GENESIS 18

The Child of Promise

1 And Yahveh came to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. **2** When he lifted up his eyes and looked, he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door and bowed himself to the ground.

3 Then he said, "My Adonai. If I have now found favor in Your sight, please stay a while with me, Your servant. **4** "Please, let me get a little water and wash Your feet. Rest yourselves under the tree. **5** Since You came to Your servant, let me get a morsel of bread so You may refresh Yourselves. You can continue on Your journey after that."

And they said, "Very well. Do as you have said."

6 Then Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quick! Make three measures[i] of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth." **7** Then Abraham[ii] ran to the herd and took a tender and good calf. Then he gave it to a young man and hurried to prepare it. **8** Then he took butter, milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set them before them. He stood by them under the tree as they ate.

9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?"

So he said, "Look! She is in the tent."

10 And Yahveh said, "I will certainly return to you about this time next year. You will see that your wife Sarah will have a son."[iii]

And Sarah heard it at the tent door, which was behind him. **11** Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in years. Sarah was well past the age for childbearing.

12 Therefore, Sarah laughed within herself. She said, "After I am old and worn out, will I have such a pleasure, especially when my lord is also very old?"

13 But Yahveh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say,

'Will I really bear a child now that I am old?'

14 "Is anything too hard for Yahveh? At the time appointed, I will return to you. About this time next year, Sarah will have a son."[iv]

15 Then Sarah denied it. She said, "I didn't laugh," for she was afraid. But Yahveh said, "No. You really did laugh."

Sodom and Gomorrah

16 Then the men rose up from there and looked toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to see[v] them on the way.

17 And Yahveh said, "Should I hide what I am about to do from Abraham? **18** I know that Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation. Blessings will come to all the nations of the earth by Him![vi] **19** For I know him. I know that he will teach[vii] his children and his household after him. They will live[viii] in the way of Yahveh. They will do justice and judgment so that I, Yahveh, may give to Abraham that which I have promised him."

20 And Yahveh said, "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great. Their sin[ix] is very[x] grievous. **21** I will now go there and see whether they have done as much wrong as what I have heard. If not, I will know."[xi]

22 The two men turned away from there and headed for Sodom, but Abraham still stood before Yahveh. **23** Abraham drew near and asked,[xii] "Will You also destroy[xiii] the righteous with the wicked? **24** What if there are 50 righteous[xiv] people in the city? Will You still destroy the city? Won't You spare the place for the sake of the 50 righteous who are in it? **25** It is morally unthinkable[xv] that You would kill the righteous with the wicked. It is unimaginable that You should treat the righteous like the wicked. Won't the Judge of all the earth do right?"

26 And Yahveh said, "If I find in Sodom 50 righteous people within the city, I will spare all of the place for their sakes."

27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Now look! I have taken it upon myself to begin speaking to Yahveh, even though I am only dust and ashes. **28** What if there are 5 less than the 50 righteous? Will you destroy the whole city just because of 5 people?" Then Yahveh said, "I will not destroy it if I find 45 *righteous people* there."

29 Then he spoke to Him yet again, and said, "What if You only find 40 *righteous people*?" So Yahveh replied, "I will not destroy it for the sake of those 40."

30 Then he said *to Him*, "Oh let not Yahveh be angry, and I will speak. What if You only find 30 *righteous people* there?" So Yahveh answered, "I will not destroy it if I find 30 *righteous people* there."

31 Then he said, "Now look! I have taken it upon myself to speak to Yahveh. Perhaps there will be *only* 20 *righteous people* found there." So Yahveh said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of those 20."

32 Then he said, "Oh let not Yahveh be angry. I will speak but this one last time. What if You only find ten righteous people there?" So Yahveh said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of those 10."

33 Yahveh went His way when He finished talking with Abraham. Then Abraham returned to his place.[xvi]

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[i] The Hebrew is סְאָה. It is approximately 1/3 of an ephah or just over one bushel. A bushel basket is about 18" in diameter by 12" in height. A bushel basket holds about 37 quarts or 9.3 gallons. If you had a bushel of wheat, it would be about 60 pounds.

[ii] Remember! Abraham is a man of wealth with many servants. He could have ordered a servant to do these things. But no! Abraham knew the importance of this occasion and did all the work himself.

[iii] Genesis 18:14, Romans 9:9.

[iv] Genesis 18:10, Romans 9:9.

[v] The Hebrew שָׁלַח means to send away. Synonyms include bring on the way, cast out, reach out, set, shoot out and escort.

[vi] Gen 3:5, 12:7, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14; Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8.

[vii] The Hebrew צָוָה means command, charge, or order. In the context of his household, it shows Abraham's encouragement, direction, teaching, and training. It is not a military order but a familial instruction that leads to obedience.

[viii] The Hebrew שָׁמַר (*shaw-mahr*) means heed, keep, observe, and watch. This occurs in the context of Abraham's teaching. They will produce the fruit of godly instruction. Their lives will demonstrate what is fair, just, and right. They will obey and worship Yahveh. The word "live" stresses a day-by-day conduct of faithfulness to Yahveh.

[ix] The Hebrew חַטָּאת (*chaht-taw-awt*) means sin and sin offering. Synonyms include sinful, sinner, punishment for sin, and purification of sins. A transgression is crossing the line. Sin is missing the target. Iniquity is something twisted. As a theological word-picture, the Het (ח) suggests an enclosure or a boundary, picturing separation or misalignment. Tet (ט) conveys something inward or hidden, reflecting the internal nature of sin. The **Aleph-Tav** (**אָת**) is a picture of Jesus. Together, the word picture portrays sin as an inward corruption and separation from God. At the same time, it points toward the divinely appointed act (Jesus) that marks, resolves, and completes the matter.

[x] The Hebrew מְאֹד (*m^{e}-od*) means vehemently. Synonyms include very, greatly, exceedingly, fervently, passionately, violently, intensely, much, mightily, and vigorously.

[xi] Even the LORD, who knows all things and all possibilities, expresses amazement to Abraham that humans can be so evil.

[xii] There are two important principles here. The first is direct and obvious. Abraham begins interceding for righteous Lot (2 Pet 2:8). This is good! God wants us to pray for people — all people. The second is indirect and obscure. We see the sequence: 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, 10. Why did Abraham stop? It takes an entire chapter for God to show what Abraham should have done. The two angels clearly told Lot that they could not do anything until they got him out of Sodom (Gen 19:22). Abraham should have continued down to ONE! ! God would have spared Sodom for just the sake of one person. Third, had there only been one person in the whole wide world, then God would have still offered the one same blood sacrifice in the plan of redemption. The only difference would be arranging the details to fit the population of that one undeserving person.

God must have been disappointed when Abraham stopped negotiating. God wants to be merciful. We need to be persistent in our prayers. God wants to answer them!

[xiii] The Hebrew סָפָה (*saw-fawh*) means to sweep away, to wipe out, or to destroy completely. It often conveys removal by judgment, as when something is cleared away and left behind no more. The term emphasizes totality rather than mere punishment and warns of complete removal if Israel persists in evil.

[xiv] The Hebrew צַדִּיק (*tsahd-deek*) means righteous. Synonyms include upright, just, lawful, right, moral, and decent. Biblical righteousness is a person who is wearing the righteousness of Jesus. First, this righteousness is relational; it depends on being in Christ. Second, this righteousness is forensic; it fulfills the demands of God's covenant. Third, this righteousness is ethical; it reflects faithfulness to a relationship.

[xv] The Hebrew חָלִילָה is from חָלַל (*chaw-lahl*). A beginning understanding of this idiom is "God forbid." It is a strong Hebrew denial, expressing moral outrage or rejection of something absolutely unthinkable.

[xvi] How wonderful it was for Abraham to intercede for the lost. However, he lost his nerve. He didn't go far enough! Yahveh must have been disappointed in how this negotiation ended. There is no clear picture of His grace from this negotiation. Perhaps Abraham was unsure about Lot's salvation. I am sure that if he had negotiated down to one for the sake of his nephew Lot, our merciful loving God would have agreed! God would have gone through the plan of redemption had there been but one human alive. We get this confirmation of God's merciful grace from the lips of the angels in Chapter 19 verse 22.