmichael, missionary to India. “Sometimes the enemy comes in like a flood. But then is the time to prove our faith and live our songs” (*Candles in the Dark*, p. 51).

A faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted. Peter compared the Christian’s trials to the testing of gold in the furnace (1 Peter 1:7), and the patriarch Job used the same image: “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10, NKJV). God’s purpose in allowing trials is not only to verify our faith but also to purify it and remove the dross. God knows what kind of faith we have, but *we* don’t know; and the only way to advance in the “school of faith” is to take examinations.

Like Abraham, as you progress in the “school of faith,” you will face three special tests: *circumstances* (Gen. 12:10), *people* (12:11–13:4), and *things* (13:5–18).

#### **1. Circumstances (Gen. 12:10)**

In leaving his family and traveling to an unknown land, Abraham took a great step of faith. After he arrived, he saw God a second time and heard His word of promise. Abraham and Sarah probably expected to settle down and enjoy their new home, but God would not let them. Instead, God permitted a famine to come to the land. There is no record that Abraham ever faced a famine in Ur or Haran; but now that he was in God’s land, he had to find food for a large company of people, plus flocks and herds (see 14:14).

Why did God allow the famine? To teach Abraham and Sarah a basic lesson in the “school of faith,” a lesson you must also learn: *Tests often follow triumphs*. This principle is illustrated in the history of Israel. No sooner had the nation been delivered from Egypt than the Egyptian army chased them and cornered them at the Red Sea (Ex. 12–15). Triumph was followed by testing. God brought them through, but then they faced another test: no water (15:22–27). After that came hunger (Ex. 16) and an attack from the Amalekites (Ex. 17). Tests follow triumphs.

“I thought that getting saved was the end of all my troubles,” a young believer said to me. “But now I know that faith in Christ has given me a whole new set of problems! But now there are two differences,” he added with a smile. “I don’t face them alone, because the Lord is with me; and I know He allows them for my good and His glory.”

One of the enemies of the life of faith is pride. When you win a victory, you may feel overconfident and start telling yourself that you can defeat *any* enemy at *any* time. You start depending on your past experience and your growing knowledge of the Word, instead of depending wholly on the Lord. This explains why the promise of 1 Corinthians

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<sup>21</sup>McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

10:13 is preceded by the warning of verse 12: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (NKJV). God did not want Abraham to become proud and self-confident, so He put him and his faith into the furnace of testing.

After you have won a great victory of faith, expect the enemy to attack you or the Lord to test you, or both. *This is the only way you can grow in your faith.* God uses the tough circumstances of life to build the muscles of your faith and keep you from trusting something other than His Word. *Don't try to run away from the problem.* It won't work.

Instead of remaining in the land and trusting the Lord to help him, Abraham went “down into Egypt” (Gen. 12:10). In the Bible, Egypt is a symbol of the world system and its bondage, while the land of Israel is a picture of the inheritance of blessing God has for you (Deut. 11:10–12). When people went to Jerusalem, they went *up*; but when they went to Egypt, they went *down*. Spiritually speaking, “going down to Egypt” means doubting God's promises and running to the world for help. (See Num. 11; 14; Isa. 30:1–2; 31:1; and Jer. 42:13ff.)

When circumstances become difficult and you are in the furnace of testing, *remain where God has put you until He tells you to move.* Faith moves in the direction of peace and hope, but unbelief moves in the direction of restlessness and fear. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28:16). In times of testing, the important question is not, “*How can I get out of this?*” but, “*What can I get out of this?*” (See James 1:1–12.) God is at work to build your faith.

God alone is in control of circumstances. You are safer in a famine *in His will* than in a palace *out of His will*. It has well been said, “The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.” Abraham failed the test of circumstances and turned from the will of God.

## **2. People (Gen. 12:11–13:4)**

Once in Egypt, Abraham faced a new set of problems; for if you run away from one test, you will soon face another. Once you enroll in “the school of faith,” you are not allowed to “drop out” just because of one failure. God has purposes to fulfill in you and through you, and He will do all that is necessary to make you succeed (Ps. 138:8; Phil. 1:6).

In Canaan, all Abraham had to deal with was a famine; but in Egypt, he had to get along with a proud ruler and his officers. Pharaoh was looked on as a god, but he was not a god like Abraham's God, loving and generous and faithful. Abraham soon discovered that he had been better off dealing with the circumstances in Canaan than with the people in Egypt. Notice the changes that took place in Abraham's life because he went down to Egypt.

To begin with, *Abraham moved from trusting to scheming.* Abraham had no altar in Egypt, and you don't find him calling on the Lord for guidance and help. When I was ministering in Youth for Christ International, my friend and fellow worker Pete Quist often reminded us, “Faith is living without scheming.” When you stop trusting God's Word, you start leaning on man's wisdom; and this leads to trouble (Prov. 3:5–6; 1 Cor. 3:18–20). Abraham and Sarah brought this “half-truth” with them from Ur (Gen. 20:13), used it in Egypt and Gerar (Gen. 20), and then their son Isaac adopted it (Gen. 26). When you find yourself scheming in order to escape problems with people, beware; worse trouble is coming!

He also moved *from confidence to fear.* When you are in the place of God's choosing, you don't ever need to be afraid; for faith and fear cannot dwell in the same heart (Isa.

12:2; Mark 4:40). The fear of God is the fear that conquers every fear (Ps. 112; Isa. 8:13); but “the fear of man brings a snare” (Prov. 29:25, NKJV). God had repeatedly said “I will” to Abraham, but now Abraham was saying “*They will*” (Gen. 12:12, italics added). He took his eyes off the Lord and started looking at people.

A third change took place: *He moved from “others” to self*. He lied so that it might “be well with me for thy [Sarah’s] sake” (12:13). As the husband, Abraham should have thought first of his wife and not of himself (1 Peter 3:7; Eph. 5:25, 2829). In fact, he should never have taken his wife there in the first place! A husband out of the will of God can bring untold trouble to his wife and family.

This leads to a fourth change: *He moved from bringing blessing to bringing judgment*. God called Abraham to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1–3); but because of Abraham’s disobedience, judgment fell on Pharaoh and his household (12:17). This also happened years later in Gerar (Gen. 20). If you want to be a blessing to others, then stay in the will of God. Jonah ran from God’s will and caused a storm that almost sank the ship. Like Jonah, Abraham lost his testimony before unbelievers and had to face embarrassment and rebuke.

God graciously watched over His servant and brought him out of a difficult situation. If Sarah had become one of Pharaoh’s wives, what would have happened to the promise of the Redeemer? When we don’t let God rule, He overrules and accomplishes His purposes; but we pay dearly for our disobedience.

Abraham learned his lesson, repented, and “went up” out of Egypt (13:1). When you disobey the will of God, the only right thing to do is to go back to the place where you left Him and make a new beginning (1 John 1:9). *No failure is permanent in “the school of faith.”* Abraham went back to his tent and altar and the life of a “pilgrim and stranger.”

A casual observer of this episode might conclude, “What happened to Abraham wasn’t all bad. Pharaoh gave Abraham a lot of wealth (Gen. 12:16; 13:2), and Sarah was given her own maid, Hagar (16:1). God forgave Abraham’s sin, and he started over again. So, what’s the big problem?”

The “big problem” is that *everything Abraham received in Egypt later caused trouble*. Because of their great wealth, Abraham and Lot could not live together and had to separate (13:5–6). Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, brought division and sorrow into the home (Gen. 16). Having had a taste of Egypt (the world), Lot started measuring everything by what he saw there (13:10–11); and this led to his downfall and the ruin of his family. There are no benefits from disobedience.

The practical lesson from all of this is simply *never abandon your altar*. Stay in fellowship with the Lord no matter what the circumstances may be. If you have disobeyed and God is disciplining you, *go back to the place where you left Him and make things right*. Remember: “The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings.” That is not an excuse for sin, but it is an encouragement for repentance.

### **3. Things (Gen. 13:5–18)**

I wonder how many family fights have been caused by the love of money. The newspapers often publish reports about families battling in court because of an inheritance or a lottery winning. People who used to love each other and enjoy each other start attacking each other just to get money, *but money cannot buy the blessings that families freely give*.

Abraham may have failed the first two tests, but he passed this third test with great success. The test was not an easy one, for it involved land and wealth; but Abraham is the example of what every believer should do when there are disputes about material things.

*Abraham determined to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker.* The problem between Abraham and Lot was not caused by the land, the famine, their wealth (both of them were rich), or even their herdsmen (13:7). *The heart of every problem is the problem in the heart.* Lot's heart was centered on wealth and worldly achievement, while Abraham wanted only to please the Lord. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

It was bad enough that this dispute was between brethren (Gen. 13:8); but even worse, the heathen people of the land were watching and listening (13:7). *When Christians have disputes, it hurts the testimony of the Lord.* In my pastoral ministry, I frequently visited the unsaved relatives and friends of church members, seeking to interest them in spiritual things, only to discover that they knew about every "church fight" in town. No wonder our Lord prayed that His people might be one, that the world might believe (John 17:20–23). Christian unity is fragrant and fruitful (Ps. 133), but disunity turns that fragrance into a stench and the garden into a desert.

James 3:13–4:10 explains why Lot was a troublemaker instead of a peacemaker: He had "heart trouble." He followed the wisdom of this world (as Uncle Abraham had done in Egypt) and not God's wisdom. He was at war with Abraham because he was at war with himself, and he was at war with himself because he was at war with God. The world's wisdom and the world's wealth seem so satisfying, but they ultimately bring disappointment.

Covetousness—an insatiable appetite for more things—leads to all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). In order to get more money, people will lie (Prov. 21:6), mistreat people (22:16), cheat (28:8), and even trouble their own families (15:27). "Covetousness is both the beginning and the end of the devil's alphabet," wrote Robert South, "the first vice in corrupt nature that moves, and the last which dies."

Abraham had caused trouble in Egypt because he was out of place, and Lot caused trouble in Canaan because he was out of place: *His heart was really in Egypt* (13:10). According to 1 Corinthians 2:14–3:3, there are only three kinds of people in the world: the natural (unsaved), the carnal (saved but living for the world and the flesh), and the spiritual (devoted to God). You find all three in Genesis 13: the natural (13:13), the carnal (Lot), and the spiritual (Abraham). Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7–8) but not devoted to the Lord. He could not walk with Abraham because Abraham was the friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8) and Lot was a friend of the world (James 4:4). Many church splits and family fights are caused by carnal Christians who are not walking with the Lord or with other believers.

*Abraham lived for others, not for self.* While in Egypt, Abraham thought first about himself (Gen. 12:12–13); but when he returned to his altar in Canaan, he put God first and others next. As the "elder statesman" of the camp, Abraham had every right to decide the issue and tell Lot what to do; but he gave Lot first choice. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10). The spiritual Christian does not insist on his or her own rights but gladly yields to others.

In his latter years, General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was too infirm to attend the Army's world conference; but he would send the delegates a

message. One year he cabled them only one word: OTHERS. I have been privileged to minister with the Salvation Army in different parts of the world, and I can testify that they take that word OTHERS very seriously. “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4, NIV).

*Abraham lived by faith, not by sight.* No matter what Lot did, Abraham was not worried about his future; for he knew that everything was in the hands of the Lord. Abraham had never read Psalm 47:4 or Matthew 6:33, but he was putting both into practice by faith. He had met God at the altar and he knew that everything was under control. *When God is first in your life, it makes no difference who is second or last.*

Lot had a tent but no altar (Gen. 13:5), which meant he did not call on the Lord for wisdom in making decisions (James 1:5). Instead of lifting up his eyes to heaven, Lot lifted up his eyes to the plain of Jordan (Gen. 13:10) and stopped there. *The eyes see what the heart loves.* Abraham had taken Lot out of Egypt, but he could not take Egypt out of Lot. Outlook helps to determine outcome. Abraham’s eyes were on the holy city of God (Heb. 11:13–16), and he went on to walk with the Lord and inherit blessing. Lot’s eyes were on the sinful cities of men, and he went on to worldly success, spiritual failure, and a shameful end.

Lot had a great opportunity to become a man of God as he walked with Abraham, but we don’t read of Lot’s building an altar or calling on the Lord. First, Lot looked toward Sodom (Gen. 13:10); then he moved toward Sodom (13:11–12); and finally, he moved into Sodom (14:12). Instead of being a pilgrim who made progress, Lot regressed into the world and away from God’s blessing (Ps. 1:1). He “journeyed east” (Gen. 13:11) and turned his back on Bethel (“house of God”) and toward Ai (“ruins”; see 12:8). The people in Sodom may not have appeared wicked to Lot, but they were wicked as far as God was concerned; and His evaluation is all that matters.

*Abraham let God choose for him.* After Lot had gone away, Abraham had another meeting with the Lord (13:14–18). Lot had lifted up his eyes and seen what the world had to offer; now God invited Abraham to lift up his eyes and see what heaven had to offer. Lot chose a piece of land which he finally lost, but God gave Abraham *the whole land which still belongs to him and his descendants.* Lot had said, “I will take.” God said to Abraham, “I will give.” What a contrast!

Lot lost his family, but Abraham was promised a family so large it could not be counted. (Remember, Abraham and Sarah were old and had no children.) Lot was living for the possible, but Abraham was trusting God for the impossible.

“Lift up your eyes and look” was followed by “Lift up your feet and walk” (see 13:17). Claim your inheritance by faith! (Josh. 1:1–3; Deut. 11:24) The discipline he experienced in going down to Egypt had taught Abraham to respect boundaries, so now God could trust him with horizons. *It is your faith in God that determines how much of His blessing you will enjoy.*

When you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, God gave you “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). You now have your inheritance! All you need do is appropriate that inheritance by faith and draw on “His riches in glory” (Phil. 4:19). The Word of God is the “will” that tells you how rich you are, and faith is the key that opens the vault so you can claim your inheritance.

*Abraham gave thanks to God.* Not only did Abraham lift up his eyes and look (Gen. 13:14) and lift up his feet and walk (13:17), but he also lifted up his heart and worshiped

God and thanked Him for His gracious blessing. He pitched his tent from place to place as God led him, and he built his altar of witness and worship. The people in Sodom were proud of their affluence (Ezek. 16:49), but Abraham had spiritual wealth that they knew nothing about (John 4:31–34). He was walking in fellowship with God, and his heart was satisfied.

Satan wants to use circumstances, people, and things to tempt you and bring out the worst in you; but God also wants to use them to test you and bring out the best in you. Abraham failed the first two tests because he resorted to faith in man’s wisdom instead of faith in God’s Word. But he passed the third test with great distinction because he let God take control. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 12:10). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.