

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 18



OUTRAGE and OUTCRY

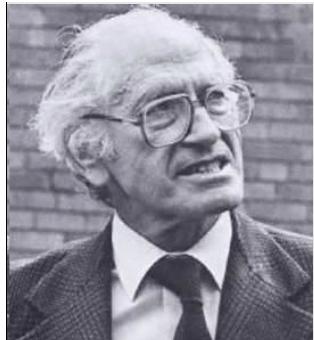
And Jehovah said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now ..." -- Gen. 18:20,21

WHY DOES JUDGEMENT DELAY? (18:16-32)

18:16-19 What privilege belongs to those who fear God? (Ps. 25:4,5,8-14)

The blessing of the nations is bound up with which other promise of the Abrahamic covenant? (12:1-3; Ps. 102:12-17)

(1) No parallels in extra-biblical literature exist to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet the destruction of the cities is referred to so frequently in the Bible that only a historic cataclysm of startling proportions could have impressed itself so deeply on popular memory. The cities most likely stood near the south



Rabbi Gunther Plaut:

Is there any direct evidence for the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah? Not eye-witness, or historical, but ...

end of the present Dead Sea (where today's Sodom is situated). The district is filled with bitumen and salt formations (Gen. 14:10; 19:26; Deut. 29:22) and is part of a deep rift that reaches from Armenia to Central Africa and that runs north/south through the Aravah Valley. The rift is presumed to be the result of a catastrophic earthquake, which might have raised the level of the Dead Sea sufficiently to flood what was formerly the Valley of Siddim (Gen. 14:3) and to submerge the cities. -- **W. Gunther Plaut, The Torah: A Modern Commentary: Genesis** p. 173

18:20-21 If Abraham is to become a "great and mighty nation", what attribute of God must be displayed? (v.25; Isaiah 26:9,10)

(2) The Hebrew words translated here "outrage" and "outcry" are really one and the same (*se'aqah-ze'aqah*). The identical description is repeated as the disaster approaches. *For we are about to destroy this place; because the outcry against them before the Lord has become so great that the Lord has sent us to destroy it.* (19:13) This thrice-repeated, generalized, designation of the Sodomite sin as an "outcry" appears to the English reader to be rather a mild appellation, hardly commensurate with the enormity of punishment. but this is one of those instances in which a Hebrew word cannot be adequately translated into another language. In the course of its linguistic metamorphosis the force of the original has become vitiated. The Hebrew root *sa'aq/za'aq* indicates the anguished cry of the oppressed, the agonized plea of the victim for help in some great injustice. A few examples of the Hebrew usage will suffice to illustrate the degree of poignancy and pathos, of moral outrage and soul-stirring passion that pervades the Hebrew word. -- **Nahum M. Sarna, Understanding Genesis** pp. 144,145 (emphasis added)

"... one of those instances in which a Hebrew word cannot be adequately translated ..."

– Nahum Sarna

18:22-25 Though Abraham has an acute desire for justice, how else is his righteousness visible?

(3) Six times God responded to His servant's prayer. After each petition came the definite answer. So it is always; as long as we ask, God will answer. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas, Genesis** 1-25 p. 220

(4) The story takes but a few moments to read; but the scene may have lasted for the space of hours. We cannot climb the more elevated pinnacles of prayer in a hasty rush. They demand patience, toil, prolonged endeavour, ere the lower slopes can be left, and the brooding cloud-line passed, and the aspiring soul can reach that cleft in the mountain side, where Moses stood beneath the shadow of God's hand. Of course, our god is ever on the alert to hear and answer those prayers which, like minute-guns, we fire through the live-long day; but we cannot

maintain this posture of ejaculatory prayer unless we cultivate the prolonged occasions. How much we miss because we do not wait before God! -- **F.B. Meyer, Abraham** pp. 126,127

18:26-32 What does Jehovah know (that Abraham doesn't) which demonstrates Sodom's time has come? (15:13-16)

(5) Why, then, did Abraham stop praying when he reached the number ten? Probably because of his ignorance of the extent of Sodom's sin, and, from another point of view, probably because his ignorance of the extent of the Divine mercy and longsuffering. As it has often been said, Abraham ceased asking before God ceased giving. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas, op. cit.**, p. 221

Abraham ceased
asking before God
ceased giving

(6) There were not ten righteous men in Sodom; but Lot and his wife, and his two daughters, were saved though three of them were deeply infected with the moral contagion of the place. And God's righteousness was clearly established and vindicated in the eyes of the surrounding peoples. In closing, we remark *one of the great principles in the Divine government of the world*. -- A whole city had been spared, if ten righteous men had been found within its walls. Ungodly men little realize how much they owe to the presence of the children of God in their midst. -- **F.B. Meyer, op. cit.**, p. 129

YAHWEH -- HERE, THERE and EVERYWHERE (18:33-19:29)

18:33-19:11 Though Lot has not been completely corrupted, what compromise has brought about his deplorable option? (13:12 cf. v. 18; 14:12; 19:1,7,9; Ezek. 16:44-50)

(7) There are lives recorded in the Bible which have well been called beacons. There are men like Balaam, Saul, and Solomon, who started well, with every possible advantage, and then closed their careers in failure and disaster. Such a life was that of Lot the nephew of Abraham. He came out of Mesopotamia with his uncle, and continued with him in Canaan until their possessions necessitated a separation (chapters xii., xiii.). He thereupon pitched his tent towards Sodom, but soon entered and abode in the city. As a consequence he was involved in its captivity by the kings of the East (chapter xiv.). Even his rescue by Abraham did not suffice to warn him from the place, for he returned and lived there as before. There is scarcely a life recorded in Scripture which is fuller of serious and solemn instruction for every believer. ... 'But he seemed as one that mocked.' His testimony had no power. He had lived too long as one of themselves, without any very real difference, to allow of his message being of any avail. When the testimony of the life does not agree with the testimony of the lips the latter always goes unheeded. It is the life that is the true light. --

W.H. Griffith Thomas, op. cit., pp. 226-228

(8) The sin of Sodom consisted not only in what its people did but in what they failed to do. Thus, no one raised his voice in protest when the crowd molested Lot's guests. Failure to protest is to participate in the sin of a community. -- **W. Gunther Plaut, op. cit.**, p. 187

19:12-25 What mystery surrounds the identity of the "angels"? (v.15; cf. 18:1-3,21,22,33)

(9) We believe that the mere expression, "God, or Yahweh, rained from heaven," would have served very adequately to convey such an emphatic statement. But in this instance Yahweh was present in and with His angels whom He had delegated to this task and who acted under specific divine mandate. He who had the day before been visibly present with them, was now invisibly with them. When His angels acted, He acted. Consequently we believe that the view which the church held on this problem from the days of old is still the simplest and the best: *Pluit Deus filius a Deo patre* = "God the Son brought down the rain from God the Father," as the Council of Sirmium worded the statement. ... Luther says: "This expression indicates two persons in the Godhead." -- **H. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis** Vol. I p. 570

19:26-29 Has Lot been delivered because he is more righteous than the Sodomites? (15:6,18)

(10) So Lot was saved from the overthrow. But though he was sent out of Sodom, he took Sodom with him; and over the remainder of his history we must draw a veil. Still, it is a marvellous testimony to the power of intercessory prayer, to learn that a man so low in the moral scale, together with his daughters, was saved for Abraham's sake; and if he had finally settled at the little city of Zoar, that too would have been spared for his sake. -- **F.B. Meyer, op. cit.**, p. 142

(11) When a Christian confesses that his prayers are seemingly unheard, he is confessing that he is living the life of Lot. When a Christian has immediate and ready access to the Lord, we may be sure that it is because he has passed through the revelations of God's being and yielded to the mortification of the knife that has cut away the flesh. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse, Genesis** p. 147

(12) His dangers may easily be ours also. His first danger was from things lawful. It was not wrong to desire a good place for his flocks and herds. The sin was in putting earthly ease and prosperity first. 'More men are killed by meat than poison.' More souls are lost by abuse of things lawful than by the use of things unlawful. It is not wrong to have possessions, it is only wrong to let possessions have us. A ship in the water is perfectly right, but the water in the ship would be perfectly wrong. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas, op.cit.**, p. 231

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