

# Judgment and Intercession

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The video version is available at: <https://youtu.be/uAL5fJ8JI4o>

The scripture reading is Genesis 18:16-19:29

This Torah portion is called Vayera which means "and he appeared." The primary focus of this Portion is the story of Isaac, his miraculous birth and near sacrifice by his father Abraham. The story of Isaac is perhaps the most well-known and read account in the Bible after Noah and the flood. But there is far more in this Torah portion. In it we find the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot's family. Sodom and Gomorrah are two of the cities of the plain. It appears that their sin has reached its fullness and the LORD has heard the outcry.

Genesis 18:20-21 NKJV 20 And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

In the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah we find a picture or shadow of the coming judgment at the end of the age and the intercession by Abraham on behalf of his nephew Lot and his family are a foreshadow of the intercession of Messiah Yeshua.

At the time of Noah, the world was full of evil and violence. The sin of Adam had fundamentally changed the nature of man as well as the entire creation. Judgment came on the whole earth in the form of a flood. Only Noah, his family, and the animals God had chosen would be spared this judgment.

Genesis 6:13-14 NKJV 13 And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 "Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.

Following the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and all living things that the earth would never again be destroyed by a flood.

Genesis 9:11-13 NKJV 11 "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

But God did not promise there would be no further judgment, just that He would not again judge the earth by a global flood. The apostle Peter warned us that a future judgment would be by fire.

2 Peter 3:5-7 NKJV 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

This week as we read about the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see a foreshadow of this judgment by fire to come. On more than one occasion Yeshua spoke of judgment by making a comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Matthew 10:14-15 NKJV 14 "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. 15 "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

Luke records Yeshua making an even more direct comparison.

Luke 17:28-30 NKJV 28 "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Fifty years after Yeshua's crucifixion and resurrection, the apostle John was given a great vision while exiled and imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos. John was instructed to write down this vision and it became the book of Revelation. In chapters 18 and 19 of Revelation John gives us a deeper insight into the state of mankind and the world at the time of Messiah's return.

Revelation 18:1-3 NKJV 1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

This description of the judgment against Babylon at the end of the age closely parallels the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's day. One day the LORD appeared to Abraham along with three mysterious men.

Genesis 18:1-4 NKJV 1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, 3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. 4 "Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

Abraham encourages these men to stay and rest. Abraham quickly requests that Sarah prepare bread for the guests while he retrieved a young calf from his herd to prepare a meal. As they ate, the men made a startling announcement that Sarah would bear a son. After the meal and after assuring Abraham and Sarah that the news about a son was true, the men arose and made their way toward Sodom.

Genesis 18:16 NKJV 16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

Sodom, along with Gomorrah were two of the cities of the plain. When Abraham came to the land of Canaan, he dwelt nearby.

Genesis 13:12 NKJV 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.

The word Sodom is number 5467 in the Strong's Concordance from an unused root meaning to scorch; burnt as in volcanic or bituminous. Gomorrah is from the root word 'amar, number 6014 meaning a ruined heap. Just as the apostle John described Babylon in Revelation, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had turned from God and become cities of great evil.

The three men who came to visit Abraham were God's advance party sent to deal with the cities of the plain. After their meal with Abraham and Sarah, the men leave Abraham's tent and head to Sodom while Abraham pleads and intercedes with the LORD on behalf of the righteous living in the city.

Genesis 18:22-25 NKJV 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. 23 And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? 25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

John also speaks in Revelation of an intercessor pleading for the righteous to leave Babylon before judgment is brought upon it.

Revelation 18:4-5 NKJV 4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Abraham bargains with the LORD on behalf of the righteous souls living in Sodom. In the end, the LORD agrees not to destroy the city for the sake of just ten righteous. According to E.W. Bullinger, the number ten indicates a completeness or perfection of divine order.<sup>i</sup> In the Bible, a single household is often considered to consist of ten individuals. Abraham may have been negotiating on behalf of his nephew Lot and his family.

There is much speculation as to who these men were who came to visit Abraham and Sarah. Were they men, or were they angels? There were three who visited Abraham. The common consensus is that all three were angels. The Jewish Sage Rashi comments:

"Here the two visitors are called angels, but when they came to Abraham, they were called men. When they came to Abraham, God was with them, making them seem no more than ordinary mortals."<sup>ii</sup>

The story continues in chapter 19, where the two, now referred to as angels arrive at Sodom.

Genesis 19:1-2 NKJV 1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. 2 And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square."

Lot was sitting at the gate of the city. This is normally a place where city judges would sit to render decisions as leaders of the city. Was Lot one such leader? Given the level sin and depravity in Sodom, it seems unlikely. More probable is that Lot was there to protect strangers and travelers from the evil surrounding him. Lot insists that the angels come with him to his home.

Genesis 19:3 NKJV 3 But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

It wasn't long after the angels were in Lot's home that many residents of the city came to Lot's door demanding that the guests be turned over to them.

Genesis 19:4-5 NKJV 4 Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. 5 And they called to Lot and said to

him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

The men of Sodom now demanded that Lot's guests be turned over to them for evil and depraved purposes. Lot had invited the angels into his home, provided a shared meal for them and his family, in essence, Lot had entered into a threshold covenant with his guests. Under the provisions of a threshold covenant, Lot was obligated to protect his guests even at the expense of his own life and that of his family. Lot went outside to speak with the unruly crowd.

Genesis 19:6-8 NKJV 6 So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, 7 and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! 8 "See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

Lot was prepared to protect his guests at all costs, even at the expense of his own daughters. But that wasn't good enough for the gathered crowd.

Genesis 19:9-11 NKJV 9 And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. 10 But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. 11 And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.

When they tried to force their way into Lot's house, they were struck blind by the angels. The men of Sodom could not even find their way out. The angels told Lot to take his family and flee the city immediately, warning Lot of the imminent destruction of the city and all its inhabitants.

Genesis 19:12-13 NKJV 12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city-take them out of this place! 13 "For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

This warning to Lot and his family to flee Sodom is very much like the warning in Revelation for the believers to flee Babylon.

Revelation 18:4-7 NKJV 4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

It would indeed be very difficult for Lot and his family members to refrain from participating in or being heavily influenced by the sins of the city around them. It will be difficult for the believers who live in the Babylon of Revelation to just up and leave everything behind when the final judgment is immanent.

Lot fled Sodom in the night. Perhaps the very night that the angels came to his house. He fled to a place called Zoar in the mountains. The word Zoar is from the root word tzaw'ar, number 6819 meaning to be small, or a small place. Once Lot was safely in Zoar, God sent judgment on Sodom and the other cities of the plain.

Genesis 19:23-26 NKJV 23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. 24 Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Just as with Sodom, the Babylon of Revelation will face sudden and complete destruction by fire.

Revelation 18:8 NKJV 8 "Therefore her plagues will come in one day--death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

On the morning following God's judgment against Sodom and all the cities of the plain, Abraham observed the aftermath.

Genesis 19:27-29 NKJV 27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. 29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

Sodom and the other cities of the plain were destroyed in a day. Babylon of Revelation will be destroyed in a day. In both cases the destruction did not and will not come until the righteous are removed from the cities. But the warnings about judgment are interwoven throughout the scriptures. Lot and his household were warned by the angels to not look back as they fled Sodom. Lot's wife did not heed the warning!

The important thing for us to remember is that God never forgets His promises. God made a promise and covenant with Abraham and sent His angels to rescue Lot and his family from the impending judgment. The great lesson we can learn from the account of Sodom and Gomorrah is to always be ready. God will keep His promise to us, the promise of eternal salvation through Messiah Yeshua. When Messiah calls, we must listen. When it is time to flee from our Babylon, we must be ready to flee at a moments notice and not look back to the things that would keep us from reaching the safety of our Zoar, our little place of refuge and safety.

Study Questions:

1. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is normally associated with sexual immorality. There are other suggestions according to Ezekiel 16:49-50. How does this Ezekiel scripture apply to the situation in Sodom? How does it apply to the Babylon of Revelation?
2. Discuss the parallels to Yeshua of both judgment and intercession in this teaching?
3. Look up other references to Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible. How do these other references compare to this teaching?
4. Discuss Abraham bargaining with the LORD in Genesis 18:22-33. Compare this with others who bargained or argued their case before the LORD.
5. Lot and his family did not engage in the sins of their surrounding culture in the city of Sodom. What are the implications of Genesis 19:16 and how does it apply to us.
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

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<sup>i</sup> E.W. Bullinger, Number in Scripture, Cosmo Publishing, p243 (public domain)

<sup>ii</sup> Rashi, as quoted in the Chumash, Artscroll edition, Mesorah publishers, 1998, p85