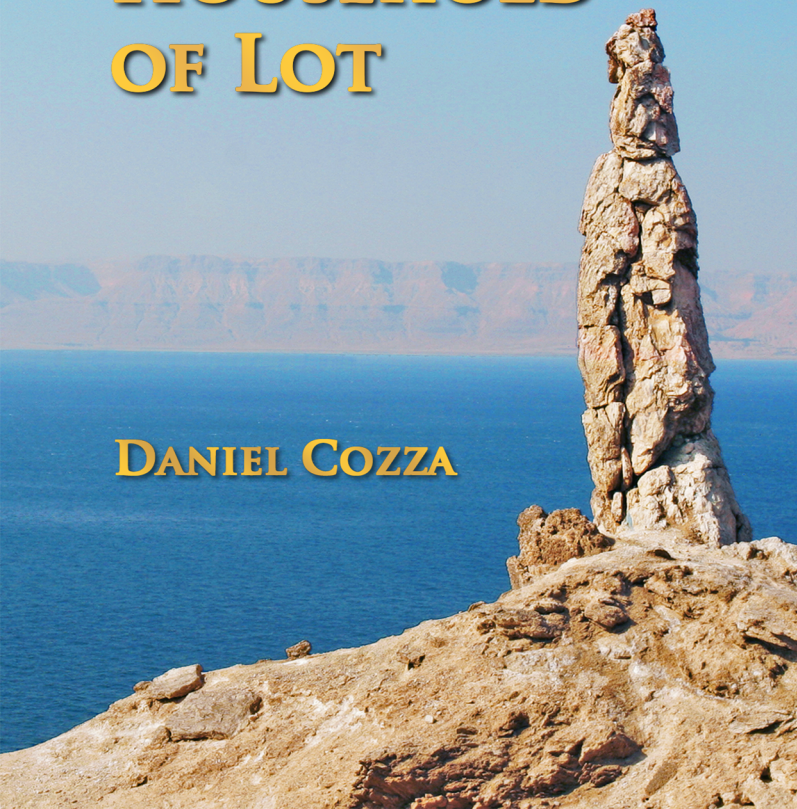


THE HOUSEHOLD OF LOT

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American Standard Version of the Bible (1901)
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Cover: “Lot’s Wife” rock formation on Mount Sodom,
beside the Dead Sea. Photo by Sergio Ponomarev,
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Lot has a small part in the Bible. He is mentioned in a few chapters in Genesis, with most of his story told in Genesis 19. We know him as Abraham's nephew, a man who lived in and eventually fled the sinful city of Sodom, a man whose wife turned into a pillar of salt when she looked back at the destruction of that city. These are notable events, worthy of inspection and discussion. However, if we ask a few questions, we will find much more hidden in this chapter than the great destruction of evil cities.

There are many questions we could ask about chapters 18 and 19 of Genesis:

- Why did God visit Abraham before the destruction of Sodom?¹
- Why did Abraham stop his plea with God at ten righteous souls?²
- What did the three men and Abraham talk about while they ate?³

¹ Genesis 18

² Genesis 18:32

³ Genesis 18:8

- What was Lot's character?
- How did Lot lead his household?
- What practical message can we take from Lot?

We will consider the first three questions as background and then we will focus on the last three, leading to an important, practical life lesson.

God's Visit with Abraham

In Genesis 18, we learn of the Lord and two angels visiting Abraham. Why did the Lord come, in person, to Abraham? Based on the rest of the chapter, we can assume there were at least two reasons: to share the news of Abraham and Sarah's coming son, and to discuss the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah.

The men sat to eat with Abraham, and the Lord spoke the good news to him (and to Sarah, who was listening) that they would have a son in the coming season. A father takes immense joy in sharing surprises with his children. Consider how delighted the Lord must have been to share this good news with His faithful servant and friend! This may have been further reason for the Lord to come in person: to see the joy and encouragement in the face of his trusting follower.

What else did the men discuss during their meal? The Bible does not say, yet we might imagine they asked after Abraham's family. They could have

said “How is Lot? Has he had sons and daughters? How do they fare in the city of Sodom?” Abraham would have shared the latest news he had of Lot: how many daughters and sons he had, whether any of his children had married, and maybe also the struggles Lot had with the evil doings of the city. The Lord knew all the details, but He meets us at our human level, speaking and listening to us in a genuine way.¹ We can only speculate that a conversation like this occurred—but if it did, several successive events make more sense.

As God and His angels rise to leave, God reveals to Abraham His concern and intentions towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and He and His angels rise to leave. Here is where Abraham begins his respectful plea for mercy towards the city. He starts by asking to save the city if fifty righteous souls are found there. He treads carefully, humbly asking the Lord to spare the city if forty-five are found, then forty—and so on, all the way down to ten. There Abraham ceases his plea. Why did he stop at ten? Why not five or even one?

Abraham must have believed that there were at least ten righteous souls, and probably many more. Abraham must have considered Lot’s household and counted Lot, Lot’s wife, two married daughters and

¹ Consider Mark 10:17-22, John 4:7-26 and John 8:1-11. The Lord knows the heart and situation of each person, but approaches them genuinely, letting them open their heart.

their husbands, two unmarried daughters, and at least two sons. This sum is at least ten, and if Lot raised his household in a righteous way, following the Lord, then there would have been at least ten righteous souls in Sodom, and the city would be spared. Abraham was wise yet careful, daring to ask for the Lord's mercy up to a point and no further. Here we see another probable reason for the Lord's visit: the Lord does not want to destroy man, and He wanted someone to intercede—even for a sinful city. The Lord knew what Abraham would do after He shared His plan for Sodom and Gomorrah, yet the Lord chose to come and have that conversation with Abraham. Whether Abraham could handle the hard news or whether he would plead that the Lord's hand would be stayed, the Lord honored his relationship with Abraham and had that direct and genuine meeting with him.

The Lord ends his visit with a great deal accomplished: sharing good news, encouraging and solidifying faith in Abraham and Sarah, providing information for His angels about Lot's family, and showing a constrained hand against the evil city.

Lot's Character

What do we know about Lot? Abraham brought Lot out of Ur of the Chaldees, and both became so prosperous the land could not bear them

both.¹ Further, consider Lot's capture and Abraham's subsequent rescue and slaughter of his captors.² Why was he taken? His "goods" are mentioned, so it was likely for his great wealth. Lot prospered with Abraham and then later, in Sodom, continued to prosper. He was a wealthy, materially successful man.

We also know he believed in and respected God. The apostle Peter calls him "righteous Lot."³ When the angels came to the gate of Sodom, he bowed to the Earth, called them lords, urged them into his home, and fed them. While the Bible does not tell us, Abraham must have spoken at length to Lot about the Lord and set a righteous example for him for many years.

Yet, we have some other clues about Lot's character. When the angels were urging him to flee the city to save himself and his family, Lot "lingered."⁴ Why did he linger? Perhaps for the love of his friends and family who remained, or perhaps for the loss of his many possessions and business. He called the sinful men of the city "brethren,"⁵ so he was close with at least some of them.

¹ Genesis 13:6

² Genesis 14:12–16

³ 2 Peter 2:7

⁴ Genesis 19:16

⁵ Genesis 19:7

The angels had to physically touch and move his family to save them.¹ After removing him from the city and telling him to escape to the mountains, Lot asked to go into a little city, even begging (“is it not a little one?”) that his “soul might live.”²

What was the state of Lot’s heart? While he believed in the Lord and was righteous, it seems he clung to his soul-life and could not let go. This is a common state for many of us today. We are Christians, yes, but still attached and clinging to our material, soulish lives. Due to our social circle or business or the culture of a bustling city, our hearts are not fully following the Lord. Lot is a conflicted soul, but by the grace of God his life was saved.

Lot’s Family

The mentions of Lot’s family are even scarcer than those of Lot himself. Yet there are a few meaningful details. Before destroying Sodom, the angels told Lot to bring his son-in-law, his sons, his daughters, and anyone else he had out of the city.³

How did the angels know to ask about his sons-in-law, his sons (knowing there were more than one) and his daughters? They may have learned of

¹ Genesis 19:16

² Genesis 19:20

³ Genesis 19:12

Lot's family from their meal and discussion with Abraham, as speculated in the first section of this booklet. We see Lot's wife, daughters, and sons-in-law (which implies other, married daughters) in the rest of the chapter, but not his sons that the angels mentioned. Perhaps his sons had become estranged from the family or, hopefully, had left the evil city, because Lot does not mention them or bring them from the city.

Lot listened to the angels' urging and told his sons-in-law to leave,¹ but they thought he was joking and did not heed his warning. Consider what kind of relationship they had. Did they respect Lot and share his fear of the Lord? If Lot had spoken frequently about the Lord to them, would they have taken his speaking for a joke?

Lot's wife is only mentioned twice in the Bible. She disobeyed the angels' charge by looking back to Sodom and thus became a pillar of salt.² Why did she look back? Presumably for the same reason that Lot lingered. Her soul-life was in that city, and she still longed for it. Why did she turn into a pillar of salt? It seems there was, and remains, a huge deposit of salt in the plains area near the Dead Sea, where Sodom was probably located. What was in

¹ Genesis 19:14

² Genesis 19:26. The other reference is Luke 17:32, recalling Genesis 19:26

Lot's wife's heart? It seems that her heart was filled with the city and her life there. It is as if she permanently became part of that very landscape—the land was filled with salt, and she was one with it. Salt can also stunt and even kill life, by absorbing the water around it. The rich life of God had no fertile ground in those cities of the plains and, evidently, neither in the heart of Lot's wife.

After some time, Lot fled from Zoar into the mountains. Perhaps he realized that judgement could come again, even in that “little city.” In the cave where they lived, his daughters take turns inebriating their father to unconsciousness and having intercourse with him. We do not know how old the daughters were, but these were his virgin, unmarried daughters, so they were likely still young. How did they learn to do such things? How and why did it come into their mind to do this? How did they know that getting their father drunk would let them do whatever they wished? Not only was this a damaging sin to the daughters and their father, but the offspring of that sin led to myriad troubles for Israel in the future. From this incest sprang the Moabites and the Ammonites. These people plagued the children of Israel, leading them to battles and even idol worship.¹

Often, we can learn about a person from their family. The way parents raise their children is reveal-

¹ Numbers 25

ed in the children's behavior. After years of living together, a wife may come to share the same views as her husband, or a husband may adopt his wife's manner of speaking. Each individual is heavily influenced by the words and actions of the head of that household. What examples did these girls have growing up? We know one for certain: Lot himself offered his precious virgin daughters to the mad crowd outside his door.¹ We can only guess at the other examples these daughters saw from their mother, father, and the evil city around them. This family was in such a sad condition.

Lot's Household Leadership

Lot was righteous, and yet his heart was not fully for God, as we have seen. His life was still saved, but what about his household? Lot's sons-in-law perished in the city, as did his friends. His wife turned to salt. His daughters deeply damaged their bodies and souls and inflicted future sin upon the children of Israel. Lot's household was utterly ruined.

The message here is one of warning and promise. It is not enough to believe and be saved. Lot believed, was considered righteous, and he indeed was saved from the destruction of his city. But his

¹ Genesis 19:8

lack of full conviction and consecration to God allowed his entire household to go to ruin. We, likewise, cannot be on the fence, believing in God but attached to our soul-lives. Our children and household will see this and learn from it as an example. If, however, we are 100% for the Lord in all ways, speaking Him, living Him, walking with Him, our families will see this and learn from a proper example. When we later warn them, they will listen and know we are not joking. When we lead them somewhere, they will not look back.



May the Lord Jesus put this responsibility clearly in our hearts and lead us to be wholly for Him, that He would save our households along with us.

*“For I have known him, to the end that he may **command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.**” (Genesis 18:19)*