

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 13:1-18

“The Gift of God”

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Verses 1-2

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

- After the debacle in Egypt (see Genesis 12: 10-20) Abram was forcibly expelled from Egypt. He left Egypt and went to the Negev, a desert area. He took with him everything he had. His nephew, Lot, accompanied him.
- While in Egypt, because of Pharaoh's favor, Abram had become very wealthy. Even though things had gone badly for him in Egypt, God was faithful to him (see Romans 8:28).

Verses 3-4

³ From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴ and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

- Abram did not settle in one place after he left Egypt. He moved from place to place until he returned to the place where he had been living before he went to Egypt. One place was named Bethel, which means “house of God” in Hebrew (see Genesis 12:8). It was at this place that Abram had built an altar to YHWH.
- The altar which Abram had built was still at Bethel. It served as a reminder to Abram of his relationship to YHWH. This is why we are instructed by God not to forsake meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). The place and the assembling together serve as reminders of our relationship to YHWH through Jesus Christ. Without such reminders, God's people tend to forget that they belong to Him as had Abram.
- Seeing the altar at Bethel caused Abram to call on YHWH as he had done before.

Verses 5-6

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

- There is a new problem. Abram's wealth and that of his nephew, Lot, was measured by the great herds of sheep each had. Their flocks were so great that the desert land of the Negev could not support them. Even great wealth brings problems.
- Abram's men and Lot's men argued with each other about the pasturing of their respective bosses' sheep. This quarreling was done openly before the other people who lived in the land.

Verses 8-9

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

- To prevent the quarreling, Abram suggested to Lot that they part company, each going his own way separate from the other.

Verses 10-13

¹⁰ Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. ¹³ Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

- Abram allowed Lot first pick of the land. Lot chose to go towards the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because the territory in that direction looked appealing to him. He did not consult YHWH before he made his choice. He picked what he thought would bring him the greatest reward. Abram accepted Lot's choice.
- Abram moved into the land of Canaan. Lot moved among the cities of the plain.

- The place where Lot chose to go was inhabited by people who had rejected the ways of YHWH. They were immoral and did not worship YHWH.

Verses 14-17

¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”

- YHWH spoke to Abram after Lot had left him. YHWH confirmed to Abram that he was giving the land of Canaan to Abram and his descendants forever.
- YHWH promised to give Abram many offspring. At the time of the promise, Abram had no children.

Verse 18

¹⁸ So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.

- Abram settled near the great trees of Mamre in the land of Canaan.
- At that place, he built a second altar to YHWH to serve as a reminder of his relationship with YHWH. The people of God need reminders that they are the people of God.

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