

Genesis 13: Abram and Lot separate

- I. Abram arrives at Bethel and worship the Lord (verses 1-4)
- II. Disputes between the herdsman of Abram and the herdsman of Lot (verses 5-7)
- III. The agreement between Abram and Lot (verses 8-13)
 - a. Abram allows Lot to select his own land (verses 8-9).
 - b. Lot chooses land close to the city of Sodom (verses 10-13). Lot lifts up his eyes and sees that the Jordan Valley (the area of Sodom) was well watered and like the “garden of the Lord,” like the land of Egypt... In other words, Lot chose what looked good.
- IV. The assurance: After Lot’s departure, God again promises to make Abram’s descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth and to give them the land of Canaan.¹

- I. Abram arrives at Bethel and worship the Lord (verses 1-4)

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.

² Now Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. ³ And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴ to the place of the altar which he had made there previously; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

- a. This is continuing from his time in Egypt.
- b. **CHRYSOSTOM:** *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 seeing this sudden transformation that had taken place—the stranger who had gone down into Egypt as a refugee and vagabond now flush with so much wealth. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 33.4–5.*²
- c. **MOODY:** *Canaan was a fruitful land and hence in high demand in Abram’s day (as today). The Canaanites, as already noted (see comment on 10:6–20; cf. Gn 10:15–19), were in fact a collection of sociopolitical and ethnic groups situated throughout the land and always therefore in the background as potential competitors wherever Abram went. That Abram’s descendants eventually became the dominant force throughout all that land is thus powerful testimony of God’s sovereign involvement in fulfilling His promise.*³

¹ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Ge 13:14–18.

² James Stuart Bell, ed., [Ancient Faith Study Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles, 2019), 19. cf. compare or consult

³ Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., [“Genesis,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 70.

- d. The competition for this fruitful land was fierce, all the more so because of the increased wealth in livestock and servants Abram had acquired in Egypt from Pharaoh (12:16). **And that was in addition to the large entourage Abram had already brought with him from Mesopotamia (conservatively numbering at least 500 people** and their necessary provisions; see 14:14). As Lot also had his own large entourage, **strife between ... the herdsmen** was inevitable. So Abram called on Lot to **separate** (i.e., distance himself) **from him**, giving his nephew the first choice of location. The strife between relatives in this passage reflects a common theme in Genesis (see comments on 4:8).⁴
- e. Abram went up from Egypt. This is likely because Israel had a higher elevation.
- f. Negev is another way of saying the south country. As the ESV Study Bible shares: *Expelled from Egypt, Abram retraces his steps northward, through the Negeb, back to the hill country between Bethel and Ai where he had previously built an altar (12:8).*⁵
- g. Also, the CSB shares: **Negev**, the last place he had lived in the promised land (12:9) before his departure to Africa.⁶
- h. **NEGEV** (נֶגֶב), negev; “south” or “dry”; also spelled Negeb). An arid region of Israel south of the Judaeen Hills and the Shephelah and east of the lower reaches of the Philistine Plain; location of the cities of Beer-sheba, Ziklag, Gerar, and Arad.⁷
- i. Genesis 12:9 mentions the Negeb.
- j. Abram is pretty wealthy so it is he and his wife and all that belonged to him. Verse 2 mentions his wealth. Livestock, silver, gold.
- k. IVP BBC OT: **From the border of Egypt to the area of Bethel/Ai would be a journey of about two hundred miles.**⁸
- l. Verse 3 shares more about his journey. He journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel basically back to where his tent had been. The CSB shares: **Abram moved northward to Bethel, an area of Canaan with greater rainfall—and thus more vegetation—than the Negev. This move was probably necessary in order to feed the large flocks of Abram and his nephew Lot.**⁹

i.e. that is

⁴ Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., [“Genesis,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 70.

⁵ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 73.

⁶ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 29.

⁷ Brandon Ridley, [“Negev,”](#) ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ge 13:1–4.

⁹ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 29.

- m. Bethel would be north of Jerusalem.
 - n. Genesis 12:8 references him being there before.
 - o. Verse 4: he goes to the place of the alter which he made formerly. Now, it says that he called on the name of the Lord again.
 - p. NET: Heb “he called in the name of the LORD.” **The expression refers to worshipping the Lord through prayer and sacrifice** (see Gen 4:26; 12:8; 21:33; 26:25). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis (WBC)*, 1:116, 281.¹⁰
 - q. See Genesis 12:7-8 about that.
 - r. It is a big deal that he calls on the name of the Lord. The CSB shares: *Abram’s physical return to the place where God first spoke to him in the promised land was paralleled by a spiritual recommitment of his life to God. For the first time since he left Canaan for Egypt, Abram called on the name of the LORD.*¹¹
- II. Disputes between the herdsman of Abram and the herdsman of Lot (verses 5-7)
Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents. ⁶ And the land could not support both of them while living together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. ⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. Now the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land at that time.
- a. Now Lot went with him.
 - b. So, we have Abram’s wealth and we have Lot’s wealth. MacArthur shares: **flocks and herds. Wealth in the ancient world was measured, not by land owned, but by the size of one’s herds and the possession of silver, gold, and jewels (cf. v. 2; Job 1:1–3).**¹²
 - c. Verse 6 shares their great wealth.
 - d. In a way, they have a good problem to have.
 - e. Verse 7: strife between the herdsman. It sounds like Lot and Abram were okay.
 - f. NET: **The Hebrew term רִיב (riv) means “strife, conflict, quarreling.” In later texts it has the meaning of “legal controversy, dispute.”** See B. Gemser, “The rîb—or Controversy—Pattern in Hebrew Mentality,” *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East [VTSup]*, 120–37.¹³
 - g. *Since the quarreling was between the herdsmen, the dispute was no doubt over water and vegetation for the animals.*¹⁴
 - h. Dr. Constable: **Lot would have been the most likely candidate for the role of Abram’s heir since Sarai was barren. He was a part of Abram’s household and a blood relative**

WBC *Word Biblical Commentary* (a commentary series)

¹⁰ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 13:4.

¹¹ Robert D. Bergen, “[Genesis](#),” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 29.

¹² John F. MacArthur Jr., [The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible](#). (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ge 13:5.

VTSup *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*

¹³ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 13:7.

¹⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 13:7.

(nephew). Abram probably regarded Lot at this time as the heir through whom God would fulfill His promises.¹⁵

- i. We will see this come up again in Genesis 36:6 with Esau and Jacob. In Genesis 26:20 we will again see strife between herdsman.
- j. Interesting how verse 7 shares that the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land as well.
- k. MacArthur shares: **Perizzite**. A Canaanite tribe. Cf. 34:30; Dt 7:1; Jdg 1:4; 3:5, 6; 1Ki 9:20, 21; Ezr 9:1.¹⁶
- l. *ESV Study Bible*: The pressure on pastureland may well have been increased by the fact that **the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land**. Cf. the similar notice in 12:6.¹⁷

Extra information about Perizzites, etc:

The difficulty was increased by the fact that the Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling in the land, so that the space was very contracted. The Perizzites, who are mentioned here and in Gen. 34:30, Judg. 1:4, along with the Canaanites, and who are placed in the other lists of the inhabitants of Canaan among the different Canaanitish tribes (Gen. 15:20; Ex. 3:8, 17, etc.), are not mentioned among the descendants of Canaan (Gen. 10:15–17), and may therefore, like the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, and Rephaim (Gen. 15:19–21), not have been descendants of Ham at all. The common explanation of the name Perizzite as equivalent to יָשֵׁב אֶרֶץ פְּרִזָּוֹת “inhabitant of the level ground” (Ezek. 38:11), is at variance not only with the form of the word, the inhabitant of the level ground being called הַפְּרִזִּי (Deut. 3:5), but with the fact of their combination sometimes with the Canaanites, sometimes with the other tribes of Canaan, whose names were derived from their founders. Moreover, to explain the term “Canaanite,” as denoting “the civilised inhabitants of towns,” or “the trading Phoenicians,” is just as arbitrary as if we were to regard the Kenites, Kenizzites, and the other tribes mentioned Gen. 15:19ff. along with the Canaanites, as all alike traders or inhabitants of towns. The origin of the name Perizzite is involved in obscurity, like that of the Kenites and other tribes settled in Canaan that were not descended from Ham. But we may infer from the frequency with which they are mentioned in connection with the Hamitic inhabitants of Canaan, that they were widely dispersed among the latter. Vid., Gen. 15:19–21.¹⁸

III. The agreement between Abram and Lot (verses 8-13)

So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are relatives!⁹ Is the entire land not before you? Please

¹⁵ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:5.

¹⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., [The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible](#). (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ge 13:7.

¹⁷ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 73.

¹⁸ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [Commentary on the Old Testament](#), vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 127.

separate from me; if you choose the left, then I will go to the right; or if you choose the right, then I will go to the left.”¹⁰ Lot raised his eyes and saw all the vicinity of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt going toward Zoar.¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the vicinity of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. So they separated from each other.¹² Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the vicinity of the Jordan, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.¹³ Now the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked sinners against the LORD.

- a. Abram allows Lot to select his own land (verses 8-9).
- b. Sodom and Gomorrah probably near the dead sea... see below:
- c. Moody: *It may seem surprising to read that (1) such fierce competition existed in this region of the Negev, which is primarily a desert, and (2) that Lot, when given first choice, chose not only to stay in that general area, but, in particular, to relocate to the especially inhospitable region along the southern shore of what is today the Dead Sea (the general area where most contemporary scholars locate Sodom and Gomorrah).* That the land Lot chose **was well watered everywhere** (v. 10) contrasts with the situation familiar to the Israelites and to people today. The answer is that all of this took place **before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah**. In other words, the inhospitable, barren state of that portion of the upper Negev and lower Jordan Valley (i.e., the “Dead Sea”) region is the direct result of the manner by which God judged the sins of the Canaanites who lived there. This stands in direct contrast to the theory that the formation of the Dead Sea and barrenness of the surrounding area resulted from millions of years of interrelated geologic processes. The sudden transformation of this region that was **well watered** and filled with life **like the garden of the LORD** to a region whose land and water are all but dead serves as a reminder of the consequence of sin (2Pt 2:6).¹⁹
- d. Dr. Constable: *“Of special interest is that in Genesis 12:10–13:4 Lot occupies the same position as that of the ‘mixed multitude’ (Ex 12:38) in the narrative of Genesis 41—Exodus 12. In other words the author apparently wants to draw the reader’s attention to the identification of Lot with the ‘mixed multitude.’ It is as if Lot is seen in these narratives as the prefiguration of the ‘mixed multitude’ that comes out of Egypt with the Israelites.”*²⁰
- e. **AMBROSE:** *Abraham made the division, because “the territory”—says Scripture—“was insufficient to contain them both,” because they were too rich. It is a worldly vice that land is always insufficient for the rich.... The richer one is, the more greedily one desires possessions. The rich man is eager to extend the boundaries of his field, to exclude his neighbor. Is this what Abraham was like? Not at all, although ... he too*

v. verse

i.e. that is

¹⁹ Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., [“Genesis,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 70–71.

²⁰ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:1.

was imperfect. For where could perfection have come from before the coming of Christ? He had not yet come who was to say, “If you will be perfect, go, sell everything you possess and give it to the poor and come follow me” [Mt 19:21]. However, Abraham offers the choice, quite unlike what a greedy person would do. Like a just man he forestalls strife. **ON ABRAHAM 1.3.12.**²¹

- f. **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. **ON ABRAHAM 2.6.33.**²²
- g. CSB: Since they were **relatives** and were surrounded by people groups that had no reason to be friendly to them, it was important that they work out a compromise.²³
- h. Abram is taking the more noble route. He lets his nephew choose.
- i. Abram does not want strife. He does not want strife between him and Lot, nor between the herdsman. They are relatives. That means something.
- j. Verse 9: Abram will let Lot choose and he will choose the opposite.
- k. CSB: Abram realized the only way to end the dispute was for them to **separate**. As senior member and head of the clan, he should have been the one to select the region where he would live. But Abram graciously handed the choice over to Lot, allowing his nephew to lay claim to the most desirable spot in **the whole land.**²⁴
- l. Lot chooses land close to the city of Sodom (verses 10-13). Lot lifts up his eyes and sees that the Jordan Valley (the area of Sodom) was well watered and like the “garden of the Lord,” like the land of Egypt... In other words, Lot chose what looked good.
- m. NET: Heb “lifted up his eyes and saw.” The expression draws attention to the act of looking, indicating that Lot took a good look. It also calls attention to the importance of what was seen.²⁵
- n. MacArthur: **before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.** When Moses was writing (700 years after Abram came to Canaan) the devastation of that region had long before occurred by divinely initiated catastrophe (19:23–29), totally obliterating any evidence of its agricultural richness. **like the garden of the LORD, like ... Egypt.** This 2-fold appraisal of the Jordan Valley, with its meadows on either side of the river to which Lot was so strongly attracted, highlighted its lush and fertile nature. Moses, reading this to the Jews about to enter Canaan and likening it to the Garden of Eden, referred hearer and reader to God’s revelatory description of it (Ge 2:8–15). Likening

²¹ James Stuart Bell, ed., [Ancient Faith Study Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles, 2019), 19.

²² James Stuart Bell, ed., [Ancient Faith Study Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles, 2019), 19.

²³ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

²⁴ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

²⁵ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 13:10.

- it to an obviously well known and well irrigated region of Egypt referred them to a place the Jews had likely known well in their sojourn in Egypt. **Zoar**. Cf. 4:2. A town located at the S end of the Dead Sea, whose name means “small place” (see 19:22).²⁶
- o. CSB: Thinking especially of his flocks’ need for water and pasture, Lot was particularly interested in the southern end of the **plain of the Jordan**, an area that **was well watered everywhere**. So well off was this region **before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah**, two prominent cities located there (19:24–25), that it was reputed to be as lush as **the LORD’s garden**—or the garden of Eden (2:9–10). The name **Zoar** anticipates the events of 19:20–22; the name of the village at this time was Bela (14:2).²⁷
 - p. ESV: This description of the Jordan Valley predates the destruction of **Sodom and Gomorrah**, which may have adversely affected the suitability of this area for flocks and herds. The precise location of these cities is unknown; one possibility is the plain southeast of the Dead Sea.²⁸

Swindoll shares:

WHEN LOT was making a decision about which land to choose, he didn’t consider God as a factor in shaping his future. He made all his calculations based upon the potential influences of nature and humanity, never considering that God might alter the world on his behalf. He looked in the Jordan River Valley and saw only lush, green vegetation for his flocks and rich, wholesome soil for his crops.

Lot failed to consider the potential danger represented by settling among the twin cities that occupied that valley. Lot never once asked God for His guidance. From a strictly horizontal perspective, the decision was a no-brainer. Consequently, with greed as his guide, he placed himself, his family, and his future in jeopardy.

I can’t imagine why anyone would want to ignore that vertical component. It’s like trying to navigate without a map—limited to what you can see and hear in your immediate area—when you could have a GPS device feeding you turn-by-turn instructions. Not only can God see everything we cannot, He wants to steer us through this dangerous landscape and bring us safely to our destination.

I realize we don’t get visitations from God in visible, audible form. But the Lord speaks and leads nonetheless. He’s there, and He wants to lead you.²⁹

- q. In verse 11 they separate. Lot chooses his area.
- r. CSB: To the careful reader, **Lot’s journey eastward has some troubling implications. Other situations in the early chapters of Genesis in which the “east” is mentioned**

²⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ge 13:10.

²⁷ Robert D. Bergen, “Genesis,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

²⁸ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 74.

²⁹ https://insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/navigating-without-a-map?utm_source=mailchimp&utm_medium=email&utm_content=ifldailydevo&utm_campaign=daily-devotional&goal=0_daec2b65fd-1dff5be3e4-106822917

as a destination include those of Adam and Eve following their sin in Eden (3:24), Cain following his judgment (4:16), and sinful humanity prior to the tower of Babylon incident (11:2).³⁰

- s. Though Dr. Constable shares: *In offering Lot either the “left” or the “right” (v. 9) Abram was evidently suggesting that he and Lot partition the Promised Land; he would take one part and his nephew the other (cf. 22:3–10). Important to our appreciation of Abram’s offer is knowledge of the fact that the Hebrews, as well as other ancient peoples, were eastern oriented (as contrasted with northern oriented, as we are). Abram and Lot were probably looking east when Abram made his suggestion (v. 9). Thus “Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the valley of the Jordan” (v. 10), which was to the east of where they stood (perhaps on Mt. Asor, the highest point in that part of Canaan, and only a short walk from both Bethel and Ai). Thus when Abram offered Lot what was on his left he was referring to northern Canaan, the area around Shechem (cf. 12:6; 33:18–34:31; 37:12–17) as far south as Bethel and Ai. The other choice was what was on their right: southern Canaan including Hebron and the Negev (cf. 13:6, 9; 13:1, 18; 20:1; et al.). Both men had previously lived in both regions.*³¹ Further: **Lot, however, chose neither of these options, north or south. Instead he decided to move east into the valley of the Jordan (v. 11). Earlier we read that Adam, Eve, and Cain traveled east after they sinned (3:24; 4:16) and that the people of Babel went east and rebelled against God (11:2). Thus Lot’s move east makes us a bit uneasy (cf. 12:3). At this time the Jordan River was the eastern border of Canaan that continued south from the southeastern end of the Salt (Dead) Sea and southwest toward Kadesh Barnea (10:19). It then proceeded to the Great (Mediterranean) Sea along the Wadi el Arish (Brook of Egypt; cf. Num. 34:1–29; Josh. 15:1–14). The text contrasts “the land of Canaan” with “the cities of the Valley” (v. 12). The place Lot chose to settle was on the eastern frontier of the Promised Land (v. 11).**³²
- t. In verse 12: Abram settled in the land of Canaan. Lot settled in the cities of the Valley and moved his tents as far as Sodom.
- u. CSB: *Lot apparently lived a transitional existence, living **in the cities on the plain** while also maintaining a **tent camp near Sodom** in order to maintain his flocks.*³³
- v. Verse 13 his introducing us to what will happen later on. *The men of Sodom were very wicked, exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.*
- w. That is strong language.

³⁰ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

³¹ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:8.

³² Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:11.

³³ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

- x. **AMBROSE:** *The reason Abraham was unable to obtain pardon for the Sodomites through his prayer is that their malice was beyond all measure. There are many people who the more wicked they are the more sheltered and secure they seem to be. They find ways of escaping human detection, where things are done without supervision or where a just person is indicted through false testimony. The just person remains just before God, even if others condemn him. God does not look at the outcome of trials or judicial actions based on unjust machinations but observes matters in their naked reality. ON ABRAHAM 2.6.36.*³⁴
- y. Ezekiel 16:49: *Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.*
- z. CSB: *The **evil state of the men of Sodom** and how they were **sinning immensely against the LORD** will be addressed further in 18:20–19:25.*³⁵

IV. The assurance: After Lot's departure, God again promises to make Abram's descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth and to give them the land of Canaan (verses 14-18).³⁶

The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now raise your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward, and eastward and westward; ¹⁵for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶I will make your descendants as plentiful as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can count the dust of the earth, then your descendants could also be counted. ¹⁷Arise, walk about in the land through its length and width; for I will give it to you." ¹⁸Then Abram moved his tent and came and lived by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron; and there he built an altar to the LORD.

- a. So, now Lot has left...
- b. I wonder if we read over that too quickly. Lot and Abram had been together since Ur. I wonder how difficult that was. I imagine that they had family dinner together and so much more and now they are separated.
- c. Keil and Delitch: **After Lot's departure, Jehovah repeated to Abram (by a mental, inward assurance, as we may infer from the fact that אָמַר "said" is not accompanied by אָרָא "he appeared")...**³⁷

Dr. Constable: *This promise was more specific than God's previous promises regarding the seed and the land (12:2, 7). This was God's third revelation to Abram. It contained three specifics.*

1. *Abram's heir would be his own seed (offspring; vv. 15–16).*

³⁴ James Stuart Bell, ed., [Ancient Faith Study Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles, 2019), 19.

³⁵ Robert D. Bergen, ["Genesis,"](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

³⁶ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Ge 13:14–18.

³⁷ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [Commentary on the Old Testament](#), vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 128.

2. God would give the land to Abram and his descendants forever (v. 15).
3. Abram's descendants would be innumerable (v. 16).³⁸

The figure of "dust" suggests physical seed (v. 16; cf. 2:7). The "stars" figure given later (15:5) suggests heavenly or spiritual seed, in addition to physical seed. God's encouragement to walk through the land (v. 17) suggested that Abram should claim the promise by treading the land under his feet. In the ancient Near East victorious armies claimed defeated territory by marching through it.³⁹

The divine promise of land and other blessings (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 17:1–8) is in the form of a covenant known technically in ancient Near Eastern studies as a 'covenant of grant.' It was made at the initiative of the granter and often with no preconditions or qualifications.⁴⁴⁹⁴⁰

- d. God is giving Abram assurance of His covenant with him.
- e. The Lord speaks to him. Don't miss that.
- f. God has him look in all directions.
- g. His descendants will have all of the land that he sees, and they will have it forever.
- h. Genesis 28:14 is similar to verse 14.
- i. Verse 16: there is more about his descendants. His descendants will be innumerable.
- j. This is repeated in: Gen 16:10; 28:14; Num 23:10⁴¹
- k. *AUGUSTINE: [T]hat multitude which was promised to Abraham is not innumerable to God, although it is to the human mind. But to God not even the dust of the earth is so. Further, the promise here made may be understood not only of the nation of Israel but of the whole seed of Abraham, which may be fitly compared with the dust for its multitude. Regarding this seed, there is also the promise of many children, not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.... [E]ven the multitude of the one people sprung from Abraham, according to the flesh, through his grandson Jacob, has increased so greatly as to fill almost every region of the world. It is because even the number of this progeny is beyond human power to count that it may, by a hyperbole, be compared with the number of dust particles. What is beyond doubt is that the only land meant is that which is called Canaan. However, some may find a difficulty in the expression "I will give to you and your posterity forever," if the "forever" is taken to mean "eternally." There is no trouble if only they will take this*

³⁸ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:14.

³⁹ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:14.

⁴⁴⁹ 449. Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 36, n. 39.

⁴⁰ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 13:14.

⁴¹ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

“forever” to mean “to the end of time,” which, as we hold on faith, is to be the beginning of eternity. CITY OF GOD 16.21.⁴²

- l. ESV: **As the dust of the earth** (13:16) is one of three similes used by God to illustrate the large number of offspring that Abram will have (cf. 15:5; 22:17). At this stage, Abram still has no children.⁴³
- m. In verse 17 God continues: walk the land....
- n. Verse 18: Abram moves his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron.
- o. Abram: **the oaks of Mamre**. A distinctively large grove of trees owned by Mamre the Amorite (14:13) located ca. 19 mi. SW of Jerusalem at Hebron whose elevation exceeds 3,000 feet. **built an altar**. Cf. 12:7, 8; 13:4. He was devoted to the worship of God.⁴⁴
- p. ESV Study Bible: Abram relocates to near **Hebron** (also known as Kiriath-arba; see 23:2), setting up his tent by the **oaks of Mamre**. Since one of Abram’s allies is “Mamre the Amorite” (14:13), the oaks are probably named after him (see note on 12:6).⁴⁵
- q. During the Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000–1500 B.C.), when the patriarchs lived, Hebron was, for its day, a major settlement in the Judean hills. It covered between six and seven acres, was heavily fortified, and contained some large public buildings. A cuneiform tablet discovered there from this time period indicates that Hebron was a capital city of a Canaanite kingdom.⁴⁶
- r. CSB: Hebron became the primary residence of Abram and, later, his son Isaac (18:1; 23:2; 35:27; 37:14).⁴⁷
- s. IVP BBC OT: The city of Hebron is located in the Judean hill country (c. 3,300 feet above sea level) approximately nineteen miles southeast of Jerusalem and twenty-three miles east of Beersheba. Ancient roadways converge on this site coming east from Lachish and connecting with the road north to Jerusalem, indicating its importance and continuous settlement. Its springs and wells provide ample water for olive and grape production and would have supported a mixed agricultural-pastoral economy such as that described in Genesis 23. Hebron is said to have been founded “seven years before Zoan” (Avaris in Egypt), dating it to the seventeenth century B.C. (see comment on Num 13:22). The construction of an altar here, as at Bethel, transforms this into an important religious site, and its subsequent use as a burial

⁴² James Stuart Bell, ed., [Ancient Faith Study Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles, 2019), 19.

⁴³ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 74.

⁴⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., [The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible](#). (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ge 13:18.

⁴⁵ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 74.

c. about, approximately

⁴⁶ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 74.

⁴⁷ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 31.

place for the ancestors established its political importance (reflected in the Davidic narrative—2 Sam 2:1–7; 15:7–12).⁴⁸

t. Abram again builds and alter to the Lord.

CHRIST FULFILLS THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

Irenaeus wrote Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching to survey the many ways the Old Testament testifies to the person and work of Jesus Christ. In this way, he shows the unity of the Old and New Testaments and provides a strong case against the false teachers of his day who argued the Old Testament presents a God inferior to the God of the New Testament. In the following selection, Irenaeus summarizes from this work (24,35) the story of Abraham and how Jesus fulfills God’s promise to have many descendants.

In process of time, that is to say, in the tenth generation after the Flood, Abraham appeared, seeking for the God who by the blessing of his ancestor was due and proper to him. And when, urged by the eagerness of his spirit, he went all about the world, searching where God is, and failed to find out, God took pity on him who alone was silently seeking him. God appeared to Abraham, making himself known by the Word, as by a beam of light. For he spoke with Abraham from heaven and said to him, “Go out of your country, and from your kindred, and from thy father’s house, and come into the land that I will show you” and there dwell (Ac 7:3). And he believed the heavenly voice, being then of ripe age, even seventy years old, and having a wife. Together with her he went forth from Mesopotamia, taking with him Lot, the son of his brother who was dead. And when he came into the land which now is called Judea, in which at that time dwelt seven tribes descended from Ham, God appeared unto him in a vision and said: “To you will I give this land, and to your seed after you, for an everlasting possession,” and (He said) that his seed should be a stranger in a land not their own, ... being afflicted and in bondage four hundred years, ... and that God would judge that race which had brought his seed into bondage. And, that Abraham might know as well the multitude as the glory of his seed, God brought him forth abroad by night, and said: “Look upon the heaven, and behold the stars of the heaven, if you are able to number them. So will your seed be.” And when God saw the undoubting and unwavering certainty of his spirit, he bore witness to him by the Holy Spirit, saying in the Scripture: “And Abraham believed, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rm 4:3). Abraham was uncircumcised when this witness was borne, and so that the excellency of his faith should be made known by a sign, God gave him circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had in uncircumcision. And after this there was born to him a son, Isaac, from Sarah who was barren according to the promise of God. Abraham circumcised Isaac according to that which God had covenanted with him....

¶ *Jesus Christ fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, which God had promised him, to make his seed as the stars of heaven. For this Christ did, who was born of the Virgin who was of*

⁴⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ge 13:18.

Abraham's seed, and constituted those who have faith in him "lights in the world." [B]y the same faith with Abraham [Christ] justified the Gentiles. For "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (see Rm 4:3). In like manner we also are justified by faith in God: for "the just shall live by faith." Now "not by the law is the promise to Abraham, but by faith," for Abraham was justified by faith and "for a righteous man the law is not made." In like manner we also are justified not by the law but by faith, which is witnessed to in the law and in the prophets, whom the Word of God presents to us.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ James Stuart Bell, ed., [Ancient Faith Study Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles, 2019), 20–21.