

# Judaism



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April 1st The Bible story of Sodom and Gomorra ~ Chapters 18-19 ~ I

perceive the story of Sodom and Gomorra as a story about virtue triumphing over sin as well as a demonstration of God's destructive powers towards evil balanced by His merciful kindness towards good. As we learn in Chapter 18, Lord and two of his angels reveal to Abraham that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorra were evil and corrupt, therefore "the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceeding grievous" (Genesis 18: 20). However, the real wretchedness of the cities is reflected in the fact that, at Abraham's request, God agrees to spare the cities if 10 righteous men were to be found among their inhabitants, but since no such men were found, the fate of the cities was sealed. On such a dark, terrible, sinful background, Lot appears like a beacon of faith. When he sees the two men (angels) entering the city of Sodom he insists on offering them food and shelter, despite the locals' disapproving attitude towards strangers: "And he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat" (Genesis 19: 3). I see this particular moment of the story as an attempt to test Lot's kindness and virtue, which he definitely passed, by being generous with his offer, food and by going against the city's general hostility towards strangers. This way, Lot and his family demonstrated their righteousness and the fact that they were worthy of being spared from the terrible destruction of the evil cities. When the inhabitants of Sodom find out that the strangers found shelter in Lot's house they come to claim the two men and have their way with them, but Lot protects the two angels and is willing to sacrifice his own daughter for them: "Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto

you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing” (Genesis 19: 8). This particular action demonstrates Lot’s powerful faith and his determination to be a kind host for the two strangers, for he is willing to sacrifice his daughters for the strangers’ cause. In return for this great service and his willingness for personal sacrifice, which is, by far, a main pillar for the genuine faith in God, the two angels reveal to Lot that the city is going to be destroyed and they offer him the chance to escape with his family towards a safe place. This is why, in the morning, Lot leaves the city of Sodom along with his wife and two daughters, while the angels tell them to not look back no matter what it takes. This is another test of faith, I believe, which Lot’s wife did not pass, for she questioned the angel’s warnings and she showed little faith in her reasoning. She looked back and turned into pillar of salt, while Lot and his two daughters, demonstrating contentious faith in God’s word, survive. I believe that the story of Sodom and Gomorra can be viewed as a metaphorical story, a parable about the destruction of evil and the continuation of good. The story sends out a strong message: first of all, strong personalities with exceptional faith, such as Lot, do not get corrupted even if living in a very bad environment. Second of all, God is very powerful and intolerant towards helpless evil but He is also merciful towards good and faithful people, therefore faith and kindness are presented as core virtues in life which are supposed to guide our actions at all times. Third of all, even if God decides to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorra, it is a last resort decision, after He tried to find good among its inhabitants. Therefore God is presented like a deity that uses destruction as a last resort and always assures continuity for the good, this being demonstrated by the fact that he offers Lot the chance to leave the city and

settle somewhere else. Last, but not least, the story praises the success of unconditioned and unquestioning faith as a guidance key for survival: while Lot followed the angels' instructions not to look back, his wife questioned the angels' warning and, with shattering faith, decided to look back and was ultimately punished for it. Sources: " Genesis, Chapters 18-19." A Hebrew - English Bible. 25 March 2011 .