

## Genesis 13

This chapter records the on-going life of Abram. Specifically, we see that he and his nephew, Lot, are so wealthy in cattle and livestock that the land will not support them. Abram gives Lot the first choice as to where to live. This will clarify that God's blessing of Abram (12:1-3) does not include Lot. Jehovah God appears to Abram again and makes His second promise to Abram to give him the land of Canaan. Abram continues worshipping God on altars he, himself, makes (13:4, 18).

### TRANSLATION - 13:1-5:

**1** Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all which [belonged] to him and Lot with him to the Negev. **2** Now Abram [was] extremely rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. **3** He went on his travels from Negev as far as Bethel, as far as the place which was there, his tent at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, **4** to the place of the altar which he made there formerly and Abram called there on the name of Jehovah. **5** Even Lot was going with Abram. He had flocks and cattle and tents.

### WORDS:

“Rich” (vers. 2) is the word translated “heavy” in 12:10, which can mean “glory” or “honor;” see comments on that text. “Silver” and “gold” illustrate Abram’s wealth. This is the first mention of the word “silver” (403 times). “Gold” was found early in the land of Eden (2:11-12; 392 times). “Beginning” (vers. 3) is used 23 times and means “beginning.” “Formerly” (vers. 4) is used 182 times and means “first” or “former.” It is a related word with “head.”

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

For comments on Bethel and Ai, see 12:8. From Egypt to Bethel and Ai would be about 200 miles.

### COMMENTS:

The last time we saw Lot was in 12:5. Lot has been with Abram while he was in Egypt. Lot, likely, became wealthy there also. This is the first occurrence of “silver” and helps show the wealth that Abram and Lot have accumulated. The wealth was not just in practical matters like sheep and cattle. It was also in monetary terms. Abram came back to Bethel where he had earlier built an altar and worshipped Jehovah God (12:8). What was involved in this act of worship, we do not know. Again, there is no indication it was an offering for sin. We presume it was still thanksgiving, both for the promise of the land he was in but also for keeping Abram safe from Pharaoh.

“Went on his travels” indicates slow movement, pitching a tent and packing it up again. With livestock, the travel was slow (cf. Exo. 17:1; Num. 10:12). The importance of this paragraph was to set the stage for the multiplicity of animals which are going to cause problems between Abram’s cattlemen and Lot’s cattlemen.

### TRANSLATION - 13:6-11:

**6** But the land could not sustain them, to settle together because there they [had] great possessions and they were not able to settle together. **7** And there was a dispute between the shepherds of the livestock of Abram and the shepherds of the livestock of Lot and the Canaanites and the Perrizzites then were settling in the land. **8** So Abram said to Lot, “Please don’t let there be contention between me and you and between my shepherds and your shepherds because men, [even] brothers we are. **9** [Is] not all the land before you? Be spread out please from me! If the left, then let me go to the right and if the right, let me go to the left.” **10** And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan that all of it was being watered before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of

Egypt as you come to Zoar. **11** Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan and Lot traveled to the east and they separated, a man from his brother.

#### WORDS:

“Sustain” (vers. 6; 659 times) is one of those words which has a wide range of meaning, evidenced by the number of times the verb is used. It can mean “lift, carry, raise, or bear.” Here, it carries the idea of “bearing” or “sustaining.” In verse 10, it refers to Lot “lifting up” his eyes and in verse 14, Abram must “lift up” his eyes. “Possessions” (vers. 6; 28 times) is “goods, property, or equipment.” It was used for the first time at 12:5. “Dispute” (vers. 7) can have a legal connotation but here, it simply means a quarrel or dispute. The noun is used 62 times and the verb, 72 times. “Shepherds” (vers. 8) is the participle form of the verb, which is used 167 times with “pasture” used 13 times and “place of grazing,” 10 times.

“Contention” (vers. 8) is a related word with “dispute” in verse 7. “Destroyed” (vers. 10) is used in 38:9 but otherwise only in reference to the flood and the cities in the plain.

“Chose” (vers. 11; 172x) always denotes a careful choice, after deliberation.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Canaanites” (73 times) are descended from Ham, through Canaan. They were their own tribal or ethnic group, but the name can also be used in a broad, general way and “Perizzites” (vers. 7) are mentioned 23 times in the OT, but we do not know anything about them. This is an abbreviated list of the nations which will be driven out of Canaan due to their sins. More complete lists, out of 27 lists total, are found in 14:5-7 and 15:19-21. The Israelites will intermarry with both the Canaanites and the Perizzites (Judges 3:5-6). There is no mention of the Perizzites outside of the Bible.

The “Jordan” (vers. 10; 181 times) will serve a prominent role in the days of Joshua (Joshua 1-4) and it will be the location for John’s baptizing (Matt. 3:5-6, 13) and Jesus’ immersion (15 times in the NT, only in the gospel accounts). The river flows from Mount Hermon in the north through the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea in the south. It separates the western part of Palestine from the eastern part.

Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar, as well as Admah and Zeboiim, are referred to as “cities of the plain” (13:12; 14:2). Zoar was on the southwestern side of the Dead Sea. Some believe that Gomorrah is the modern site of Numeira. It is also believed that Sodom is the modern site of Bad Edh-Dhra. All these cities are likely located at the southern point of the Dead Sea.

The boundaries of God’s gift to Abram’s family are defined in Num. 34:2-12.

#### COMMENTS:

Verse 6 emphasizes twice that the land could not sustain or bear both wealthy men’s livestock. That’s what causes the dispute. As if that wasn’t enough, there were also other peoples, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, living in the land. It is ironic, and yet seems very human, that Lot and Abram’s men seem to be able to live with the non-believers (Canaanites and Perizzites) more easily than they can with family! How frequently do we get along better with co-workers than with family at home? Count the number of occasions the verb “settle” is used in the text. Abram cannot “settle” because there were too many people living in too small a location.

The expression “men, [even] brothers we are” (verse 8) carries the idea that “men should not argue, much less brothers.” Taking the role of a patriarch, Abram graciously allows Lot to make the first choice, to perhaps even choose the best place for his cattle. It was a magnanimous offer since the older uncle had the right to make the first choice. Perhaps it was Abram’s faith in God’s promise to provide for him that allowed Abram to give Lot the first choice.

Lot takes the better choice. Moses uses two expressions to show the rich land in which Lot will settle. First, it was like Jehovah’s garden, the garden of Eden. It seems in those early days, even past the flood, that Eden’s beauty had become proverbial. Second, the land

compared to the rich pastures of Egypt, as far as Zoar. Lot's choice was not necessarily a bad choice; it was pragmatic. He simply did not take into consideration the impact Sodom's morality would have on his own family. He made the logical decision, if not the spiritual decision.

The next time we see Lot, he will be living in Sodom (Gen. 14:12) and it will cost him dearly (Gen. 19). But, as the next paragraph will point out, Lot's absence from Abram will not impact God's promise to Abram in any way.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Abram might not have had "Christian" sensibilities when it came to allowing his wife to be taken by the Pharaoh, but he did have "Christian" sensibilities relative to seeking peace, even if it means taking second place or even leftovers. We do not know if Abram was basing his offer on God's promise to bless him, but we presume it was Abram's faith.

*Contemporaries in Moses' day* - Moses' contemporaries could have learned a lesson from Abram's behavior: God will provide. Allow the Ammonites to have their land. Allow the Edomites to have their land. Allow the Moabites to have their land. God will provide for Israel. Isaac follows a different path when his herdsmen argue with the local inhabitants (26:18-22). Jacob and Esau will experience a similar challenge relative to pastures (36:6-7). Israel would also become wealthy while in Egypt (Exo. 3:22; 12:36).

*Later Hebrew writers* - There is something beautiful about unity (Psa. 133:1). But keeping one's opinions to oneself is necessary for unity to exist. The wise man will caution his readers to avoid "strife": Prov. 17:1, 14; 18:6, 17; 26:17, 21; 30:33.

*NT writers* - The NT has its own incidences of peaceful separation (Acts 15:39; 1 Cor. 7:12-15). If two individuals cannot remain in peace, then the two should separate peacefully (Rom. 12:18).

#### TRANSLATION - 13:12-18:

**12** Abram settled in the land of Canaan and Lot settled among the cities of the plain and he pitched his tent near Sodom. **13** But the men of Sodom [were] evil and extreme sinners before Jehovah.

**14** Then Jehovah said to Abram, after Lot spread out from him, "Lift up your eyes, please, and see from the place where you [are] there, northward, and to the Negev and eastward and seaward. **15** Because all the land which you are seeing, to you I am giving and to your seed indefinitely. **16** And I am making your seed like the dust of the land which, if a man is able to count the dust of the land, even your seed will be counted. **17** Get up! Walk back and forth in the land to its length, to its breadth because to you I am giving it."

**18** So Abram pitched his tent and came and settled among the great trees of Mamre which [was] near Hebron and he built there an altar to Jehovah.

#### WORDS:

"Pitched his tent" (vers. 12, 18) is one word, a verb form of the word "tent."  
"Extreme" (vers. 13) is found at the end of the sentence which emphasizes the degraded nature of Sodom's inhabitants. Since the Negev is to the south, in verse 14, the word means "southward." "Seaward" (vers. 14) is toward the Mediterranean, therefore, "westward."  
"Indefinitely" (vers. 15) translates the adverb often translated "eternal." Since the word means "indefinite," there is no reason to believe Palestine is a permanent gift to the Jews. It served its purpose once Jesus came into the world. The NT lays no importance on Palestine in any way.  
"Great trees" can be translated as "terebinth" or "oaks." They were, simply put, large trees.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Mamre" was an Amorite with whom Abram will develop an alliance (Gen. 14:13). The city is located two miles north of Hebron. The terebinth tree and the oak are some of the best

shade trees in Palestine (cf. Hosea 4:13). They can grow as high as 20-25 feet with a thick trunk and heavy branches. "Hebron" (vers. 18; 62 times) was the highest town in Palestine, located nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. It was also known as Kiriatharba (Gen. 23:2). David will set up his capital at Hebron for seven years (2 Sam. 2:1-4; 5:1-5). The rainfall for the area of Hebron was 20-28" per year, considerably higher than the Negev. There were also 25 springs which provided water for livestock. These two cities have a strong role in the history of the patriarchs and is where the Cave of Machpelah, their burial site, is located (23:17; 25:9; 35:27-29; 49:30; 50:13). Hebron will later be designated a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7; 21:13).

#### COMMENTS:

Abram "walked around" in the Promised Land just as God "walked around" in the Garden (Gen. 3:8) and Enoch and Noah "walked" with God (Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:8-9). This may suggest some type of legal action in which Abram is "taking possession" of the land or "staking his flag" there. Once Lot has left, Abram has no more ties with his father's house.

At first sight, it seems that Lot has received the better land. It was not as occupied; it was well-watered; it was perfect for cattle. Abram's land was occupied, hilly, and less watered. But, the Lord had promised to bless Abram and the Lord will bless him. For Moses to describe Sodom as "evil (cf. 6:5; 8:21) and extreme sinners before Jehovah" shows that God held men accountable to some standard. He did the same with Pharaoh in the previous chapter, even if God had not yet given a written law to Israel or anyone else. The expression "extreme sinners" is only found here. Thus, in two ways, "evil" and "extreme sinners," Moses emphasizes their corrupt behavior and sets the stage for their destruction in chapter 19. Peter will say that Sodom's behavior greatly troubled Lot (2 Peter 2:7).

For God to say "please" to Abram is somewhat unique. The particle, "please," is found 60 times in Genesis. Only four times out of its total uses is it found in the mouth of God toward humans: here, 15:5; 22:2; Exodus 11:2.

Abram has built three altars to Jehovah God in this land, from the north to the south. We again point out that Abram did not use pre-existing altars, which would have been used in pagan worship. He built his own (cf. 12:7-8). He is learning daily to walk with God.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - We do not know if Lot knew of the wickedness and depravity of Sodom when he "pitched his tent" there. Perhaps he learned quickly. Perhaps he made the choice to stay there. Eventually, he will move into Sodom (14:12). We will talk more about Lot when we study chapter 19. Abram, on the other hand, has another communication from God, promising Abram that his "seed" would inherit that land (cf. 12:7), which motivated Abram to worship God. Abram's "seed" would be as innumerable as the dust of the earth (cf. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 28:14; 32:12).

*Contemporaries in Moses' day* - The gift of the land is a strong theme in Deuteronomy (3:18-21; 30:3-5) but God will also warn Israel that they will lose the land if they do not remain faithful (Deut. 6:10-15; 11:8-9; 28:15-21, 36-37, 58-65). The numerous descendants of Abram is a theme in the law (Num. 23:10). God continued to encourage people to be generous, as Abram was, and seek peace (Lev. 19:17-18).

*Later Hebrew writers* - The loss of the land, due primarily to idolatry, was a theme in the prophets (Jer. 31:2-21). Later writers also refer to the number of Abram's descendants (1 Kings 3:8). Later writers continue to encourage seeking peace and being generous (Psa. 122, 133; Prov. 3:17, 29-34).

*NT writers* - Since the "seed" of Abram, under Christ, is broadened to include all those who walk by the faith of Abram, faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:16-18; Gal. 3:24-29), John is able to see the seed of Abram as too many to be counted (Rev. 7:9). Abram's faith will be praised by the Hebrew writer (Heb. 11:8-10). The NT writers follow the OT example and encourage seeking peace with others and being generous toward others (Heb. 12:14; James 3:17-18). The

NT strongly encourages peace-seeking: Matt. 5:22-26, 43-48; Rom. 15:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Eph. 2:14-17.