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The Progression of Separation: Genesis 13 in the Hebrew Bible and Early Reception

Dan Rickett

ABSTRACT

This present study seeks to answer three interconnected questions as pertains to Genesis 13 and the role and function of Lot: (1) Does the text necessitate a reading of Lot as being the first potential heir and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram? (2) If not inherently from the text, then where do these readings of Lot as the potential heir and as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram originate and how can a study of the early reception of Genesis 13 aid in answering that question? (3) If these common assumptions are not derived inherently from the text, then how are Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, to be understood? First, I examine the biblical text of Genesis 13 providing a close narrative reading which demonstrates that these common interpretations among modern readers are not inherently rooted in the text itself. On the contrary, the text appears to point to a different understanding of Genesis 13 in general and Lot in particular. Second, after demonstrating that these are not necessary conclusions, I propose that these readings originally developed out of concerns of ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters to safeguard Abram. Last, I provide, based both on my exegesis and reception analysis, a new reading of the place and function of Genesis 13 in general and Lot in particular both in the wider Abraham narrative and Genesis as a whole. I will demonstrate that Lot's relationship with Abram is set up, not within the context of sonship but rather in the context of brotherhood. Abram and Lot's separation not only solves the problematic issue of Lot's accompaniment but also foreshadows the subsequent tension in the patriarchal narratives about brothers being co-dwellers in the land. This tension requires separation, even if the relationship is amicable, and the necessity of the brothers to dwell in different places with only one occupying the land.

**The Progression of Separation:
Genesis 13 in the Hebrew Bible and Early Reception**

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dan Rickett

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Abbreviations

The formatting of this thesis, including footnotes, bibliography, and abbreviations, follows the conventions set out in *The SBL Handbook of Style* 2nd Ed (ed. Patrick H. Alexander, et al.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2014), with minor variations. American spelling and grammatical usage has been used throughout.

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 vols.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ACEBTSup	Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese en bijbelse Theologie Supplement Series
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. Arndt, F. Gingrich, F. Danker. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> .
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> .
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R.W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> .
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> .
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament.
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>

CC	Continental Commentaries
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Edited by I.B. Chabot et al.
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by David J.A. Clines. 9 vols.
DOTP	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch</i> . Edited by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker.
<i>EgT</i>	<i>Eglise et théologie</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English Translations
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRC	Family, Religion and Culture
GAP	Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
<i>GKC</i>	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A.E. Cowley. 2d ed.
<i>HALOT</i>	L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J.J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson.
HB	Hebrew Bible
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBHS</i>	Bruce Waltke and M.O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> .
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
ITC	International Theological Commentary
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow. <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic literature</i> .
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>

<i>JBRec</i>	<i>Journal of the Bible and Its Reception</i>
JCPS	Jewish and Christian Perspective Series
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KJV	King James Version
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LCBI	Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, H.S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9 th ed. with revised supplement.
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	John William Wevers. <i>Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum</i> , Auctoritate Acadimae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum 1: Genesis.
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible (2011)
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
<i>NIB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>

<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.</i> Edited by W.A. VanGemeren. 5 vols.
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTR	Old Testament Readings
SamP	August Freiherr von Gall. <i>Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner.</i> Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann Verlag, 1966
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Syr.	Syriac
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.</i> Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols.
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.</i> Edited by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley, and D.E. Green. 15 vols.
Tg. Neof.	Targum Neofiti.
Tg. Onq.	Targum Onqelos to Genesis.
Tg. Ps.-J.	Targum Pseudo-Jonathon: Genesis.
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>

UBW	Understanding the Bible and its World
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
Vulg.	Vulgate
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

Genesis 13 tells the story of the separation of Abram from Lot, who had been traveling with Abram to Canaan, and their subsequent dwellings in Canaan and the cities of the plain respectively. How does Genesis 13 function in general and how, in particular, is Lot characterized both individually and with regard to his relationship to Abram in Genesis 13? For the majority of modern interpreters, the answers to these questions are simple: Genesis 13 functions to remove Lot as the potential heir (functioning as the first “potential heir” in the story of Abraham and his descendants) and/or Lot is characterized as an ethical contrast to Abram. But are the answers to these questions really that simple and are these dominant readings inherent in the text itself? If they are not inherent in the text itself, then where do these readings of Lot as adopted/potential heir and as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram originate from and how can a study of the early reception of Genesis 13 aid in answering that question? Finally, what is the purpose of Genesis 13, and how *is* Lot and his purpose and function to be understood? It is these issues that this thesis seeks to address.

The account of Abram and Lot’s separation in Genesis 13 is a pivotal though underappreciated story that provides foundational information for the subsequent Abraham narrative.¹ It also connects both explicitly and implicitly with other stories in both the Abraham narrative in particular and the book of Genesis in general. Below, I will provide an introduction to the present study by briefly looking at

¹ There are only a handful of works that I am aware of specifically dedicated to Genesis 13: Janet W. Dyk, “Lack of Space and Loneliness: Abraham and Lot separate” in *Unless someone guide me...Festschrift for Karel A. Deurloo*, ed. Janet W. Dyk et al., ACEBTSup 2 (Maastricht: Shaker Pub, 2001), 13-9; Walter Vogels, “Lot in His Honor Restored: A Structural Analysis of Gen 13:2-18,” *EgT* 10 (1979): 5-12; Walter Vogels, “Abraham et l’offrande de la terre (Gn 13),” *SR* 4 (1975), 51-57; Larry R. Helyer, “The Separation of Abram and Lot: Its Significance in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *JSOT* 26 (1983): 77-88; Gershon Hepner, “The Separation Between Abram and Lot Reflects the Deuteronomic Law Prohibiting Ammonites and Moabites,” *ZAW* 117 (2005): 36-52; Dan Rickett, “Rethinking the Place and Purpose of Genesis 13,” *JSOT* 36 (2011): 31-53; Dan Rickett, “Creating an Unrighteous Outsider: The Separation of Abram and Lot in Early Scriptural Retellings,” *CBQ* 76 (2014): 611-33.

Genesis 13 in three ways: (1) I will examine the scholarly discussion surrounding the composition history of Genesis 13;² (2) I will examine the way in which Genesis 13 has been said to fit into the overall Abraham narrative and Genesis as a whole; and (3) I will discuss the way in which this present study provides a unique contribution both to the study of Genesis in general and the account of Abram and Lot's separation in particular.

1.1 Genesis 13 in Modern Scholarly Discussion – Composition

While some scholars have argued that Genesis 13 reflects a story that originally existed independently of the Abraham narrative,³ others have noted the way in which Genesis 13 provides essential linking information within the Abraham narrative, and doubted therefore that the account of Abram and Lot's separation could ever have served as an independent tale.⁴ There has also been debate about whether or not certain portions of Genesis 13 are late additions to the narrative.⁵ The traditional source analysis has been outlined as follows⁶:

² Obviously, in a short introduction, I will not be able to rehearse all that has been said about Genesis 13 diachronically. My purpose is solely to provide a brief overview of popular scholarly opinion.

³ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, vol. 13, BKAT (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 203 (ET, 173), believes that Gen 13:1-5, 18 reflect an older itinerary and 13:5-12 reflect an old account of patriarchal disputes. Abraham's desire for a peaceful resolution to the strife serves as a paradigm for the way Israel is to handle later conflicts. Rudolf Kilian, "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte Lots," *BZ* 14 (1970): 23-37, writes concerning the tradition history of the Lot narratives that Genesis 13 is a genuine Israelite tradition while the account of Moab and Ammon in Genesis 19 is a non-Israelite tradition.

⁴ Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 176 (ET: 175-76), believes that Genesis 13 so connects with the Sodom and Gomorrah pericope in Genesis 19 that the latter must have, originally, immediately followed the former. G. W. Coats, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, FOTL 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 113, raises doubts about whether Genesis 13 ever existed as an independent tale given its obvious connections to the rest of the Abraham narrative: "The Abraham-Lot tradition forms a remarkably well-unified narration within the scope of the Abraham saga." Coats believes the entire account is attributed to J.

⁵ For a different approach to the diachronic/synchronic issues surrounding the composition of Genesis see the "user base" approach espoused by Campbell and O'Brien. In a "user-base" model the Lot narratives would have been written to be, "a base for further reflection and storytelling" rather than as "end-text." Genesis 13 is part of a wider "Abraham-Lot collection" and vv. 14-17 comprise an "enhancement/expansion" to the narrative. See Anthony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Rethinking the Pentateuch: Prolegomena to the Theology of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005), 17; 135-36.

⁶ These are taken from Anthony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

J – Genesis 13:1-5, 7-11a, 12b, 13, 14-17, 18⁷
P – Genesis 13:6, 11b, 12a

Westermann, for example, comments that 13:6, 11b, 12a are a P narrative layer.⁸

These comments are to be understood as a literary parallel (“literarische Parallele”) to other portions of Genesis 13 worked into the story, presumably by P.⁹

What has garnered the most attention, however, regarding the diachronic analysis of Genesis 13, is the promise section in 13:14-18. Ska’s comments are illustrative:

The oracle in Gen 13:14-17 interrupts a description of the migrations of both Abraham and Lot after their decision to go separate ways. The original text in Gen 13:12 is clearly repeated in 13:18. In 13:13 the intrusion of the narrator directly precedes the oracle...The oracle in 13:14-17 is not closely tied to its context. First, the promise of land (13:14-15) sanctions Abraham’s choice *a posteriori* because YHWH gives him the land on which he has already settled, according to 13:12. Second, the promise of numerous offspring is awkwardly inserted into a narrative that deals primarily with the land. Third, the command to traverse the length and the breadth of the land (13:17) is not carried out. Abraham only moves from Bethel to Hebron (13:18).¹⁰

There have been those, however, who have argued that Genesis 13 is not to be viewed as a composite work but rather a unified whole. Wenham comments:

Against this dissection of the story into earlier and later elements must be set the verbal parallels between the divine promises in vv 14-15 and the description of Lot’s choice in vv 10-11...vv 14-18 run on lines similar to vv 9-12.¹¹

⁷ Gunkel, *Genesis*, 168-73 (ET: 168-73), sees the J material as composite, with 13:2, 5-18 being supplemented by 13:1, 3-4.

⁸ See also Walther Zimmerli, *1.Mose 12-25:Abraham*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976), 29.

⁹ Westermann, *Genesis*, 202 (ET: 173). See also discussion in Joel Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 179, who comments “the J story of which covers the majority of Genesis 13, 18, and 19, is represented by only a handful of verses in P: 13:6, 11b-12ba; 19:29.”

¹⁰ Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 89-90. See also the discussion in David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 163-66.

¹¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 295. Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 132, adds that without the promise section in 13:14-17, “the denouement in chap. 13 is unsatisfying, making the episode a mere family roust.” Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1973), 173, likewise comments: “There is no need for considering contrast between vv. 1-13 and vv. 14-17 as the unwilling result of ‘one who put them together.’ Rather, here the narrative as a whole (vv. 1-17) reaches its climax.”

There are, in fact, compelling arguments on both sides of the diachronic question of Genesis 13, but it is not my purpose to provide an exhaustive overview of the way in which Genesis 13 has been understood diachronically. My own reading of the separation of Abram and Lot will work with the text in its finished form and as a holistic narrative unit, interconnected with the prior and subsequent sections of the Abraham narrative in particular, and Genesis in general.

1.1.1 The Methodology of the Present Volume

My methodology will be, at its core, literary and is squarely within the parameters of the definition of literary/narrative criticism set forth by Hawk:

Literary critics...view the biblical text as a cut gemstone, a thing of beauty in its own right. Generally speaking, they adopt a synchronic ('same time') perspective that focuses on the literary character of the Pentateuch as a subject worthy of study in and of itself. Literary approaches therefore tend to forego questions of history or external referents in favor of others that explore the ways in which the Pentateuch communicates as a written work of art.¹²

As Mark Allen Powell has outlined, literary/narrative criticism focuses on the finished form of the text. He notes that:

Literary criticism does not deny...observations regarding the development of the text...Ultimately, it makes no difference for a literary interpretation whether certain portions of the text once existed elsewhere in some other form. The goal of literary criticism is to interpret the current text, in its finished form.

Literary criticism also emphasizes the unity of the text as a whole, discerning "the connecting threads that hold it together." Furthermore, literary criticism views the text as an end in itself because the "goal of a literary study is to understand the narrative."¹³ My reading of Genesis 13 in its narrative and wider context will be

¹² L. Daniel Hawk, "Literary/Narrative Criticism," *DOTP*, 536.

¹³ Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism*, GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 7-8.

decidedly synchronic.¹⁴

1.2 Genesis 13 in Modern Scholarly Discussion – Literary Function

Discussion of the compositional history of Genesis 13 has focused mainly around the promise section in 13:14-18 and likewise, the synchronic discussion of Genesis 13 has focused, primarily, on one aspect of the promise section, the promise of descendants. Furthermore, the character of Lot has been seen, primarily, as an ethical contrast to Abram and/or as Abram's potential heir. My own intention is to look at the story more broadly and to evaluate the role of Lot in light of this. Crucial to that evaluation is the account of Lot's separation from Abram (13:8-14).

1.2.1 Understanding the Separation of Abram and Lot

There have been a variety of ways in which the separation of Abram and Lot has been understood. While the dominant reading has been to see Lot's separation from his uncle as his removal as Abram's heir and/or as Abram's ethical foil, I want to first address some of the other ways in which the narrative's placement and function has been understood.

Some have understood the focus of Genesis 13 to reflect Israel's conflicts with Moab and Ammon. Hepner comments:

After Abram and Sarai return from Egypt, where they are forced to go during a famine in Canaan, Abram asks Lot to separate from him. This request reflects a Deuteronomic law prohibiting the Israelites from allowing Lot's

¹⁴ While the main thrust, methodologically, will be literary, I in no way deny the obvious benefits of historical-critical scholarship. I have attempted, at pertinent points, to weave together issues of history, background cultural practices and law to further substantiate my arguments. My focus, however, will be on the final form of Genesis 13 while recognizing that Genesis is a composite document woven together into a continuous and meaningful whole.

descendants, the Ammonites and Moabites, to enter the community.¹⁵

Christopher Heard offers a more nuanced view of the way in which the Lot narratives reflect Israel's interactions with Moabites and Ammonites. He proposes that the patriarchal narratives in general, and Genesis 13 in particular, are a product of the post-exilic community. For Heard, characters like Lot are a reflection of the tensions felt between the returning Judahites and the other people groups—here Moabites and Ammonites—currently dwelling in the land. This tension is reflected in the way in which Lot is pictured as an ambiguous character in the narrative. The following comment concerns the entire Lot corpus but reflects his reading of Genesis 13 as well:

Many readers...of Genesis have found there a negative portrayal of Lot. This negative portrayal emerges, however, from resolving crucial negative ambiguities in certain plausible, but not necessary, ways. At many significant points in the narrator's presentation, crucial elements of the portrait redound either to Lot's blame or to his credit, depending on how readers evaluate the facts of the story the narrator tells. The narrator's language cannot compel readers to judge Lot negatively or positively. A vast range of evaluations lies open to the readers drawing on identical textual 'data.'¹⁶

This ambiguous picture of Lot reflects the struggle of returning Judahites as they wrestled with their relationship to the current inhabitants of the land. Whether or not Moabites or Ammonites are “good” or “bad” people doesn't matter, they are to remain separated from the Judahites:

¹⁵ Hepner, “Separation,” 52. Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 86, understands the Abraham/Lot stories in general and Genesis 13 in particular not as a “family narrative” but rather as “political theology” reflective of the monarchical period. See also Theodor Seidl, “Conflict and Conflict Resolution: Inner Controversies and Tensions as Places of Israel's Self-Conception in the Patriarchal Traditions of Genesis,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 845, who comments that in the monarchical period Israel and Moab/Ammon would have often been at war with one another. Genesis 13 then functions as “an admonition for Israel to treat its eastern neighbors with respect...to abandon plans of violence and military actions against them...to keep aloof from its eastern neighbors and to avoid interfering with their internal affairs.”

¹⁶ R. Christopher Heard, *Dynamics of Dislocation: Ambiguity in Genesis 12-36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah*, SBLDS (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 61. Paul Tonson, “Beyond Abrahamism: A Fresh Reading of the Tanakh Traditions respecting Lot, Moab and Ammon” (PhD diss., Deakin University, 1999), like Heard, focuses his attention on the way in which ethnic boundaries are constructed in light of neighboring people groups. Like Heard, he argues that Lot is not to be viewed as a wholly unrighteous individual but rather as, like Abraham, a morally ambiguous character. His comments on Genesis 13, however, are quite brief as his main focus is on Genesis 19, its connection to ethnic studies and its relationship to subsequent literature concerning Israel's relationship with Moab and Ammon.

Lot may be a selfish, inconsiderate, careless, lecherous drunk, and therefore Yehudians may be too good to associate with his fourth-century descendants. Or Lot may be a fine fellow, and his Achaemenid-era descendants be decent folk pursuing the courses of action they see best for themselves, their families, their province, their satrapy, their empire...No matter how one feels personally about Lot's character, or the character of his descendants, Abraham's descendants and territory simply do not, should not, overlap with Lot's.¹⁷

Others have focused on the theme of sacrifice. Vogels, for example, sees Genesis 13 as fitting in the wider context of Abraham's sacrifice of the promises, and connects Genesis 13 with Genesis 22 and the sacrifice of Isaac. Just as Abraham sacrificed his potential descendant in Genesis 22, so here in Genesis 13, he willingly sacrifices the land—though obviously the recipient is different in each: with Isaac, the sacrifice is to God, while in Genesis 13 it is to Lot.¹⁸

1.2.2 Lot as Potential Heir and/or Ethical Contrast

As noted above, however, the view that Genesis 13 functions to remove Lot as Abram's potential heir and/or to present him as an ethical contrast to Abram has been, by far, the most dominant in modern scholarship.¹⁹ Lot's role as Abram's potential heir has been emphasized not only in various commentaries on Genesis, but also in a number of specialized studies which seek to understand the role and function of

¹⁷ Heard, *Dynamics*, 174. While Heard's reading is more nuanced than Coats's and Pace Jeanson's (which I outline below) the function of Lot in the narrative is primarily the same. His characterization provides ethical reflection.

¹⁸ Vogels, "L'offrande," 55. The preparation for the subsequent stories concerning Sodom (14, 18, 19) could also be mentioned though it appears to function as a secondary purpose for interpreters.

¹⁹ See for example: Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 56; Helyer, "Separation," 81-2; 85; Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 393; Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 40-2; Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict and Continuity in Genesis*, LCBI (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991); John Lawlor, "Lot," *DOTP*, 557; Lou H. Silberman, "Listening to the Text," *JBL* 102 (1983): 19; William John Lyons, "The Eternal Liminality of Lot" in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson*, ed. Diana Lipton (Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2012), 11; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 299; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 130-31; Rodney S. Sadler Jr., "Genesis" in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: Old Testament and Apocrypha* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 108.

Genesis 13 synchronically. Larry R. Helyer, for example, sees the “leading theme” of the Abraham cycle as the “problem of an heir” and comments concerning Genesis 13:

If we have correctly interpreted Genesis 13, then we may say that its primary purpose is to draw attention to the crisis of faith which Lot precipitated by his choice of pasturage outside the land of Canaan. At stake is nothing less than Lot’s elimination as heir to the covenant of promise.²⁰

While Helyer provides the most thorough study on the way in which Lot fulfills the role of “presumed heir” in the Abraham narrative, he is certainly not alone in reading the pericope this way. Naomi Steinberg, for example, in her book *Kinship and Marriage*, reads Lot as the first “presumed heir” among many in the account of Abraham’s descendants. She writes that there is:

Special significance attached to Lot for the future of Abram’s genealogical line...Lot’s presence in Abram’s life seems to advance the family situation toward the reestablishment of stable genealogical progression last seen in the genealogy of Shem...Lot’s departure from his uncle retards the action of the promise story and heightens the narrative suspense. If one, properly, assumes Lot to be Abram’s future heir, a crisis for the promise results when Lot takes off to work out his own destiny.²¹

In addition to this discussion of Lot’s elimination as heir, Genesis 13 has also been seen as a part of the larger way in which Lot is depicted as a foil to Abram.

Abram, it is argued, is pictured as a righteous and faithful person while Lot is pictured as a selfish fool. This particular reading has been most notably expounded in essays by George Coats²² and Sharon Pace Jeansonne.²³ Coats, for example, argues that the story of Abram and Lot’s separation is:

[A] report of a tradition about Abram and Lot that emphasizes the contrast between righteous Abram and his opposite...Indeed it establishes a fundamental contrast that will be a substantial part of the story. As exposition

²⁰ Helyer, “Separation,” 85.

²¹ Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*, 52.

²² G.W. Coats, “Lot: A Foil in the Abraham Saga” in *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honor of Bernhard W. Anderson*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger et al., JSOTSup 37 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).

²³ Sharon Pace Jeansonne, “The Characterization of Lot in Genesis,” *BTB* 18 (1988): 123-29.

it sets up the following story about Abram and Lot, or perhaps better, a story about faithful Abram highlighted by Lot, a contrasting foppish foil.²⁴

Pace Jeansonne comments that in Genesis 13:

It becomes apparent that Lot and Abraham have become separated not only geographically but ethically as well. Abraham's suggestion is recorded in direct speech; he generously and unselfishly offers Lot the first selection of the best land. The text does not record Lot's response. He does not offer any alternative plan wherein Abraham too might have some allotment of the choice land.²⁵

Incidentally, the majority of interpreters see Lot *both* as an unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram *and* as Abram's "potential heir."²⁶

1.3 The Thesis of the Present Volume

As noted above, there are three interconnected questions to which I will continually return throughout the thesis which connect to both the wider issues of Genesis 13 and the role and function of Lot: (1) Does the text necessitate a reading of Lot as being the first potential heir and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram? (2) If they are not inherent in the text, then where do these readings of Lot as the potential heir and as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram originate and how can a study of the early reception of Genesis 13 aid in answering that question?²⁷ (3) If these common assumptions are not derived from the text, furthermore, then how

²⁴ Coats, "Lot: A Foil," 117-18. Likewise Carr, *Reading the Fractures*, 191, comments that "Lot functions throughout as a negative contrast to Abraham."

²⁵ Pace Jeansonne, "The Characterization," 125.

²⁶ See for example: Steinmetz, Steinberg, Mathews, Levenson, among others.

²⁷ To my knowledge, there are no writings that deal specifically with the reception of Genesis 13 in general or the way in which Lot is developed in particular. A good example of this is to be found in James L. Kugel's important work *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). There are roughly nine hundred pages of reception history contained in his book, but there are no sections that deal specifically with Abram's interactions with Lot in Genesis 13. The totality of references to the reception of Genesis 13 amounts to roughly one page in length. There are, however, twenty-three pages dealing with the reception of the Sodom and Gomorrah pericope in Genesis 18-19. In addition, the articles in *Sodom's Sin: Genesis 18-19 and Its Interpretation*, ed. Ed Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar, TBN 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2004) deal specifically with the reception of Genesis 18-19. Further, those works that do discuss Genesis 13 in the early retellings concentrate almost exclusively on Abram's characterization and provide only passing, if any, references to Lot's characterization. It would appear that a more detailed analysis of the early reception of Lot's characterization in Genesis 13 is in order.

are Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, to be understood?

In order to answer these questions thoroughly, I will need to look both at the text of Genesis 13 and its early reception.²⁸ I shall start by examining the biblical text of Genesis 13, providing a close narrative reading which demonstrates that these common interpretations among modern readers are not inherently rooted in the text itself. On the contrary, the text appears to point to a different understanding of Genesis 13 in general and Lot in particular (Question #1 above). Second, after demonstrating that these are not necessary conclusions, I will propose that these readings originally developed out of concerns on the part of ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters to safeguard Abram (Question #2 above).²⁹ Last, I will provide, based both on my exegesis and reception analysis, a new reading of the place and function of Genesis 13 both in the wider Abraham narrative and Genesis as a whole (Question #3 above).

As I will demonstrate in my exegetical analysis, there are potential problems which arise regarding Abram (the accompaniment of Lot, the striving herders and the offer of land). It is the desire to safeguard Abram with regard to these problematic issues which become the foundation for early interpretation and understanding of Genesis 13. What we have is an interesting narrative development:

(1) The early account of Abram raises various problematic questions regarding Abram in his relationship with Lot. First, there is the problem of Lot's

²⁸ John F.A. Sawyer, "The Ethics of Comparative Interpretation" in *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*, 9 vols. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-2001), 3.153-68. Sawyer opts for the helpful title, "Comparative Interpretation" for what scholars are doing in their study of reception history.

²⁹ Sawyer comments that in reception studies we should provide "as wide a range of interpretations as possible, from scholarly reconstructions of the original to the most radical mediaeval and modern reworkings of the text in music, art, architecture, literature, politics, and theology. Only then will it be possible for critical readers of the Bible, in whatever 'interpretive community' they find themselves, to reach some kind of consensus on which meanings are far-fetched, ugly or oppressive, and which convincing, beautiful or liberating" (John F.A. Sawyer, "A Critical Review of Recent Projects and Publications," *JBR* 3 [2012]: 298-326).

accompaniment, second the account of the striving herders and third the offer of land to his nephew.

(2) Early Jewish and Christian³⁰ retellers recognized the dilemmas and, in turn, shifted the focus by elaborating or creating ways to safeguard Abram and suppress Lot. The problem of accompaniment was solved through adoption and/or Lot's decision to go. The blame for the strife was placed at the feet of Lot and the offer of land became a way to exalt Abram's generosity and magnify Lot's selfishness. Within that shift, however, there is an underlying ideological outworking which saw Jewish interpreters reading Lot as an exemplar of Torah-rejection and Christians reading Lot through the lens of his later salvation from Sodom. Thus while Lot's decisions were seen as foolish in Christian interpretation there was a far more negative slant to Lot's characterization in Jewish interpretation. The readings of Lot as adopted/potential heir and foil to Abram then became part of the subsequent interpretive stream.

(3) Thus the widespread tendency of modern interpreters to see Lot as adopted and as an unrighteous counterpart to Abram, does not appear to be something inherent in the text but rather reflects the concerns of ancient interpreters to safeguard Abram.³¹ In other words, it appears that the predominant interpretations of Genesis 13 are, consciously or unconsciously, inherited readings.³² This raises questions about what the text really does or does not say.

What my thesis will demonstrate, therefore, is my justification for a fresh reading of Genesis 13 which seeks to understand its purpose and function within the context of both the Abraham narrative and Genesis as a whole. This analysis will not

³⁰ I use the terms "Jewish" and "Christian" interpretation while recognizing that one cannot speak of a monolithic interpretive framework in either tradition as there is clearly a "spectrum" of interpretive foci expressed throughout. With that said, however, there are some clear connections with regard to the way Lot is read in Genesis 13 in both Jewish and Christian readings. I am thus not attempting to argue, for example, for some kind of literary dependence within the Jewish works but rather that there are particular interpretive concerns which continue to present themselves as one moves from Second Temple to rabbinic Literature (though the extent to which these concerns are dealt with certainly varies). The same is true for Christian readings as there are particular ways in which Lot is understood which provide a kind of connective link between, at times, isolated interpretive contexts. Further, while there most certainly was crossover between the two traditions (e.g., Ambrose's use of Philo; the impact of Josephus on the church fathers; Jerome's knowledge of Jewish literature and practices) there are clearly points of departure as well and these points of departure point to differing underlying theological foci operating within early Jewish and Christian interpretation, respectively. For discussions of the relationship between Jewish and Christian interpretation and their awareness of one another see: William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 200-25.

³¹ In other words, as Anderson notes, "the biblical text has been rewritten in conformity with an evolving interpretive tradition." See Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 17.

³² Thus, I am not implying that modern interpreters are, likewise, seeking to safeguard Abram, though this may be the case at times, nor am I implying that modern interpreters are always fully aware of the way ancient readers were interpreting Genesis 13. I am simply highlighting the interpretive traditions which developed and have continued down into modern readings of Genesis 13.

only locate the problematic portions mentioned above but also allow them to stand while avoiding unnecessary ethical conclusions. Doing so will enable us to see the way in which Lot's relationship with Abram is set up, not within the context of sonship but rather in the context of brotherhood.³³ Abram and Lot's separation not only solves the problematic issue of Lot's accompaniment but also foreshadows the subsequent tension in the patriarchal narratives about brothers being co-dwellers in the land. This tension requires separation, even if the relationship is amicable, and necessitates the dwelling of the brothers in different places, with only one occupying the land.

³³ While there has been a growing interest in the brotherhood language in Genesis there has been little to no discussion of how Lot fits into that paradigm. See the discussion in works such as: Bradford A. Anderson, *Brotherhood and Inheritance: A Canonical Reading of the Esau and Edom Traditions*, LHBOTS (New York: T & T Clark, 2011); Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist: The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story*, JSOTSup169 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Joel Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007); A. Wénin, "La question de l'humain et l'unité du livre de la Genèse" in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, ed. A Wénin (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 3-34.

2. Abram's problematic taking of Lot and the beginnings of separation

I noted above that the purpose and function of Genesis 13 revolves around the dual themes of separation and settlement. These are predicated on Abram's call to move to a new land and leave his father's household. The problem at the outset of the journey, however, is that Lot accompanies Abram.³⁴ As noted above, for many Lot functions as Abram's potential heir and/or as an ethical contrast to Abram. But do these conclusions really reflect how the text characterizes Lot and his relationship to Abram? Perhaps Abram's taking of Lot is, on the contrary, an act of disobedience to the call to leave his "father's household." Further, if not as a potential son to Abram than how does the narrative characterize Lot? As I will demonstrate, Abram and Lot were to be separate from the outset of Abram's journey to Canaan and as the narrative un-folds in Genesis 12-13 that separation will be highlighted in several ways as the texts moves to settle Abram in the land and away from his "brother."

In this opening chapter, therefore, I will examine the first half of Genesis 13 (1-6) as well as Abram's initial call (12:4). This analysis will highlight the following: First, Abram is called to leave his father's household. Second, Lot is depicted as a member of that household. Third, there is no indication that Lot has been adopted by Abram or that he is viewed as a potential heir. Fourth, Lot's depiction as a member of a household distinct from that of Abram is begun in Genesis 12 and continued in Genesis 13. Fifth, the account of the striving herders presents a potentially problematic situation in Abram's relationship with his nephew Lot.

³⁴ I use "Abram" for references prior to Genesis 17 and "Abraham" for references from Genesis 17 onward.

2.1 Defining what Abram is called to leave

Chapter 12 begins: “Then Yhwh said to Abram, ‘Go away from your land, and away from your kin, and away from your father’s household to the land that I will show you.’”³⁵ Here I understand the first “land” to be Haran, where Terah’s household has settled,³⁶ and “kin” to be a grouping of extended families between the “father’s household” and the “tribe.”³⁷ This understanding of “kin” (מולדת) is supported by other uses in Genesis, specifically Gen 24:4; 31:3 and 32:9. It is true that מולדת can mean “native land” and this is seen when it is coupled with ארץ as in Gen 11:28 and 31:13. The lack of the descriptive “land” points to the fact that God is commanding Abram to leave a specific group of people and not simply the land

³⁵ לך לך (an ethical dative) emphasizes “the significance of the occurrence in question for a particular subject” (Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, eds. E. Kautzsch and A.E. Cowley [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960], 119). Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 206, concludes that “used with the verb ‘to go,’ לך suggests that the person mentioned is going alone and breaking away from the group.” Cf. Ronald J. Williams, *William’s Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 107. In this context the preposition מן is to be understood in the ablative sense, “designating movement away from a specified beginning point” (Bruce Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 212). Thus it may be best to translate this preposition as “away from” rather than simply “from” as the former more poignantly highlights the drastic nature of Abram’s decision.

³⁶ This is the majority view among scholars. See, Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 88; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 274; Westermann, *Genesis*, 170 (ET: 147); Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 371, among others.

³⁷ I am following, among others, Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*, OTR (London: Routledge, 2000), 50. Haag, *TDOT* 8:164, argues that מולדת ought to be understood as a hendiadys (ארץ מולדת) because of its proximity to ארץ. However, he does not adequately address the distinction between the forms in verses which contain ארץ מולדת (11:28; 31:13) and the current verse which does not. Mention should also be made here of John Walton’s interpretation of the things which Abram is to leave in Gen 12:1. He writes, “when Abram is asked to put his land and his family behind him, the request entails walking away from any territorial or patron gods.” Building on this understanding he later states that “father’s household” is to be identified “as his (Abram’s) inheritance.” See: John H. Walton. *Genesis NIVAC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 392; 399. He does note that Abram is to leave his land, his kinship group and all that is familiar to him. But these are, apparently, to be understood within the context of Walton’s previous mention of “territorial and patron gods.” His interpretation, however, seems problematic in light of Abraham’s later mention of “country” and “kin” in chapter 24 which have specific reference to a place and a people, not gods. Further, Abram is never called upon to set aside his “territorial or patron gods.” What Abram is called to leave is his land, kin and father’s household, the latter being the very thing Abram is reluctant to let go of.

occupied by that group of people. Therefore, the sense of מולדת in this context appears to refer to Abram's kindred, or clan.³⁸

The final thing that Yhwh calls Abram to “go away from” is his בית אב (“father’s household”). Myers comments that בית אב “is perhaps better rendered ‘family household,’ which more successfully reflects the integral relationship between kinship-linked persons and the material basis for their survival...the economic role of the family was all-pervasive.”³⁹ Likewise, Blenkinsopp notes, “The ancestral household (בית אב) was the basic building block of the tribal structure.”⁴⁰ Thus Yhwh’s call for Abram to leave his “father’s household” may be read as asking Abram to take an incredible risk, since he would be without the structure and support of family, but also to impose a risk on his “father’s household,” since Abram would be abdicating his responsibilities to them. The grammatical structure of Gen 12:1 moves “according to the severity of the sacrifice involved: country, extended family, nuclear family.”⁴¹ Abram’s decision to go is not without cost.

2.1.1 Was Abram totally obedient in his going?

When examining the question of whether or not Abram was being obedient to God in taking Lot with him, it is first important to understand how the narrator’s comment that Abram went “just as Yhwh had spoken to him” (וַיֵּלֶךְ...כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים) (יהוה) is used in other portions of the Hebrew Bible. This will provide a proper

³⁸ See also, *HALOT*, 556. Heard, *Dynamics*, 29, notes, “The subsequent narrative, not least chapter 24, may suggest...that getting Abram *away from* his family is not so much the point as getting Abram *to* Canaan” (emphasis his). The focus on Genesis 12-13 is on Abram’s eventual settlement in the land of Canaan. However, that settlement necessitates his separation from Lot.

³⁹ Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Purdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers, FRC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 19-23.

⁴⁰ Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Purdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers, FRC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 51.

⁴¹ Sarna, *Genesis*, 88.

framework for understanding the additional comment that “Lot went with him” (וַיֵּלֶךְ (אתו לוט).

Modern scholars have consistently praised Abram for his total obedience in Gen 12:1-4.⁴² This is based on the narrator’s remark, “And Abram went just as Yhwh had spoken to him.” Ska comments:

The ‘fulfillment formula’ that comes in 12:4a certainly does not belong to the usual vocabulary of traditional J. On the contrary, this formula is frequent in the priestly account and in texts from the deuteronomic and deuteronomistic traditions. The formula found in Gen 12:4a, namely יהוה [...] כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר, comes again in the priestly account in Gen 21:1; Exod 7:13, 22; 8:11, 15; 9:12, 35. In the deuteronomic and deuteronomistic texts it is also very frequent. This formula has its importance, since it makes Abraham the first ‘fulfiller’ of a divine order in the history of Israel. The patriarch thus becomes a model of obedience for all his descendants.⁴³

Ska mentions forty instances, including those noted above, of the formula “and did just as Yhwh had spoken” in the Pentateuchal, Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic texts.⁴⁴ Interestingly, however, only six of the references are of the “command/fulfillment” type. The others refer not to human fulfillment of a divine command but the fulfillment of a divine promise with or without human involvement. Of those six “command/fulfillment” texts, five of the six (Deut 2:1; Josh 4:8; Job 42:9; Num 5:4; Num 27:23) provide no additional remark following the comment,

⁴² Von Rad, *Genesis*, 161, writes, “Abraham obeys blindly and without objection...The word *wayyelek* (‘and he set out’) is more effective than any psychological description could be, and in its majestic simplicity does greater justice to the importance of the event.” Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 376, comments, “No commentary is provided, but it is clear that Abram is presented to the reader as a paragon of faith and obedience.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 278, notes, “‘as the Lord had told him’ emphasizes Abraham’s obedience.” R.W.L. Moberly, *Genesis 12-50*, OTG (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 22, comments that in response to Yhwh’s command, “Abraham quite simply obeys.” Albert de Pury, “Genesis 1-26” in *Erklärt – Der Kommentar Zur Zürcher Bibel Band 1* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2010), 42, states that Abram’s departure is an act of obedience (“Gehorsamsakt”). Zimmerli, *1.Mose 12-25*, 22, comments that, “Abraham greift nach der ausgestreckten Hand.” As I discuss in chapters 4-6, ancient commentators have done the same. One could contend that the biblical text also supports this position, for Heb 11:8 states, “By faith, when he was called, Abraham obeyed to go out to a place that he was about to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” However, the focus of this text does not appear to be on whether or not Abraham went *from* but that he went *to* a place that he was unsure of. The writer to the Hebrews does not appear to be concerned with Abraham’s *going from* but solely with his *going*.

⁴³ Jean-Louis Ska, *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch*, FAT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 62.

⁴⁴ Ska, *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch*, 62, n. 68.

“and did just as Yhwh had spoken.” The only text which provides an additional remark is found in Judg 6:27 where it states:

Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did just as Yhwh had spoken to him; but because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

The additional remark regarding Gideon’s “fear” raises potential questions about his character. An additional remark regarding the actions of the character fulfilling the divine command is, therefore, not only incongruous but also potentially problematic. Gen 12:4 begins, “and Abram went just as Yhwh had spoken to him.” On the heels of this statement, however, we read, “and Lot went with him” which raises doubts about the reality of Abram’s obedience to Yhwh’s initial command.⁴⁵ Had the text simply read, “And Abram went just as Yhwh had spoken to him” with no additional remarks, then certainly Abram could be lauded for his total obedience.⁴⁶ With the inclusion of “and Lot went with him” it would appear that Abram may not have been totally obedient to God’s initial command to “go away from.”⁴⁷ If, however, Lot had

⁴⁵ Steinberg, *Kinship*, 50, sees a contrast in the order between the mention of “and Lot went with him” in 12:4 and “and Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot” in 12:5. Lot, alone, is mentioned as going with Abram in 12:4 but is mentioned after Sarai in 12:5. She comments that this may imply that Lot has a “more important place in Abram’s genealogical future and for matters of inheritance than does Sarai.” The problem with such a reading is that the comment in 12:4 comes immediately following Yhwh’s imperative that Abram “leave” his father’s household. The mention of Lot then makes better sense as a comment highlighting Abram’s potential disobedience to that imperative than it does about Abram’s “genealogy.” Lot, alone, is mentioned in 12:4 because he is the one who, in fact, should not be going. It would be superfluous to mention Sarai at that point because she is a member of Abram’s household and her presence on the journey is assumed.

⁴⁶ One finds similar remarks, for example in Lev 16:34; Num 8:3; 17:11; 27:22 with regard to commands given to Moses being fulfilled just as Yhwh had commanded. Obviously, the phraseology is different given the use of צוה as opposed to דבר.

⁴⁷ While the vast majority of interpreters have seen Abram as wholly obedient there have been a few who have argued otherwise. For example, early 20th century writer Arthur Pink comments that Abram “failed” to fully obey God’s command by taking a member of his father’s household with him and thus his response to God’s command was “partial and slow” (Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* [Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Ass’n, 1922], 141). See also, Andrew Vaughn, “And Lot Went with Him: Abraham’s Disobedience in Genesis 12:1-4.” in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J.J.M. Roberts*, ed. Bernard Frank Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 111-24. This is not to say that Abram should not still be commended for his going. That Abram went at all is certainly a demonstration of the patriarch’s great faith. What Lot’s presence on the journey does raise though are questions about the totality of Abram’s obedience to the call to “Go from.”

become a member of Abram's household via adoption then it would absolve him of responsibility for Lot's accompaniment.⁴⁸

2.2 Reading Lot as Abram's Potential Heir

The idea that Lot functions as the presumed heir appears plausible given the phraseology found in the genealogical list which precedes the passage in Genesis 12. Genesis 11 opens with the Babel narrative (vv. 1-9) and is followed by the genealogical structure of Shem's line (vv. 10-26).⁴⁹ Actually, the Babel pericope is "framed" by two separate lists of Shem's descendants, Gen 10:22-31 and 11:10-26.⁵⁰ The list in 10:22-31 simply opens with בני שם and then sets out to list Shem's four sons. What follows in vv. 23-24 focuses solely on two of Shem's sons, Aram and Arpachshad. The genealogical structure is further specified by the sole focus on the sons of Arpachshad in vv. 25-31. The genealogy in 11:10-26 is far more detailed and begins not with בני שם but אלה תולדת שם.⁵¹ Like the genealogy in chapter 10, however, the focus is on the descendants of Shem through just one of his four sons, Arpachshad. The structure of 11:10-26 is quite rigid. The pattern of "X" was "a

⁴⁸ Waltke comments that Lot "agrees on his own to go" (Bruce Waltke with C. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 207); B. Jacob comments similarly that Lot wanted to stay with Abram by comparing Lot's presence on the journey to that of Ruth and Naomi. (B. Jacob, *Das Erste Buch Der Torah: Genesis* [New York: Ktav, 1974], 339). There is, however, no mention in the text of Lot's desire to travel with his uncle one way or the other.

⁴⁹ Regarding this kind of "segmented" or "family tree" type genealogical list, Wilson notes, "Genealogies of this sort have both a vertical and horizontal dimension. Vertically, the genealogy has depth and traces the relationship between two generations. Horizontally, the genealogy has breadth and traces the relationship between siblings by relating them to a common ancestor" (Robert R. Wilson, "Genealogy, Genealogies," *ABD* 2:930). See also his "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *JBL* 94 (1975): 169-89; and, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, Yale Near Eastern Researches 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁵⁰ Carr, *Reading the Fractures*, 100, notes that "the verbless material in Genesis 10 resembles Priestly material in important ways, yet never appears to have existed apart from the non-P material in Genesis 10 and 11:1-9. The genealogical framework in Genesis 10 appears to be a Priestly redaction, or more precisely, a Priestly composition built around this portion of the non-P primeval history." Carr reasons thus because without the intervening Babel pericope in 11:1-9 we are left with an, apparently, awkward doubling of accounts of Shem's descendants. There is a similar break between the *toledot* of "Adam" and "Noah" with the story of the בני אלהים (6:1-4). Though, there, obviously, the genealogies are not for the same person.

⁵¹ For a recent treatment of the *toledot* structure of Genesis see: Matthew A. Thomas, *These are the generations: Identity, covenant, and the 'toledot' formula*, LHBOTS 551 (London: T & T Clark, 2013).

certain number of years old” when he became the father of “so and so” and X lived “a certain number of years” after he became the father of “so and so” and he had other sons and daughters, is repeated throughout.⁵² For example in 11:20-21:

ויחי רעו שנים ושלישים שנה ויולד את־שרוג
ויחי רעו אחרי הולידו את־שרוג שבע שנים ומאתים שנה ויולד
בנים ובנות

(“And Reu lived thirty-two years, and he became the father of Serug. And after Reu became the father of Serug, he lived two hundred and seven years and he fathered sons and daughters” – Gen 11:20-21)⁵³

This pattern is interrupted by the comments regarding Terah. Interestingly, the pattern prior to v. 27 was the mention of a father and the mention of *one* son. In v. 27, however, we have the mention of a father, Terah, and the mention of *three* sons, “Abram, Nahor and Haran.”⁵⁴ After this atypical beginning we find a second list of *toledot*, אלה תולדת תרה. This is the only place in Genesis where we find *toledot* within *toledot*.⁵⁵ Brief information about each of Terah’s three sons follows.⁵⁶

The first thing mentioned about Terah’s sons is that one of them, Haran, had a son named “Lot.” The presence of Lot at this point in the narrative doesn’t necessarily appear to be abnormal. There are other instances in the prior genealogies where certain additional information is provided about the members of the given

⁵² In many ways this genealogical structure is similar to what we see in Genesis 5. There, however, we have the mention of the ספר of the generations of אדם, the summary statements regarding the extent of each father’s life, and the editorial comments given concerning both Enoch and Noah.

⁵³ All translations from MT are my own.

⁵⁴ The mention of multiple sons actually fits the genealogical pattern in 10:1-31 better than it does 11:10-24 because the genealogy in chapter 10 regularly mentions multiple sons and provides additional information about the “sons” in the context of the genealogy. The comment about Terah “taking” his family at the end of chapter 11 is reminiscent of the travel, territory and settlement statements in chapter 10 (10:5, 19, 30).

⁵⁵ There are places where one *toledot* will follow another *toledot*. We find this in Genesis 25 (Ishmael/Isaac) and Genesis 36-7 (Esau/Jacob). Regarding Esau’s *toledot* in Genesis 36 there is a repetition of ואלה תולדת עשו in both 36:1 and 36:9. But, unlike our current text, there isn’t a shift into a genealogy of one of Esau’s descendants.

⁵⁶ Much like the structure in 10:22-31 we have here a mention of multiple sons but then the focus narrows to two (Abram and Nahor) in light of the death of Haran. The genealogy then further narrows to focus solely on Abram.

line.⁵⁷ Occasionally, this additional information is important for the subsequent story line, but at other times it is not.⁵⁸ Here the mention of Lot is purposeful and this purpose will be unfolded in the subsequent story line. The genealogical information about Haran continues with the note that Haran died “in the presence of (על־פני) Terah, his father, in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.”

The narrator continues the discussion of Terah’s *toledot* by noting that Abram and Nahor, the two surviving sons of Terah, took wives for themselves, presumably both from within their kindred.⁵⁹ This is followed by the note concerning the barrenness of Abram’s wife Sarai:

ויקח אברם ונחור להם נשים שם אשת־אברם שרי ושם אשת־
נחור מלכה בת־הרן אבי־מלכה ואבי יסכה
ותהי שרי עקרה אין לה ולד

(“And Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah, daughter of Haran, father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren, she had no child.” – Gen 11:29-30)

Zakovitch notes that one way in which issues are “solved” in inner-biblical dialogue is through exegetical comments embedded in genealogical lists. For example, we see in Gen 11:29: “Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah, daughter of Haran, father of Milcah and Iscah.” The structure of the verse is intriguing. While there is additional information given on Milcah there is nothing said about Sarai. The silence here may be deliberate, because it makes room for Abraham’s later explanation of his

⁵⁷ One thinks here of the narrative remark concerning Enoch in the *toledot* of Adam, for example, in Gen 5:24: “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.”

⁵⁸ The statement regarding Noah at the end of Adam’s genealogy in 5:29 prepares the reader for the subsequent account concerning Noah, “He called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one shall bring us comfort from our work and from the toil of our hands from the ground Yhwh has cursed.’” While this statement is significant for the subsequent story line, the remark regarding Nimrod in 10:8-9 is not apparently of significant import in the story line, “Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. He was a mighty hunter before Yhwh; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Yhwh.’”

⁵⁹ Though not entirely clear, it seems safe to assume that the “Haran” mentioned in 11:29 as fathering “Milcah and Iscah” is different from the Haran, mentioned in 11:27, 28, 31, who fathers Lot. One finds a similar recurrence of the name of Terah’s father, Nahor, in 11:24-25 and Terah’s son, Nahor, in 11:27.

relationship with Sarah: “Also, she is my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife” (Gen 20:12). This remark returns the mind of the reader to 12:13, “Say you are my sister.” In chapter 12, Abram appears guilty of deceit, which may be troubling for readers. The remark in 20:12 assuages any fears and the silence in 11:29 confirms the reality of the relationship.⁶⁰

At first, there appears to be another example of this technique in Genesis 11 which relates directly to the topic at hand. In 11:27-30 we read:

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. Haran died in the presence of Terah, his father, in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah, daughter of Haran, father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

There are two things which are at work here that relate directly to the issue of Lot’s accompaniment of Abram. First, we see the mention of Haran’s death. With his death, Lot would be without a father. He would no longer serve as an “heir.” Second, Sarai’s barrenness implies that Abram is without an “heir.” Above, I noted that Lot’s accompaniment of Abram is problematic. If, however, Lot is understood as the “heir” then the problem has been solved. Lot has no father and Abram has no son.⁶¹ Lot, it

⁶⁰ Yair Zakovitch, “Inner Biblical Interpretation” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 52-3.

⁶¹ Stacks states that the taking of Lot demonstrates that Abram “has not forgotten simple family duty” (Robert D. Stacks, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990], 78).

could be assumed, has been used to fill that void.⁶² As Steinberg comments:

Adoption of a blood relative, the son of one's brother, allows for the continuation of Abram's lineage. The preferred choice, from the perspective of the lineage, is the closest male kinsman available. Within the kinship sphere, adoption serves the interests of Abram by providing for social reproduction.⁶³

If that is the case then Abram is absolved of responsibility for Lot's accompaniment.⁶⁴

But does the text necessitate such a reading? How, in fact, does the narrative portray

Lot's relationship to Abram and to whose household is Lot really connected?

2.3 Lot as a Member of Terah's Household

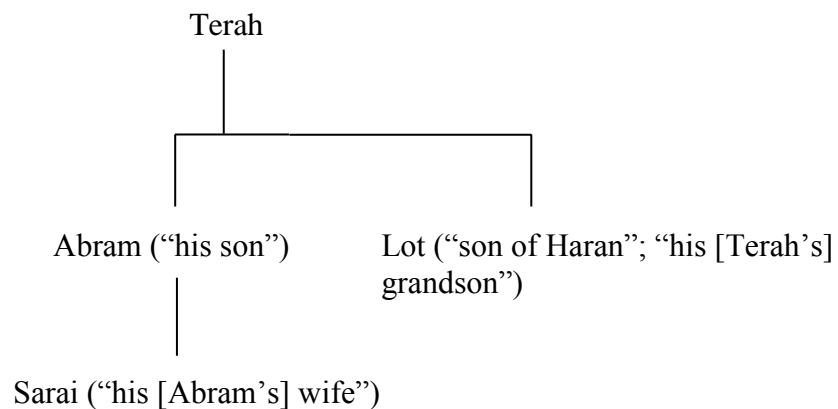
When it comes to the actual way Lot is described in the narrative, he is defined, not by his relationship to Abram, but rather in terms of his relationship first

⁶² Silberman, "Listening," 19; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 376. Laurence A. Turner, "Lot as Jekyll and Hyde" in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, eds. D.J.A. Clines et al., JSOTSup, 87 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 86, raises the question about Lot's accompaniment and its impact on Abram's obedience. He, however, justifies Lot's presence with the comment that Abram, "must have thought Lot was someone far more important—none other than the one through whom the 'great nation' would come. There is no other reason why Abraham should take Lot." He comments elsewhere, "When we consider, however, that despite the injunction to leave his kindred, the childless Abram takes the fatherless Lot, the possibility is raised that from Abram's perspective, Lot is not simply kindred. Sarai has not provided a son through whom the promised nation will come; but his dead brother has" (Laurence A. Turner. *Genesis* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 64-5); (Cf. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 162). In other words, while it may appear that Abram disobeyed God's command, he really did not, because Lot, as Abram's heir, is no longer to be seen as a member of Abram's father's household but rather of Abram's household. Others have noted that Abram's taking of Lot is an example of his compassion and responsibility for his nephew. See, for example, E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 98.

⁶³ Steinberg, *Kinship*, 51. Likewise, Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York, Doubleday, 1992), 100, comments, "the prominence of Lot as a participant in this two-stage journey and the notice that Sarah is infertile suggest that Lot was at this state the intended heir of Abraham"; Benjamin Ziemer, *Abram – Abraham: Kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Genesis 14, 15, 17*, BZAW 350 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 124, concurs noting with Haran's death, Lot is orphaned ("verwaist") and Abram as the eldest brother takes responsibility for his nephew.

⁶⁴ Adoption was a typical practice in the ancient Near East. Various reasons are given for why families would adopt, some similar to today. Perhaps the most prominent is adoption to obtain a male heir who would preserve the family name. Other reasons are also given: the desire of the adoptive parents to have a son who would support them in their old age; or adoption by a craftsman of a male heir for apprenticeship. There are also laws set forth regarding adoption in both the Laws of Eshnunna and the Law Code of Hammurabi. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. J. McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 51-2, notes however that "the notion of adoption, in the juridical sense, was known in Old Testament times, but had little influence on daily life." Pamela Barnash, "Adoption," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Law*, 7, comments that references to adoption in the Hebrew Bible are "elusive." She does list several potential instances of adoption which have been put forth by interpreters but notes that these are only possibilities and interpretations have "varying degrees of success." Whether or not adoption was practiced in Israel, the focus here is on how Lot's relationship to Abram is characterized in the text.

to Haran and then to Terah. Lot is initially called Haran’s son (11:27) and when he is taken by Terah on the journey to Canaan, following Haran’s death, he is identified as both Haran’s son and Terah’s grandson in 11:31 (בן־הרן בן־בנו). If Lot has, in fact, been adopted by Abram after Haran’s death, why would the narrator continue to identify Lot by his connection to Terah? Furthermore, the comment about Lot being “Haran’s son” and “Terah’s grandson” comes *after* the comment regarding Sarai’s barrenness. If the narrator wanted to make a clear “father/son” relationship between Abram and Lot, as he does with regard to Abram and Sarai’s “husband/wife” relationship, it is curious that Lot would still be defined, even *after* the barrenness comment, by his relationship to Haran and Terah. While Sarai’s connection is defined by her relationship to Abram, Lot’s is defined by his relationship to Haran and Terah. Lot *is* someone’s son. He is “Haran’s son” and the narrator wants that to be clear from the outset. The relational connections are outlined as follows:



At the time of this move, then, Lot is still to be understood as being part of Terah’s household.⁶⁵ Incidentally (and I will have much more to say about this in chapter seven below), in Genesis 11-14 Lot is never characterized as Abram’s “son” or even “potential son”:

⁶⁵ Since Haran dies, presumably, while still a member of Terah’s household (11:28), Lot would still have been a member of Terah’s household when Abram takes him some 60 years prior to Terah’s death (Terah being 70 at Abram’s birth and subsequently dying at age 205). See Vaughn, “And Lot Went with Him,” 119.

TEXT	CHARACTERIZATION OF LOT
Gen 11:27 (והרן הוליד את־לוט)	Son of Haran
Gen 11:31 (בן־הרן בן־בנו)	Son of Haran; Grandson of Terah
Gen 12:5 (בן־אחיו)	Son of Abram's brother (Haran)
Gen 13:8 (כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אָחִים אֲנָחֵנו)	Abram's "brother"
Gen 13:11 (אחיו)	Abram's "brother"
Gen 14:12 (בן־אחי)	Son of Abram's brother (Haran)
Gen 14:14 (אחיו)	Abram's "brother"
Gen 14:16 (אחיו)	Abram's "brother"

Thus, when Yhwh calls Abram to leave his "father's household," Lot must, from a contextual standpoint, be included in that grouping.⁶⁶ It would appear, from the above discussion, that Lot's accompaniment of Abram is problematic.⁶⁷ Perhaps Abram, while obedient in *going*, was not fully obedient in *leaving* his father's household.

Coats comments, regarding Lot's accompaniment of Abram in Gen 12:4: "It is not important here that Lot should be identified as Abram's nephew. But it is

⁶⁶ From a sociological standpoint King and Stager note, "Authority over the household resides with the paterfamilias, who in the case of a three-generation household would be the grandfather... Besides parents and unmarried children, the *בית אב* might include several generations of family members, depending on who is claimed as the paterfamilias, along with his wife or wives, sons and their wives, grandsons and their wives, the unmarried sons and daughters, slaves, servants... aunts, uncles, widows, orphans" (Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, LAI [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 37; 40).

⁶⁷ Heard, *Dynamics*, 29, offers two critiques of this particular reading. First, he conjectures, that just as it would have been unlikely for Abram to leave behind his actual children, if he had had any, it would have been equally unlikely for him to leave behind Lot, whom he may have considered himself to "adopt." He writes, "it does not seem likely that Abram would have taken Yahweh's command to 'leave kinfolk' to require him to leave these children behind." Secondly, if Sarai is, as Abraham will later state in 20:12, his father's daughter, then Sarai is "potentially one of the 'kinfolk' whom Abram is supposed to leave." He concludes, "if Abram thinks of his nephew Lot as his heir or ward, and thus his relative by descent and by legal tie, then Lot may be in the same category as Sarai and Abram's taking Lot to Canaan will have violated no part of Yahweh's command." Heard's logic here is problematic for several reasons: 1. The text is clear that Abram and Sarai had no children together (11:30) and that Sarai was Abram's wife (11:29) and thus a member of Abram's household; 2. He misreads the meaning of *מולדת* which, as I have outlined above, speaks of a grouping of people between the tribe and father's household and thus would not include those, like children and Sarai, who were members of Abram's household; 3. It is not clear that Abram ever thought of Lot as adopted. Actually, the text seems to support arguments contrary to that notion; 4. Sarai, as Abram's wife, would now fall under the rubric of Abram's household, which Yhwh in no way commands Abram to leave.

essential that Lot appear in relation to Abram.”⁶⁸ Given the discussion above however, and in light of the analysis that will follow, it is actually quite important that Lot be identified as Abram’s nephew in Gen 12:4 because it sets Lot in his proper relational context. He is Abram’s “brother’s son,” not Abram’s “son” and is therefore still a member of Terah’s household. Though Lot is relationally connected to Abram, he is not in the *proper* relational connection to Abram and therefore ought not to be with Abram on the journey.⁶⁹

While the majority of modern interpreters have read Abram’s taking of Lot as a clear picture of adoption, the above analysis has shown that the text may be pointing in a different direction. Lot’s presence on the journey appears problematic. The initial comments at the outset of Genesis 13 seems to be the first step toward distancing Lot from Abram relationally and solving the issue of Lot’s accompaniment.

ויעל אברם ממצרים הוא ואשתו וכל־אשר־לו ולוט עמו הנגבה
 (“And Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that belonged to him and
 Lot with him to the Negev” – Gen 13:1)

Genesis 13 opens by connecting the present pericope to the previous one. The mention that Abram “went up from Egypt” reminds the reader that Abram was previously in Egypt (12:10-20). The mention of Lot not only prepares the reader for the story of separation but also brings him back into the main story line, given his absence from the Egypt pericope. The fact that Lot is mentioned here at the outset

⁶⁸ Coats, “Lot as Foil,” 115.

⁶⁹ Abram’s act of partial obedience here in 12:4 may also contrast with Abram’s later act of full obedience, in the taking of Isaac, in chapter 22 (cf. Vaughn, “And Lot Went with Him,” 124):

Take, please, your son (22:2-3)

קח־נא את־בנך

And Abraham rose

וישכם אברהם

and his son Isaac

ואת יצחק בנו

Go away from... your father’s household(12:1; 4)

לך־לך...ומבית אביך

And Abram went

וילך אברם

and Lot went with him

וילך אתו לוט

also connects this pericope back to the first mention of Lot's accompaniment on this journey in 12:4 which, as was argued above, appears quite problematic.

2.4. Abram's Return to the Land

When Abram returns to the land, in Genesis 13, the first thing he does is return to the place he had been previously. The beginning here is a reference to his initial arrival in the land of Canaan in Gen 12:5-9. There are several important parallels between the accounts in Genesis 12 and Genesis 13, all of which surround the issue of land: (1) Abram's journey to and eventual arrival in the land (12:5-6 and 13:1); (2) the mention of the Canaanites being "in the land" (12:6 and 13:3); (3) Yhwh's speaking and subsequent promise to Abram (12:7 and 13:14-15); (4) the mention that Abram builds an altar and worships Yhwh near trees (12:7 and 13:18).⁷⁰ In Genesis 13 the return to the land provides the backdrop for the separation story. This may be highlighted by the placement of Lot after the mention of Abram's possessions in 13:1 ("And Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that belonged to him and Lot with him to the Negev"). The placement here may be a subtle way of separating Lot from Abram before the actual account of separation has even happened⁷¹ while highlighting the two separate households traveling together. Now that Abram and Lot are in the land together, the narrative will continue to push Lot to the outside where each will "separate from his brother" (13:11).

2.5. Abram's Worship and Abram and Lot's Property

It is the contention of this thesis that one of the main foci of Genesis 13, in the wider context of the Abraham narrative, is the necessity of Abram's separation from Lot. At the beginning of Genesis 13, one finds discussion of Abram's worship

⁷⁰ Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 219, notes regarding 13:18, "At Mamre, in Hebron, the final word is 'Yhwh'...Hebron will be central to the place of God's visitation."

⁷¹ Sarna, *Genesis*, 97.

practices and lists of his and Lot's respective possessions. There is an interesting lacuna in the story as Lot's worship is not mentioned and Abram alone is said to "call on the name of Yhwh." Why only Abram? Furthermore, Abram and Lot are both said to be quite wealthy but there are differences between the goods mentioned. Does the difference in goods indicate that the writer wants the reader to draw a contrast between Abram and Lot? Perhaps, but as I will discuss below, there are also other ways of understanding these aspects.

The narrative states that Abram went:

אל־מִקוֹם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה שָׁם בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
("To the place of the altar that he made there previously and there Abram called on the name of Yhwh" – Gen 13:4)

Abram has returned to the land and to his previously built altar. At the altar he "calls upon the name of Yhwh."⁷² Here the mention that only Abram is "calling on the name of Yhwh" may be significant. Abram was first mentioned by name in the opening verse prior to the mention of those traveling with him. Of that group only Lot was mentioned by name. Genesis 13 begins then with two named figures at the forefront. Subsequently, the writer mentions, by name, that Abram was a very wealthy individual. Between that reference in 13:2 and the reference here to Abram in 13:4 no other character has entered the equation. The writer has continually used the third masculine singular verbal form to identify the actions that Abram was

⁷² The statement "called on the name of Yhwh" is a phrase used throughout the Hebrew Bible to signify worship of and allegiance to Yhwh. The phrase, for example, is used three times in Psalm 116 in the context of both petition and praise, "Then I called on the name of Yhwh (וּבְשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֶקְרָא), 'O Yhwh save my life'" (116:4); "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of Yhwh (וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא)" (116:13); "I will offer to you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and I will call on the name of Yhwh (וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא)" (116:17). The idea of "calling on the name of Yhwh" clearly has cultic significance and highlights Abram's devotion to and worship of Yhwh. The expression is used in contrast to the calling on of false gods. Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal with the statement, "You will call on the name of your god (וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) and I will call on the name Yhwh (וּבְשֵׁם־יְהוָה) the god that answers by means of fire, he is God" (1 Kgs 18:24). Here there is a distinction between those who call on the name of so-called "gods" and those that call on the name of Yhwh. Most telling, in the context of Genesis, is the use of the phrase following the birth of Seth in Gen 4:26, אַז הוּחַל לְקָרֵא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה. The statement in Gen 4:26, is slotted between the announcement of Seth's birth and the subsequent *toledot* of the "descendants of Adam." It may be quite purposeful that the statement comes only after the beginnings of the line of Seth in contrast to the earlier line of Cain.

engaging in.⁷³ Here in verse 4 Abram is again mentioned by name, with no mention of Lot. The writer could have obviously left Abram's name out as it seems reasonably clear in the text that the storyteller has not diverted from his initial subject, Abram. The fact, however, that his name—and his name alone—reappears here in the context of the worship of Yhwh may point to a way in which the writer is subtly separating Abram and Lot.⁷⁴

I noted above that Lot's accompaniment on the journey appears problematic. If one of the main foci of Genesis 13 is the rectification of that problem then the opening comments regarding Abram's worship practices may introduce the idea which the narrator is working toward: Abram, alone, in the land worshipping Yhwh. These opening statements foreshadow where the text wants to take the reader and this will be more clearly seen in the way the narrative itself is framed by Abram's worship of Yhwh at altars (cf. 13:18).

וגם־ללוט ההלך את־אברם היה צאן־ובקר ואהלים
("And Lot, the one going with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents" – Gen 13:5)

The writer provides a reminder that Lot is on the journey with Abram. The mention that he is "the one going with Abram" links not only to the opening verse but also to the first mention of Lot's accompaniment in chapter 12. I discussed above the problematic nature of Lot's accompaniment and here the writer's remark again presents the reader with the dilemma of Lot's presence and the issue of Abram's

⁷³ ויעל (13:1); וילך (13:3); ויקרא (13:4).

⁷⁴ It could be argued that Abram is sacrificing on behalf of his whole party, Lot included. As I demonstrated above, however, Lot is from a separate household and so might reasonably be expected to offer his own sacrifices.

obedience to Yhwh’s initial call.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the writer mentions that Lot “also had flocks and herds and tents” (Gen 13:5). While many commentators simply see this as a statement regarding the vast wealth of Lot,⁷⁶ Coats sees a “contrast” between Abram and Lot. Abram is defined in terms of not only his cattle but also his “silver” and “gold.” Lot, in contrast, is said to have “flocks, herds and tents.” Coats comments, “The item clearly intends the contrast since the opening word for v. 5 connects the Lot information with the preceding description of Abram.”⁷⁷ The contrast would be set out as follows:

Abram	Lot
“very rich”	
“in livestock”	“flocks”
“in silver”	“herds”
“and in gold”	“tents”

But is the point of the lists really to provide contrast? Certainly, the writer notes in 13:2 that Abram is “very rich (כבד מאד).”⁷⁸ Earlier the “famine” of Genesis 12 was described as being כבד which implied that the famine was a particularly difficult famine which weighed “heavily upon the land.” The use of כבד here refers not to severe lack but to exceeding wealth. So while Abram left the land initially (12:10) due to the “heaviness” of the famine, he returns to the land bearing a

⁷⁵ Steinberg, *Kinship*, 51, reads the continued references to Lot as referring to the “special significance... attached to Lot for the future of Abram’s genealogical line.” The continual mention of Lot, however, fits better within the context of obedience to God’s initial command. Thus, the tension raised by the mention of Lot in 12:4-5, his absence in the Egypt pericope and his reappearance in 13:1 focuses the reader’s attention on Abram’s lack of obedience in 12:4. Did Abram finally break from his father’s household? With the mention of Lot in 13:1 the answer is, “no.” This then paves the way for the separation which will occur in chapter 13.

⁷⁶ See Hamilton, Wenham, Mathews, among others.

⁷⁷ Coats, “Lot as Foil,” 116. Cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 98.

⁷⁸ For discussion of the use of כבד with מאד as a means of intensification see *IBHS*, 668.

“heaviness” of wealth⁷⁹ in livestock,⁸⁰ silver and gold.⁸¹

Lot is also depicted as being quite wealthy having a variety of possessions, namely, flocks,⁸² herds⁸³ and tents.⁸⁴ One question which the text does not address is the source of Lot’s wealth. Mathews sees Abram as the source of Lot’s wealth and comments that “the narration never loses sight of why Lot prospers.”⁸⁵ Likewise, Waltke comments that “Abraham mediates blessing to those with him.”⁸⁶ The point being that Lot was prosperous precisely because of his connection to Abram. Ironically, the text never says *why* Lot prospers. He apparently had goods, as mentioned in 12:5, which may imply that at least a portion of Lot’s possessions were received as an inheritance from his deceased father. Whether from his father, from Abram, from both, or from neither, the text is silent on the issue. Furthermore, when the text says that Lot “also had flocks,” etc., does it automatically mean that he didn’t have the other things mentioned concerning Abram? Perhaps the mention of the goods of both Abram and Lot is simply a way of drawing attention to the vast amount

⁷⁹ For further discussion of the term see: P. Stenmens, “כֶּבֶד,” *TDOT* 7:18-19.

⁸⁰ The word מִקְנֵה can refer to livestock but can also be a more general term signifying a vast number of domesticated animals. Note Koopmans’ comment that, “Of the 76 occurrences of the nom. *mikneh*, virtually all the references designate domestic livestock – herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats” (William T. Koopmans, “מִקְנֵה,” *NIDOTTE* 2:1090).

⁸¹ The combination “silver and gold” occurs approximately 95 times in the Hebrew Bible (N. Lohfink, “כֶּסֶף,” *TDOT* 7: 270-88.). Silver and gold are used throughout the Hebrew Bible for a variety of purposes including: exchange, minting, manufacturing of tools, jewelry, artifacts, cultic accessories and various instruments (cf. Gen 23:15-16; Exod 26:19-32; Exod. 28:36; 2 Sam 12:30; Esth 4:11; Song 1:11; Isa 2:20). Silver is also used as a metaphor for the preciousness of God’s law in Ps 12:6, though in other places (Ps 119:72) the law is more valuable than silver and gold.

⁸² The term can imply a flock of both sheep and goats as well as a flock of just sheep or just goats (*HALOT*, 992).

⁸³ The term בָּקָר generally refers to “cattle” including bulls, cows and calves (*DCH* 2:250). Cattle were an important possession which could be used for food, plowing and sacrifice (Cf. Gen 18:7; Num 7:87-8; Amos 6:12).

⁸⁴ Abram was earlier (12:8) described as being a tent-dweller and at the close of Genesis 13 he is said to move his tent and settle in the land of Canaan. We are not told how many tents Lot has but it is safe to assume that the mention of “tents” signifies that Lot had a number of people in his party. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 134, notes that the use of “tents” here may be equivalent to the “male and female servants” that Abram acquires in 12:16.

⁸⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 134. Raymond Harari, “Abraham’s Nephew Lot: A Biblical Portrait,” *Tradition* 25 (Fall 1989): 32, appears to imply the same with his comment that “the narrative stresses that Lot was accompanying Abram and suggests that Lot probably owed his economic success to that fact.”

⁸⁶ Waltke, *Genesis*, 220.

of property accumulated between the two. This seems to be the most natural reading of the text and is supported by the writer's use of מקנה to describe the animals of both Abram and Lot in 12:7.

Further, it is noteworthy that Abram and Lot do *not* share flocks, tents, shepherds, etc. Lot is depicted not as one who has been absorbed into Abram's household but rather as one who is separate from him. He is independently wealthy and perhaps as an equal to Abram (though maybe not as rich) and a member of a distinct household.

2.6 A Burdened Land and Striving Herders

The mention of Abram and Lot's possessions "sets up" the subsequent account of their striving herders and the land's inability to "carry" the two households. This is a significant point in the narrative. The land can't contain both Abram and Lot. Here begins, in a more focused way, the weaving together of the two main foci of Genesis 13 (separation and settlement).

ולא־נשא אתם הארץ לשבת יחדו כִּי־היה רכושם רב ולא יכלו לשבת יחדו
ויהי־ריב בין רעי מקנה־אברם ובין רעי מקנה־לוט והכנעני והפרזי אז ישב בארץ
(“And the land could not support both of them dwelling together for their possessions were abundant, thus they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herders of the livestock of Abram and between the herders of the livestock of Lot. At that time the Canaanites and Perizzites were dwelling in the land” – Gen 13:6-7)

Initially, in these particular verses, the land (ארץ) is said to be unable to support (נשא) the two families dwelling together.⁸⁷ The term נשא has a broad range of meanings, but here it appears to refer to the “unbearable burden” being placed on the land by the combined possessions of Abram and Lot.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ The parallels with the Jacob/Esau narrative at this point will be taken up in chapter seven.

⁸⁸ Heard's, *Dynamics*, 32, comment that “Though often translated ‘the land could not...,’ the first clause of 13:6 actually begins ‘the land did not’” seems more of a semantic difference rather than one of substance. Whether the land “could not” or “did not,” the focus is on the inability of both households to dwell together.

The use of נשא may also be a *double entendre*. The most obvious way to understand the verb is as “support” (i.e., the land was unable to support both households living together). The more subtle way to understand the verb is by reading it as “raise” or “exalt.”⁸⁹ This particular rendering places a more theological, rather than agricultural, emphasis on the text. With this reading in mind the text would be implying that only one of the two are able to be “exalted” in the land, both cannot be “raised up.”

Earlier in the Abraham narrative (12:10) he and his household were forced to vacate Canaan due to a famine (רעב); in 13:6 the land is again under stress, though this time it is not due to a lack but to the abundance (רב) of Abram and Lot’s possessions. The issue of whether or not Abram can dwell in the land has been raised again. In Genesis 12 he willingly left to go to Egypt; with the mention that he and Lot cannot dwell together, the reader is left wondering if Abram will leave yet again. The issues in the land continue in the next verse with the mention that there was strife between the herders of Abram and the herders of Lot. Not only has the land faced a רעב but also a רב of possessions and now a ריב between Abram and Lot’s herders.

After the mention of the inability of the land to support the two family members dwelling together the text states the reason: the vastness of their resources. Gunkel comments that v. 6 is “überflüssig.”⁹⁰ It does serve, however, to connect the previous statements concerning Abram and Lot’s possessions to the subsequent account of the strife and separation. It also provides another justification in the narrative, along with the striving herders, for Abram to call for separation. The noun רכושם is used in Gen 12:5 in reference to the possessions that Abram and Lot were taking with them on their journey. It is also used four times in Genesis 14 with

⁸⁹ HALOT, 725.

⁹⁰ Gunkel, *Genesis*, 174 (ET: 173).

reference to the goods that were taken from the people of Sodom in general, and Lot in particular, and their subsequent return by Abram.⁹¹ The term, therefore, refers to both material goods and animals.⁹² The possessions of the two households is said to be רב. As an adjective, as it is used here, the term signifies the vastness or abundance of the possessions.

The mention of the property sets the stage for the ensuing quarrel between the herders. As noted above, there is said to be a ריב between the herders of Lot and the herders of Abram. The language of “strife” or “quarrel” can involve two persons or several persons. It may refer not only to a physical, but also a verbal struggle between parties.⁹³ This particular usage does not refer to a lawsuit⁹⁴ (e.g., Deut 17:8) but rather to a verbal, perhaps physical, disagreement between the herders. One of the questions that the text does not address explicitly is what the herders are striving about. The “herders” are said to be herders of Abram and Lot’s מקנה. Herders spent most of their time protecting the flocks. They would offer protection from thieves and wild animals. In a nomadic society the role of “herder” was typically fulfilled by the members of one’s family.⁹⁵ Here, however, given the lack of family members mentioned for either Abram or Lot it would appear that the herders are hired servants—perhaps the same servants mentioned as being given to Abram in 12:16, or the people they took with them in 12:5. The term מקנה is the same term that was used

⁹¹ Gen 14:11, 12 and twice in 14:16.

⁹² Cf. 2 Chr 21:14-17; 2 Chr 32:29.

⁹³ Cf. Ex. 17:7; 2 Sam 22:44; Ps 18:43.

⁹⁴ Hamilton, *Genesis* 1-17, 391, comments, “In strict legal terms, the word lawsuit can only be properly used when the two disputing parties are unable to resolve their differences through either peaceful or violent means. As a result they turn to a third party to act as adjudicator. This is not the procedure pursued in Gen. 13, for Abram and Lot are able to solve their quarrel without resort to a mediating party.”

⁹⁵ Louis Jonker, “רעה,” *NIDOTTE* 3:1141. For a fuller discussion of the role of “shepherds” in the ancient Near East and the historical and theological framework for understanding the role of “shepherds” in the Hebrew Bible see: Jack W. Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherds,” *ABD* 5:1187-1190.

earlier to describe Abram's animal possessions in distinction from his monetary wealth.

Obviously, the presence of an "exceedingly great" number of animals would pose a problem regarding available grazing space. Such a large number of animals would require a great deal of grass and water. The text, however, does not state this clearly. Heard notes the ambiguity here concerning the cause of the strife: "The narrator's hesitation to unequivocally blame resource scarcity for Abram's decision to have Lot separate from him may raise reader's suspicions about the true cause of the separation."⁹⁶ The ambiguity regarding the reason behind the quarrel does leave the reader with an interesting tension.

Who is to blame for the quarrel, Abram's herders or Lot's? Perhaps Lot's herders are jealous of Abram's vast number of animals. Perhaps Abram's herders are seeking to take the grazing space of Lot's herds to accommodate the large amount of livestock under their care. (Incidentally, in Prov 26:21 a person who is quarrelsome [מדונים] kindles strife [ריב]).⁹⁷ Whoever is at fault would certainly be seen in a less-than-favorable light.

Furthermore, while 13:7 is silent on both the cause of, and the fault for, the quarrel, it does end with the seemingly odd comment, "at that time the Canaanites and

⁹⁶ Heard, *Dynamics*, 32.

⁹⁷ Also, those that strive (מדון) with others are described as being "hot tempered" (15:18); "greedy" (28:25); "lovers of crime" (17:19). Literally, "one characterized by loving crime is one characterized by loving strife" where both occurrences of "love" are masculine singular *qal* participles. There is no "to be" verb in Hebrew here but it is implied by the context.

Perizzites were dwelling in the land.”⁹⁸ Commentators have noted the irony here.

Abram and Lot cannot dwell together in the land but whole people groups can occupy the land without mention of the land’s inability to “carry” them.⁹⁹

2.7 Concluding Remarks

In the present chapter, I noted five narrative elements which form the basis of my interpretation. First, Abram is called to leave his father’s household. Second, Lot is depicted as a member of that household. Third, there is no indication that Lot has been adopted by Abram or that he is viewed as a potential heir. In reality, Lot’s relational connection is to that of Haran and Terah and thus Lot is characterized as a member of the very household Abram has been called to leave. Fourth, Lot’s depiction as a member of a household distinct from that of Abram is suggested through his continued connection to Haran and Terah, his placement among Abram’s companions, silence concerning his worship practices, his independent wealth demonstrated by the list of his goods and herders separate from those of Abram. Fifth, the account of the striving herders presented a potentially problematic situation in Abram’s relationship with his nephew Lot. As I move now into the second half of my literary analysis of Genesis 13, the dual themes of separation and settlement will continue to pervade the narrative, ultimately culminating in the separation and settlement of the family members.

⁹⁸ The land is described, in Genesis 13, more in terms of the occupants rather than specific boundaries. It is the home of the “Canaanites and the Perizzites”; it is a place of strife between Lot and Abram’s herders; it is the place where Abram settles and can commune with Yhwh; it is juxtaposed to the Jordan Plain occupied by Lot and the “wicked” of Sodom and Gomorrah; and it is the future home of Abram’s descendants. This is not to deny, however, the importance of boundaries, both mental and physical, the ancestral connections to land or the ideological-theological understandings presented in the Hebrew Bible (see works such as: C. Nicholas Raphael and Philip S. Alexander “Geography and the Bible,” *ABD* 2: 964-88; and Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

⁹⁹ The mention of “Canaanites and Perizzites” may point to a pragmatic issue regarding the striving herders. Such a quarrel between nomadic groups could potentially disrupt their relationships with the “indigenous agricultural communities” (Sarna, *Genesis*, 98). Sarna goes on to say that “Canaanites and Perizzites...may refer, respectively, to those who dwell in walled cities and in open country.”

3. SEPARATION AND SETTLEMENT

The first of the three questions posed at the outset of this thesis was, “Does the text necessitate a reading of Lot as being the first “potential heir” and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram?” I noted above the insufficiency of the “potential heir” reading to account for the way Lot is characterized in the text.¹⁰⁰

Below, I will examine in detail the issue of Lot’s moral characterization in the latter portion of Genesis 13 where the vast majority of that discussion among scholars has been located.

As I move into the second half of my analysis of the place and function of Genesis 13 in the Abraham narrative, the focus will continue to be on the two foci noted in the previous chapter, separation and settlement. In this second section of Genesis 13 these two foci are brought squarely to the forefront.

3.1 Abram’s (Problematic) Offer

Genesis 13:7, the last text I examined above, mentioned the strife that had broken out between the herders of Lot’s animals and the herders of Abram’s animals. In 13:8 the first dialogical comments of the narrative are introduced:

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־לוֹט אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ וּבֵין רְעִי וּבֵין רְעִיךָ כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנַחְנוּ

(“And Abram said to Lot, ‘Please, let there be no strife between me and between you and between my herders and between your herders for we are men who are brothers.’ – Gen 13:8)

The insertion of Abram’s one-way conversation (Lot is not recorded as saying anything), connects the preceding account of the strife with the account of separation that will follow. Abram mentions that there ought to be no quarrel between him and Lot (though importantly, the text doesn’t suggest that they themselves are actually

¹⁰⁰ I will have much more to say about this in chapter seven.

quarreling). As Baker has observed, the phrase “between me and between you and between my herders and between your herders” may be an example of the *waw explicativum* and, if so, then the text would read something like, “Please, let there be no strife between me and between you, *that is*, between my herders and between your herders.”¹⁰¹ The point seems to be that Abram understands any strife between the groups as being strife between the family members themselves, regardless of whether they are themselves the ones quarreling or not.

Gen 13:7-8 is obviously not the only story about “quarreling” in the Hebrew Bible. One reads, for example, of the “quarrel” between Isaac and King Abimelech in Genesis 26 as well as Israel’s “quarreling” against Moses while in the desert over the lack of an available water supply in Exodus 17 (and the term מריבה is the same term that is used for the naming of the “waters of Meribah” in Ex 17:7). The nominal form is only used subsequently when recounting Israel’s complaints against Moses regarding the need for water.¹⁰² Based on this, Sarna has concluded that the appearance of the term מריבה in Gen 13:8 implies Lot’s “base ingratitude.”¹⁰³ The irony of Sarna’s comment is that the text says nothing of Lot’s “ungratefulness” and neither Lot nor his herders are implicated as being the instigators of the quarrel. It would appear that Lot and his herders are no guiltier than Abram or his herders as far as the quarrel itself goes. Abram’s remark that there ought to be no “quarreling” between him and Lot seems to reflect a desire for an amicable solution to the problem. Perhaps Lot’s silence here speaks not to his “ungratefulness” but rather to his agreement with his uncle that the quarreling should cease.

¹⁰¹ D.W. Baker, “Further examples of the *waw explicativum*,” *VT* 30 (1980): 132.

¹⁰² Cf. Num 20:13, 24; 27:14; Deut 32:51; 33:8; Pss 81:7 (MT 81:8); 95:8; 106:32.

¹⁰³ Sarna, *Genesis*, 98. Similarly, though the text is silent as to who is at fault for the quarrel, Sidnie White Crawford comments that one of the “disreputable” characteristics of Lot in Genesis 13 is that “he quarrels with Abraham” implying that Lot is at the heart of the incident (Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*, Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 123).

The verse ends with כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אֶהְיֶה אִתְּכֶם. The phrase translates literally, “for men, brothers, we.” This particular phrase brings the familial connection between Abram and Lot to the forefront.¹⁰⁴ It appears that the terminology is used to show the kinship connection between the two and provide a backdrop for Abram’s subsequent offer that they dwell separately in the land.

In the wider context of Genesis, אָח can be used to mean a biological brother (Gen 4:2);¹⁰⁵ a member of one’s family (Gen 29:15); a fellow countryman (Gen 31:32); but also as an address to unrelated persons (Gen 19:7).¹⁰⁶ It seems that Abram, by using the language of brotherhood, is not only noting their familial connection but also treating Lot as one of equal status. The fact that Abram references his kinship connection to Lot in the plural (אֶהְיֶה) ¹⁰⁷ and not the singular cannot go unnoticed. While this may seem insignificant on the surface,¹⁰⁸ within the wider context of Genesis¹⁰⁹ we see that the plural form is never used in dialogue when the emphasis is solely on an individual relationship. “Person A” always refers to “Person B” in the singular when addressing just “Person B.” On the other hand, “Person A” always addresses a group of people when using the plural. If Abram were only focusing on his relationship with Lot we would assume he would have used the

¹⁰⁴ Michael Fishbane, “The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” *JBL* 89:3 (1970): 315, argues that the use of brothers here implies “treaty partners” and it may be that Abram is seeking to engage in some kind of “treaty” with Lot. This, however, does not negate the primary focus which appears to be on the familial connection between the two.

¹⁰⁵ To this one could add places like Gen 9:22; 27:6. The stories which portray Joseph and his brothers could also be mentioned (cf. 37:1-36), though this would include both full (Benjamin) and half-brothers.

¹⁰⁶ One could also mention Gen 9:5: “Surely, your lifeblood I will require, from every animal I will require. And from humanity, from everyone’s *brother* I will require the life of a human.”

¹⁰⁷ In commenting on the textual veracity of Lot being called Abram’s “brother” Ziemer, *Abram*, 138, comments that this is so because the term brother can also be understood in the broader sense of relative (“auch in weiterem Sinne als Verwandter verstanden werden kann”).

¹⁰⁸ Westermann, *Genesis*, 199, (ET: 171), notes that אֶהְיֶה stands in apposition to אֲנָשִׁים. Thus, “brothers” is plural precisely because “men” is plural. This however does not address the more pressing questions of why this particular plural construction is present and how the plural form functions in the wider context of Genesis.

¹⁰⁹ I am not aware of any place in the Hebrew Bible where someone refers to just one other person in the plural. Cf. 2 Sam 19:12; 1 Kgs 9:13.

singular, much like Laban does when referring to Jacob in Gen 29:15, ויאמר לבן ליעקב, ¹¹⁰הכִּי־אחי אתה.

Abram's use of אחים here implies a connection between groups.¹¹¹ Abram and Lot are, therefore, connected both on individual and collective levels. I attempted to capture both the individual and collective connection in my translation, "we are men who are brothers." It would appear that Abram is not only noting familial connection but also household separation. Lot, as was illustrated above, is a member of Terah's household. The language of brotherhood then becomes a poignant reminder to the reader that Lot is not a member of Abram's household, was not supposed to go with Abram, and is not to be a dweller in the land.

It is also noteworthy that the use of "brother" argues against understanding Abram and Lot's relationship along "father/son" lines. The reason is because אח can be used for those of the same family or those of the same tribe but is never used to describe a parent-child relationship.¹¹² That is not to say that the text doesn't set Lot up as anyone's son. In fact, as I have illustrated above, the reader is often reminded that Lot is Abram's "brother's son" (11:27; 11:31; 12:5; 14:12). The language of "brotherhood" in 13:8 on the lips of Abram (and later in 13:11 by the narrator) is a strong indication that the text is *not* setting Lot up as "the potential heir." Abram and Lot are "brothers" and they need to separate.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Gen 33:9 where Esau says to Jacob, "I have much, my brother" (אחי). Though not specifically in the context of dialogue, the use of the singular in subsequent references to the relationship between Abram and Lot is even more telling in light of this earlier use of the plural, Gen 13:11 (ויפרדו איש מעל (את־לוט אחיו); Gen 14:14 (וישמע אברם כי נשבה אחיו); and 14:16 (את־לוט אחיו)).

¹¹¹ Note here the reference by Jacob in 31:32 that, "The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the sight of *our brothers* (אחינו)." Jacob here is speaking with Laban but makes a reference to all who are present as one connected group. Cf. Gen 29:4 where Jacob refers to the people of Paddan-aram as "my brothers (אחי)."

¹¹² Cf. HALOT, 29; BDB, 26; DCH, 1:173.

Furthermore, the language of “brotherhood” becomes a source of intriguing tension in the light of Abram’s subsequent offer of land to Lot. It is to that offer I turn next.

הלא כל־הארץ לפניך הפרד נא מעלי א־השְׂמאל וא־הימִן וא־שְׂמאֵילָה
 (“Is not all the land before you? Separate¹¹³ please from me. If to the left then I will go to the right; if to the right, then I will go to the left” – Gen 13:9)

Abram continues speaking to Lot and begins by asking a question: “Is not all the land before you?” The reference to “all the land” appears to be a specific reference to the land of Canaan with Abram acting as “owner.”¹¹⁴ The vast majority of commentators have seen Abram’s magnanimity in offering Lot the “first choice” of where to dwell. Wenham, for example, sees a depiction of Abram’s “self-effacing generosity.”¹¹⁵ Brueggemann sees a juxtaposition with Abram’s earlier lack of faith regarding Sarai in Egypt in Genesis 12: “In the first (Genesis 12) Abraham is self-seeking and self-serving. He trusts in no resource beyond his own shrewdness. He is willing to sacrifice others for his survival. In chapter 13, Abraham is very different. He takes no thought for himself or for tomorrow.”¹¹⁶ Petersen notes both Abram’s gracious offer and also his strategic plan to settle the conflict, which “involves distancing, removing the parties from each other,” and thus when they do separate they have “avoided an escalation of the conflict into violence.”¹¹⁷ Reno goes further and sees the offer as a reflection of Abram’s ethical superiority to Lot: “Abraham is the older and the greater, yet he cedes the choice of portions to Lot, and in so doing

¹¹³ Or, “separate yourself.”

¹¹⁴ This is somewhat ironic in light of the earlier mention that the Canaanites and Perizzites were in the land (13:7).

¹¹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 299. Cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 200.

¹¹⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1984), 133.

¹¹⁷ David L. Petersen, “Genesis and Family Values,” *JBL* 124/1 (2005): 18. Incidentally the language of “strife” may imply that there already was violence.

Abraham shows himself greater still.”¹¹⁸ Likewise, Pace Jeansonne comments that while Abram offered the best of the land unselfishly to Lot, “He (Lot) does not offer any alternative plan wherein Abraham too might have some allotment of the choice land.”¹¹⁹

Vogels, in building on the notion of Abram’s generosity, notes that Abram is, in reality, “offering” or “sacrificing” the land. This willingness to “sacrifice” the land which is “the very object of the promise (l’objet même de la promesse)” is then rewarded, as was the later sacrifice of Isaac, by God’s subsequent promise (13:14-17).¹²⁰ It may be, however, as Vogels reasons elsewhere that Abram is actually self-centered in his offer because he feared Lot would eventually displace him and therefore he needed to safeguard the existence of both groups.¹²¹

In the biblical text, it is clearly Abram who seeks to separate from Lot. In reality, he doesn’t even give Lot the option of not separating. The word הפירד is a *niphal* imperative, and therefore, Abram doesn’t seem to be simply asking Lot to separate but is, in fact, telling Lot to separate. Many commentators have missed the force of Abram’s wording, opting to read it as a simple suggestion rather than a

¹¹⁸ R.R. Reno, *Genesis*, BTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 149.

¹¹⁹ Pace Jeansonne, “The Characterization,” 125.

¹²⁰ Vogels, “Abraham et l’offrande,” 55.

¹²¹ Vogels, “Lot in His Honor Restored,” 5-6, 12, who had earlier argued that Lot was “selfish” provides a counter reading which attempts to demonstrate Abraham’s selfishness. He comments, “Because Abraham is older than Lot, and therefore weaker, he knows that he would lose in any real fight between them... Abraham realizes that sooner or later the new generation will take over. So he makes a gesture, which may appear generous, but in fact is a well calculated trick. He knows that it is better to lose a part than to lose the whole... if anybody is to blame, it is Abraham rather than Lot.” Abram’s offer then is based on his recognition that the only way to secure his future is to get his nephew out of the picture lest Lot and his servants eventually overtake Abram and his. Robert Kawashima, “Literary Analysis” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception and Interpretation* ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen, VTS 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 91, similarly comments that Abram and Lot must separate because “Lot... threatens, by his mere existence, the uncle’s legacy with an horizontal displacement.” Westermann, *Genesis*, 206 (ET: 176), argues that the offer is a means to safeguard the existence of both groups. Abram thus makes the offer based on the responsibility he has for his family and their welfare.

command.¹²² The reason that Lot parts from Abram is because Abram tells him to do so. Further, it seems that Abram's offer is for him and Lot to share the land, though to move to different parts of it (presumably the northern and southern portions).¹²³ Heard notes, "Both parties and their flocks are to move away from their current pasturage to different places. Lot's move is to be mirrored by Abram's move. Neither will remain in the immediately disputed territory."¹²⁴ Abram, it would appear, is not calling on either of them to "leave the land" but rather his offer is to share the land with Lot. The question then becomes, what will Lot choose?

Before I engage this particular question, however, it should be noted that Abram's offer provides an intriguing narrative tension. What makes Abram's offer potentially troubling is the fact that Lot is not part of the promise (this will be made clear below), and therefore neither he nor his descendants are to be dwellers in the land. This tension is further amplified in light of the Deuteronomic statement regarding the prohibition of Ammonites and Moabites from the assembly of God in Deut 23:3 and its later retelling in Nehemiah 13:

No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of Yhwh. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of Yhwh forever. (Deut 23:3)

On that day they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God. (Neh 13:1)

Given the account of Lot fathering the eponymous ancestors of Moab and Ammon in Genesis 19, there is an obvious dilemma here. Moabites and Ammonites

¹²² Turner, *Genesis*, 67-8, for example, describes it as "Abram's suggestion that he and Lot should separate." He further comments that "Lot had chosen to separate from Abram." The text, however, is quite clear that the decision to separate was decidedly Abram's.

¹²³ Many commentators read "left/right" as "north/south" given that Hebrew directions are east-oriented. See, for example, Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 392; Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 96. Abram seems to be envisioning him and Lot residing in the northern and southern portions of Canaan.

¹²⁴ Heard, *Dynamics*, 35-6. See also, Dyk, "Lack of Space," 13.

have no place in the land; but in Genesis 13 Abram offers to share the land with their ancestor.¹²⁵ I noted above that the two problems that run throughout Genesis 13 are the issue of Lot's accompaniment and the question of Abram's settlement in the land. The land was originally promised by Yhwh to Abram and not Lot. Abram's offer to share the land with Lot, in light of the promise, becomes quite problematic.

3.2 Lot Sees and Chooses the Jordan Plain

While often viewed as a prime example of the way Lot serves as ethical contrast to Abram, both Lot's "lifting of his eyes" and his "choice" of Sodom are actually quite ambiguous and may even be considered positive reflections of his character.

וישא־לוט את־עיניו וירא את־כל־כרך הירדן כי כלה משקה לפני שחת יהוה את־סדם
ואת־עמרה כגן־יהוה כארץ מצרים באכה צער

(“And Lot lifted his eyes and he saw all the plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, before Yhwh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Yhwh; like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar” – Gen 13:10)

Genesis 13:10 opens with Lot's nonverbal response to Abram's offer: “and Lot lifted his eyes.” Lot says nothing, he simply reacts. We aren't told if Lot questioned Abram's offer or if he responded with a counter offer. The text wants the reader to focus on Lot's actions. Earlier the land was unable to נשא (support) the two households dwelling together. Here Lot “lifts” (נשא) his eyes to determine which part of the land he will inhabit. While the text is silent as to what Lot's look means, many commentators have provided an interpretation. Skinner, for example, notes that Lot's look was “self-interested”¹²⁶ or as Hirsch comments, “he let himself be guided,

¹²⁵ See also, John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 143.

¹²⁶ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 253.

undeterred by any consideration which would affect Abraham, simply by what appealed to his sensuous eye.”¹²⁷

The language of “lifting the eyes” is a common phrase in Genesis for examining one’s surroundings, often with reference to people. It is used of Jacob in Gen 33:1: “Now Jacob lifted his eyes (וישא...עיניו) and looked, and behold, Esau was coming.” It is used when Joseph sees Benjamin in Gen 43:29: “he lifted his eyes (וישא...עיניו) and saw his brother Benjamin.” At other times it may be used in the context of love and attraction: “Isaac went out to walk in the field toward evening; and he lifted his eyes (וישא עיניו) and looked, and behold, camels were coming. Rebekah lifted her eyes (ותשא...את־עיניה), and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel” (Gen 24:63-4). The phrase is also used in the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife: “And it happened after these events that his master’s wife lifted her eyes (ותשא...את־עיניה) to Joseph, and said, ‘Lie with me’” (Gen 39:7). The range of usage for this particular phrase is therefore quite broad, being used in contexts of both general observation and more nuanced “looking.” In other words, there is nothing about the phrase which would naturally lead one to assume, especially given the context, that Lot’s look is to be viewed negatively. Perhaps Lot is simply surveying the land to determine what would be both the best for his herds *and* the safest distance from Abram’s flocks so as to avoid any further strife. The phrase itself is, therefore, quite neutral.

¹²⁷ Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch Translation and Commentary: בראשית* (New York: Judaica Press, 1971), 243. See also, A. Wénin, “La question,” 24; 32, who reads Lot’s lifting of his eyes as being a depiction of the “greed” with which Lot looked upon Sodom and Gomorrah (“Lot a regardées avec les yeux de la convoitise”). Here he contrasts Lot’s “greedy look” with Abram’s willingness to “renounce greed” (“Abram renonce à toute convoitise”) by offering Lot the choice of dwelling that he preferred. Harari, “Abraham’s nephew,” 33, also reads a negative connotation into Lot’s lifting of his eyes, “The verse itself ironically points to Lot’s misguidedness by introducing his decision with a reference to Lot’s ‘raising his eyes’; in fact, there was nothing lofty about his decision.”

What Lot “sees” is that all the Jordan Plain is “well-watered everywhere.”

What follows this statement is a remark about Yhwh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, לפני שחת יהוה את־סדם ואת־עמרה. After this statement the text picks up where it left off in describing the Jordan Plain. It is “like the garden of Yhwh, like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar.” The remark about Sodom and Gomorrah’s demise seems somewhat out of place in the flow of the passage.¹²⁸ Most translations have placed the statement about Sodom and Gomorrah after the remark about Zoar so as to keep the two clauses connected.¹²⁹ What the statement does provide is a specific context for what Lot is looking at. The place God would later destroy was once a place of abundance and beauty.¹³⁰

Following the cleverly placed phrase regarding Yhwh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the description of what Lot saw continues. The “plain” Lot sees is said to be “like the garden of Yhwh; like the land of Egypt.”¹³¹ Baden notes that this comment “seems to have as its reference points the Eden story of Gen 2-3 and the episode of 12:10-20, in which the plenty of Egypt is contrasted with the famine of Canaan.”¹³² These particular descriptive phrases are striking not only because they evoke an image of the plain as a place of abundance and beauty, but also in light of the prior mention of Yhwh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. By linking Sodom and Gomorrah to “the garden of Yhwh” and “Egypt” the writer has provided a theological description which goes well beyond simply the “outward” appeal of this

¹²⁸ Westermann, *Genesis*, 207 (ET: 177), for example, sees this as an awkward addition to the narrative.

¹²⁹ So, NRSV; NAB; NIV; ESV; CEB. JPS in contrast keeps the Hebrew structure intact.

¹³⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 136, notes that the insertion highlights the region’s “momentary façade: reference to the plain’s destruction falls between two descriptions of its former beauty.” Or as Kessler and Deurloo comment, “It was like the first thundercloud announcing an impending catastrophe” (Martin Kessler and Karel Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis: The book of beginnings* [New York: Paulist Press, 2004], 103).

¹³¹ It is worth noting that the writer is depicting Sodom in a way that contrasts with its later depiction post destruction in Genesis 19. In other words, the writer appears to be explaining that while Sodom is now a barren desert, it used to be better.

¹³² Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 269n53.

particular region. Both of these places have negative connotations in the Hebrew Bible. While the “garden” is initially described as an idyllic location, it becomes a place of brokenness and shame. So, too, Egypt is a place of power, might and majesty but also a place of oppression and wickedness. The comment not only tells of what the plain was like but it also provides a framework within which to understand the place Lot is “seeing” as a place of both beauty and shame. The final phrase, “as you come to Zoar” links the plain here with the account in Genesis 19 of Lot’s escape from Sodom and eventual settlement in the mountains near Zoar.

ויבחר־לו לוט את כל־ככר הירדן ויסע לוט מקדם ויפרדו איש מעל אחיו
 (“And Lot chose, for himself, all the Plain of the Jordan and Lot journeyed eastward.
 Thus each man separated from his brother”¹³³ – Gen 13:11)

Here one finds what I have deemed the climax of Genesis 13. This is where the two main themes of Genesis 13, which will connect it with later “brother” stories, come together—brotherhood and separation.¹³⁴

The reader is now informed of the decision Lot makes. He will separate from Abram and go into the Jordan Plain. While some, like Zimmerli, have noted that the narrator highlights the fact that, while Lot’s decision may have looked wise, it was actually, given the inhabitants of Sodom, far from it,¹³⁵ others have viewed Lot as

¹³³ The text continues to connect Abram and Lot as family through the use of אָה, though here the singular is used whereas the plural was used in 13:8. It is interesting that the text would have the plural forms, אֲנָשִׁים אֲהִים אֲנָחְנוּ in 13:8, but here the singular, אִישׁ מֵעַל אָחִיו. While this may be nothing more than a reflection of the way in which אָה functions when in apposition to אִישׁ, the decision by the storyteller to use the singular is intriguing. The reason may have to do more with context. In 13:8 the context was the strife between Abram and Lot’s herders and, obviously, more people were involved in the story line. Abram’s use of אֲהִים, in that context, appeared to connect Abram and Lot’s groups and not just Abram and Lot as individuals. The connection between groups makes sense, given the wider context of Abram and Lot’s striving herders. In 13:11, the focus is on Abram and Lot as individuals and therefore the use of אִישׁ and אָה in the singular fits the context much better

¹³⁴ This will be discussed in detail in chapter seven.

¹³⁵ Zimmerli, *1.Mose 12-25*, 31. B. Jacob, *Genesis*, 363, comments that Lot did not properly examine the land (“Lot prüfte das Land, aber nicht, wie er hätte tun sollen”). The point being that Lot was so focused on the way the land appeared that he did not take the time to access the moral climate of the region. Moberly, “Abraham and Aeneas” in *Genesis and Christian Theology* ed. Nathan MacDonald, Mark W. Elliot, Grant Macaskill (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 301, comments similarly that “Lot’s choice is guided entirely by the surface attraction of the Jordan Plain, and the moral problems represented by its inhabitants apparently don’t bother him” (see also Levenson, *Abraham*, 41).

being selfish because he chose for himself the “best” option and did not allow Abram to have it.¹³⁶ As Allen Ross comments, “Lot made his choice without any concern for Abram.”¹³⁷ Vogels comments that Lot’s decision draws him further from God and in his selfishness (“pur égoïsme”) he chooses his own ruin.¹³⁸ De La Torre, likewise, remarks, “If Lot had been as faithful as Abram, he might have responded to Abram’s munificence by dividing the land...But Lot saw an opportunity and snatched it.”¹³⁹

Levenson articulates well the contrast which many commentators have seen:

Abram is characteristically conciliatory, offering Lot the first choice of land. Lot, by contrast, is self-interested and immediately selects what he mistakenly takes to be the best. The narrator’s comparison of his portion to the *garden of the Lord*, a place of disobedience and curse, and to Egypt, a place of exile and oppression, suggests the short-sightedness of Lot’s choice.¹⁴⁰

From a purely pragmatic standpoint, one need not view Lot as selfish in his decision to choose what “looked like the garden of Yhwh.” As Hamilton comments:

It is not necessary to view Lot’s choice as based on avarice. There is no indication that he is covetous. He makes the natural and logical decision. Given the alternatives, he opts for a section of land that holds much potential for his grazing flocks. He can hardly be blamed for that choice.¹⁴¹

From a narrational standpoint, that the text describes the land Lot chose as being “like the land of Egypt,” etc., does not have to be an indication of his

¹³⁶ Some have highlighted the phrase “and Lot chose for himself” as a literary hint at Lot’s selfishness (see Sarna, *Genesis*, 99; Levenson, *Abraham*, 42). The phrase “chose for himself” (ויבחר־לו) is only used a couple of other times in the Hebrew Bible and never does it carry selfish/sinful connotations. For example, in 1 Sam 13:2 Saul “chose for himself” 3000 Israelite soldiers to go to war with the Philistines, and in 1 Sam 17:40 David “chose for himself” five stones prior to his encounter with Goliath. So the phrase itself implies nothing by way of motive on Lot’s part. It simply illustrates the fact that he made a reasoned decision.

¹³⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 286.

¹³⁸ Vogels, *L’Offrande*, 53. See also, Vogels, “Lot père des incroyants,” *EgT* 6 (1975), 143. Coats, *Genesis*, 113, likewise comments that Lot is shown here to be “clever, manipulating a conflict with Abram over space for maintaining his wealth into possession of choice territory.” Sarna, *Genesis*, 99, comments that Lot, “does not defer to Abram, but selfishly selects the most attractive prospect.”

¹³⁹ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis, Belief* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2011), 156.

¹⁴⁰ Jon Levenson, “Genesis” in *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33. See also, Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 68.

¹⁴¹ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 383; See also Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 183. Cf. Stacks, *Genesis*, 82.

selfishness, moral inferiority or even shortsightedness. First, it could be a way to sympathize with Lot. Neither he, nor Abram, would have had any way of knowing the horrific fate of that area or even the moral well-being of its inhabitants. Perhaps Lot was only seeking to provide suitable pastureland for his herds and is thus a victim of a fate outside of his control. Second, there appears to be an assumption that just because Lot's plain is described with "lush" vocabulary that Abram's land is somehow "worse-looking" when, in reality, the text never says what Abram's land looks like. The focus may not be on how Lot's land looked in comparison to Abram's but rather simply what it looked like *before* Yhwh destroyed it. Third, Lot is actually demonstrating his willingness to obey Abram. He offers no rebuttal but simply obeys (also a trait of Abram, Noah and others which is often praised by commentators). Fourth, perhaps Lot wants to allow his uncle full possession of the land.¹⁴² Finally, perhaps Lot moves because he does not want to quarrel with his uncle and wants to move as far away as possible to allow the most space between the two groups which would be a rather commendable thing on his part. There is, thus, a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the question of why Lot chooses the Jordan Plain and, in the end, the text provides no explicit answer. As a result, I think the focus of the text is not on *why* Lot chooses the plain, but rather *that* Lot chooses the plain. Lot has been "separated from his brother."

The writer then informs the reader that Lot "journeyed eastward." Ironically, Lot's decision to move east may not be one of the options originally set forth by Abram.¹⁴³ Helyer comments:

¹⁴² Heard, *Dynamics*, 38, summarizes the ways in which commentators have viewed Lot here by noting that either Lot was selfish or generous; selfish because he wanted the best for himself; generous because he wanted to allow Abram full possession of the land.

¹⁴³ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 130, comments that Lot disregarded "the promissory land" and "ignored Canaan."

The first matter which should be addressed is the precise nature of the choice which Abram offered Lot; in order to understand this, we must remind ourselves of the Hebrew perspective on directions. Hebrew directions are east-oriented; that is, one is assumed to be facing east, *qedem* and *panim*. From this perspective one's right, *yamin*, is south and one's left, *semol*, is north. And behind one, *ahor* or *yam*, is the west. With this background we can now reconstruct Lot's choice. Abram and Lot were between Bethel and Ai, perhaps at modern Jebel et-Tawil. Abram permits Lot to decide which portion of the 'whole land' (*kol ha'eres*) he desires. For Abram the 'whole land' is the land of Canaan (*eres-kena an*). But to Abram's dismay, Lot 'chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out towards the east' (v. 11). This is not what Abram had desired; Abram had set before Lot the option of choosing whether to pasture his flocks in northern Canaan (i.e., the region around Shechem [Gen. 12.6; 33.18-34.31; 37.12-17]) with the Bethel-Ai region as the southern boundary, or to graze in the southern Canaan region (Hebron/Mamre and the still more southerly Negev around Beersheva and Gerar [Gen 13.6, 9; 13.1, 18; 20.1; etc]). In other words, Abram desired that the land of Canaan should be partitioned between himself and Lot; but what actually happened was that 'Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom' (NIV).¹⁴⁴

The willingness of Lot to choose a portion of land "not offered" by Abram is intriguing and places Lot in his proper geographical context. He was not meant to share the land with Abram and thus his move east, while saying nothing explicit with regard to his ethical standing, says a great deal about his theological standing. He is to be "separated from his brother" and his move "east" is simply a reflection of that fact.¹⁴⁵

3.3 The Brothers Separate and Settle

The settlement of Abram in Canaan and Lot in the "cities of the plain" provides a geographical demarcation between the family members. The theme of separation is clearly evident here in 13:12. While Abram settles in the "land," Lot settles in the "cities," pitching his tent "as far as Sodom."

¹⁴⁴ Helyer, "Separation," 79-80.

¹⁴⁵ The use of מעל ("from upon") reflects Abram's use of the term in his call for separation, הפרד נא מעלי. Both Abram and Lot's groups, then, fulfill Abram's imperative for them to separate.

אברם ישב בארץ־כנען ולוט ישב בערי הכנר ויאהל עד־סדם
("Abram settled in the land of Canaan but¹⁴⁶ Lot settled in the cities of the plain and
pitched his tent as far as Sodom" – Gen 13:12)

For the first time since the initial promise of land, it is now said that Abram has *ישב בארץ־כנען*. I have argued throughout that one of the main tensions in the opening chapters of the Abraham narrative is the question of Abram's settlement in the land. He had been in the land earlier, back in chapter 12, but the text never explicitly stated that he "settled" in the land. He had "pitched his tent" and "built an altar" (12:8) but there was never a statement regarding his actual settlement in the land. Here, however, Abram has, in fact, settled in the land.

Ironically, his settlement in the land comes in the same context as his separation from Lot. Many, as noted above, have seen Lot's move as the elimination of him as a potential heir. This particular reading of the separation of Abram and Lot has become so prominent among commentators that it seems to be simply taken for granted that Lot's initial accompaniment and eventual separation are built upon the foundational question of Abram's heir. Cohn, for example, in discussing the theme of progeny in the Abraham narrative remarks:

Even episodes that would not seem to have been originally connected with this theme contribute to its development by their placement in the cycle. For instance, the separation of Lot removes from the scene Abraham's most likely heir and creates new anxiety about how God will fulfill his promise.¹⁴⁷

As I have argued, however, the text has never, in fact, set Lot up as the potential heir in the first place. Lot, though connected to Abram as a family member, has been separated from Abram all along. Incidentally, while the text clearly situates Abram in Canaan, the text isn't exactly clear about where Lot settles. Helyer argues,

¹⁴⁶ Jan Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew: A New Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose*, JBS 10 (Jerusalem: Semor LTD, 2012), 47 n 14, sees the opening of 13:12 as an example of a "contrastive clause."

¹⁴⁷ Robert L. Cohn, "Narrative Structure in Genesis," *JSOT* 25 (1983), 3-16. (See also, Levenson, *Abraham*, 43).

correctly I believe, that Lot has chosen a location outside the land of Canaan.¹⁴⁸

Turner, however, reads Gen 10:19 as placing these cities within Canaanite territory but on the “extreme limits.” So, while Lot may be dangerously close to the place of “wicked sinners” he is still not fully outside the Promised Land.¹⁴⁹ Regardless, given the contrast the text provides between Abram’s dwelling *in* Canaan and Lot’s dwelling *in* the plain, it seems clear that the writer wants the reader to see a geographical distinction between Abram’s land and Lot’s plain.

While Gen 13:11-12 probably implies that Lot’s choice places him outside of the land of Canaan, all that is stated is that Lot, who “settled in the cities of the plain” and “pitched his tent as far as Sodom,”¹⁵⁰ traveled “eastward.”¹⁵¹ Further, Lot’s move “near” a place of exceedingly wicked sinners¹⁵² is quite ambiguous and can’t be read as an emphatic indictment of his decision.¹⁵³

3.4 Lot’s Choice and the People of Sodom

The inclusion of the remarks concerning Sodom draw the attention of the reader forward to Genesis 19, the account of God’s destruction of Sodom and the role of Lot therein. As will be discussed below, this does not necessitate a negative reading of Lot’s character in Genesis 13.

¹⁴⁸ Helyer, “Separation,” 85. Collins and Scott comment, “the distinction between where Abram lived, in Canaan proper, and where Lot chose to live, in Sodom beyond the Jordan, shows that the two men lived on opposite sides of the river... Lot chose not to live on the Canaan side with Abram, but on the Transjordan side” (Steven Collins and Latayne C. Scott, *Discovering the City of Sodom* [New York: Howard Books, 2013], 119-21). See also: Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 87; William John Lyons, *Canon and Exegesis: Canonical Praxis and the Sodom Narrative*, JSOTSup 352 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2001), 132-33 and; Elisabeth Robertson Kennedy, *Seeking a Homeland: Sojourn and Ethnic Identity in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 9. Cf. Albert de Pury, “Genesis 1-26,” 45.

¹⁴⁹ Turner, *Genesis*, 67.

¹⁵⁰ Sarna, *Genesis*, 99, comments that ער “often has the meaning ‘nearby, in the vicinity of.’” It would appear that Lot is not yet “in” Sodom as he will be in 14:12ב (והוא ישב בסדם).

¹⁵¹ The phrase מקדם translates literally, “from the east” which appears to be elliptic for “from the east of the place Abram was encamped” (Sarna, *Genesis*, 99).

¹⁵² George W. Coats, “Strife and Reconciliation: Themes of a Biblical Theology in the Book of Genesis,” *Horizons of Biblical Theology* 2 (1980), 26, comments that by separating “from the source of his blessing” Lot “loses his status as a wealthy shepherd and becomes a passive citizen of the wicked city, unable to control his own fate.” Coats obviously sees Abram as the source of Lot’s possessions.

¹⁵³ Contra Coats, “Lot as Foil,” 117.

“And the people of Sodom were wicked and sinners before Yhwh exceedingly” –
Gen 13:13)

This verse connects the movement of Lot near Sodom to the subsequent account of Yhwh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. This particular reference also connects to the earlier statement regarding Yhwh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in 13:10. The reader is thus reminded that the reason Yhwh destroyed Sodom was because they were exceedingly wicked sinners. The term רעים, in this context, probably means “wicked” due to its apposition to “sinners.” Baker notes that the “foundational meaning of the root concerns an action or state that is detrimental to life or its fullness.”¹⁵⁴

It seems likely that the narrator assumes the reader will be familiar with the account in Genesis 18-19 and thus draw some connections between the two stories. First, there is similar terminology used to describe the inhabitants of Sodom both here and in Genesis 18-19. Second, Lot’s choice to dwell near Sodom is framed by two narrative remarks which anticipate the accounts in Genesis 18-19:

Before Yhwh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah

And Lot chose, for himself, all the Plain of the Jordan and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus each man separated from his brother Abram settled in the land of Canaan but Lot settled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent as far as Sodom

And the people of Sodom were wicked and sinners before Yhwh exceedingly¹⁵⁵

Third, Lot is a major character in both narratives. Whether or not the account of Lot’s move near Sodom provides an explicit commentary on his character is one question I will return to.

¹⁵⁴ David W. Baker, “רעע,” *NIDOTTE* 3:1154. He further adds that, “The detriment can be physical, literal death or abnormality of the body, or moral injury to the spirit or to a relationship. Both aspects concern a departure from that which is ideal and desired for fullness and enjoyment of life.” As an adjective it can also signify something of “little worth” (*HALOT*, 1251). Cf. Gen 41:20; 27.

¹⁵⁵ Waltke, *Genesis*, 220.

3.4.1 Genesis 13 and 18

While there is no explicit statement about the actual “sin” of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19 there is similar terminology used to describe the inhabitants in Genesis 13 and 18. In Gen 18:20 Yhwh states that the “outcry” of Sodom and Gomorrah is “great” and that their “sin is exceedingly heavy” (והטאתם כי) (כבדה מאד):

Gen 13:13	Gen 18:20
רעים	והטאתם
והטאים	כבדה מאד
מאד	

Furthermore, in 18:23 Abraham questions Yhwh about the impending judgment on Sodom with the question, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked (רשע)?” As noted above, the majority of interpreters have opted to view Lot as an ethical contrast to Abram, as the potential heir, or both. Those who view Lot as an ethical contrast tend to read his move towards Sodom as proof positive of his concern only for himself and his inability to fully grasp the consequences of his move. He is pictured as one who refuses to think of Abram’s well-being, selfishly choosing the “well-watered” Jordan Plain for himself. This plain, the text tells us, is also the home of those who are exceedingly wicked sinners.¹⁵⁶ Lot thought this was prime real estate and foolishly chose to dwell near the sinners.¹⁵⁷ Those who opt to view Lot as the potential heir see Lot’s move away from Abram as his decision to separate himself from the promise. In other words, Lot *was* the heir before he decided to “pitch his tent as far as Sodom.” The problem with both of these readings, as I have argued

¹⁵⁶ Murphy sees it as probable that Lot was single when he departed from Abram and then, subsequently married a woman of Sodom thus falling “into the snare of matching, or, at all events, mingling with the ungodly.” This, at the core, was Lot’s own fault as the “higher blessing of good society...was wanting in the choice of Lot” (J.G. Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis With a New Translation* [Boston: Draper and Halliday, 1867], 276.)

¹⁵⁷ Driver sees Lot as “heedless” of both Abram’s claim to the land and the wicked people with whom he would be abiding (S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* 3rd Ed [New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1905], 153).

throughout, is that Lot is not explicitly pictured as an ethical contrast, nor is he ever truly considered to be the heir.

3.4.2 Lot in Sodom

Genesis 19 opens with Lot “sitting in the gate.” The “gate” was the place where the elders sat, where legal matters were deliberated and where meetings were held.¹⁵⁸ That Lot is sitting “in the gate” may imply that he was not simply a member but an elder in the community. Genesis 19 also presents the final stage in the progression of Lot’s “settling.” Specifically, in Genesis 13, Lot, for the first time, “settles” (ישב) בערי הכנר. In Genesis 14 the reader finds Lot “settling” (ישב) בסדום. Now Lot is “settling” (ישב) בשער־סדום. The story has followed Lot as he gradually progressed from the “outskirts” of Sodom, into Sodom and finally sitting in the very gate of Sodom.¹⁵⁹

While there has been some debate whether or not Lot’s hospitality to the

¹⁵⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 54.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 135.

“messengers” was an indication of his “righteousness”¹⁶⁰ or his lack thereof,¹⁶¹ what is clear is that Lot does, at least, offer to take the messengers into his home, providing food and shelter for them much like Abram had done earlier in Genesis 18. One noticeable difference between the two accounts, however, is the absence of Lot’s wife. Sarah was explicitly mentioned in Genesis 18, but here Lot’s wife is “visible only by inference.”¹⁶² The lack of the mention of Lot’s wife at the opening of the narrative may be a means to foreshadow her later absence at the close of the narrative. Furthermore, the focus on Lot may also provide a distinction between his character, as Lot alone is said to show hospitality, and that of his wife, who will later be turned into a pillar of salt (19:26). What has been the most troubling for interpreters has been the way in which Lot is characterized after the initial arrival of the messengers. The story which follows recounts Lot’s offer of his daughters to the “people of Sodom,” his

¹⁶⁰ For a view which sees Lot as a righteous figure in Genesis 19 see especially: T. Desmond Alexander, “Lot’s Hospitality: A Clue to his Righteousness,” *JBL* 104 (1985), 289-91. With regard to the hospitality of Lot in particular, Alexander concludes that the parallels between Abraham’s act of hospitality in Genesis 18 and Lot’s act of hospitality in Genesis 19 enable one to view Lot “in a favorable light.” See also the positive assessment of Lot’s initial hospitality in Wenham, *Genesis 18-50*, 54; and Yitzhak Peleg, “Was Lot a Good Host? Was Lot Saved from Sodom as a Reward for his Hospitality?” in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson*, ed. Diana Lipton (Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2012), 129-56. Peleg, however, views Lot’s role in the entire Abraham narrative as serving to ennoble the character of Abraham. So “while Lot was an excellent host, Abraham was better.”

¹⁶¹ Pace Jeansonne, “Characterization,” 126, sees the entirety of Genesis 19, including the opening section about Lot’s hospitality, as a condemning indictment of Lot. She sets out several ways in which she interprets Lot’s hospitality as being far less than that of Abraham: 1. Lot merely “rose to meet” (19:1) the messengers and did not “run” as Abraham did (18:2); 2. Abraham begins his request of the guests with the phrase, “if I have found favor in your sight” (18:3) while Lot shows no humility in his request that the messengers stay at his home; 3. Abraham offers his guests “rest and food” (18:4-5) while Lot offers only “rest” (19:2), though later there is mention of a meal being prepared (19:3); 4. The meal provided at Abraham’s house is far more sumptuous than the one Lot offers. Abraham offers a “fine meal” (18:5) which he asks Sarah to make while Lot offers unleavened bread and does not ask his wife or daughters to make anything; 5. Abraham prepares a “tender calf” and there is great detail about the “curds and milk” also being offered (18:7-8), while the details surrounding Lot’s meal are more hurried and are simply glanced over (See also, Harari, “Abraham’s Nephew,” 38; Levenson, *Abraham*, 59; Vogels, “Lot père des incroyants,” 145-46). Turner, “Lot as Jekyll and Hyde,” 93, raises questions about the “contrasts” that Pace Jeansonne is seeing and comments that these may be nothing more than, “the kind of slight differences one would expect in a sophisticated narrative that wanted to portray similarity without recourse to verbatim repetition.” See also discussion in Heard, *Dynamics*, 47-8; Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 213-15.

¹⁶² Dana Fewell and David Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise: The subject of the Bible’s first story* (Minneapolis: Abingdon Press, 1992), 64.

delay in obeying the messengers' command to "flee" and his fathering of Moab and Ben-ammi through the incestuous union with his daughters.

3.4.3 Lot and the People of Sodom

After the initial arrival of the messengers and their decision to stay at Lot's house in 19:3 due to his "strongly pressing" (ויפצר־בם מאד) them to do so, the people of Sodom arrive at Lot's door¹⁶³ and desire to "know" the "men" who are staying with Lot (19:4-5). The people of the city, much like Abram in Gen 13:9, use an imperative when making their request to Lot (הוציאם).¹⁶⁴ Unlike Genesis 13, however, Lot responds to the imperative with a verbal statement of his own in 19:7: "My brothers, please do not act so wickedly" (ויאמר אל־נא אחי תרעו). Earlier, Abram had used the language of brotherhood to show the connection between him and Lot as family. Here Lot uses the language of brotherhood with those to whom he is not related but with whom he certainly has some connection. Lot's remark is also intriguing in light of the way in which Sodom is described in Genesis 13. As I discussed above, Sodom is said to be a place of wicked sinners. Here in Genesis 19, Lot is calling the people not to be what Genesis 13 says they are—"wicked."

I noted above that Lot refers to the people of Sodom as "brothers" much like Abram does with him in Gen 13:8. Given the other parallels noted above, some pertinent observations can be made. First, as Genesis 19 unfolds it is evident that Lot is seeking a peaceful resolution of the problem.¹⁶⁵ By comparison, in Gen 13:8-9 Abram wanted Lot to separate from him and prefaced his call for separation by stating

¹⁶³ The text states that "all the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, from young to old, all the people (כל־העם) to the last one." Curiously, the final reference to "people" may imply that it wasn't simply "males" who approached Lot's house but rather "people" in general. Lyons, *Canon and Exegesis*, 225, makes a similar observation but then comments, "it does seem likely that those outside the house are only the men of Sodom."

¹⁶⁴ *Hiphil* MS of יצא with 3rd MPL suffix (literally, "cause them to come forth").

¹⁶⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 55, comments that "Lot hoped that a soft answer would turn away wrath (Prov 15:1)."

his desire for a peaceful resolution. Second, both Abram and Lot call for an end to potentially negative activities (“let there be no strife” and “do not act so wickedly”). Third, both Lot and Abram provide a subsequent plan for resolution. Abram, as noted above, does not give Lot the option of not separating, but does give Lot the option of which part of the land he will choose to dwell in. In Gen 19:8, perhaps seeking to “strike a compromise,”¹⁶⁶ Lot tells the people, “Behold, I have two daughters¹⁶⁷ who have not known a man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever is good in your eyes; only don’t do a thing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” While Abram had used a *niphal* imperative “separate” (הפריד) in telling Lot to go, Lot now uses a *qal* imperative, “do” (ועשו) in telling the people what they are to do with his daughters.

The people respond to Lot’s imperative by noting that Lot came as a foreigner¹⁶⁸ and questioning his ability to “judge” them. This is a rather intriguing statement, especially in light of the connection Lot sought to make with the people in 19:7. He sees them as his “brothers” but they see him as a “foreigner.” This is also intriguing given the fact that Lot has, apparently, become quite assimilated into the community. He has a home in Sodom, is among those who “sit in the gate,” and he

¹⁶⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 35.

¹⁶⁷ Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 35, notes that Lot’s willingness to hand his daughters over to the mob echoes Abram’s earlier willingness to place Sarai at the mercy of Pharaoh.

¹⁶⁸ האחד בא־לגור.

has daughters who are betrothed, or possibly married, to men of the city.¹⁶⁹ The people then proceed, in 19:9, to “strongly press against Lot” (ויפצרו באיש בלוט מאד).¹⁷⁰ So, while Lot seeks to establish a bond, the people highlight Lot’s distinctiveness from the members of the community with their response, “this one came as a foreigner” (19:9).¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the use of “judge” (וישפט) here is interesting, given the earlier reference to Lot “sitting in the gate.” As I noted above, the gate was the place where judicial affairs were settled. The townspeople may actually be providing commentary on the earlier statement regarding Lot’s “sitting in the gate.” He is not to be seen as a judge, he is really an outsider. I noted above that the way in which Lot is separated from the rest of Abram’s possessions at the outset of Genesis 13 may be a subtle means of distancing Lot from Abram’s household. Similarly perhaps, his placement “in the gate” at the outset of the narrative in Genesis 19 is a way to separate Lot from the wicked of Sodom.

But what of Lot’s offer? The crowd that has gathered at Lot’s door demanded Lot send out (הוציאם) his male guests so that those in the crowd could “know” them

¹⁶⁹ There is debate about exactly how many daughters Lot had. It is possible that the two who are offered to the mob are also betrothed to the “sons-in-law.” Sarna, *Genesis*, 136, opts for this reading seeing the “sons-in-law” as not being literally married to Lot’s daughters but rather betrothed. Part of the issue lies in how one translates the depiction of the “sons-in-law” in 19:14, אלהחבניו לקחי בתניו. It is possible to translate this phrase as either “to his sons-in-law who had married his daughters” or “to his sons-in-law who were going to marry his daughters.” If Lot does in fact have daughters who are married then the subsequent rejection of Lot’s message by the sons-in-law means that Lot would also be leaving two of his daughters behind. In support of this, one could point to the remark in 19:15 by the messengers that Lot is to take his wife and his two remaining daughters (lit. “your two daughters, the ones being found here”). This, however, is still somewhat ambiguous because the text doesn’t explicitly differentiate these daughters from those who were mentioned previously. The ambiguity of לקחי is also reflected in early translations. Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 40, notes that the LXX has τοὺς εἰληφότας and thus renders the participle in the past tense, whereas Vulg. has *qui accepturi erant* and thus renders it in the future tense.

¹⁷⁰ Note the parallel between the people’s “strongly pressing” against Lot and Lot’s earlier act of “strongly pressing” the messengers to stay at his home.

¹⁷¹ Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19*, BibInt (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 151, remarks that by this phrase, “Lot’s foreign status is underlined.” Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 35, comments, “A sojourner is one who lives, either permanently or briefly, among people to whom he or she is not related by blood.” On the semantic range of גר see discussion in, Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative*, JSOTSup 231 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 30-2.

(וּגְדָעָה אֹתָם). The terminology here may have sexual ramifications and may imply that the crowd desires to sexually abuse (i.e., rape) the men.¹⁷² According to Coats, Lot responds as a “good host” should. He presents himself to the mob, closing the door behind him. He seeks, first and foremost, the protection of his guests.¹⁷³ Pace Jeansonne questions whether or not Lot’s initial response is really to be considered one of protection or not. She maintains that Lot “shut the door behind him” precisely so his shameful plan would go unheard by those in his house.¹⁷⁴

Whether or not Lot is seen as “protective” or “diabolical,” what is most questionable is the offer he makes once he is outside with the crowd. As I noted above, Lot responds to their imperative with an imperative of his own. He tells the crowd to take his two daughters¹⁷⁵ “who have not known a man” and do to them whatever they please.¹⁷⁶ While there have been a few dissenting voices among modern interpreters,¹⁷⁷ most view Lot here in a decidedly negative light. Turner’s assessment is illustrative: “We must not allow Lot’s initial gentlemanly behavior to

¹⁷² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 55, comments, “The mob could mean simply that they want to know who the visitors are, but since the visitors came through the public gateway and were publically greeted by Lot, this cannot be all they mean. And since יָדָע ‘to know’ is frequently used in Genesis of sexual intercourse, this seems the likeliest meaning here.” For a counter reading see: Scott Morschauser, “Hospitality, Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1-9,” *JSOT* 27 (2003): 461-85. He understands the language of “know” as a desire to interrogate potential spies. See also: Ellen van Wolde, “Outcry, Knowledge, and Judgement in Genesis 18-19” in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson*, ed. Diana Lipton (Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2012), 71-100.

¹⁷³ Coats, “Lot as Foil,” 121. Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 55.

¹⁷⁴ Pace Jeansonne, “Characterization,” 127.

¹⁷⁵ Sarna, *Genesis*, 136, comments, “This was an age in which a patriarch possessed absolute power over the members of his clan, and daughters were held in low esteem. Lot’s desperate stratagem reflects this system of values.”

¹⁷⁶ On the intertextual parallels between Genesis 19 and Judges 19 see especially, David Penchansky, “Staying the Night: Intertextuality in Genesis and Judges” in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Dana Nolan Fewell (Louisville: Westminster, 1992), 77-88. On the intertextual parallels between Genesis 19 and the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 see especially: L. Daniel Hawk, “Strange Houseguests: Rahab, Lot and the Dynamics of Deliverance” in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Dana Nolan Fewell (Louisville: Westminster, 1992), 89-98.

¹⁷⁷ Alexander, “Lot’s Hospitality,” 290, for example, sees the offer as in no way diminishing Lot’s righteousness and calls on the reader to read Lot’s predicament with a “sympathetic understanding.”

blind us to the real horror he proposes for his daughters.”¹⁷⁸ Lot’s act here of “sacrificing” his daughters to the crowd may connect Lot in a most unflattering way to the wicked of Sodom.¹⁷⁹ Even the way in which Lot’s offer is recorded contains some parallels to the initial demand of those standing at his door. They demand that Lot “bring out” (*hiphil* imperative - הוציאם) the visitors so that they may “know” (וידעה) them. Lot offers to “bring out” (*hiphil* imperfect - אוציאה)¹⁸⁰ his daughters who have not “known” (ידעו) a man.¹⁸¹

But does this require a negative reading of Lot’s character? It may be that Lot’s offer is not really an “offer” at all. Perhaps Lot seeks to “shock the men of the city to their senses” by making a ridiculous offer regarding his daughters whom the people of the town should treat as “the daughters of a neighbor.”¹⁸² This may be supported by Lot’s earlier comment for the people to not act wickedly—which assumes he believes they are capable of refraining from evil and choosing good. His extreme example may be a way to bring them to their senses ethically with the hope that they will heed his earlier advice. Perhaps Lot’s “offer” is really a “sarcastic indirect request” underlying “his resolve not to let the men of Sodom rape *anybody* found under the shelter of his roof.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Turner, “Lot as Jekyll and Hyde,” 95. Turner further comments, “To have offered himself to be homosexually abused in place of his guests would have maintained his high standing in the reader’s eyes. But, rather than self-sacrifice, he chooses to offer his virgin daughters...Lot’s offer of his daughters is an act of wickedness.”

¹⁷⁹ “At no time...does Lot recognize the irony or the links that exist between his own behavior and that of those outside” (Lyons, *Canon and Exegesis*, 231).

¹⁸⁰ First person singular cohortative (“Let me bring out”).

¹⁸¹ J. Cheryl Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, second revised edition (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 141, notes, “The offer shows the father’s control of his daughter’s sexuality, even though...they are betrothed and thus are not, strictly speaking, Lot’s ‘property’ to dispose of (cf. Deut. 22.23-27).”

¹⁸² J. Gerald Janzen, *Abraham and All the Families of the Earth: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 12-50*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64.

¹⁸³ Heard, *Dynamics*, 55 (italics his). He notes that such a request is defined as, “an ironic utterance in which a speaker asks a listener to do something other than that which the speaker really wants the listener to do.”

The people's subsequent response to Lot's offer may lend support to the notion that it is not meant to be taken seriously. The people at his door provide no comment with regard to the offer but simply call on Lot to "stand aside" (19:9). Furthermore, their mocking remark about Lot as "judge," along with their threat to "treat him (Lot) worse than them" (19:10) may highlight the anger which the people feel toward Lot with regard to his call to resist evil, both by his explicit comment about their wickedness and his implicit comment by means of his offer.

The "men of Sodom" follow their remarks to Lot by seeking to "break down" the door of Lot's house. They are, in turn, struck with blindness¹⁸⁴ by the messengers and struggle to find "the door."¹⁸⁵ Once inside, the messengers inquire about the members of Lot's household that are still present in the city and demand they leave: "Who of yours is still here? Get your sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters and all that is yours in the city out of this place" (19:12).¹⁸⁶ The reason they are to get out is because the messengers are intent on destroying Sodom, "For we are about to destroy this place" (19:13).¹⁸⁷ They inform Lot that Yhwh had sent them to the city for that very reason because the "outcry has become so great before Yhwh." Lot appears to begin fulfilling their command, declaring to his sons-in-law: "Up! Get out of this place! Yhwh is going to destroy the city" (19:14). Lot apparently believes the declaration of the messengers and acts upon it.

¹⁸⁴ This may not imply total blindness but rather that their sight "did not correspond to reality" (Hamilton, *Genesis 17-50*, 37).

¹⁸⁵ The "men of Sodom" demanded that Lot give those that "came" (באו) to Lot's house to them (19:5), Lot responds requesting that they do nothing to those that "came" (באו) under his roof (19:8) and now these same messengers cause Lot, himself, to "come" (ויבאו) back into the house (19:10). Lot had earlier "shut the door" (והדלת סגר) behind him (19:6) to protect his guests and now the messengers "shut the door" (ואת־הדלת סגרו) to protect Lot and his household (19:10) against those who had earlier sought to break down "the door" that they are now struggling to find.

¹⁸⁶ Earlier, the "men of Sodom" demanded that Lot "cause to bring out" his guests, Lot offered to "bring out" his daughters for them and now the messengers demand that Lot "cause to bring out" (הוציא) – *hiphil* MS imperative of (יצא) his household from the city.

¹⁸⁷ כִּי־מִשְׁחָחִים אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה. The *hiphil* participle here (משחחים) functions to, "announce approaching action, or action that is already in progress" (Arnold and Choi, *Guide*, 81).

The sons-in-law, however, believe Lot is “joking around” (כמצחק).¹⁸⁸ Lot’s demand has fallen on deaf ears. But why would they believe Lot to be joking? Their response has been variously interpreted as it pertains to Lot’s characterization in the story. Coats sees the sons-in-law’s lack of response as reflecting of a defect in Lot’s character. He is “a jester, a fool, someone to be ignored.”¹⁸⁹ Mathews comments that the disregard shown by the sons-in-law “speaks also to the narrative’s general picture of Lot as a confused, inept person.”¹⁹⁰ Turner wonders if the sons-in-law perceived a lack of true conviction in Lot’s voice.¹⁹¹ Heard sees an unambiguous commentary on Lot’s character—he “is an abject failure.”¹⁹² Others, like Hamilton, wonder if the message was simply too outlandish for them to believe.¹⁹³ Although there is the potential in Gen 19:14 to read Lot through a negative lens, this is by no means a necessary reading. It may be that the sons-in-law are the real foils in the story. Perhaps their negative response is in contrast to Lot’s positive response to the messenger’s warning.

3.4.4 Lot’s Delay

One would assume, given Lot’s initial rapid response to the messengers’ command, that he, at the very least, would quickly vacate the city. This, however, is not the case. The next morning, one finds the messengers beseeching Lot to take his family out of the city immediately so they are not “swept away in the punishment of the city.” Lot has not fulfilled the command of the messengers. Unlike Lot’s earlier response where he immediately told his sons-in-law to “get out,” in 19:16 Lot

¹⁸⁸ While many translations opt for something along the lines of “joking around” or “jesting” (NRSV; ESV; NIV; NASB; NAB; NJPS) the root צחק may also carry the notion that they felt “mocked” by Lot (cf. Gen 39:14, 17).

¹⁸⁹ Coats, “Lot as foil,” 123.

¹⁹⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 238.

¹⁹¹ Turner, “Lot as Jekyll and Hyde,” 95.

¹⁹² Heard, *Dynamics*, 55.

¹⁹³ Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 40.

“delayed” (וַיִּתְמַהֵמָה). The term used here for “delayed” is the same term that is used in a more positive sense with reference to the Israelites “not delaying” when they were driven out of Egypt (Ex 12:39).¹⁹⁴

Does Lot’s delay imply something negative about his character? There are parallels between Lot’s earlier imperative to his sons-in-law—“Up! Get out of this place! Yhwh is going to destroy the city” (19:14)—and the messengers’ imperative to Lot: “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters, the ones being found here or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city” (19:15). Given these parallels, one can compare the subsequent responses by Lot’s sons-in-law and Lot. The sons-in-law thought Lot was joking. Lot hesitated. Did Lot really believe the messengers’ warning or does his hesitation imply that he, too, thought the message a joke? Is he still fearful of the mob?¹⁹⁵ Is he attached to the city?¹⁹⁶ Is Lot exemplifying his foolishness?¹⁹⁷

Lot’s response does raise questions about his willingness to submit to the command of the messengers.¹⁹⁸ An explicit indictment of Lot, however, cannot be ascertained from the text. We are not told, for example, why Lot hesitates. Perhaps

¹⁹⁴ In *Genesis Rabbah* one reads that the *shalsholet* (שְׁלִשְׁלוֹת) used here in Gen 19:16 over וַיִּתְמַהֵמָה denotes that Lot was “lingering after lingering.” (*Genesis Rabbah* 50:11) It, thus, demonstrates Lot’s indecision. When the marking appears over a particular letter there is a three-fold extension in the vocalizing of that letter. Mois Navon (“The Shalsholet: Mark of Ambivalence,” *Jewish Thought* Vol. 4 No. 1) defines the *shalsholet* as, “lingering by the subject due to some apprehension to carry out a prescribed action...the shalsholet does not only come to denote an event based on the subject’s apprehension, but furthermore comes to distinguish the event as the culmination of a primary struggle within the subject.” On this reading, the use of the *shalsholet* here signifies that Lot was wrestling within himself about what to do. His action is not instantaneous he takes time to ponder whether or not he wants to follow through on the command of the messengers. Contrary to this understanding, Joshua R. Jacobson, *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Complete Guide to the Art of Cantillation* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2002), 107-8, argues that the marking is used not for exegetical purposes but rather its syntactic function is in relation to the words that follow.

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 43.

¹⁹⁶ Fewell and Gunn, *Gender*, 59.

¹⁹⁷ Coats, “Lot as Foil,” 123, sees here a justification for the earlier response of the sons-in-law, “Passive Lot remains passive, unable to leave the city under the urgency of the messengers, unable even to save his own life and the life of his family. It is no surprise that the sons-in-law could not take him seriously.” See also, Vawter, *Genesis*, 238; Speiser, *Genesis*, 143.

¹⁹⁸ Lyons, *Canon and Exegesis*, 243, sees the necessity of the messengers leading Lot out of the city by the hand as an indication of Lot’s “lack of righteousness.”

Lot lingered because the rest of his family was unwilling to go and he was waiting on them to join him in vacating the city. In this reading, Lot's hesitance is actually an act of compassion and forbearance which would be quite commendable. Regardless, Lot's hesitation forces the messengers to drag him and his family outside of the city and implore them to flee to the hills for their very lives.

3.4.5 Leaving the City

There is an interesting statement made in 19:16: "So the men took his hand, and the hands of his wife and two daughters—in the compassion of Yhwh upon him—and brought him out and left him outside the city." Why would the writer highlight Yhwh's compassion on Lot?¹⁹⁹ Some have argued that Lot, who is portrayed as righteous, is saved precisely because of that righteousness.²⁰⁰ Others have argued that Lot is shown mercy not because of anything he has done but rather because of his connection to Abraham as 19:29 may imply: "God remembered Abraham and he sent Lot out from the midst of the overthrow."²⁰¹

Once outside the city the messengers command Lot and his family to "flee." The term "flee" is used no less than five times between 19:17 and 19:22. Mathews notes the potential play on words between מלט and לוט, "the humor of the play is that Lot is anything but quick to leave."²⁰² The messengers here in 19:17 command Lot and his family to "flee" (המלט), "don't look behind you" (אל־תביט אחר־יך), "don't stop" (אל־תעמד) and "flee" (המלט). The use of the *niphal* imperative "flee" frames the two negative statements about "looking" and "stopping." Lot and his family are to leave and they are to leave now. These imperatives are likewise framed by two remarks regarding the fate of Lot and his family if they don't obey the command to flee: "or

¹⁹⁹ Paul Tonson, "Mercy Without Covenant: A Literary Analysis of Genesis 19," *JSOT* 95 (2001): 95-116, comments that Lot is the first recipient of the saving mercy of Yhwh in the Hebrew Bible.

²⁰⁰ Alexander, "Lot's Hospitality," 291.

²⁰¹ Sarna, *Genesis*, 137; *b. Ber.* 54 b.

²⁰² Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 239.

you will be swept away” (19:15, 17). Ironically, in 19:19, Lot replies, “I am not able to flee” (לא אוכל להמלט).

Messengers’ Command (19:12)

“Who of yours is still here? Get your sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters and all that is yours in the city out of this place.”

Lot’s Response (19:14)

“Lot went and spoke to his sons-in-law, “Up! Get out of this place! Yhwh is going to destroy the city.”

Messengers’ Command (19:15)

“Up! Take your wife and your two daughters, the ones being found here or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.”

Lot’s Response (19:16)

“But he delayed.”

Messengers’ Command (19:17)

“Flee for your life! Don’t look behind you and don’t stop anywhere in the plain. Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away.”

Lot’s Response (19:18-20)

“No, please, my lords!²⁰³ Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot flee to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die; now behold, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved.”

Ironically, Lot addresses the messengers in a similar way that he addressed the inhabitants of Sodom, אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָמָה in 19:7 and אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָמָה in 19:18. Both are respectful, yet clear, objections to the initial plans of the subjects. It should be pointed out, as well, that the messengers command Lot to avoid stopping, or staying בְּכָל־הַכְּנָר. The reference to “the plain” here provides a contextual echo back to Lot’s initial decision to choose the plain. Lot bargains with the messengers and asks to be allowed to go to

²⁰³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 58, notes that אֲדָמָה as pointed is “the proper way to address God” and Lot’s subsequent remarks may be read as being “addressed to God” though whether or not this is the case is still a “mystery.”

“that city,” which he describes as a “little city” so that his life can be spared.²⁰⁴ This is also ironic, given the earlier command by the messengers that Lot needs to “flee to the mountains” in order to be spared. Lot, it may be read, doesn’t completely trust the messengers’ command. The “littleness” of the city provides the basis for the narrative remark that the city is called צוֹעַר (19:22).²⁰⁵ The use of צוֹעַר here echoes back to Lot’s original move to the “cities of the plain.” In Genesis 13 the text mentions the plain being like the garden and Egypt “as you come to Zoar” or “in the direction of Zoar.”²⁰⁶ When Lot looked upon the plain in Genesis 13 it looked like the ideal spot to take his herders and his herds. It was well-watered and may have appeared to be a safe place, at a safe distance from any potential strife with Abram’s herders. Here, in Genesis 19, Lot opts to go to Zoar because he feels it is a safe place away from the impending destruction that Yhwh is about to bring on Sodom.

But why does Lot continue to delay? Many commentators understand Lot’s delay as reflecting poorly on his character.²⁰⁷ As Heard observes, however, such a reading is not necessary. I noted above that Lot’s initial delay may imply that he is waiting on his family to join him. Heard, taking a slightly different approach, notes that the continual delays of Lot may imply he did not want to abandon his neighbors to destruction. If the destruction hinges on Lot’s removal from Sodom, then his continual delays ensure that that destruction will be stalled. This desire to stave off destruction may also undergird his request to go to Zoar. Heard notes: “The apparent self-centeredness of Lot’s appeal may strategically conceal a concern for other people.

²⁰⁴ Gad Dishy, “Saving Zoar: How Did Lot Succeed,” *JBQ* 38, (2010): 213, notes that while the God does answer Lot’s plea and, in turn, saves Zoar, Abraham’s pleadings in Genesis 18 are still “nobler than Lot’s selfish request” as Lot thought of no one but himself.

²⁰⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 240.

²⁰⁶ So NRSV.

²⁰⁷ See for example: Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 58; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 239; Turner, “Lot as Jekyll and Hyde,” 95.

Lot now knows that he cannot save Sodom, but perhaps he can save Zoar.²⁰⁸ Just as Abraham had earlier pleaded with God for Sodom in light of God’s commitment to justice, here too, Lot may be seeking to save others in light of God’s commitment to Lot’s rescue. Heard notes correctly, “Only if Lot is prejudged to be incapable of such selfless action is it implausible to suppose that his ‘delays’ are attempts to keep others alive.”²⁰⁹

3.4.6 The Fate of Sodom

Up to this point, Genesis 19 has only hinted at Yhwh’s actions but has chosen to focus the attention on the actions of those in the city—the people, the messengers and Lot. Now the text shifts focus heavenward and describes what has been long anticipated, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Then Yhwh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yhwh out of the sky, and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all those dwelling in the cities, and what sprouted on the ground. But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt (Gen 19:24-26).

Yhwh’s destruction is total. Not only are the cities destroyed, but also the plain, the inhabitants and the plant life. This destruction is quite reminiscent of the earlier flood story. The note that Yhwh “rained...out of the sky” (הַמַּטִּיר...הַשָּׁמַיִם) recalls the account of Yhwh “sending rain” (מִמַּטֵּיר, 7:4) “from the sky” (מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם, 8:2).²¹⁰

Unlike the flood story, however, Yhwh does not literally bring “rain” but rather he “rains brimstone and fire.” These particular elements of judgment are commonly used to portray the destructive wrath of Yhwh.²¹¹ Yhwh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was already anticipated in Genesis 13 with the narrative remark concerning the fate of the inhabitants. The mention of “all the plain” (כָּל־הַכְּנָר) reminds the reader of what Lot once saw when he lifted his eyes back in Genesis 13. There he saw “all

²⁰⁸ Heard, *Dynamics*, 57.

²⁰⁹ Heard, *Dynamics*, 58.

²¹⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 241.

²¹¹ Cf. Ez 38:22; Deut 29:23; Job 18:15; Ps 11:6.

the plain” (כל־ככר) as being well-watered and reminiscent of the garden of Yhwh and Egypt.

Yhwh’s destruction of plant life in 19:25 brings the comment in 13:10 full circle in some provocative ways. The mention of “what sprouted on the ground (יצמה (האדמה))” connects the plain to the way in which the garden is described prior to the creation of אדם: “Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted (יצמה), for Yhwh God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no human to cultivate the ground” (Gen 2:5). Furthermore, in Gen 2:5 the reason nothing has “sprouted” is because Yhwh God had *not* “caused it to rain” (המטיר) – *hiphil* perfect (מטר) upon the earth and nobody was there to work the ground. Here, in Genesis 19, the reason that nothing is “sprouting” on the ground is because Yhwh has totally annihilated everything that “sprouts” *because* he “caused it to rain” (המטיר) – *hiphil* perfect (מטר). In Genesis 2 there was no rain and no human. In Genesis 19, Yhwh “rains” his wrath on both plants and humans. Nothing is growing in the garden because Yhwh God had not sent rain and had not created humanity. Nothing is growing in plain that “looked like the garden” because Yhwh sent rain and destroyed humanity.

What comes next, however, is quite unexpected in the story line—the account of Lot’s wife (19:26). The Hebrew Bible does not inform the reader where Lot got his wife or any of the details concerning their marriage. What the text does record is what happened to her after leaving Sodom. The remark that she “looked back,”²¹² while she was “behind” Lot may imply that she looked while still traveling.²¹³ Did she not make it to Zoar? The narrative uses another *hiphil* verb here, ותבט, to describe the actions of Lot’s wife. The initial *vav* doesn’t clarify the timing of the event, as it

²¹² On תבט as “looked back” here in Genesis 19 see: *HALOT*, 661.

²¹³ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 242, sees this as an indication that she “evidenced her affections for her life at Sodom.”

could mean “and,” “but,” “then,” “now,” etc. The fact that she “looked...from behind him” (מאחוריו) appears to imply that she “became” a pillar of salt while standing, or traveling, behind Lot. While the text is somewhat ambiguous regarding these particulars, it is clear on what happens to Lot’s wife upon looking back—she turns to a pillar of salt (ותהי נציב מלח). The note that she “looked back” is the same phraseology that the messengers used in their earlier command in 19:17 that Lot and his household should not “look behind you” (אל־תביט אחריך). The parallel language certainly implies that Lot’s wife did not obey the command of the messengers. One thing which is blatantly obvious in this narrative sequence, but which has consistently gone unmentioned, is that Lot, in contrast and quite commendably, fully obeys the command.

3.4.7 Abraham and Lot

As the narrative continues, the focus returns to Abraham. As Abraham arose early in the morning he went to the place where he had earlier spoken with Yhwh (Genesis 18): “Now Abraham arose early in the morning (and went)²¹⁴ to the place where he had stood before Yhwh” (19:27). Not only does this connect to the earlier story of Abraham’s dialogue with Yhwh in Genesis 18, it also connects back to Abram’s interactions with Yhwh in Genesis 13:

Genesis 13

“to the place of the altar that he had made there previously (אל־מקום המזבח אשר־); and there Abram called on the name of Yhwh” (13:4).

Genesis 19

“Now Abraham arose early in the morning (and went) to the place where he had stood (אל־המקום אשר־עמד) before Yhwh” (19:27).

In Genesis 13, Abram returns to the place where he had previously built an altar to Yhwh, and in Genesis 19, he returns to the place where he stood before Yhwh. In

²¹⁴ The Hebrew text has no verb here, only בבקר אל־המקום, though it would seem the verb is implied.

addition, seeing that what follows in Genesis 13 is his separation from Lot, and Lot's separation from the promise, it is not surprising that one finds similar themes in the remaining portion of Genesis 19. For example, after Abraham goes to the place where he was standing with Yhwh, Gen 19:28 states that Abraham "looked down" upon the plain and what he saw was smoke rising up "as from a furnace."²¹⁵ In Gen 13:10, Lot looked on the plain and saw that it was well-watered, like the garden, like the land of Egypt. However, the writer inserted a comment in 13:10 to remind readers that later Yhwh will destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. After that destruction what one sees is not a lush and beautiful plain but a wasteland, a scorched territory. Lot saw what the plain was like then, Abraham sees is what the plain is like now.

After he describes Abraham looking down on Sodom, the writer inserts a comment about God's rescue of Lot: "It happened, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, God, then, remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt" (19:29). The mention that "God remembered Abraham" is intriguing for two reasons. First, that "God remembered" (ויזכר אלהים) recalls the earlier use of the same phrase in Gen 8:1: "God remembered (ויזכר אלהים) Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth and the water subsided." Actually, all three times this phrase is used in Genesis it is the same construction.²¹⁶ Just as Noah and the animals were rescued from the flood waters because God "remembered" Noah, so Lot is spared because "God remembered Abraham."²¹⁷

Second, the fact that Lot is spared because "God remembered Abraham" makes this particular instance of the phrase unique. It is the only time when someone

²¹⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 242, notes the similar language used in the Sinai theophany (Exod 19:18) and that burning smoke is used as a demonstration of divine anger and judgment.

²¹⁶ See here the same phrase in Gen 30:22, "God remembered (ויזכר אלהים) Rachel."

²¹⁷ "Remembering always implies doing something, in this case enabling Lot to escape" (Kessler and Deurloo, *Genesis*, 119).

is spared, rescued, helped, etc., in Genesis because God remembered someone else.²¹⁸ Earlier in 19:16 the messengers dragged Lot and his family out of Sodom because of the impending destruction. The writer explains that the “compassion of Yhwh” was upon Lot, which raises the question of whether or not it is something inherent in Lot which moves Yhwh to compassion, or if it is something outside of Lot which moves Yhwh to compassion. Was Lot spared in response to Abram’s dialogue with Yhwh in Genesis 18?²¹⁹ Was it the prior covenantal promises of blessing to Abram (12:3)?²²⁰ Perhaps, but the text never directly says that.²²¹ Because Lot is spared, is he to be considered “righteous”? Perhaps, though Lot certainly engages in both potentially commendable and potentially damning activities. Perhaps God spared him just because of his familial connection to Abraham. Perhaps the reason is a combination of these elements.²²² In the end, certainty of interpretation escapes us.

3.4.8 The Birth of Sons

Genesis 19 closes with the account of the birth of Moab and Ben-Ammi.

There is no need to rehearse all of the issues surrounding this particular text, but some discussion is warranted as it pertains to my thesis. There has been much debate about

²¹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 59, notes that a true parallel to the rescue of Noah would be, “God remembered Lot.”

²¹⁹ So Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 171-72, who argues thus, sees the use of “lest you be swept away on account of the iniquity of the city” (19:15, 17) in light of Abraham’s prayer, “Will the righteous be swept away along with the wicked?” (18:23). He later comments, 174, “Any merit on Lot’s part that may have resulted in his rescue has obviously been subordinated to the central importance of Abraham’s intercession on his behalf.”

²²⁰ So Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 243. He notes that the phrase “God remembered” links to the “prior covenant obligation (12:3) as the basis for the divine intervention, not the righteousness of Lot” and provides “a final jibe at Lot’s failure.” Cf. David W. Cotter, *Genesis*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 124, comments, “Lot was saved, not as a result of his own worth but of Abraham’s.” (See also, Harari, “Abraham’s Nephew,” 40).

²²¹ Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, 69, comments that by not mentioning Lot by name, Abraham has shown that he has “no interest in Lot.” This particular reading goes against the majority of commentators who envision Abraham as being concerned for Lot as he continues to push Yhwh to lessen the required number of righteous individuals. In the end, either a positive or negative view of Abraham’s thoughts towards Lot in Genesis 18 is purely speculation though contextually the more positive view bears greater support. Abraham, after all, had earlier offered to share the land with Lot (Genesis 13) and risked his life in a military campaign to rescue his nephew (Genesis 14).

²²² Peleg, “Was Lot a Good Host,” 154, argues that Lot is spared because of his hospitality, because of God’s mercy and because he is Abraham’s nephew.

the characterization of both Lot and his daughters in Gen 19:30-38.²²³ Some commentators have viewed Lot's daughters as manipulative and unrighteous while viewing Lot as passive and foolish.²²⁴ There have been others, however, who have argued that Lot's daughters are actually doing the right thing, given their presumed circumstance²²⁵ while Lot is the one who is at fault.²²⁶

The pericope opens with the statement that Lot “dwelled in the mountain with his two daughters because he was afraid to dwell in Zoar and he dwelled in a cave with his two daughters” (19:30). Lot has “dwelt” in the Plain of the Jordan (13:12), the city of Sodom (14:12), the gate of Sodom (19:1),²²⁷ in the mountain because he was afraid to “dwell” (לשבת) in Zoar (19:30a),²²⁸ and finally Lot “dwells” (וישב) with his two daughters in a cave (19:30b). While in the cave, Lot's daughters determine that because Lot is “old” and there is no “man in the land to come upon us after the way of all the land,” they will get Lot drunk and “lie with him.” The firstborn, whose idea this is initially, tells her younger sister that the reason for the plan is so they can “preserve (ונהיה) from our father seed” which appears to mean they want to keep their father's line going. After getting Lot drunk, the first daughter has sex with her father. The narrative informs the reader that Lot “did not know when she lay down and when she arose” (19:33). The fact that Lot does not “know” (ידע) what is happening to him may imply that the narrative wants the reader to view Lot as passive and foolish, or it may be that the reader is to be sympathetic with Lot as one who has been taken

²²³ For a fascinating psychoanalytic-literary examination of the account of Lot and his daughters in conjunction with its portrayal in art and film see: Exum, *Plotted*, 133-60.

²²⁴ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 245; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 64.

²²⁵ Sharon Pace Jeanson, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 41.

²²⁶ *b. Naz. 23a* (see further discussion below). Cf. Exum, *Plotted*.

²²⁷ ישב (*qal* 3MS Perfect) in 13:12; ישב (*qal* MS Participle) in 14:12 and 19:1.

²²⁸ Why he was “afraid” we are not told. This silence has not kept interpreters from seeing here a defect in Lot's character. For example, von Rad, *Genesis*, 223, notes that Lot “in his career of faintheartedness and temporization...is driven farther and farther from the ways which God had taken with him.”

advantage of.²²⁹ After the elder daughter is successful, the younger one does the exact same thing.²³⁰ Lot again does not know when she lay down or when she arose.²³¹ After the remark regarding the younger daughter the narrative states that “both the daughters of Lot were pregnant from their father.” The daughters have successfully preserved seed from their (lit. “our”) father (מֵאֲבֵינוּ) by getting pregnant (19:36) by their father (מֵאֲבֵיהֶן).²³²

Lot’s firstborn daughter bears him a son, מוֹאֵב, who, the narrative informs us, becomes the father of the Moabites. The name מוֹאֵב, which has been defined in a number of ways from “from father” to “water (i.e., seed) of the father,”²³³ implies both kinship connection and separation. The statement that he is the father of the Moabites places these descendants of Lot as outsiders. While the actual meaning of the name eludes us, it clearly links this child with the wider context of the “father’s” genealogical framework. That genealogical framework connects with Abraham.

A similar tension is found with regard to the second son. When he is born he is given the name בְּנֵי-עַמִּי and is said to be the father of the Ammonites. His name means “son of my people”²³⁴ and, therefore, implies a connection with Lot’s wider

²²⁹ “[T]he author wants it clearly understood that the hapless man was sexually exploited” (Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 245).

²³⁰ There may be a subtle differentiation in the acts of the daughters through the use of the verb בָּא for the elder daughter and קָם for the younger. The fact that the younger daughter “rose” may imply that she is “acting against her better judgment and against her instincts, in contrast to the elder daughter, who *comes* and *lies*” (Jonathan Grossman, “‘Associative Meanings’ in the Character Evaluation of Lot’s Daughters,” *CBQ* 76 [2014], 40-57). It may also be that the use of “rose” in the account of the younger daughter implies that she is simply obeying what her older sister told her to do (cf. Gen 22:3).

²³¹ The fact that the elder daughter states the initial plan to sleep with Lot in 19:31 and then repeats it again to the younger sister in 19:34 may imply that the younger sister needed convincing. See Talia Sutskov, “Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38). Further literary and Stylistic Examinations,” *JHS* 11 (2011): 7.

²³² Vogels, “Lot père des incroyants,” *EgT* 6 (1975): 151, notes that while Abram is the father of believers, Lot is the “father of unbelievers” (“père des incroyants”).

²³³ For discussion see, Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 53.

²³⁴ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 245, sees the reference to “people” here as specifically referring to the “paternal kinsmen.”

family, which would include Abraham.²³⁵ The fact that the Ammonites are mentioned as being the son's descendants, however, clearly places them in the category of outsiders.²³⁶ This tension is also seen in the subsequent stories concerning the Ammonites and Moabites in the Hebrew Bible. There are times when they are said to be under the protection of Yhwh from the Israelites (Deut 2:9; 19) and there are times when they are depicted as utterly rejected by Yhwh (Deut 23:3). In both contexts, however, the separation of Moab and Ammon from Israel is clearly demonstrated.²³⁷ They have a separate land in which to dwell and they have no right to worship with the Israelites.

3.4.9 Concluding Thoughts on the Connections between Genesis 13 and 19

In Genesis 13 Abram offered Lot a portion of the land in which he and his household could dwell. Although Abram offered him the northern or southern regions of Canaan, Lot chose to travel “eastward” and pitch his tent “as far as Sodom.” By linking Lot's choice to the subsequent story in Genesis 19, the narrative has, in fact, informed the reader that Lot is really an outsider; his choice to dwell “eastward” confirms that fact. The birth of his sons becomes the climactic assertion of that status. When it comes to Lot's ethics, however, there is a great deal of ambiguity. Lot may be righteous, he may be unrighteous or he may be a combination of the two. Thus, the connections to Genesis 19 in Genesis 13 cannot be read as indications of Lot's selfishness or his desire to live near people who are wicked and sinful.

²³⁵ Sutscover, “Lot and his daughters,” 8, comments that the names may be seen being “etymologized to refer to incest.”

²³⁶ Mention should be made here of the link between Moab and Ammon and Sodom and Gomorrah in Zeph 2:9: “Surely, Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah.” This link echoes the narrative in Genesis 19.

²³⁷ One could point to the story of Ruth as another example of the connection/separation tension surrounding Moab. Though Ruth does marry Boaz, the narrative continually reminds the reader that Ruth is a “Moabite” and even after the birth of her son it is Naomi, the Israelite, who is exulted as one “having a son.” While Ruth is connected, she is also clearly separated.

3.5 God's Promises to Abram in Light of Lot's Departure

Immediately following the remark concerning the wicked and sinful inhabitants of Sodom the narrative returns to focus particularly on Abram and his actions in the land. With Lot having separated from Abram to dwell near the sinful inhabitants of Sodom, the dual problems of Lot's accompaniment and Abram's settlement in the land are now solved. The narrative moves the focus back to Abram—to Yhwh's positive testimony of the promise of land to Abram's descendants and Abram's subsequent worship.

ויהוה אמר אל־אברם אחרי הפרד־לוט מעמו שא נא עיניך וראה מן־המקום
אשר־אתה שם צפנה ונגבה וקדמה וימה

(“Yhwh said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him,²³⁸ ‘Lift, please, your eyes and look from the place where you are to the north and to the south and to the east and to the west.’ – Gen 13:14)

Up to this point in the narrative the only direct speech was that of Abram to Lot. Now, Yhwh speaks to Abram after Lot has separated, literally “from with him.” This is, in fact, the third time פרד is used in Genesis 13 and, along with אה, it serves as a *Leitwort* in the narrative. The first use is in Abram's call for separation in 13:9 (הפרד נא מעלי). The second use is in the context of Abram and Lot's parting in 13:11 (ויפרדו איש מעל אחיו) and the third is here in 13:14 (אחרי הפרד־לוט מעמו) which comes after the separation is complete. The repetition of פרד provides a stirring reminder of the importance of separation. The fact that the term is used before, during and after Abram and Lot's separation may be the narrator's way of highlighting the necessity of Lot's separation from Abram. The two cannot dwell together. Perhaps the mention

²³⁸ Or “after Lot separated himself” if one reads the *niphal* infinitive הפרד as a reflexive. The use of the *niphal* here may be an indication of Lot's obedience to Abram's imperative which was also a *niphal* (“separate yourself...after Lot had separated himself”).

that the blessing is spoken “after Lot had separated from him” is also a reminder that Lot was not supposed to be with Abram in the first place.²³⁹

At the outset of Genesis 13 one finds Abram “calling on the name of Yhwh.” This particular phrase is not followed up by any further cultic activity. Here in 13:14, Yhwh speaks to Abram²⁴⁰ and tells Abram to do the very thing that Lot did when he surveyed the area: “lift up your eyes.” I noted above that the use of this particular phrase is quite broad. It is used in contexts of both general observation and more nuanced “looking.” Some commentators, however, have noted a contrast here between Abram and Lot. Levenson, for example, notes, “Whereas Lot ‘raised his eyes,’ Abram does not do likewise until the Lord so instructs him.”²⁴¹ Why, however, would that reading be preferred over the reading which sees Lot’s look as one which seeks to satisfy the pragmatic concerns of his herds? It is difficult to justify an ethical reading either way, as both the text and the phrase itself are quite neutral.

3.6 Lot is Not a Descendant

כי את־כֹּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־רָאָה לְךָ אֶתְנַנָּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם וְשִׁמְתִי אֶת־זַרְעְךָ כְּעַפְרָ
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲמִיּוּכָל אִישׁ לִמְנוֹת אֶת־עַפְרָ הָאָרֶץ גַּם־זַרְעְךָ יִמְנֶה
 (“For all the land that you see, to you I will give it and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants like the dust of the land, so that if anyone can number the dust of the land, then your descendants can also be numbered.” – Gen 13:15-16)

When Abram told Lot they needed to separate he did so by prefacing his statement with, “Is not all the land before you?” Here, Yhwh prefaces his promise of land to Abram with the comment, “For all the land that you see.” Abram acted as

²³⁹ Though not faulting Abram for taking Lot, Sarna, *Genesis*, 100, comments “Abram’s last link with his father’s house is now severed, and a fresh stage in his life begins.” See also Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 131.

²⁴⁰ Dyk, “Lack of Space,” 18, comments that Yhwh here speaks to Abram as a friend and fills the emptiness in Abram’s life caused by Lot’s departure with the promise of descendants.

²⁴¹ Levenson, “Genesis,” 33. See also: Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 288; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 138. One also finds this particular interpretation in writings of early 20th century minister G. Campbell Morgan, “Abram is seen in direct contrast to Lot in every way. Lot chose for himself. God chose for Abram. Lot chose by sight. . . Abram, by faith, chose not to choose; and now Jehovah brought him into the place of sight on the basis of faith” (G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible* [Westwood: Fleming H. Revell, 1959], 17).

owner of the land in 13:8 and in 13:15 Yhwh confirms Abram's claim to the land by promising it to him and his descendants.²⁴²

Throughout I have noted that the majority of interpreters have read Lot as the presumed heir and that Lot forfeits that blessing by his choice to move away from Abram. I have argued that this particular reading is problematic for several reasons, one of which is that Abram never calls Lot anything except "brother." The language of brotherhood, while certainly providing a familial connection between the two, is never used to describe a parent-child relationship. Lot is a brother, he is not a descendant. The fact that Lot moves east and pitches his tent "as far as Sodom" is not to be seen as Lot's forfeiture of the blessing. The blessing was never offered to him because he is never depicted as being in the proper relational connection with Abram. The promise is for Abram and his descendants, not Abram and his brothers.²⁴³

3.7 Abram in Yhwh's Space

קום התהלך בארץ לארכה ולרחבה כי לך אתננה
ויאהל אברם ויבא וישב באלני ממרא אשר בחברון ויבן־שם מזבח ליהוה
("Rise, walk about through²⁴⁴ the length and breadth of the land for to you I will give it. And he pitched his tent and he came and settled by the oaks of Mamre that are in Hebron and he built there an altar to Yhwh" – Gen 13:17-18)

Yhwh, as owner of the land, tells Abram to "walk about in the land." Sarna notes that this "walk" may be symbolic of Abram's right to the land:

In both the Egyptian and Hittite spheres, the king had to undertake a periodic ceremonial walk around a field or a tour of his realm in order to symbolize the renewal of his sovereignty over the land. In Nuzi, in order to enhance the

²⁴² Zimmerli, *1.Mose 12-25*, 31, comments, "Abraham scheint in alledem das schlechtere Teil zugefallen zu sein (14-17). Der Erzähler macht aber hörbar, daß es dennoch das bessere Teil ist."

²⁴³ Steinberg, *Kinship*, 50, comments, "because Lot is outside of Canaan, he can no longer be lineal descendant to Abram – according to Gen 12:7, Abram's descendants are to be given Canaan. Once Lot no longer resides in Canaan, the one item missing from Abram's wealth, an heir, is now seemingly out of Abram's grasp forever." As I have argued, throughout, however, Lot is never set up as Abram's "lineal descendant." Lot is a member of Terah's household and is defined not as Abram's descendant but as Abram's "brother" or "brother's son." Lot is excluded not because he chose to be excluded but because he was never included in the first place. He was never in proper relational connection with Abram to inherit anything.

²⁴⁴ On the use of the preposition ׀ to denote movement through see: Arnold and Choi, *Guide*, 103.

validity of property transfer, the former owner would ‘lift up his own foot from his property’ and place the foot of the new owner in it.²⁴⁵

While the text doesn’t tell us whether or not Abram actually completed the walk it does say that he “pitched his tent” and “dwelled by the oaks of Mamre which are in Hebron.”²⁴⁶ There appears to be a subtle contrast here with the way Lot’s movement “as far as Sodom” is described. Lot “settled in the cities of the plain” and “pitched his tent as far as Sodom.” Abram proceeds to “dwell” in the land and erect an altar to Yhwh. The ideal presented at the outset of Genesis 13 has come to fruition. Abram, alone, is in the land worshipping Yhwh. Lot is dwelling in a separate location and is not part of the cultic activities, which heightens, at least implicitly, the separation between the family members.²⁴⁷

Furthermore, several pertinent observations arise with regard to the importance of Abram’s settlement in the land: (1) the only mention of Abram’s building of altars is in the land (12:6, 7; 13:18); (2) Yhwh does not speak to Abram, apart from his initial command in 12:1, outside of Canaan; (3) Yhwh’s desire is for Abram and his descendants to inherit the land. It is ironic that both times Abram is said to “dwell” in the land (Gen 13:12, 18), the text also reminds us that Lot is no

²⁴⁵ Sarna, *Genesis*, 100.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Genesis 18. The mention here of Abraham building his altar beside “the oaks” raises related issues about the religion of the patriarchs which are beyond the scope of this present study. For a good introduction to the issues see R.W.L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 79-104.

²⁴⁷ What I am saying here should not be read as synonymous with Coats’ statement, “Lot as Foil,” 117-18, that “Lot’s city friends were wicked, indeed, sinners against the Lord. This point contrasts sharply with the expository information in v. 4: ‘There Abram called on the name of the Lord.’ *Abram and Lot* are opposite.” For Coats the contrast is solely “ethical” as his subsequent remark that Genesis 13 is “a report of a tradition about Abram and Lot that emphasizes the contrast between righteous Abram and his opposite...As exposition it sets up the following story about Abram and Lot, or perhaps better, a story about faithful Abram highlighted by Lot, a contrasting foppish foil.” This seems to be the same reading provided by Jeansonne, “Characterization,” 125, “Lot and Abraham have become separated not only geographically but ethically.” As I have noted above, while there may be places where Lot’s “ethics” can be questioned, such a question is merely implicit, as nothing in the text explicitly contrasts Lot and Abram from an ethical standpoint. The questions raised concerning Lot in the narrative focus more intently on Lot’s relational separation from his uncle. Lot cannot dwell in the same “space” as Abram precisely because, while being a “brother,” he is an “outsider.”

longer with him.²⁴⁸ Here the foci of separation and settlement come together. Abram has to separate from Lot, in fulfillment of the command in 12:1, and occupy the land himself, in demonstration of the promise in 12:7.

3.8 Concluding Remarks

I began this thesis by asking three questions. The preceding textual analysis addressed the first of these: Does the text necessitate a reading of Lot as being adopted and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram? As has been demonstrated, the answer to this question is no. The text does not necessitate such readings; in fact, the text seems to point in other directions. I also demonstrated above that Genesis 13 functions to (1) separate Lot from Abram and (2) settle Abram in the land. These foci were dealt with in two main ways: (1) The separation of Abram and Lot brings resolution to Lot's problematic accompaniment of Abram. (2) The question of Abram's settlement in the land is resolved through the problematic offer of land to Lot by Abram; Lot's choice to dwell near Sodom; Yhwh's promise of land to Abram; and Abram's settlement in Canaan. Furthermore, Lot, it was argued, is not characterized as Abram's foil but is (from an ethical standpoint), at worst, an ambiguous character.

3.9 Moving Toward Reception

The preceding analysis leads, logically, to addressing the second question posed at the outset of this thesis: If not inherently from the text, then where do these readings of Lot as adopted and as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram come from, and how can a study of the early reception of Genesis 13 aid in answering that question?

²⁴⁸ As noted earlier, Abram is not said to "dwell" in the land upon his initial arrival in Genesis 12.

Where do these notions of Lot as potential heir begin? For example, is Helyer the first to offer such a proposal regarding Lot as potential heir/adopted by Abram? No, Rashi, the great 11th century rabbinic commentator, notes that Abram “treated Lot as his son.”²⁴⁹ In the *Palaea Historica*, dated between the 9th – 12th centuries, the writer retells Abram’s call for him and Lot to separate: “Look, [my] son, the land is before us. Choose from all the land and settle where it is pleasing to you.” Here, the language of brotherhood in Gen 13:8 is replaced by the language of sonship.²⁵⁰ In the 12th century work *Historia Scholastica*, Peter Comestor, remarks on Gen 12:4 that Abraham adopted Lot as his son.²⁵¹ Thirteenth century rabbinic commentator Hezekiah Ben Manoach (Chizkuni) comments on Gen 12:4 that Abraham “adopted him (Lot) as if he had been his own son.”²⁵² The notion that Abram regarded Lot as a son also appears in the writings of medieval commentator Nicholas of Lyra.²⁵³ Furthermore, Calvin, in the 16th century, comments on the account of separation in Genesis 13 that Lot’s separation implies the removal of Abram’s potential heir: “Certainly had the option been given him he would rather have chosen to cast away his riches, than to be parted from him whom he had held in the place of an only son...the separation was sad to Abram’s mind.”²⁵⁴ Likewise, Matthew Henry in the

²⁴⁹ Rashi’s commentary on Deut 2:5.

²⁵⁰ Translation from: Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila and Alexander Panayotov, eds., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 585-99.

²⁵¹ *Qui et Loth fratrem uxoris in filium adoptavit, quia Sarai sterilis erat* (41.40). Latin text taken from: *Petri Comestoris Scolastica Historia: Liber Genesis*, ed. Agneta Sylwan, CCCM 191 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 80. This is also reflected in *Patrologia Latina* 198. I wish to thank Prof. Joy Schroeder for her assistance in working with the Latin and helpful comments on the *Scholastica*.

²⁵² Translation from: *Chizkuni: Torah Commentary by Rabbi Chizkiyahu ben Rabbi Manoach*, Vol. One, Trans. Eliyahu Munk (Brooklyn: Ktav Publishers, 2013), 105.

²⁵³ See his comments on Deut. 2:5.

²⁵⁴ Rabbinic commentator Don Isaac Abravanel (15th century) notes similarly that Abraham was saddened by the departure of his nephew whom he regarded as the probable heir (as noted in Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, *Bereshis: A new translation with a commentary anthologized from talmudic, midrashic, and rabbinic sources*, 2 vols. [Brooklyn: ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, 1986], 468). Likewise, 19th century Christian commentator Adam Clarke notes that Abram felt “pure and parental affection for his nephew” (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible containing Old and New Testaments with a commentary and critical notes* [New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1833], 94).

18th century comments, “Lot also, his kinsman, was influenced by Abram's good example, who was perhaps his guardian after the death of his father, and he was willing to go along with him too.”²⁵⁵

What of the notion that Lot is to be viewed as a foil to Abram in Genesis 13? Is Coats the first to see Lot as selfish and as a counter to righteous Abram? No. One sees, for example, a contrast described by the 18th century Christian commentator John Gill, “[Lot] had not the ingenuity to return back the choice to Abram which he gave him, but took the advantage of it; nor did he show any uneasiness or unwillingness to part from Abram, though so near a relation, and so wise and good a man, and by whose means greatly he had obtained his riches.”²⁵⁶ Likewise, 19th century rabbinic commentator Mordechai Yosef Leiner notes that the absence of the term “heavy” with regard to Lot’s wealth signifies that he had “no fear whatsoever” whereas Abram, in contrast, was said to be “heavy” and therefore “feared in his soul concerning wealth.”²⁵⁷ The 19th century Christian commentator Adam Clarke comments that Lot, “certainly should have left the choice to the patriarch and have sought to be guided by his counsel; but he took his own way.”²⁵⁸ Further, 19th century Christian commentator J.P. Lange comments that Abram lifts his eyes “in pious faith, as Lot had raised his eyes in impious and shameless self-seeking.”²⁵⁹ In order to

²⁵⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 1 (1708-10; repr., Mclean, Va: Macdonald Publishing Company, 1985), 85.

²⁵⁶ John Gill, *An Exposition of the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, Newport Commentary Series (1763; repr., Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2010), 241.

²⁵⁷ Mordechai Yosef Leiner, *Living Waters: The Mei HaShiloach: A Commentary on the Torah*, Translated and edited by: Betsalel Philip Edwards (Oxford: Rowan and Littlefield, 2001), 39. Hirsch, *בראשית*, 241, also during the 19th century, comments that while Abram saw it as his “business לקרא בשם ה’, Lot had very different ideas. He considered his business to be the acquirement of sheep and cattle and had no feeling for Abraham’s spiritual mission.”

²⁵⁸ Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 95. Fellow 19th century commentator John Cumming writes concerning Lot’s lack of verbal response to Abram’s offer of land that Lot did not have the “courtesy and the Christian conduct of Abram...he did not even thank him, so rude was he” (Rev. John Cumming, *Sabbath Morning Readings on the Old Testament* [Cleveland: John P. Jewett, 1854], 109).

²⁵⁹ J.P. Lange, *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, doctrinal and homiletical, Vol. 1: Genesis*, trans. and ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1893), 398. See also, Skinner, *Genesis*, 253; Murphy, *Genesis*, 276; Driver, *Genesis*, 153.

determine where these readings began and how and why they developed, it is necessary to examine the earliest interpretations of Genesis 13 in Second Temple, Jewish and patristic literature.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Interestingly, the account of Abram and Lot's separation is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an though one does find in Sura 7:80, "We also (sent) Lūt: he said to the people: Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you?" Note here that Lot is "sent" to Sodom specifically to prophesy against them. The placement of Lot in Sodom then is not due to his own selfishness, wickedness or foolishness but rather because God has sent him there for a particular task. In the Qur'an, Lot is one of the 25 named prophets.

4. SOLVING ABRAM’S PROBLEMS: RECEPTION OF GENESIS 13 IN LXX, JUBILEES AND GENESIS APOCRYPHON

4.1 Introductory comments on ancient interpretation of Genesis 13

As I move into my analysis of early reception of Genesis 13, it may be helpful to provide some preliminary remarks concerning early biblical interpretation in general. Kugel notes four major assumptions guiding early biblical interpretation.²⁶¹ First, the Bible is a cryptic document which implies that there is both a surface meaning and a hidden meaning in any given text or detail in the story. Second, the Bible is a book of instruction. In other words, the Bible isn’t simply a book about the past but is a book which can, and does, speak to the present circumstances and issues of the reader. Third, Scripture is perfect and harmonious in itself. This not only means that the Bible is without contradiction, it also means that texts either in close proximity or substantially removed from a given text may explain the meaning of the text in question. Fourth, the Bible is inspired by God. While this final assumption is not to be seen as the source of the previously-mentioned assumptions, it does imply that interpreters were concerned with textual meaning in light of theological presuppositions.

I would like to add one additional interpretive element as pertains to our discussion: the desire to safeguard Abram. This particular aspect of early interpretation has been previously noted by scholars. For example, Moshe Reiss comments that, while modern readers may detect “many ethical considerations and dilemmas in these texts. The rabbinic tradition does not view Abraham’s actions as

²⁶¹ James L. Kugel, “Ancient Biblical Interpretation and the Sage in Studies in Ancient Midrash” in *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2001), 16-9.

problematical.”²⁶² Perhaps the most famous example of this is found in the retelling of Abram and Sarai’s sojourn in to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). *Jubilees*, for example, removes the potential deception by Abram (“say you are my sister”) and transforms Pharaoh, who is a rather ambiguous character in the Genesis account, into the antagonist who “seizes” Sarai (13:13). It appears from the Genesis account that Abram may have been willing to put his interests above Sarai’s (“so that it may go well with me because of you”). In *Genesis Rabbah*, however, one finds Abram being characterized as “honoring” Sarai and putting Sarai “in a box and locked her in it” so as to protect her from the “swarthy and ugly” Egyptians (40.4-5). Augustine states that Abram “told no lie” as he “did not deny that she was his wife but held his peace about it, committing to God the defense of his wife’s chastity” (*City of God* 16.19). Maintaining Abraham’s honor was, for many, an important part of early biblical interpretation. Many early interpreters took seriously the biblical text, read it closely, recognized the potential issues which arise regarding Abraham and sought to interpret them in such a way that Abraham’s honor was safeguarded. Interestingly, the way in which this practice was worked out in Genesis 13 has not been analyzed and, as I will demonstrate, this practice is no less true in the way Lot’s accompaniment and subsequent account of separation in Genesis 13 is retold.

Over time, the story of Abram and Lot’s separation began to take on a new life as it was retold in Second Temple, rabbinic and patristic literature. An intriguing narrative developed as the problematic choices of Abram that were highlighted in my exegetical analysis were wholly resolved, and the ambiguities concerning Lot, which I noted as well, were magnified negatively. Gaps are filled in such a way that Abram comes out as an exemplar of righteousness while Lot is transformed from an

²⁶² Moshe Reiss, “The Actions of Abraham: A Life of Ethical Contradictions,” *SJOT* 24 (2010), 174. Reiss focuses his attention solely on Jewish sources and incidentally, Reiss does not discuss Lot’s accompaniment or the account of Abram and Lot’s separation.

ambiguous character into an unrighteous, even wicked, character. While the earliest developments in this reception narrative are more nuanced in their characterization of Lot as unrighteous, many later interpreters are far more explicit and blatant in their condemnation. There is however, in this developing narrative, a divergence between Jewish and Christian thought. The portrait of Lot is far more negative in Jewish tradition than in the corresponding Christian literature. This particular aspect seems to result from the disparate lenses through which Lot is viewed. In rabbinic discussions, Lot is viewed through the lens of conversion while in patristic discussions Lot is viewed through the lens of salvation.

4.2 Genesis 13 in the Earliest Scriptural Retellings

In this chapter, I will explore the development of Lot's characterization in the Genesis 13 from the biblical text through the earliest retellings²⁶³ before the end of first century BCE. Given the parameters mentioned above, I will be limiting my

²⁶³ I use the term "retelling" because it best encompasses texts that are both translations (LXX) and scriptural rewritings (*Jubilees*; *Genesis Apocryphon*). The language of "retelling" is not uncommon in scholarly terminological discussions. The LXX is, after all, a retelling of the Hebrew text in Greek, and *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* are retellings of scriptural stories, including additions to and omissions from those stories, for particular theological, ethical, and historical purposes. Further, given the preference to speak of works such as *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* as scriptural "rewritings," my use of "retellings" here avoids terminological confusion since I am including the LXX in the discussion. I understand, however, that any such terminology is fraught with difficulties. For a detailed summary of the various "theories" on classifying "rewritten Bible," see Molly M. Zahn, "Talking about Rewritten Texts: Some Reflections on Terminology," in *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* ed. Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala, and Marko Marttila, BZAW 419 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 93-119.

discussion to the LXX,²⁶⁴ *Jubilees*²⁶⁵ and *Genesis Apocryphon*²⁶⁶ as these reflect the earliest developments²⁶⁷ of traditions concerning Lot. In those problematic and/or ambiguous texts noted above, retellers tended to shift the focus away from any potential difficulties surrounding Abram to Lot's ethical and relational separation from his uncle. The result of this analysis will be to show that through changing wording, adding interpretive information or omitting problematic portions altogether Abram has, by the end of the first century, been absolved of any potential wrongdoing and Lot has been further developed from an ambiguous character into one who can be read as an unrighteous outsider.

4.2.1 The Problem of Lot's Accompaniment

As I argued in the opening chapters, Lot's accompaniment of Abram on his journey to Canaan is rather problematic. I demonstrated that Genesis 13 resolves that particular dilemma through the account of Abram and Lot's separation. Did earlier retellers realize the tension in the text surrounding Abram's taking of Lot? While the

²⁶⁴ LXX dates back to the third century BCE. For discussion of date, purpose and role of the LXX in Jewish and Christian reception see: Jennifer M. Dines, *The Septuagint*, UBW (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 1-62 and; Karen H. Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 19-102.

²⁶⁵ The oldest fragment of *Jubilees* dates to the last quarter of the second century BCE. For discussion of date, genre and function of *Jubilees* see: James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, GAP (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 17-21. See also, James Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees* JSJSup 156 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 305-42. For a discussion of the Abraham narratives in *Jubilees* see: Jacques T.A.G.M. Van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: The Rewriting of Genesis 11:26-25:10 in the Book of Jubilees 11:14-23:8*, JSJSup 161 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

²⁶⁶ *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen) is written in Aramaic and dates between the 3rd and 1st centuries BCE have been offered for its composition. For discussion of issues surrounding date, genre and purpose of the Apocryphon see: Daniel K. Falk, *The Parabiblical Texts: Strategies for Extending the Scriptures among the Dead Sea Scrolls*, LSTS (London: T & T Clark, 2007) 26-106; and Daniel Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13-17*, STDJ 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 1-30. For discussion of the question of sources see especially: Moshe J. Bernstein, "Is the Genesis Apocryphon a Unity? What Sort of Unity Were You Looking For?" *Aramaic Studies* 8 (2010): 107-34.

²⁶⁷ While many scholars date *Jubilees* prior to *Genesis Apocryphon* there is no consensus on the issue. Falk, *Parabiblical*, 97-100, among others, believes *Jubilees* to be prior to *Genesis Apocryphon* while Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon*, 8-17, among others, believes *Genesis Apocryphon* pre-dates *Jubilees*. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the two see: Kugel, *Jubilees*, 305-42.

LXX follows the biblical text rigidly in Gen 12:1-4,²⁶⁸ it would appear that the writer of *Jubilees* not only recognized the dilemma but sought to provide a solution to the problem. (Unfortunately, we don't have the full account of Abram's departure from Canaan available in *Genesis Apocryphon*²⁶⁹).

Genesis (12:4-5)

And Abram went just as Yhwh had spoken to him; and Lot went with him...And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all the possessions they gathered and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to the land of Canaan.²⁷⁰

Jubilees (12:30-13:1)

If you see a land that, in your view, is a pleasant one in which to live, then come and take me to you. Take Lot, the son of your brother Haran, with you as your son. May the Lord be with you. Leave your brother Nahor with me until you return in peace. Then all of us together will go with you. Abram went from Haran and took his wife Sarai and Lot, the son of his brother Haran, to the land of Canaan. He came to Asur. He walked as far as Shechem and settled near a tall oak tree.²⁷¹

In the biblical text, there is no reason provided for why Abram takes Lot with him on the journey. As I have argued above, Lot's accompaniment of Abram may be read as an act of disobedience in light of Yhwh's command for him to leave "his father's household." Abram's decision to take Lot with him, then, may potentially reflect poorly on Abram. While many later interpreters solved the issue of Lot's accompaniment by reading adoption into the text of Genesis, *Jubilees* explicitly writes such an interpretation into its retelling of Abram's departure: Abram is told by his father, Terah, to take Lot with him "as your son." This particular addition to the story

²⁶⁸ LXX does use two different terms for "went" with regard to Abram and Lot's going (καὶ ἐπορεύθη Ἀβραμ and καὶ ᾤχετο μετ' αὐτοῦ Λωτ respectively) where MT has יָלַךְ in both instances.

²⁶⁹ One does, however, find a unique discussion of Lot's accompaniment with Abram to Egypt which the biblical text is silent about. In *Genesis Apocryphon*, Lot journeys with Abraham and Sarah to Egypt and weeps with Abraham when Sarah is taken from them. Lot also informs Herqanosh that Sarah is in fact Abraham's wife and that Abraham cannot pray over Pharaoh until she is returned (20:11; 22-25). It is noteworthy that in both LXX (καὶ Λωτ μετ' αὐτοῦ) and SamP (ולוט עמי) Lot is explicitly said to have left Egypt with Abram in 12:20.

²⁷⁰ I continue to use *BHS* as my base text. I did not find any variants in Kennicott, DeRossi or Pentateuch Eretz Israel (ms. Heb 5702).

²⁷¹ Translations of *Jubilees* are taken from James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2 vols, CSCO 510, 511 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989).

does three main things: (1) It absolves Abram of responsibility for taking Lot by putting the responsibility on his father, Terah; (2) It provides a reason for Lot's accompaniment on the journey; and (3) It allows the reader to see Lot as a member of Abram's household.

Van Ruiten notes that since *Jubilees* records both Lot's birth (12:10) and Haran's death (12:14) after the marriage of Abram and Sarai (12:9), it becomes easier to view Lot as a "surrogate son." This, he says, also "lessens the emphasis on the biblical notion of Sarai's infertility."²⁷² It would appear, however, that the writer has also, purposefully, solved the problematic issue of Lot's accompaniment. This becomes clearer in light of the fact that the writer has actually *doubly* absolved Abram of responsibility. Not only is the issue of Lot's accompaniment solved but also the issue of Abram abdicating his responsibilities to his father's household. In the biblical text, Abram simply leaves with no discussion of how this affected Terah or what he thought about it. It could thus be assumed that Abram, in leaving, abandoned his family and his responsibilities to them. The account in *Jubilees*, in contrast, makes it clear that Abram's departure has the blessing of Terah. It would appear that the writer recognized two particular dilemmas with regard to Abram's relationship to his family and solved them both by putting the focus not on Abram's actions but on Terah's words.²⁷³

As I have noted above, in the biblical text, Lot's relationship with Abram is defined as both "brother" (13:8, 11; 14:14, 16) and "brother's son" (12:5; 14:12). Incidentally, Lot is identified only as Abram's "brother's son" and not as his

²⁷² Van Ruiten, *Abraham*, 56.

²⁷³ *Jubilees* does something similar with its retelling of Abram and Sarai's sojourn into Egypt. In the biblical text, it is Abram who appears to be at fault for Pharaoh's taking of Sarai but in *Jubilees* the blame is shifted from Abram to Pharaoh. The account of Abram's "lie" is removed and the reader is told twice that Sarai was taken from Abram by force (13:11, 13).

“brother” in *Jubilees* (12:30; 13:1, 14, 23).²⁷⁴ It is true that, in *Jubilees*, Terah tells Abram to “take Lot, the son of your brother Haran, with you as your son” (12:30). The narrator, however, never uses anything other than “brother’s son.” Whereas Terah, and most likely Abram, think of Lot as Abram’s “son” the narrator identifies Lot’s true relational connection to Haran. As a result, Lot’s relational connection is clearly with that of an outsider. The retelling in *Jubilees* displays a great deal of sophistication. It solves the issues that are raised, but still provides relational separation between Abram and Lot. The narrator wants the reader to know that Lot is, in fact, not Abram’s son at all for he has been and only will be the son of Haran.

4.2.2 Dealing with Lot’s Wealth

Earlier, I noted the silence concerning the origin of Lot’s wealth, as well as the way some modern commentators have sought to link Lot’s wealth to Abram. There is, apparently, some uneasiness about Lot’s wealth in early retellings. This becomes clear when reading the tradition as it is retold:

Genesis (13:2; 5)

Now Abram was exceedingly rich in livestock, silver and gold...Lot, the one going with Abram, also had flocks, herds and tents.

LXX (13:2; 5)

Now Abram was exceedingly rich in livestock, silver and gold²⁷⁵ ...Lot, the

²⁷⁴ *Genesis Apocryphon*, likewise, only calls Lot Abram’s “brother’s son” (20:11, 34; 21:7; 22:3, 5, 11). This is similar to what *Jubilees* does with the Cain and Abel pericope. Jacques T.A.G.M. Van Ruiten, *Primeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1-11 in the Book of Jubilees*, JSJSup 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 132, notes that while, in the Cain and Abel pericope, the term “brother” occurs seven times in Genesis, it only occurs once in *Jubilees*.

²⁷⁵ LXX is fairly straightforward in its translation. It does provide a more nuanced translation of כבד גדול (“exceedingly heavy”) by its use of πλούσιος σφόδρα (“exceedingly rich”). The translator opted to use κτήνησιν here for בקר. While בקר most often means “livestock” it is also translated with the general “herds” at times. Κτήνησιν can refer to any large domesticated animal whose primary purpose would be carrying loads or for riding. Its use in the NT provides a range from “cattle” to “donkey.” Susan Brayford, *Genesis*, SCS (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 292, notes that translating κτήνησιν here as “herds” is “an appropriate term for non-specific animal property” though “livestock” would also be appropriate (so *NETS*). See also discussion in: T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), 416.

one traveling together with Abram, also had flocks, cattle and tents.²⁷⁶

Jubilees (13:14)

Now Abram had an extremely large amount of property: sheep, cattle, donkeys, horses, camels, male and female servants, silver, and very (much) gold. Lot—his brother’s son—also had property.

Genesis Apocryphon (20:33-34; 21:6)

Now I, Abram grew tremendously in many flocks and also in silver and gold. I went up from Egy[p]t, [and] my brother’s son [Lot wen]t with me. Lot had also acquired for himself many flocks, and took a wife for himself from the daughters of Egy[p]t...I also added a great deal to his belongings.²⁷⁷

The distinctions between the possessions of Abram and Lot become obvious when compared side by side. While the biblical text and the LXX are basically identical,²⁷⁸ there are striking differences in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*. While all agree that Abram had silver and gold, the possessions of Lot are quite distinct. In *Genesis Apocryphon*, Lot has, like Abram, “many flocks” but also a “wife”²⁷⁹ and *Jubilees* only mentions that he “had property.”²⁸⁰ The contrast is further emphasized in *Jubilees* through the listing of Abram’s additional possessions: “sheep, cattle, donkeys, horses, camels, male and female servants, silver, and very (much) gold.” Furthermore, both *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* preface their remarks on Abram’s wealth, like Genesis and the LXX, by providing an emphatic statement about the vastness of Abram’s resources. In *Jubilees*, Abram had “an extremely large

²⁷⁶ LXX translates the goods of Lot specifically here, πρόβατα καὶ βόες καὶ σκηναί. There is a variant, however, found in Alexandrinus with the use of κτήνη rather than σκηναί. This may be a harmonization given the use of κτήνος for Abram’s herds in 13:2 and both Abram and Lot’s herds in 13:7.

²⁷⁷ Translations of *Genesis Apocryphon* are taken from Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon*.

²⁷⁸ Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, SBLSCS 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 175, comments, “It is not certain in MT whether כֶּסֶף is a verb or an adjective, but Gen seems to take it as a verb: ἦν πλούσιος.”

²⁷⁹ This additional remark about Lot’s wife will be taken up below.

²⁸⁰ The mention that Lot “had property” may simply be a way of eliminating the redundancy of the Hebrew text, a common technique in *Jubilees*, regarding Lot and Abram’s possessions. Given, however, the fact that Abram’s possessions are greatly exaggerated from the biblical text it could also be argued that the writer is attempting to draw a stronger distinction between the two than the biblical text allows for. For further discussion see fn. 310 below.

amount” and in *Genesis Apocryphon* he “grew tremendously” (וגבלת).²⁸¹ There is no such statement for Lot. While Genesis draws a subtle distinction between the two men through the use of “very rich” (כבד מאד) and “silver and gold” in reference to Abram, the distinction is more pronounced in *Jubilees* through the emphatic reference to Abram’s wealth, the more detailed description of his possessions, and the diminished emphasis on Lot’s. Additionally, the biblical text, LXX and *Jubilees* say nothing of how Lot gained his wealth. *Genesis Apocryphon* makes it clear that his goods have been given to him by both the Egyptians²⁸² and by Abram.²⁸³

4.2.3 Worshipping at the Altar

Genesis notes that upon returning to the land Abram also returned to an altar that he previously built. There is no mention, however, of Lot’s activities in the land. The actions of Abram are much more pronounced and exaggerated in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*:

Genesis (13:3-4)

He went by stages from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent was at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai. To the place of the altar that he made there previously and there Abram called on the name of Yhwh.

LXX (13:3-4)

He went, from where he came, into the desert²⁸⁴ as far as Baithel to the place where his tent was formerly, between Baithel and Haggai, to the place of the

²⁸¹ For discussion of translating וגבלת as “grew tremendously” see Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon*, 77.

²⁸² While it is not explicitly stated that Lot received his wealth from the Egyptians it seems implied given the previous story of Abram and Lot’s sojourn in Egypt, the statement that Abram “grew tremendously” after the Egypt pericope and the latter statement regarding Lot’s taking a wife “from Egypt.”

²⁸³ Note the similar statement regarding Abram’s adding to Lot’s possessions in column 22:1-2, “But one of the shepherds of the flock that Abram had given to Lot...”

²⁸⁴ Wevers, *Notes*, 175, notes “That the Negeb was the desert would be sensible to an Alexandrian since the area to which one went up from Egypt would indeed be a desert.” *NETS* translates here “wilderness.”

altar which he had made at the beginning. And, there, Abram called on²⁸⁵ the name of the Lord.²⁸⁶

Jubilees (13:15b-16)

He went to the place where he had first pitched his tent—at the location of the altar, with Ai on the east *and* Bethel *on the* west. He blessed the Lord his God who had brought him back safely. During the forty-first jubilee, in the third year of the first week, he returned to this place. He offered a sacrifice on it and called on the Lord’s name: “You, Lord, most high God, are my God forever and ever.”

Genesis Apocryphon (20:34-21:4)

I was encamping [with him] (at) every place of my (former) encampments until I reached Bethel, the place where I had built the altar. I built it a second time...and offered upon it burnt offerings and a meal offering to the Most High God, and I called there on the name of the Lord of Ages. I praised the name of God, blessed God, and gave thanks there before God because of all the flocks and good things that he had given to me, and because he had worked good on my behalf and returned me to this land in peace.

Genesis simply tells the reader that Abram returned to the place of the altar and called on the name of Yhwh. The LXX has him heading into the “desert” (ἔρημον) while Genesis has “southland” or “Negev” (נגב). *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* go into a tremendous amount of detail as to what Abram did (sacrifice; a burnt offering and a meal offering) and what he said (praise of God). Abram is pictured here as an ideal priest.²⁸⁷

The fact that there are two kin in the land together but only one of them is bringing offerings and thanking God for his great wealth and safe travels may cause the reader to wonder even more strongly than in Genesis about the silence concerning

²⁸⁵ The aorist middle indicative ἐπεκαλέσατο (from ἐπικαλέω which means to “call on, invoke for” [BDAG, 373]). *NETS* translates this as “invoked” though the same word is translated in *NETS* as “called on” in 12:8 (also dealing with Abram’s cultic activities).

²⁸⁶ MT uses יהוה throughout while LXX uses κύριος here and in v. 18 which both speak of Abram’s involvement in cultic activities but θεός for the remaining occurrences of יהוה (See Wevers, *Notes*, 176).

²⁸⁷ The picture of Abram as priest is consistent with the priestly concerns of the Pentateuchal rewritings. See Crawford, *Rewriting*, 146-49.

Lot's activities.²⁸⁸ The mention in *Jubilees* that Lot is "his brother's son," in 13:14, certainly connects Lot with his father Haran. Haran, it will be remembered, worshipped images and died trying to save them (12:12-14). Perhaps Lot, like his father, rejects the worship of the one true God. Regardless, given the copious additions surrounding Abram's worship practices, the continued silence concerning Lot's is all the more glaring.²⁸⁹ What is clear, however, is that Abram has been portrayed as a paragon of religious, priestly commitment.²⁹⁰

4.2.4 The Strife between the Herders

Gen 13:6 states that the, "land could not support both of them dwelling together for their possessions were abundant, thus they could not dwell together." This statement introduces the subsequent account of the strife between the herders of Lot and the herders of Abram. Was it the vastness of the possessions that caused their strife or was it something inherent within the herders themselves? If it was the herders, then who is to blame, Abram's herders or Lot's?

Genesis 13:7 is silent concerning the content of the herder's quarrel. All the text says is: ויהי־ריב בין רעי מקנה־אברם ובין רעי מקנה־לוט. The LXX mirrors that of the Hebrew,²⁹¹ *Jubilees* doesn't even mention the quarrel and *Genesis Apocryphon* does

²⁸⁸ The language that Abram was camping "with Lot" suggests that where Abram stopped, so did Lot. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary* 3d ed, BibOr 18/B (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2004), 216, notes that this "prepares for the eventual parting of the two of them." It would seem, however, given the elaborate language used to describe Abram's practices and the silence regarding Lot's practices that there may be a more subtle theological focus than simply narrational preparation.

²⁸⁹ There is a similar contrast made in *Jubilees* with regard to Isaac and Ishmael. While 22:1-4 informs the reader that both Isaac and Ishmael come to their father to celebrate First Fruits, Isaac is the one who offers the sacrifice. It will be remembered that Abraham passed the priesthood on to Isaac in chapter 21 (See Kugel, *Jubilees*, 63; 126). In the story of Isaac and Ishmael, however, the reader is informed that Ishmael came to celebrate and that he was present for the offering. Here, the reader is not even certain that Lot is present for the offering that Abram is making.

²⁹⁰ Falk, *Parabiblical*, 89-91, notes the priestly characterization of Abram in both *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* but focuses solely on the way in which this provides a more positive valuation of Abram and says nothing about the way in which the additions to the story reflect on the characterization of Lot.

²⁹¹ καὶ ἐγένετο μάχη ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ποιμένων τῶν κτηνῶν τοῦ Αβραμ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ποιμένων τῶν κτηνῶν τοῦ Λωτ. LXX uses the imperfect ἔχωρει ("contain") for the Hebrew נשג ("support").

not provide any further detail on the quarrel, noting only that “Lot parted from me due to the behavior (עוֹבֵד) of our shepherds” (21:5).²⁹² There is a great deal of ambiguity here as well. Was the decision to separate solely Lot’s? Was Lot unwilling to “work things out”? The fact that *Jubilees* is totally silent on the quarrel and that *Genesis Apocryphon* notes it only in passing may point to an uneasiness for early retellers concerning the quarrel itself. How could Abram’s herders have been quarreling with Lot’s since Abram is a man of peace and righteousness?

4.2.5 A Tension of Connection and Division

In Gen 13:8, Abram notes that he and Lot need to separate, and he does so in the context of kinship, אֲלֵינָא תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ וּבֵין רְעִי וּבֵין רְעִיךָ כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנַחְנוּ.²⁹³ Why does Abram call Lot his brother? As I suggested earlier, it appears that the terminology is used to show the kinship connection between the two and to provide a backdrop for Abram’s offer that they dwell in the land together. They are family after all, aren’t they? In 13:9 Abram asks, “Is not all the land before you?” The reference to “all the land” appears to be a specific reference to the land of Canaan. After telling Lot they need to separate, Abram offers to share the land with his “brother”: “If to the left then I will go to the right; if to the right, then I will go to the left.”²⁹⁴ As discussed above, it is not clear that Abram assumed that either he or Lot would actually “leave” the land. It may be that Abram’s offer is that they both continue to dwell in the land while occupying separate spaces therein. What makes this potentially troubling for later retellers is the fact that Lot is not part of the promise and

²⁹² There is an intriguing silence here concerning the offer of land by Abram to Lot which will be taken up below.

²⁹³ LXX is quite rigid here, εἶπεν δὲ Ἀβραμ τῷ Λωτ Μὴ ἔστω μάχη ἀνά μέσον ἐμοῦ καὶ σοῦ καὶ ἀνά μέσον τῶν ποιμένων μου καὶ τῶν ποιμένων σου. ὅτι ἄνθρωποι ἀδελφοὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν.

²⁹⁴ As noted above, many commentators read “left/right” as “north/south” given that Hebrew directions are east-oriented. Abram seems to be envisioning him and Lot residing in the northern and southern portions of Canaan.

therefore neither he nor his descendants are to be dwellers in the land.²⁹⁵ Given the account of Lot fathering the eponymous ancestors of Moab and Ammon in Genesis 19, it seems likely that early retellers would have recognized the dilemma. Moabites and Ammonites have no place in the land but here in Genesis 13 Abram offers to share the land with their ancestor. Later retellers sought to bring Lot's status as an outsider to the forefront. This will be discussed more fully below.

From an intertextual standpoint the inclusion of the word "brothers" and the earlier reference to the land not being able to support Abram and Lot clearly echo the later story of Jacob and Esau and their separation (Gen 36:6-8).²⁹⁶ While there are similarities between these texts there are also significant differences. First, Esau has an entire family which he takes with him to Seir. There is no mention of Lot's family. Second, Esau acquired his goods in Canaan, but there is no mention of where Lot received his goods. I dealt with the issue of where Lot received his goods previously. It is with regard to their families that the most important difference occurs, given what later retellers do with it. In both the stories of Isaac/Ishmael and Jacob/Esau the brothers choose wives from different places. Ishmael and Esau both take wives from foreign lands while Isaac and Jacob marry those from the land of their kindred.

Genesis however, says nothing about Lot's marriage. The LXX agrees with the biblical text and *Jubilees* mentions nothing of Abram's offer of land and desire for separation. The tendency in *Jubilees* to downplay the kinship relationships between those of the "chosen line" and those "outside" seems clearly evident here with the glaring omission of Abram's offer in general and the language of kinship (אחים) in particular.

²⁹⁵ See my earlier discussion of these potential issues above.

²⁹⁶ This will be more fully developed in chapter 7.

As noted above, *Genesis Apocryphon* makes it very clear where Lot got his wife: “[Lot wen]t with me. Lot had also acquired for himself many flocks, and took a wife for himself from the daughters of Egy[p]t” (20:34).²⁹⁷ This narrative remark could simply be a way to “fill in the gap” regarding the origin of Lot’s wife who will later appear in Genesis 19. In light of the connection to Esau noted above, however, the inclusion appears more significant. Esau, in the biblical text, took wives with Canaanite origin (Gen 26:34; 36:2) as well as a wife of Egyptian lineage (Gen 28:9).²⁹⁸ Ishmael, it will be remembered, married an Egyptian (Gen 21:21).

Furthermore, the remark that Lot “took a wife for himself from the daughters of Egypt” utilizes a common phrase in Genesis when discussing the wives of the “chosen” and the “outsiders.” For example, Abraham makes his servant swear to “not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites” (Gen 24:3); Jacob is told to “take a wife from the daughters of Laban” (Gen 28:2); and Esau “took his wives from the daughters of Canaan” (Gen 36:2). The writer of *Genesis Apocryphon* appears to borrow the language of marriage unions in Genesis in order to highlight the foreign origin of Lot’s wife and his status as an outsider. The mention, therefore, of Lot taking a wife while in Egypt clearly aligns him with Esau and Ishmael who are both at the same time “brothers” and “outsiders.” Given the mention of Lot’s wife prior to Abram and Lot’s separation and the subsequent stories of Esau and Ishmael’s wives, the wording of 20:34 may be a subtle means of justifying both Lot’s rejection and

²⁹⁷ The mention of Lot’s wife in *Genesis Apocryphon* has not been adequately addressed, if addressed at all, in the pertinent literature. I am not aware of any work that discusses the inclusion beyond a passing note that it anticipates her appearance in Genesis 19. For example, Crawford’s, *Rewriting*, 123, only comment is that the inclusion is a “small anticipation.”

²⁹⁸ For discussion of the names and identities of Esau’s wives see: Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 334-37. It should be noted that both Egypt and Canaan are linked genealogically as descendants of Ham (Gen 10:6).

Abram's separation from him.²⁹⁹

The biblical text brought Abram and Lot together as kin and potential co-dwellers in the land. This was not simply a haphazard occurrence but was predicated on Abram's offer to Lot. Later retellers, however, retold the story in such a way as to simply make the offer disappear altogether and make sure that Lot's status as an outsider was clear. That status will continue to be developed below through the focus on Lot's unrighteous behavior and on his exclusion from the promise.

4.2.6 Abram and Lot Separate: It Was Lot's Choice

While some retellers opted to either keep or omit Abram's offer, all end up shifting the focus away from Abram's offer to Lot's choice of where to dwell. In doing so, they also shift the focus away from Abram's desire for him and Lot to separate to Lot's willful move away from his uncle.

Genesis (13:10-13)

And Lot lifted his eyes and he saw all the plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, before Yhwh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Yhwh; like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar. And Lot chose, for himself, all the Plain of the Jordan and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus each man separated from his brother. Abram settled in the land of Canaan but Lot settled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent as far as Sodom. And the people of Sodom were wicked and sinners before Yhwh exceedingly.

LXX (13:10-13)

Lot, lifting up³⁰⁰ his eyes, saw all the region round about the Jordan that was all watered (before God's destruction of Sodoma and Gomorra) as the orchard

²⁹⁹ For a good discussion of the way in which intermarriage compromised both ritual and moral purity in the Qumran community see: Hannah K. Harrington, "Keeping Outsiders Out: Impurity at Qumran" in *Defining Identities: We You and the Other in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting of the IOQS in Gröningen* ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez and Mladen Popović, STDJ 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 187-203.

³⁰⁰ The aorist active participle ἐπάρας (from ἐπαίρω) is translated "lifting up" in *NETS* (it is translated "lifted" in each of the other two occurrences in LXX, Ex 7:20 and Num 20:11) and by Brayford, *Genesis*, 69. On the nuances of the aorist participle see BDF, 174-75.

of God³⁰¹ and as the land of Egypt until one came to Zogora.³⁰² And Lot chose for himself all the region round about the Jordan, and Lot departed from the east. And they separated each one from his brother. Abram settled in the land of Chanaan, but Lot settled in a city of the regions round about, and he pitched his tent³⁰³ in Sodoma.³⁰⁴ And the people in Sodoma were wicked and exceedingly sinful before God.

Jubilees (13:17-18)

In the fourth year of this week Lot separated from him. Lot settled in Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were very sinful. He was brokenhearted that his brother's son had separated from him for he had no children.

Genesis Apocryphon (21:5-7)

After this day Lot parted from me due to the behavior of our shepherds. He went and settled in the Jordan Valley along with all of his flocks, and I also added a great deal to his belongings. As he was pasturing his flocks he reached Sodom, and bought a house for himself in Sodom. He lived in it while I was living on the mountain of Bethel, and it was disturbing to me that Lot, my brother's son, had parted from me.

As noted above, in Genesis 13 it is clearly Abram who seeks to separate from Lot.

Subsequent retellers apparently did not want to leave the focus on Abram. So, they shifted the focus to Lot by highlighting the choice he made about where to dwell.

As I have noted above, on the whole, the biblical text is ambiguous regarding Lot, yet there appear to be phrases and/or gaps in the story which “left the door open” for negative readings. In Gen 13:10 and 13:13, the additional remarks concerning the fate and inhabitants of Sodom say nothing explicit concerning Lot's ethics but they do provide an opportunity for retellers to align Lot with Sodom and thus separate him from Abram. However, the text cannot be conclusively read in this way.

³⁰¹ LXX translates the כַּנְיִהוּרָה as ὡς ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ. *NETS* also translates παράδεισος as “orchard.” J.A.L. Lee, *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch*, SBLSCS, 14 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 55, comments that the term means “an area of cultivated ground containing chiefly fruit-trees, at times also other types of tree, vines, and possibly other plants, and perhaps protected by a wall” and that while there is no exact equivalent in English, “‘Orchard’ is probably the nearest to it.”

³⁰² For the relationship between צַעַר and Ζογορα see: Wevers, *Notes*, 180.

³⁰³ MT says Lot “pitched his tent” (וַיֵּאָהֵל) LXX has him ἐσκήνωσεν which may be understood that he “took up residence” or “pitched a tent as a settler” (Muraoka, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 624).

³⁰⁴ Or possibly “among the Sodomites.” On the nuances of ἐν see: Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek grammar beyond the basics: An exegetical syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 372-75.

The potential then, is for the ambiguities in the biblical text to give subsequent retellers the opportunity to further align Lot with Sodom and, in turn, focus attention on Lot's choice and not Abram's offer. The LXX appears almost slavishly rigid in the translation of the Hebrew with three notable exceptions. The first has to do with the contrast between Abram and Lot's places of settlement. I noted above the possibility of reading a contrast with regard to the places Abram and Lot settle. The contrast is then made more explicit through the use of the disjunctive δὲ, in LXX, when discussing the settlements of Abram and Lot: Ἀβραμ δὲ κατώκησεν ἐν γῆ Χανααν, Λωτ δὲ κατώκησεν ἐν πόλει τῶν περιχώρων καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν Σοδομοῖς. While the initial δὲ can be read as a conjunctive, the subsequent one seems to serve as a disjunctive contrasting the settlements of Abram and Lot.

The second exception has to do with where Lot moved. While it may be questionable on Lot's part to choose to move near a place of exceedingly wicked sinners, it is still ambiguous and can't be read as an emphatic indictment of his decision. By replacing עַד with ἐν the LXX leaves no doubt that Lot didn't simply move near or "as far as" Sodom, but that Lot moved "in" to Sodom.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, where the Hebrew states that Lot settled בערי הכנר, the LXX states that Lot settled ἐν πόλει τῶν περιχώρων καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν Σοδομοῖς. While this may be nothing more than the narrative's way of linking Genesis 13 with the later stories regarding Lot's presence in Sodom in Genesis 14 and 19 respectively,³⁰⁶ the phraseology is intriguing, given the penchant of subsequent retellings to distance Lot from Abram, relationally

³⁰⁵ The LXX translator, obviously, could have used ἕως if he wanted to convey a literal rendering of the Hebrew (cf. 11:31; 13:3; 14:14). It is also possible that LXX had a variant source-text. While MT has the plural "cities," LXX has the singular "city" and if this is a variant the translator probably equated the "city" with Sodom.

³⁰⁶ Wevers, *Notes*, 181.

and ethically.³⁰⁷ It is far less damning for Lot to settle in a general region and be near a city with exceedingly wicked sinners than it is for Lot to actually choose to move directly into and reside in that very city. The third exception is the mention in v. 13 that οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ἐν Σοδομοῖς πονηροὶ καὶ ἀμαρτωλοὶ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ σφόδρα which appears to connect Lot and those “in” Sodom. The biblical text has סְדֹמָי וְאִנְשֵׁי (“and the people of Sodom”) whereas the LXX has οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ἐν Σοδομοῖς (“and the people in Sodom”). The use of ἐν here may be a way of connecting with the previous verse and Lot’s movement “in” to Sodom. The placement of this statement after the discussion of Lot’s dwelling “in” Sodom provides a strong condemnation of Lot’s character. Lot is “in” Sodom. Those that are “in” Sodom are wicked. The logical conclusion: Lot, too, is wicked.³⁰⁸

Jubilees, not surprisingly, gives a far more terse account of Lot’s separation from Abram, noting only the year and week that Lot left.³⁰⁹ *Jubilees* mentions nothing about the strife between the herders, Abram’s call for separation, or his offer to share the land. What is striking, however, is that by omitting any mention of the strife, or Abram’s responsibility for the separation, the writer has put the responsibility for departure squarely on Lot.³¹⁰ In this account there is no justifiable reason for Lot to leave Abram. And without a justifiable reason, it is quite easy to pin

³⁰⁷ For a good introduction to the way LXX serves as scriptural interpretation see: Martin Rösel, “Translators as Interpreters: Scriptural Interpretation in the Septuagint” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 64-91.

³⁰⁸ As I noted above the change from $\tau\upsilon$ to ἐν may simply be a way to prepare the reader for Lot’s later presence in Sodom. Given, however, the dual use of ἐν in relation to Lot and the people of Sodom, the change appears purposeful and, therefore, does not seem to be simply stylistic or solely for purposes of narrational preparation but rather to provide a stronger condemnation of Lot’s character and move away from Abram.

³⁰⁹ For discussion of the chronological system of *Jubilees* see: James C. VanderKam, “Studies in the Chronology of the Book of Jubilees” in *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* ed. James C. VanderKam, JSJSup 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 522-44.

³¹⁰ In Genesis the mention of both Abram and Lot’s vast resources provides a justification for the strife. The retelling in *Jubilees* omits the strife and, as noted above, diminishes Lot’s resources. These two changes to the storyline serve to shift the focus more intently to Lot’s unjustifiable move away from his uncle. The changes, therefore, reflect not only stylistic peculiarities but also the author’s sophistication as a storyteller.

Lot as the guilty party, the one who willfully chose to leave Abram. This, in turn, not only reflects Lot's "true" character (as one who does not want to be with Abram), but also removes him from the equation relationally as well. The latter is highlighted by the writer's remark that: "He was brokenhearted that his brother's son had separated from him for he had no children."

There are two conclusions which seem inescapable in this statement: (1) Abram probably regarded Lot as his heir³¹¹ and (2) Abram did not want Lot to move. The statement, "for he had no children" implies Abram was grieved because he believed he was now without an heir. In addition, this statement leads logically into the promise of descendants which follows. It should be noted, however, that the text also seems to imply that if Lot had stayed he could have been, in Abram's mind, his heir. By leaving, Lot has removed himself from the promise. Again, on the retelling in *Jubilees*, that removal is solely Lot's responsibility.

In Gen 13:9 the biblical text has Abram telling Lot they need to separate and giving Lot the choice of place to dwell. *Jubilees*, by removing the command and offer and by bringing in the notion that Abram was "brokenhearted" when Lot separates, leads the reader to sympathize with Abram. How could Lot be so cruel? After all, Abram never wanted Lot to separate from him and, by omitting the strife, there didn't seem to be any justifiable reason for Lot to go. This retelling shifts the focus away from the potential difficulties regarding Abram's striving herders and his problematic land offer to Lot's unjustifiable move away from his now grief-stricken uncle. Abram is innocent, it was Lot's choice to go and therefore, Lot is the guilty

³¹¹ This is further substantiated by the earlier request of Terah for Abraham to: "take Lot, the son of your brother Haran, with you as your son." (*Jubilees* 12:30)

party.³¹² As with the LXX, *Jubilees* places Lot “in” Sodom. By omitting the reference to the “cities of the plain,” *Jubilees* has focused attention solely on Sodom and Lot’s choice to move in to a place of “very sinful” people.

The account in *Genesis Apocryphon* is the most detailed when it comes to Lot’s residence in Sodom. What is ironic, however, is that in one important way it mirrors Genesis and *then* proceeds to move Lot further into Sodom. Column 21:6 reads, והוא רעה נכסוהי ודבק עד סודם. The use of עד סודם here mirrors the biblical text’s use of עד סדם but doesn’t, unlike Genesis, leave Lot “near” Sodom.³¹³ *Genesis Apocryphon* moves Lot “into” Sodom and tells of the house which he purchased therein. This clearly leaves little doubt as to Lot’s loyalties. He has removed himself completely from Abram and has aligned himself with the people of Sodom by becoming a member of their community.³¹⁴

However, one could argue that the writer’s silence regarding the sinfulness of Sodom may be an attempt to paint Lot in a more positive light than previous tradition. Van Ruiten, for example, comments that *Genesis Apocryphon* provides a positive spin on Lot’s move because it “leaves out that Sodom, the place where Lot settled, had a sinful reputation.”³¹⁵ Given, however, the overwhelmingly negative tradition surrounding Sodom, both in the Hebrew Bible and subsequent literature,³¹⁶ it is

³¹² Van Ruiten, *Abraham*, 82, comments, “[C]omplete responsibility for the separation of Lot and Abram is put squarely on the shoulders of Lot, who is the one who leaves: Abram and his herdsmen are not to blame.” What I have shown above, however, is that *Jubilees* isn’t simply concerned with Abram’s “blame” in the quarrel but also seeks to establish Lot’s move as both his choice and as unjustifiable. Through both its retelling technique and literary sophistication, *Jubilees* has depicted Lot as one who, in spite of his uncle’s desires, does not want to be with Abram.

³¹³ SamP also leaves Lot “near Sodom,” ויאהל עד סדם. Weitzman notes that the Peshitta also has Lot dwelling “as far as Sodom” (M.P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 32).

³¹⁴ The writer may also be setting up later events by smoothing out the tent/house discrepancy between chapters 13 and 18.

³¹⁵ Van Ruiten, *Abraham*, 117-18.

³¹⁶ See Eibert Tigchelaar, “Sodom and Gomorrah in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Sodom’s Sin* ed. Ed Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar, TBN 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 47-62.

difficult to imagine that Lot “buying a house in Sodom”³¹⁷ could ever have been viewed as a positive thing. It could also be argued that the language of sinfulness is omitted because it isn’t necessary. Readers and hearers would be well-acquainted with Sodom’s deplorable reputation. On a subtle note of irony, Lot “purchases” a home in Sodom in the same context as a statement noting Abram’s “adding a great deal” to Lot’s possessions. Lot, it may be read, has taken advantage of his uncle’s benevolence. He has left Abram and, it can be inferred, used what Abram has given him to secure property in Sodom.

Furthermore, the text squarely places the blame for Lot’s departure on Lot and not Abram. Much like *Jubilees*, *Genesis Apocryphon* states that Abram is “disturbed” (רַבְּאֵשׁ) by Lot’s separation from him.³¹⁸ What exactly he is “disturbed” about we are not told. It may be that he feared for Lot, that he questioned Lot’s moral well-being³¹⁹ and commitment to God, or that he had regarded Lot his heir and was therefore disheartened at the prospect of being without one. Regardless, we have again a shift in focus away from Abram’s imperative that they separate to Lot’s decision to separate, apparently in spite of his uncle’s desires. Abram, it would appear, didn’t want Lot to go but Lot went anyway. As with *Jubilees*, the reader is left feeling sorry for Abram

³¹⁷ Whether one reads the text as וְזָבַן, as reflected in this translation, or as וַיִּבֶן (For discussion see Machiela) the same inference can be drawn.

³¹⁸ Falk, *Parabiblical*, 84, makes a passing comment to Abram’s “grief” but provides no analysis of the addition or discussion of the impact this addition has on one’s evaluation of Lot.

³¹⁹ רַבְּאֵשׁ also carries the connotation of “displeasing” (see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 183; Jastrow, 135) and therefore it may be that Abram viewed Lot’s move as something negative (either about Lot or in general).

while questioning the motives, righteousness and commitments of his nephew, Lot.³²⁰

4.2.7 Promises, Promises

All four texts end with God's promises to Abram regarding descendants and land:

Genesis (13:14-18)

Yhwh said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him,³²¹ ‘Lift, please, your eyes and look from the place where you are to the north and to the south and to the east and to the west. For all the land that you see, to you I will give it and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants like the dust of the land, so that if anyone can number the dust of the land, then your descendants can also be numbered. Rise, walk about through the length and breadth of the land for to you I will give it. And he pitched his tent³²² and he came and settled by the oaks of Mamre that are in Hebron and he built there an altar to Yhwh.

LXX (13:14-18)

And God said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Look up³²³ with your eyes and behold from the place which you are now to the north, south, east and west. All the land which you see I will give to you and your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the sand³²⁴ of the earth.

³²⁰ Moshe J. Bernstein comments that the reduction of the earlier quarrel to an “incident,” the description of Abram’s generosity to Lot, the omission of Sodom’s sinfulness, and the mention of Abram’s grief serve to “minimize the significance of the incident and to leave the reader with a higher opinion of Lot than is held by the reader of the biblical text” (“The Genesis Apocryphon: Compositional and Interpretive Perspectives” in *Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 167; cf. Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*, 124). As I have argued above, however, the reduction of the quarrel serves to shift the attention from any problematic outcomes regarding Abram to Lot’s unjustifiable move away from his uncle. The choice to reduce the quarrel to an “incident,” then, removes the problem of Abram’s striving herders and his problematic offer of land to Lot and shifts the attention to Lot and his decision, on his own accord, to separate from Abram, apparently against his uncle’s wishes. The omission of the language of sinfulness does not negate the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Sodom in both the Hebrew Bible and subsequent literature. It is doubtful that readers/hearers would have understood Lot’s “buying a house in Sodom” as something positive. Therefore, the additions and omissions, it can be suggested, provide a basis for diminishing Lot’s status and moral character in the story line.

³²¹ Or “after Lot separated himself” if one reads the *niphal* infinitive הפרד as a reflexive. The use of the *niphal* here may be an indication of Lot’s obedience to Abram’s imperative which was also a *niphal* (“separate yourself...after Lot had separated himself”).

³²² There are some variants among manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch here as noted in Von Gall. Von Gall prefers the use of ויאהל (*Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner* ed. August Freiherr von Gall. Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann Verlag, 1966). A number of manuscripts have ויאל which is what Tsedaka prefers in his English translation (Benjamin Tsedaka, *The Israelite Samaritan Version of the Torah* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012]). Some manuscripts have ויהל. One manuscript has וילך which may be a way to harmonize this particular text with Gen 12:4 and Gen 22:3. In each of these texts, God commands Abram to go to a particular place (“a land I will show you” and “a mountain I will show you” respectively) and Abram’s response is predicated by the verb וילך.

³²³ While LXX used ἐπάρας in 13:10, here one finds ἀναβλέψας.

³²⁴ LXX renders the Hebrew עפר (“dust”) with ἄμμον (“sand”) though in Gen 2:7, for example, LXX uses χεῶν (“dust”) for עפר. The use of “sand” here in Genesis 13 may be a way for this promise to connect to the later promise in Gen 22:17 though there ἄμμον is used to translate literally, חול.

If anyone is able to count out the sand of the earth, your descendants also shall be counted out. Rise up, travel through the length and breadth of the land; for I shall give it to you.” Moving his tent, Abram came and settled by the oak of Mambre,³²⁵ which was in Chebron and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Jubilees (13:19-21)

In that year when Lot was taken captive, the Lord spoke to Abram—after Lot had separated from him, in the fourth year of this week—and he said to him: “Look up from the place where you have been living toward the north, the south, the west, and the east; because all the land which you see I will give to you and your descendants forever. I will make your descendants like the sand of the sea. (Even) if a man can count the sands of the earth, your descendants will (still) not be counted. Get up and walk through its length and its width. Look at everything because I will give it to your descendants.” Then Abram went to Hebron and lived there.³²⁶

Genesis Apocryphon (21:8-22)

Then God appeared to me in a vision in the night, and said to me, “Go up to Ramat-Hazor, which is to the north of Bethel, the place where you are living. Lift up your eyes and look to the east, to the west, to the south, and to the north, and see this entire land that I am giving to you and to your descendants for all ages.” So on the following day, I went up to Ramat-Hazor and I saw the land from this high point; from the River of Egypt up to Lebanon and Senir, and from the Great Sea to Hauran, and all the land of Gebal up to Kadesh, and the entire Great Desert that is east of Hauran and Senir, up to the Euphrates. He said to me, “To your descendants I will give all of this land, and they will inherit it for all ages. I will make your descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth, which no one is able to reckon. So too will your descendants be beyond reckoning. Get up, walk around, go and see how great are its length and its width. For I shall give it to you and to your descendants after you unto all ages.” So I, Abram, embarked to hike around and look at the land. I began to travel the circuit from the Gihon River, and came alongside the Sea until I reached Mount Taurus. I then traversed from alo[ng] this Great Sea of Salt and went alongside Mount Taurus to the east, through the breadth of the land, until I reached the Euphrates River. I journeyed along the Euphrates until I reached the Erythrean Sea, to the East, and was traveling along the Erythrean Sea until I reached the gulf of the Red Sea, which extends out from the Erythrean Sea. I went around to the south until I reached the Gihon River, and I then returned, arriving at my house in safety. I found all of my people safe and went and settled at the Oaks of Mamre, which are near Hebron, to the northeast of Hebron. I built an altar there and offered upon it a burnt offering and a meal offering to the Most High God. I ate and drank there, I and every person of my household. I also sent an invitation to Mamre, Arnem, and Eshkol, three Amorite brothers (who were) my friends, and they ate and drank together with me.³²⁷

³²⁵ For discussion of the use of Μαμβρη in Genesis 13 and 14 see Wevers, *Notes*, 184.

³²⁶ For discussion of *Jubilees*' rendering of the promise see Van Ruiten, *Abraham*, 83-4.

³²⁷ For discussion of the various geographical locations and their placement in the story see Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 219-29.

The biblical text, LXX and *Jubilees* mention that God affirms his commitment to Abram after Lot has separated from him. The mention in Gen 13:14 of אַחֲרַי הַפְּרַד־לוֹט מֵעִמּוֹ may simply be a chronological connective to the preceding account of Abram and Lot's separation. If, however, there has been an underlying uneasiness concerning the person and character of Lot, then this particular phrase becomes the unqualified statement of final separation. In other words, God's promises to Abram are for Abram and his descendants, not for his brothers. In addition, the language of שָׂא נָא עֵינֶיךָ (13:14) resembles וַיִּשְׂא־לוֹט אֶת־עֵינָיו (13:10). The use of similar phraseology allows for a comparison of what each saw. Lot sees a land, but it is not "the land." The place he sees is "wicked." The place that God tells Abram to see is "promised." Furthermore, by placing the capture of Lot in the same context as his separation from Abram, *Jubilees* may be implying that his capture is the divine response to the foolishness of his decision to dwell in Sodom.³²⁸

Abram's building of an altar at the close of Genesis 13 forms an *inclusio* in the pericope with the earlier mention of Abram worshipping at an altar (13:4). The fact that Abram engages in both worship and the building of an altar without any mention of Lot heightens, at least implicitly, the separation between the family members. This is most explicitly stated in the retelling of *Genesis Apocryphon*. Not only is this the only account which describes Abram as actually obeying God's command to "walk about,"³²⁹ it also gives a detailed description of the walk, complete with a return to Abram's "people." Abram, in turn, gives more offerings, celebrates by "eating and drinking" with his "household" and even invites some of his neighbors to the celebration (i.e., covenant meal³³⁰).

³²⁸ Kugel, *Jubilees*, 93.

³²⁹ For discussion of the parallels in the Apocryphon of Abram's "walk through the land" and Noah's earlier "walk through the land" see Falk, *Parabiblical*, 65-6.

³³⁰ So Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 228.

The mention in 21:20 of a “burnt offering” and “meal offering” (עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה) forms an *inclusio* with the earlier references to these offerings (21:2). Ironically, there is no mention of Lot and his family as being part of the “people” of Abram. Lot is not a partaker in the covenant meal. He was not mentioned as participating in the earlier offerings and he is not mentioned as participating in these subsequent offerings and festivities which likewise highlight his lack of connection. As a result, Lot has been subtly, but unmistakably, disassociated from his uncle, Abram. Furthermore, given the vast amount of geography mentioned here, one wonders if *Genesis Apocryphon* can only start talking about geography once Lot has been eliminated from the story of Abraham.

4.3 Conclusion

The above analysis has demonstrated that one of the chief concerns of early retellers was to shift the focus away from any potential difficulties surrounding Abram. *Jubilees*, for example, absolves Abram of the responsibility concerning Lot’s presence on the journey by putting the origin of Lot’s presence on Terah. When it comes to Genesis 13, it was shown that while, on the whole, the biblical text is ambiguous regarding Lot, there were times when phrases and/or gaps in the story appear to have “left the door open” for negative readings. Abram has, by the end of the first century, been absolved of any potential wrongdoing and Lot has been transformed from his ambiguous characterization in Genesis 13. This continued development was made by changing wording (e.g., טַרְחָה to ἐν in the LXX), adding interpretive information (e.g., the origin of Lot’s wife in *Genesis Apocryphon*), or omitting problematic portions altogether (e.g., the removal of the striving herders and Abram’s offer of land in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*). In those problematic and/or ambiguous texts, retellers tended to shift the focus away from any potential

difficulties surrounding Abram to Lot's ethical and relational separation from his uncle. It was noted, for example, that Lot unjustifiably separated himself from Abram, purchased property in Sodom and even took for himself a wife of foreign origin. The result is that Lot, by the end of the first century, had been transformed from an ambiguous character into one who can be read as an unrighteous outsider.

5. CREATING AN UNRIGHTEOUS OUTSIDER: LATER JEWISH RECEPTION OF GENESIS 13.

As I move now into later Jewish retellings, it will be demonstrated that the problematic accompaniment of Lot and the problematic issues surrounding Abram (striving herders, offer of land) were clearly on the minds of the interpreters as they retold the story to exalt Abram and suppress Lot. Lot, it will be seen, becomes a full-fledged lustful, wicked individual.³³¹ This is contrasted explicitly with the way in which Abram is described. Abram is the exemplar of Torah observance whereas Lot is the exemplar of Torah rejection and therefore a “foil” to righteous Abram. While early retellers like *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, at times, appear satisfied with subtly exalting Abram and suppressing Lot, later Jewish interpreters were driven by more explicitly ideological interests. The focus was to show, without a doubt, that Lot is an outsider. For rabbinic writers, he is more than that—he is a rejecter of Torah. So while there are marked similarities with regard to the negativity with which Lot is viewed, there is also a new, ideologically-driven, reading which understands Lot as wanting neither Abram nor his God. This contrast not only highlights the ethical and relational distinction, but makes their separation a necessity. I will close with a discussion of how rabbinic commentators dealt with Lot in comparison to how they dealt with one of his most prominent descendants, Ruth. In doing so, I will provide a proposed framework for understanding why rabbinic readings of Lot in Genesis 13 are so decidedly negative. Lot, like Ruth, was offered the chance to convert but he, unlike Ruth, chose to separate from Abram and thus rejected the Torah.

³³¹ Dina Stein, “Rabbinic Interpretation” in *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*, ed. Ronald Hendel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 120, comments that for rabbinic interpreters, the Bible is a fundamentally “cryptic text” which requires “elucidation of its obscure or hidden meanings.” This foundational hermeneutic, provides, as I will demonstrate below, the necessary basis for making Lot an unrighteous outsider in light of rabbinic ideology.

5.1 Philo

5.1.1 Lot's Accompaniment

I have argued above that one of the main tensions in the story line is that of Lot's accompaniment on Abram's journey. While Philo doesn't seek to solve the problem through the language of adoption, he does provide a subtle solution through his interpretation of Lot's accompaniment. This particular interpretation is, as will be true of the remainder of his reading of Lot, focused on contrasting Lot with Abram: "Lot' by interpretation is 'turning aside' or 'inclining away' [ἔστι μὲν οὖν Λὼτ ἑρμηνευθεὶς ἀπόκλισις].³³² The mind 'inclines' sometimes turning away from what is good, sometimes from what is bad." Those characterized this way are always shifting, never firmly planted in either the good or the bad. In them is "nothing praiseworthy even in their taking a turn to the better course."³³³ Of this crew Lot is a member." Philo wants it to be clear that there is nothing positive to be gained from Lot's accompaniment:

[H]e comes with him, not that he may imitate the man who is better than him and so gain improvement, but actually to create obstacles which pull him back, and drag him elsewhere and make him slip in this direction or that. (*Migr.* 27.148-149)

Philo has subtly solved the issue of Lot's accompaniment in two ways. First, he makes it sound as if the choice to go was Lot's, not Abram's. Second, by focusing attention on Lot's moral depravity, as one who seeks only to cause problems, he has made Abram the victim. Lot is not on the journey because of Abram's love for his nephew but rather because of Lot's desire to undermine Abram. In Genesis, Abram

³³² Translations from Philo are taken from Colson (LCL). While Colson's translation here implies that there are two words used by Philo for Lot's name, there is in fact only one ἀπόκλισις for which Colson supplies two meanings. Lester L. Grabbe, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: The Hebrew Names in Philo*, BJS 115 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 179, comments that "The exact derivation is uncertain."

³³³ The "better course" for Philo here is Lot's accompaniment of Abraham on the journey to Canaan.

takes Lot with him. For Philo, Lot is the one who chose to go with Abram and he chose to go to try and bring Abram down.

5.1.2 Exalting Abram and Suppressing Lot

It has been clear that one of the most prominent ways interpreters have read the separation of Abram and Lot is through the lens of ethical categories. Philo writes that Abram chose to separate from Lot precisely because of Lot's moral disposition:

So we find that when the Mind begins to know itself and to hold converse with the things of the mind, it will thrust away from it that part of the soul which inclines to the province of sense-perception, the inclining which among the Hebrews is entitled "Lot." Hence the wise man is represented as saying outright, "Separate thyself from me" (Gen 13:9). For it is impossible for one who is possessed by love for all that is incorporeal and incorruptible to dwell together with one who leans towards the objects of sense-perception doomed to die. (*Migr.* 3.13)

In *On Abraham*, Philo makes a much stronger contrast between the moral quality of Abram and Lot:

[W]e see what moderation he [Abram] showed to those who, connected with him by birth, but estranged from him in moral principles, stood alone and unsupported and with possessions far inferior to his, and how he willingly accepted to be at a disadvantage when he might have taken advantage of them. For he had a nephew who had accompanied him when he migrated from his native land, an unreliable and hesitating person, ever inclining this way and that, sometimes fawning on him with loving greetings, sometimes rebellious and refractory through the inconsistency of his different moods. (*Abr.* 37.211-12)

In these passages, Philo provides several interpretive comments on Abram and Lot's relationship. First, Lot is connected to Abram but is separate from Abram morally. Second, Lot's possessions are said to be far inferior to Abram's. Finally, Abram willingly allowed himself to be at a disadvantage to his nephew. Presumably, Philo has in mind the offer of land. Furthermore, Philo provides a portrait of Lot which envisions him as an unstable individual. At times Lot appears to show love and honor to Abram but at others rebels against and rejects Abram. Philo also notes that while there is a familial connection, Lot is really estranged from Abram morally. This

negative characterization of Lot will provide Philo the basis for solving problematic portions of Genesis 13 involving Abram. The biblical text is silent about both the origin and cause of the quarrel between the herders. The fact that the herders are quarreling may potentially place Abram in a questionable light. Philo wants to uphold Abram as a man of peace and righteousness, and his connection to such a quarrel would certainly raise doubts about that depiction. While *Jubilees* solves the problem by removing the quarrel completely, Philo solves the problem by putting the blame on Lot and his herders:

Therefore his servants too were quarrelsome and turbulent, as they had no one to control them, and this was particularly the case with the shepherds who were stationed at a distance from their master; thus breaking out of control in their willfulness they were ever quarreling with the Sage's herdsmen who many times gave way to them because of their master's gentleness. (*Abr.* 37.213)

Lot's herders, because of their behavior, eventually forced Abram's herders to defend themselves "against the injustice." Philo has thus safeguarded Abram's reputation but has also provided a means to extol Abram even more for his subsequent offer to Lot. Abram sought, "when the fight³³⁴ had become very serious," to reconcile with Lot because he didn't want "to distress his nephew through seeing his own party defeated" and because he knew that there would inevitably be "wars and factions" between the families. Above, Philo noted that the reason Abram had to separate from Lot was because of Lot's moral disposition. Here it is solely for pragmatic reasons to keep the peace. Thus, Abram was willing to offer Lot "a choice of the better district" not seeking his own self-interests but rather seeking "a life free from strife and so far as lay with him of tranquility, and thereby he showed himself the most admirable of men" (*Abr.* 37.214-16). I argued above that Abram's offer of land is actually quite problematic in the overall context of Genesis. Philo, however, focuses not on the

³³⁴ Philo here uses μάχη to describe the quarrel which is the same term found in the LXX.

potential issues of Lot's residence in the land but rather on Abram's magnanimity in offering Lot first choice.

Not surprisingly for Philo, there is also a "spiritual" side to the story as well. In his discussion of the spiritual aspects of Genesis 13, Philo calls Abram "one higher and senior" while Lot is "lower and junior." Philo takes the discussion of Abram and Lot's wealth in Genesis 13 and uses it as a way to distinguish them spiritually. While Abram is a man characterized by "wisdom and temperance and justice and courage and virtue" whose actions are guided by virtue, Lot is a man characterized by "wealth and reputation and office and good birth, good not in the true sense but in the sense which the multitude give to it." This division will necessarily cause conflict between them "since they have no common principle but are forever jangling and quarrelling about the most important thing in life, and that is the decision what are the true goods." For Abram the true goods are "moral excellence and virtue" whereas for Lot they are "wealth or glory." Abram's goods are "genuine" (γνήσιος) while Lot's are "spurious" (νόθος). For Philo then, the story of the separation of Abram and Lot is also a story of the struggle between the virtuous and the greedy. Abram becomes the personification of virtue while Lot becomes the personification of worldliness. This provides the spiritual basis of the separation. Lot cannot have fellowship with Abram for whatever Abram thinks to be on the right Lot "thinks to be on the left" and whatever Abram thinks to be on the left in Lot's "judgment stands on the right" (*Abr.* 38.217-24).³³⁵

³³⁵ Here Philo, it seems, is drawing on the language of "left" and "right" contained in Abram's offer of land in Gen 13:9.

5.2 Josephus

5.2.1 Lot's Accompaniment

In the previous chapter, I noted that *Jubilees* solves the issue of Lot's accompaniment by making Lot the adopted son of Abram.³³⁶ Josephus does the same:

Now Abram, having no legitimate son, adopted Lot, his brother Aran's son and the brother of his wife Sarra; and at the age of seventy-five he left Chaldea, God having bidden him to remove to Canaan, and there he settled, and left the country to his descendants. (*A.J.* 1.154)³³⁷

Here Josephus takes Gen 12:4 and flips it around. Gen 12:4 begins with the note about Abram's obedience and ends with "and Lot went with him." Josephus, by putting the adoption of Lot³³⁸ at the forefront, makes the reason for Lot's presence clear and thus Abram's obedience to the command, which closes out the retelling, is left unquestioned.³³⁹

5.2.2 Striving Herders

Genesis 13:7 is silent concerning the reason for the strife between the herders. As I outlined above, many interpreters have understood the cause of the strife to be an inadequate grazing area. Josephus, however, leaves his retelling somewhat ambiguous: "On his return to Canaan, he divided the land with Lot, since their

³³⁶ It may be that Josephus was familiar with and drew from *Jubilees* though this is not entirely clear. For discussion see: Betsy Halpern-Amaru, "Flavius Josephus and the Book of Jubilees: A question of source," *HUCA* 72, 2001 pgs 15-44. She notes some 19 parallels between Josephus' *Antiquities* and *Jubilees*. She does not, however, list Abram's adoption of Lot as a possible connection though it appears that it could reasonably be added to the list.

³³⁷ Quotations from Josephus are taken from Thackeray (LCL).

³³⁸ Feldman comments, "The Greek or Roman reader would expect a hero, if childless, to adopt a son in order to ensure the maintenance of his name and estate" (Louis H. Feldman, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, Vol 3* ed. Steve Mason Judean Antiquities Books 1-4 [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 55).

³³⁹ Michael Avioz, "Josephus's Portrayal of Lot and His Family," *JSP* 16 (2006): 5, notes "Josephus's target audience was Eastern Mediterranean Greek Jews and Romans. If this was the case, then the practice of adoption may have been well-known to his readers."

shepherds quarreled [στασιαστής]³⁴⁰ about grazing ground” (A.J. 1.169).³⁴¹ Josephus links the quarrel to “grazing ground” but doesn’t clarify whether or not the quarrel is over lack of space or the way in which the herders are using the space. The latter will be a popular way in which later rabbinic writers will interpret the scenario. It is intriguing that Josephus mentions nothing of Abram’s return to his initial altar, or Lot and Abram’s wealth. Josephus makes it sound as if the separation occurred immediately upon entering the land whereas the biblical text allows for a gap in time, albeit an unknown gap. Josephus then comments:

[B]ut he left Lot to select what he chose. Taking for himself the lowland that the other left him, he dwelt in Nabro, a city that is more ancient by seven years than Tanis in Egypt. Lot for his part occupied the district in the direction of the plain and the river Jordan, not far from the city of Sodom, which was then prosperous but has now by God’s³⁴² will been obliterated. (A.J. 1.169-170)

There are two things here relevant to my thesis. First, Josephus comments that Abram “left Lot to select what he chose.” As with earlier retellers, Josephus shifts the focus from the problematic offer of Abram and places the focus on Lot’s decision to go. Second, Josephus comments that Lot possessed the land “not far from the city of Sodom.” His retelling differs from the LXX, *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* which distinctly put Lot “in” Sodom following the separation.

Unlike Philo, Josephus does not provide explicit commentary on Lot’s character. Avioz notes that Josephus’s “ultimate goal was to portray Abraham as generous and noble spirited.”³⁴³

³⁴⁰ “One who stirs up to sedition” (*LSJ*, 1421). Cf. Mark 15:7 where the genitive masculine plural nominal στασιαστῶν is used in reference to those who are in prison along with Barabbas.

³⁴¹ Thomas W. Franxman, *Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus* BibOr 35 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 132, notes that Genesis 13-15 are “bound together in a tight little unit by our author, who makes chapter fourteen his principal theme.” Josephus, in his retelling, omits several details from Genesis 13 like Abram and Lot’s possessions, Abram’s worship at the altar, Abram’s call for separation and the closing promise by Yhwh. For discussion of Josephus’s geography in this section see Franxman, *Josephus*, 133.

³⁴² Franxman, *Josephus*, 133, notes that this is the only place where God is mentioned in Josephus’s retelling of Genesis 13.

³⁴³ Michael Avioz, “Josephus’s Portrayal,” 6.

5.3 The Targums

5.3.1 Lot's Wealth

Genesis 13 begins with the note that “Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that belonged to him and Lot with him to the Negev.” Lot's presence on the journey is also mentioned in 13:5 following the mention of Abram's wealth and his return to the previously built altar, “Lot, the one going with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.” As with the earlier retellings in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, there appears to be some uneasiness, among rabbinic interpreters, concerning Lot's wealth. As with some modern commentators, this tension is resolved by understanding Lot's wealth as a direct result of his connection to Abram. *Targum Pseudo- Jonathan* reflects this reading: “Lot who was supported³⁴⁴ by the merits,³⁴⁵ of Abram also had sheep and oxen and tents.”³⁴⁶

5.3.2 Striving Herders

While Josephus was silent about the actual content of the quarrel, the targumic retellers³⁴⁷ mused about the content of the strife and, like Philo, placed the blame on Lot and his herders. The silence in the Genesis narrative allows interpreters to “fill the gap” in the text. The strife between the herders becomes for the interpreters a place to discuss the ethical distinctions between Abram and Lot and the separation between their descendants. There was apparently a tradition which highlighted the

³⁴⁴ The verb דבר carries the notion “to apply” and probably refers here to Abram's applying his goods to Lot. For discussion of דבר see: Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 312-13.

³⁴⁵ The noun זכו here probably implies that Abram's “meritorious deed” towards Lot was providing for him out of his own abundance. For discussion of זכו see: Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Illan University Press, 1990), 176.

³⁴⁶ Translation of Tg. Ps.-J. from *Targum Pseudo-Jonathon: Genesis*, Trans. Michael Maher, ArBib 1B (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992).

³⁴⁷ For discussion of the dating of the Targums see: Paul V.M. Flesher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 151-66.

fact that Abram’s herders muzzled their cattle³⁴⁸ when leading them out to pasture.³⁴⁹

This is reflected in *Targum Neofiti*, two fragmentary targums and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*.³⁵⁰

Abram’s herdsmen muzzled their cattle until they reached the pastures and Lot’s herdsmen did not muzzle their cattle but allowed them to graze freely and they roamed about. Besides, Abram’s herdsmen had been commanded by their master Abram, saying, “Do not turn aside to the Canaanites or the Perizzites.” (*Targum Neofiti* Gen 13:7)³⁵¹

Abram’s herders would muzzle their animals until they reached the place of pasture, whereas Lot’s herders did not muzzle their cattle but rather let them be free to graze in strange fields; also the herders of Abraham, the righteous, would tie up their reins, and would not extend into the Canaanites nor into the Perizzites, for they were still dwelling in the land. (*MS Paris – Bibliothéque nationale Hebr. 110* Gen 13:7)³⁵²

Abram’s herders would muzzle their animals until they came to the place of pasture. Lot’s herders would not muzzle their animals but rather let them be free to go on grazing. Indeed Abram’s herders were commanded by their master, Abram, the righteous, as follows: “You must not go to the Canaanites and to the Perizzites for they still have authority over the land.”³⁵³ (*MS Vatican. Ebr. 440* Gen 13:7)

The herdsmen of Abram had been commanded by him not to go among the Canaanites and the Perizzites, because they still had authority over the land.

³⁴⁸ It seems that rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 13 is fairly homiletic, as opposed to legal, in nature, though there may be legal reference with regard to muzzling cattle—which from what I can gather may be an indirect reference to Deut 25:4. Obviously in the Deut passage the command is to “not muzzle.” That is, however, with reference to the actions of the “ox” in its own land whereas Abram is in the land of the Canaanites and thus would need to muzzle his oxen. There are a few references to muzzling in Bavli. One is in *Baba Mezi’a* 90a. There Deut 25:4 is quoted but the exposition has to do with threshing for offerings and tithes. There is another in *Mas. Shabbath* 53a where there is reference to an ox going out muzzled which may imply that the animal is to be muzzled only until it reaches its own field. The footnote in Soncino (*The Babylonian Talmud* trans I. Epstein; 18 vols [London: Soncino, 1948]) implies this, “It was muzzled until it came to its own fields, so that it should not browse in other peoples’ land” though the text doesn’t explicitly state that.

³⁴⁹ The paraphrase translation while leaving the viable one-to-one rendering of the original is typical of the Pentateuchal targums (Philip S. Alexander, “Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* ed. Martin Jan Mulder [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988], 231). For a more detailed analysis of the “translation technique” of the Pentateuchal targums see, Fleisher and Chilton, *The Targums*, 71-89.

³⁵⁰ Onqelos follows the Hebrew text literally in its translation and thus is not mentioned here.

³⁵¹ Translations from Tg. Neof. are from *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (trans. Martin McNamara, ArBib 1A (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992).

³⁵² Translations from *Fragment- Targums of the Pentateuch: According to their extant sources*, ed. and trans. Michael L. Klein, 2 vols (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986).

³⁵³ The mention that the Canaanites and Perizzites “possess control” of the land provides an interpretation of the comment in Gen 13:7 that they are “dwelling” in the land. Dwelling then signifies “control” or “authority” of the land.

They used to muzzle their cattle so that they would not eat anything that had been stolen until they had arrived at their grazing grounds. But the herdsmen of Lot allowed (their cattle) to go about freely and eat in the fields of the Canaanites and Perizzites who were still dwelling in the land. (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* Gen 13:7)³⁵⁴

Note that while all reflect a similar tradition only *Pseudo-Jonathan* provides the reason for Abram's herders' muzzling, "so that they would not eat anything that had been stolen until they had arrived." This clearly creates further distinction between Abram and Lot's herders, who allowed the cattle to "go about freely and to eat in the fields." Philo, it will be remembered, also noted that Lot's herders had no one to control them.³⁵⁵ The fragmentary targums alone attribute the qualifier "the righteous" (צדיקא) to Abram. Furthermore, the first fragment is the only one which mentions anything about Abram's herders "tying up the reins" of his cattle. The second fragment alone mentions the authority which the Canaanites and Perizzites had over the land.

What is most significant here is that all of these targumic retellings paint Lot, and his herders, in a negative light while painting Abram, and his herders, in a positive one. It was noted in the previous chapter that there is a telling silence in *Jubilees* concerning the strife between the herders. This silence may be the result of an uneasiness about how such a quarrel would reflect on Abram. After all, how could Abram be quarreling with Lot since Abram is a man of peace and righteousness? It should be noted that in Proverbs, the one who quells or refrains from a ריב is exalted. For example, one finds in Prov 20:3, "It is honorable for one to refrain from³⁵⁶ strife" (ריב). Prov 15:18 notes, "one who is slow to anger quiets³⁵⁷ strife" (ריב). As noted

³⁵⁴ Flescher and Chilton's, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction*, 22, definition of targum as, "a translation that combines a highly literal rendering of the original text with material added into the translation in a seamless manner" is clearly exemplified in the retelling of the striving herders pericope.

³⁵⁵ *Abr.* 37.213

³⁵⁶ For discussion of שבת as "refrain from" see *HALOT*, 1409.

³⁵⁷ *Hiphil* 3rd MS Imperfect of שקט.

above, however, in Prov 26:21 a person who is quarrelsome kindles strife (רִיב). If one wants to ensure Abram's honor, then it makes sense to blame Lot and his herders for the quarrel as whoever was the cause of the quarrel—Abram, Lot or their herders—would certainly be cast in a less than flattering light. The account of the quarrel remains intact, but because the fault has now been laid at the feet of Lot and his herders, the character and righteousness of Abram are no longer in question.

5.3.3 Lot's Look

As I mentioned in my exegesis of Genesis 13 above, the language of “lifting the eyes” is a common phrase in Genesis for examining one's surroundings, often with reference to people. The use of this particular phrase is quite broad. It is used in contexts of both general observation and more nuanced “looking” (Gen 39:7). The mention of Lot “lifting up his eyes” therefore, provided the opportunity for many interpreters to develop a greater analysis of what they believed to be Lot's true character. In *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, one reads, “And Lot raised high his eyes lustfully”³⁵⁸ (13:10).

One intriguing question that Genesis 13 raises is with regard to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The biblical text informs the reader that they were “wicked and sinners” but how were they so? The text doesn't tell us. An answer can be found, however, in the targums. *Targum Onqelos* describes the inhabitants of Sodom as “wicked with their money and sinful with their bodies.” *Targum Neofiti* elaborates further: “Now the people of Sodom were very evil, one toward the other, and were very guilty before the Lord of revealing their nakedness and of the shedding of blood and of foreign worship” (13:13). *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* further enlarges the description: “And the men of Sodom were evil towards one another with their wealth,

³⁵⁸ לִזְנוּ (literally, “to/for fornication”).

and sinful with their bodies through sexual immorality,³⁵⁹ by shedding innocent blood, and by the practice of idolatry,³⁶⁰ and rebelling grievously against the name of the Lord.” (13:13). The connection that all three make regarding sinfulness with their bodies may simply have reference to the description of the Sodomites’ actions in Genesis 19 but are probably also a reference to Lot’s actions with his daughters at the close of Genesis 19. Thus, the references in *Neofiti* and *Pseudo-Jonathan* to “revealing their nakedness” may be read as an indictment of Lot. Lot’s move “as far as Sodom” thus becomes a reflection of his own moral and spiritual bankruptcy.

5.4 The Talmud

5.4.1 Dealing with Lot’s Wealth

As with interpreters previously mentioned, there appears to be some uneasiness about Lot’s wealth. This issue is most often resolved by connecting the origin of Lot’s wealth to Abram. This particular interpretation, found both in modern readings and the targums, is also found in the Talmud:³⁶¹ “Raba again said to Rabbah b. Mari: ‘From where is derived the popular saying: Behind an owner of wealth chips are dragged along?’ He replied, ‘As it is written: And Lot who also went with Abram had flocks and herds and tents’” (*b. Qam. 93a*).³⁶² While still within the context of Lot’s connection to Abram, the *Genesis Apocryphon* allowed for Lot’s wealth to originate from both Egypt and Abram. The Talmud, on the other hand, restricts his attainment of wealth solely to Abram. Lot didn’t really have anything of his own, he owed everything to Abram.

³⁵⁹ Literally, “in revealing their nakedness (בגילוי ערייותא)” which is the same phrase used in Tg. Neof.

³⁶⁰ פולחן נכראה (“foreign worship”) which is the same phrase used in Tg. Neof. On נוכרי see: Jastrow, 887.

³⁶¹ I will deal exclusively here with Bavli as there are no explicit references, which I could find, to Genesis 13 in Yerushalmi.

³⁶² Translations of the Talmud are from *The Babylonian Talmud* trans I. Epstein; 18 vols (London: Soncino, 1948).

5.4.2 Lot's Look

Immediately following Abram's offer the biblical text states, וישאלוט את עיניו. One of the references to the "lifting of the eyes" outside Genesis 13 is in the account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:7). It would seem that her look was one of lust. The Talmud, as with Tg. Ps.-J, reads Lot's look the same. This particular interpretation comes within the context of a discussion regarding Lot's actions in Genesis 19. While Lot's daughters are described as having right intentions, Lot's intention was to sin. This intent is substantiated by Lot's look in Gen 13:10:

R. Johanan has said: The whole of the following verse indicates (Lot's) lustful character.³⁶³ And Lot "lifted up" is paralleled by, And his master's wife lifted up her eyes upon; "his eyes" is paralleled by, for she hath found grace in my eyes; "and beheld" is paralleled by, And Shechem the son of Hamor beheld her; "all the ככר [plain] of the Jordan" by For on account of a harlot, a man is brought to a ככר [loaf] of bread, and "fat" it was well watered everywhere by, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. (*b. Naz. 23a*)³⁶⁴

5.4.3 Lot's Separation

Upon making his choice, Lot travels east which, as was discussed previously, may be a subtle means of denigrating Lot and his decision. While the biblical text of Genesis 13 highlights Abram's desire for him and Lot to separate and mentions nothing about Lot's "desire" to separate, some ancient readers see Lot's movement away from Abram as exactly that—Lot's "desire" to distance himself from Abram:

Raba (others say R. Isaac) made the following exposition: What is the meaning of the Biblical text, He that separates³⁶⁵ himself seeks his own desire, and snarls against all sound wisdom?—He that separates himself seeks his own desire, refers to Lot who separated himself from Abraham: And snarls against all sound wisdom, for his shame was exposed in the Synagogues and in the houses of study, as we learnt: An Ammonite and a Moabite are forbidden [to enter into the assembly] forever. (*b. Hor. 10b*)

³⁶³ Literally Lot's look is here described as "sinful" (עבירה – see: Jastrow, 1038) though from the context it is meant to signify a look of "lust."

³⁶⁴ Cf. *b. Hor. 10b*; *b. Qam. 93a*.

³⁶⁵ פרוך being the same term used in Genesis 13.

The Talmud here links Lot and his decision to separate from Abram with the later prohibition against his descendants, the Ammonites and Moabites. As with *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, the Talmud removes Abram's call for separation and puts the blame for the separation squarely on Lot. By separating, Lot has demonstrated his true character as one who rejects wisdom and deserves to be rejected. It seems that in Lot's rejection of "all sound wisdom" he has, in fact, rejected Torah.

5.5 Midrashic Literature

By far the largest amount of interpretive space dedicated to Genesis 13 is found in the midrashic literature. The focus, however, is still the same: exalt Abram and suppress Lot.

5.5.1 Lot's Presence with Abram on the Journey

I have demonstrated above that Lot's presence on the journey may reflect negatively on Abram. In *Jubilees* one finds the detailed account of Abram's adoption of Lot at the behest of Terah. Likewise, one finds the notion of adoption in *Josephus*. In *Genesis Rabbah*³⁶⁶ one finds the mention that "Lot was merely joined on with him" (39.13)³⁶⁷ which may imply that Lot became a member of Abram's household.

It is clear that in early Jewish interpretation, there is an uneasiness about the vast amount of wealth Lot possessed. This is continued in midrashic exegesis.

³⁶⁶ For discussion of sources, date, composite nature and redaction of *Genesis Rabbah* see: Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 276-83. Strack and Stemberger argue for a final redaction in the first half of the fifth century. Neusner notes that "*Genesis Rabbah* provides a complete and authoritative account of how Judaism proposes to read and make sense of the first book of the Hebrew Scriptures" (Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to Midrash: The Workings of Rabbinic Bible Interpretation* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989], 101). Neusner opts for a date of the fourth century for final redaction.

³⁶⁷ Translations from: *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. H. Freedman and M. Simon. 10 vols (London: Soncino Press, 1961).

Pesikta Rabbati (3.3)³⁶⁸ notes: “You find that when Abraham came to the Land, Lot came with him. And because he attached himself to Abraham, he grew rich, as Abraham had grown rich.”³⁶⁹ *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) likewise reads: “[B]lessed are the righteous and those joined with them, as stated: ‘And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks’” (1.21.1).³⁷⁰ *Genesis Rabbah* (41.3) mentions, at this point, “four boons” which Lot enjoyed because of his connection to Abram:³⁷¹ (1) Lot’s presence with Abram; (2) Lot’s wealth; (3) Lot’s rescue in Genesis 14; and (4) Lot’s rescue in Genesis 19. It is clear that all Lot enjoyed was because of Abram and not because of anything inherent in Lot himself.

5.5.2 Striving Herders

Genesis 13:5-6 implies that Abram and Lot could not dwell together because of the vastness of their resources: “Now, Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. The land could not support both of them dwelling together; because of the vastness of their possessions they could not dwell

³⁶⁸ Paul V.M. Flescher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums*, 65, note that *Pesikta Rabbati* is usually assigned to the sixth or early seventh century. For discussion of the composite nature and redaction of *Pesikta Rabbati* see: H.L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 296-302. While still within the midrashic genre of interpretation this work, along with *Pesikta de Rab Kahana*, is organized on the yearly liturgy. The interpretive comments are, therefore, focused on the readings used for festivals and special Sabbaths. I could find no discussion of Abram and Lot’s separation in *Pesikta de Rab Kahana*.

³⁶⁹ Translations from: *Pesikta Rabbati*, trans. William G. Braude, 2 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

³⁷⁰ Translations from: *Midrash Tanhuma – S. Buber Recension*, trans. John T. Townsend (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1989). For discussion of the two editions of *Tanhuma* (Buber and *Yelammedenu*) see: Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 302-06 and; *Midrash Tanhuma – Yelammedenu Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Samuel A. Berman (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1996), ix-xiii.

³⁷¹ *Genesis Rabbah* also notes that Lot had “two tents,” one was Ruth the Moabite and the other Naamah the Ammonite. I will discuss, below, the way in which the rabbinic reading of Abram and Lot’s separation in Genesis 13 contrasts with their reading of Ruth.

together.”³⁷² While this phrase is somewhat ambiguous,³⁷³ *Pesikta Rabbati* (3.3) notes two reasons for their inability to dwell together: “And do you marvel at this thing, that the Land was not able to bear them? It was unable not only because their substance was so great, but also because of the arguments which took place among the herdsmen.” The question is then asked, “Why were they arguing back and forth?” The answer lies in the moral character of the herder’s masters: “When a man is righteous the members of his household also are righteous like him and so, too, is anyone who joins with him; and when a man is wicked, the members of his household also are wicked like him.” The quarreling between the herders is a direct result of the moral distinction between their masters. As will be evident from the subsequent analysis of *Pesikta Rabbati*, the wicked herders of wicked Lot are causing problems for the righteous herders of righteous Abram.

I noted above that the targums reflect a tradition of how Abram’s herders muzzled their cattle.³⁷⁴ This tradition is also reflected in *Genesis Rabbah* (41.5): “Abraham’s cattle used to go out muzzled, but Lot’s did not go out muzzled.”³⁷⁵ This statement is followed by a conversation between Abram and Lot’s herders in which

³⁷² Ibn Ezra, writing in the 12th century, comments that “יחדר” means acting like one person.”

³⁷³ See my previous textual analysis. Rashi says the land could not support the cattle that Abram and Lot owned. He reasons thus because נשא is masculine when it should be feminine given that ארץ is usually in the feminine gender, and therefore read, נשאה (which is what one finds in the SamP). The text in Genesis 13 is not, therefore, referring to the “land” in a general sense, but rather in a specific sense implying “pasture land”: “It was unable to supply enough pasture for their cattle, and this is an abbreviated expression, and an additional word is needed. [It is to be explained] as: ‘And the pasture of the land could not bear them.’ Therefore, נשא ולא is written in the masculine gender.” Translation from: A.J. Rosenberg, *Genesis: A New English Translation: Translation of Text, Rashi and Other Commentaries*, 3 vols. (New York: Judaica Press, 1993). Sforno, the sixteenth century commentator, likewise notes, “There was insufficient pasture for both” (13:6). Translation of Sforno from, *Sforno*, Translation and explanatory notes by Raphael Pelcovitz (Brooklyn: Mesorah), 1987.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Tg. Neof 13:7; Tg Ps.-J 13:7 and the two fragmentary targums discussed above.

³⁷⁵ Abram’s actions reflect that of a righteous individual, in contrast to Lot. This is well in keeping with *Genesis Rabbah*’s characterization of Abram as one who keeps “the entire Torah” and whose actions “form the model for future conduct...the paradigm of correct behavior” (Jacob Neusner, “Theology of Genesis Rabbah” in *Encyclopedia of Midrash: Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism*. Vol. 1, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery Peck [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 118-19).

Lot's herders remark that they allow their cattle to eat freely because they assume Lot will be Abram's heir and therefore inherit the land.³⁷⁶

Said Abraham's herdsmen to them: "Has then robbery been permitted?" To which Lot's herdsmen replied: "Thus did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Abraham: 'Unto thy seed will I give this land'; now Abraham is a barren mule, who cannot beget children, therefore Lot will be his heir; if they eat, they are eating their own."

Pesikta Rabbati (3.3) appears to reflect a similar tradition but adds a great deal more to the conversation between Abram and Lot's herders. The account begins by noting the righteous reasons that Abram's herders muzzled their cattle: "Now Abraham's herdsmen used to lead out Abraham's cattle muzzled in order that they should not deprive other people's herds of their herbage." The ensuing conversation begins with Abram's herders noting that the actions of Lot's herders will reflect badly on Lot. Lot's herders respond by challenging what Abram's herders are doing in muzzling their cattle, noting that their actions are, in the end, detrimental to Lot's herds and a mere pretense of righteousness. Furthermore, Lot's herders again assume that Lot will be the heir and therefore justify their lack of muzzling:

Thereupon the herdsmen of Abraham fell to arguing with the herdsmen of Lot, saying to them: Why are you causing Lot to have a bad name by leading out his cattle unmuzzled? The herdsmen of Lot replied: It is we who ought to protest against you because you muzzle the cattle. Since you know that Abraham's cattle will finally go back to Lot—because Abraham has no children—you do not feed them properly! Because you know that Abraham has no son, and that eventually, when he dies, Lot will be his heir, you make yourselves out to be righteous at the expense of another man's cattle. You go too far! How do you presume to say that what our cattle eat they eat wrongfully? Are they not eating what is rightfully theirs?³⁷⁷ Did not the Holy

³⁷⁶ Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 44.9. As will be discussed more fully below, the characteristic practice of reading the biblical text "midrashically" is exemplified through the way in which both Lot's words and Lot's thoughts are added to the text to give support for his rejection. Ithamar Gruenwald, "Midrash and the 'Midrashic Condition': Preliminary Considerations" in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought and History*. ed. Michael Fishbane New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 7, comments that midrashic readings entail, "more than a concern for lexicological or plain-sense meaning of a text or piece of information. What really matters, therefore, is not the mere act of understanding texts, but the creation of the meaning that is attached to them."

³⁷⁷ Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit* (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1985), 126, comments regarding this, "The shepherds quarreled over the violation of the prohibition against robbery...It was the sin of robbery which separated Lot from Abram both in the physical and moral sense."

One, blessed be He, say thus to Abraham: Unto thy seed will I give this Land? Behold, eventually he will die without children. And Lot, who is his brother's son will be his heir.

5.5.3 Lot as Heir

It is clear from the biblical text that Abram has no children and thus for the rabbis the logical conclusion is that Lot's herders assumed that Lot would fill that void. But how does one respond to the assertion that Lot will be Abram's heir? The key lies in the phrase, "but the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land" (Gen 13:7). Surely, Abram's descendants had been promised the Land. But when would that take place? Since Genesis does not give a final answer to the question, the rabbis read into the proposed dialogue a reference to the future conquest of Canaan:

Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to them: "Thus did I say to him [Abram]: Unto your descendants have I given this land" When? When the seven nations are uprooted from it. Now, however, "And the Canaanites and Perizzites are dwelling in the land:" so far they still have a right in the land. (*Genesis Rabbah* 41.5)

Pesikta Rabbati (3.3) again echoes the same tradition but has a much more expanded version of what God says. In this passage, there is specific reference to God speaking directly to Lot's herders and thus answering, in a sense, on behalf of Abram's herders. What is most striking about God's response, however, is the distinction made between Abram and Lot. God himself provides an ethical and relational analysis of Lot in comparison to Abram:

True, I told Abraham that I would give the Land to his children—to his children—not to this wicked Lot, as you think. But even though I told Abraham that I would give the Land to his children, when did I intend to do so? Only after I had driven the Canaanites and the Perizzites out of the Land. As yet, however, I have given no children to Abraham, and the Canaanites and the Perizzites are still in the Land. The Land still has them as masters over it, and yet you make such wild claims to its ownership!

God has declared Lot unfit both ethically and relationally to be Abram's heir.³⁷⁸ The conversation between the herders is founded upon the kinship connection between Abram and Lot. As the conversation unfolds the reader is told that, though Lot is connected, there is also marked separation between Abram and Lot and between their descendants. Given the connection between Abram and Lot, it became necessary for interpreters to demonstrate Lot's illegitimacy.³⁷⁹ Rabbinic interpreters, more so than *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, shifted the focus of the story from the problematic striving of Abram's herders to Lot and his herders' unethical behavior. In contrast to *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, the rabbis seem to nuance the discussion of Lot as potential heir. This is most evident in the way Lot's herders are said to believe that Lot is the heir. Furthermore, the rabbinic writers continue to narrow the focus to Lot's illegitimacy as the heir by highlighting—even creating—his ethical failures. So while there are more subtle shifts in this direction in the earlier traditions, the shift is much more pronounced here as Lot is unmistakably characterized as one who is unfit to be part of the promise.

5.5.4 Abram's Decision to Separate

Following the mention of strife between the herders, Genesis 13 tells of Abram's remark that he and Lot separate. What precedes that decision to separate, however, is a statement by Abram which couches the separation in the language of

³⁷⁸ In *Genesis Rabbah* 44.11 one reads that when the "word of Yhwh" came to Abram in Genesis 15 that one of the things spoken was, "Lot is accursed, he shall not be Abram's heir." The footnote in Soncino, 367 n. 4, remarks, "This is a play on words, Lot is *liṭa*, accursed."

³⁷⁹ Both his ethical and relational distinction will be further elaborated below.

brotherhood (Gen 13:8).³⁸⁰ Why does Abram call Lot his brother? While the language of brotherhood is absent in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, rabbinic interpreters were forced to deal explicitly with this terminology. Rabbi Eliezer discusses Abram's use of "brothers" in the same context as the subsequent use of "brother" by Laban in reference to Jacob in Gen 29:15. He justifies Laban's calling Jacob his brother based upon the prior portrayal of Abram and Lot's relationship in terms of brotherhood. He comments:

This teaches you that the son of a man's sister is like his son, and the son of a man's brother is like his brother. Where do we learn (this)? From Abraham, our father, because it is said, "And Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife...for we are brothers.'" Another verse, "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive." Was he his brother? Was he not the son of his brother? But it teaches you that the sons of a man's brother are like his own brothers.³⁸¹

In *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber), the language of brotherhood is one way Abram demonstrates his humility: "Was he Lot's brother? Look, however, at the humility of our father Abraham after all the strife that they had had with him...Our father Abraham did not remember the strife but called him his brother" (3.16.4). Similarly, in *Aggadat Bereshit* (13) Abram's use of "brother" reflects Abram's righteousness and mercy: "Abraham did not recall this (the strife), but called him 'my brother.'"

³⁸⁰ Though the biblical text gives no explicit indication of strife between Abram and Lot, in *Genesis Rabbah* we read: "Just as there was strife between the herders of Abraham and the herders of Lot, so there was strife between Abraham and Lot" (*Genesis Rabbah* 41.6). Likewise, *Pesikta Rabbati* (3.3) notes: "Even as there was strife among the herders, so there was strife between Abraham and Lot. And the proof? The plea, 'Let there be no strife, please, between me and you.'" It was clear from the analysis above that, for the rabbinic writers, the strife was brought on by the actions of Lot and his herders. *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (9.82-7) connects the conflict between Abram and Lot's herders to the phrase in Ex 15:15, "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab are gripped with trembling. All of Canaan's inhabitants are melted away." Why would these nations, specifically Moab, be so terrified? The *Mekhilta* states, "You might think because the Israelites are come to take possession of our land. But has it not already been said; Do not harass Moab, etc. And it also says: And when you come opposite the children of Ammon, etc. How then can Scripture say: The leaders of Moab are gripped with trembling...They said: Now the Israelites have reawaken the strife that was between our father and their father as it is said, And there was strife between the herders of Abram's livestock, etc." Translation from: *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, trans. Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 3 vols (Philadelphia: JPS, 1976).

³⁸¹ Translation from: *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (the chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) According to the Text of Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna*, trans. Gerald Friedlander (New York: Hermon, 1965).

Genesis Rabbah (41.6) provides a rather unique answer to the question “was he (Lot) then his brother?” The question of brotherhood is explained not in kinship categories but rather in terms of their physical likeness: “he called him so because his features resembled his own.”³⁸²

Abram, in the end, decides that he and Lot need to separate. While Philo perceived Abram and Lot’s ethical contrast as justification for separation, and the Talmud places blame for the separation on Lot, the midrash provides a reading which connects the separation to their relational distinction. In *Genesis Rabbah* (41.6) we read: “R. Helbo said: Not הבדל is written but הפרד: Just as a פרדה cannot develop semen, so is it impossible for the man to mix with the seed of Abraham.” *Pesikta Rabbati* (3.3) echoes the same tradition, where Abram bases his desire to separate from Lot on his desire to keep the bloodline pure:

The ordinary word הבדל for separate yourself is not written here. Instead the word הפרד is written, which according to R. Helbo, suggests that Abraham said to Lot: “As the mule [פרדה] does not accept semen and does not form an embryo, so shall my seed not mix with your seed.”

I noted in my exegetical analysis that Lot does not have the proper genealogical connections. This is made emphatically clear by the rabbis. If there was any doubt that Lot may somehow have a claim to the land because of his connection to Abram, it has been unmistakably removed because of his true status as an outsider.³⁸³ Lot’s real connection, for the midrashic exegetes, is not to Abram, but is, as will be discussed below, to Sodom.

5.5.5 He that Separates Rejects and Is to Be Rejected

While Abram’s remark, ואם־השמאל ואימנה ואם־הימין ואשמאילה, appears to simply be his way of saying, “If you go one way I will go the other to ensure equal pasturage

³⁸² Literally, “features of his face were similar to him” לקסתר פניו דומה לו

³⁸³ Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 44.11

for both of us,” interpreters read this as Abram’s way of securing the land for himself by “making” Lot move out of the land. This securing of the land for himself appears to be a reflection of the necessity of separating from Lot from an ethical standpoint, but also from a relational standpoint given the comments above:

He said to him: “If you go to the left, I go to the south, while if I go to the south, you go to the left, so that in either case I go to the south.” R. Johanan said: “This may be compared to two men who had two stacks, one of wheat and the other of barley. One said to the other, ‘If the wheat is mine, then the barley is yours, while if the barley is yours the wheat is mine; in either case then the wheat is mine.’” R. Hanina b. Isaac said: “It is not written *ואשמאלה* but *ואשמאילה*: in all events I will make that man go left.” (*Genesis Rabbah* 41.7)

Because *ואשמאילה* is a *hiphil* of *שמאל* the rabbis are reading this as Abram actually “causing” Lot to go to the “left.”

It has been clear that one of the most prominent ways interpreters have read the separation of Abram and Lot is through the lens of ethical categories. These categories of righteous and unrighteous are a reflection not simply of the moral quality of the individual in question but, more telling, a reflection of their relationship to the proper kinship line. Immediately following Abram’s offer the text says, *וישא-לוט את-עיניו*. As with the Targums and the Talmud, midrashic exegesis provides a negative reading of Lot’s look. Like the Talmud, it is connected to the actions of Potiphar’s wife:

R. Nahman b. Hanan said: Whoever is fired with immoral desire is eventually fed with his own flesh. R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: The whole of this verse connotes immoral desire [*ערוה*].³⁸⁴ Thus: “And Lot lifted up his eyes,” as you read, “And his master’s wife lifted up her eyes to Joseph.” (*Genesis Rabbah* 41.7)³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Whereas the Talmud (*b. Naz* 23a) used a more general term for sin (*עבירה*) the midrash here specifically describes Lot’s look as being “obscene” (*ערוה*). The use of *ערוה*, which can also mean “nakedness” (Jastrow, 1114) is most likely an explicit connection to Lot’s later activity with his daughters in the cave.

³⁸⁵ Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 50.9 where Lot’s desire to separate from Abram is applied to his desire for his daughters.

Because the reference to lifting up of the eyes in Gen 39:7 has a negative connotation, the midrash, as with the previously discussed Talmud, reads a negative connotation into Lot's action here.³⁸⁶ *Pesikta Rabbati* follows the same tradition noting that Lot "cast his eyes upon wantonness" (3.3). *Aggadat Bereshit* (25 B) likewise reads immoral desire into Lot's action but also connects it to the birth of his sons in Genesis 19:

From the beginning, when he was with Abraham, he longed for promiscuity, when he said to him: Let there be no strife between you and me. [First it says] Separate yourself from me; and immediately [thereafter]: Lot cast his eyes. "Casting the eyes" is none other than the longing for promiscuity, as is stated: "And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph." (Gen. 39:7) "Lot looked about him, and saw that the plain of the Jordan was all watered like the garden of the Lord": "For a prostitute's fee is only a loaf of bread" (Prov. 6:26). "The Jordan was all watered": "So they made their father drink wine that night" (Gen. 19:33). Because he longed for promiscuity from the beginning, Abraham said: "Separate yourself from me." Lot thought that nobody knew when he sinned.³⁸⁷

Likewise, one finds in *Midrash Tanhuma* (Yelammedenu) the connection between Lot's lifting of his eyes and his eventual choice of Sodom as reflecting his depravity. It is also a reflection of his true character exemplified in his name:

Wicked men...are degraded through their eyes, as it is said: "And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of the Jordan." This refers to Sodom, which had been previously selected by Abraham, but to which Lot went, and where he behaved as they did. That is why his name was Lot. For Lot means accursed, and that is what happened to him. (9.6)³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ For discussion of the "interspersal hermeneutic" in midrashic interpretations, see: Moshe Idel, "Midrash vs. Other Jewish Hermeneutics" in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought and History*, ed. Michael Fishbane (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993) 45-58. He comments, 52, "Midrash is not only a verse-centered type of exegesis but an interspersal type of hermeneutic as well—one that explores the significance of an obscure, controversial text by means of another obscure, or less obscure, text. Interesting literary achievements of midrashic discourse emerge precisely from the interval created by ambiguities stemming from obscurities in some aspects of various biblical verses." For discussion of what Boyarin calls the "ideological intertextual code of the rabbinic culture" see: Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

³⁸⁷ Lieve Teugels, *Aggadat Bereshit: Translated from the Hebrew with an Introduction and Notes*, JCPS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 79, comments, "The midrash connects the two forms of the verb שָׁקַט : 'to water', appearing in the two verses. Because of the connotation of promiscuity which 'giving to drink' has in Gen. 19:33, the fruitfulness of the Jordan River described in Gen. 13:10 receives the same connotation."

³⁸⁸ Translations from: Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma – Yelammedenu Genesis and Exodus*.

While here Lot is said to behave as the Sodomites did, earlier, one finds that Lot not only knew of the sinfulness of Sodom³⁸⁹ but chose to live there “so that he might behave as they did” (4.12).³⁹⁰

Pesikta Rabbati (3.3) reflects a variant, and quite humorous, interpretation which builds on the notion that Lot was lifting up his eyes “lustfully.” Commenting on the description of the plain we read:

And the verse goes on to say of Lot that he beheld all the round plain of the Jordan, its roundness conveying a suggestion to him “of a whorish woman, of rounded buttocks” (Prov. 6:26). The verse says further, where every woman deserved the waters (Gen. 13:10), implying that all the women of the plain were whoring women, and should, like women suspected of adultery, have been put to the ordeal of drinking the bitter waters of the curse. So taught R. Simeon ben Yohai.

The connection to Prov 6:26 here and in *Aggadat Bereshit* is intriguing and is also reflected in *Genesis Rabbah* (41.7). In the Proverbs passage one reads, “For the price of a harlot is a loaf (ככר) of bread.” The play on words then revolves around the mention that the Jordan Plain is literally the ככר הירדן.³⁹¹ The rabbinic writers see the mention of the “round of bread” in Proverbs in relation to the purchasing of a harlot as connecting the “round” plain Lot chooses with his desire for all things lustful. Lot’s choice then, according to the reading, doesn’t simply reflect his pragmatic concern for his family and livestock. Rather, it reflects his selfish, lustful character as we read in *Genesis Rabbah* (41.7), “He was like a man who covets³⁹² his mother’s dowry.” The

³⁸⁹ The lure of Sodom is exemplified in the midrash which highlights the tension between Sodom’s appeal and its repugnance: “There was no city more wicked than Sodom: when a man was evil he was called a Sodomite; and there was no nation more cruel than the Amorites; when a man was cruel he was called an Amorite. R. Isai said: ‘There was no city better than Sodom, for Lot searched through all the cities of the plain and found none like Sodom. Thus these people were the best of all’ (*Genesis Rabbah* 41.7).

³⁹⁰ The midrash subsequently links Lot’s desire to behave as the people of Sodom to his willingness to allow his daughters to be abused by the mob in Genesis 19.

³⁹¹ Ibn Ezra comments, “ככר means an area with plants. The כ is doubled in ככר. On the other hand, it is possible that one כ has been dropped in כר גרדב (Isaiah 30:23).”

³⁹² Literally “chooses” דבחר. Thus Sokoloff, *Palestinian*, 90, reads this as “like one who chooses his mother’s *ketubba*.”

point being that Lot desired the lewd and immoral atmosphere of Sodom as if it were his inheritance.

Above, I noted that the Talmud characterizes Lot as one who “snarls against all sound wisdom.” *Genesis Rabbah* (41.7) goes further and more sharply condemns Lot by highlighting his thought process: “He betook himself from the Ancient of the world, saying, I want neither Abraham nor his God.”³⁹³ The rabbinic writers, as with earlier traditions, shifted the focus away from Abram’s imperative that he and Lot separate to Lot’s choice to separate. Lot has chosen to leave because he has no desire to be with Abram or serve his God. Neusner’s translation captures this well: “I want no part of Abraham or of his God.”³⁹⁴ I noted earlier that in both *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* Abram’s offer of land to Lot was conveniently absent. This, in turn, enabled the reader to focus the blame for the separation solely on Lot. The rabbis deal with the offer in a different way by shifting the focus from Abram’s offer to the necessity of the call for separation. Thus, the ambiguities surrounding Abram’s problematic offer of land have been resolved given Lot’s moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Abram had to separate because of who Lot was.

5.5.6 Separation and Promise

After Abram settles in Canaan and Lot settles “in the cities of the plain” Yhwh comes to Abram and reaffirms his promises from 12:7. There is a tradition which notes the fact that God reaffirms the promises only *after* Lot has departed as a final indicator, in Genesis 13, of the questionable character of Lot and the necessity to

³⁹³ אִי אִיפְשִׁי לֹא בְּאַבְרָהָם וְלֹא בְּאַלְוֵהוּ. The phrase in *Tanhuma* Noah (3) is illustrative of the contrast between Lot and those who follow Torah, “The Torah is not to be found with him who seeks the lusts of the world, pleasure, glory, greatness in this world, only with him who kills himself, so far as living in this world is concerned, as it says, ‘This is the Law, if a man dies (Num. 19:14).’” As cited in: C.G. Montefiore and H.M.J. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 140.

³⁹⁴ Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, A New American Translation Vol. 2* (Atlanta, Scholars Press), 1985.

separate from him. As I argued above, the fact that God reaffirms the promise to Abram only after Lot has left may be a way of subtly highlighting Lot's relational separation from his uncle. Later interpreters make this unmistakably clear. *Genesis Rabbah* makes the following interpretation of "Yhwh said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him:"

R. Judah said: There was anger against our father Abraham when his nephew Lot parted from him. "He makes everyone cleave," said the Holy One, blessed be He, "yet he does not cause his nephew to cleave." R. Nehemiah said: There was anger against the Patriarch Abraham when Lot his nephew went with him. "I promised him, 'To your descendants I have given this land'" (Gen. 15:8), said God, "yet he attached Lot to himself; if so, let him go and procure two common soldiers!" This explains the text: "Cast out the scorner" (Prov. 22:10), which alludes to Lot; "and contention will go out." (41.8)

While the rabbinic interpretation espoused here doesn't emphatically make a connection between the separation and subsequent promise,³⁹⁵ *Pesikta Rabbati* and *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber) do just that:

R. Eleazer ben Pedat said in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra: See to what extent wicked Lot deprived righteous Abraham of the Divine Word. As long as Lot was attached to Abraham, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not speak to Abraham. Only after Lot separated from Him, did the Divine Word leap out to Abraham. (*Pesikta Rabbati* 3.3)

During the whole time that Lot was attached to Abraham, you never find a divine oracle being conferred upon Abraham. As soon as Lot was separated from him, the divine word was conferred upon him, as stated, "Then the Lord said unto Abraham after Lot had departed from him." (*Midrash Tanhuma* 7.21.1)³⁹⁶

In light of my previous discussion of the necessity of Abram and Lot's separation, the interpretation in *Midrash Tanhuma* is intriguing as it is based on the understanding that Israelites "are not to associate with the wicked ones because the Holy One will

³⁹⁵ Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 96, notes that the commentary here doesn't appear to connect to Gen 13:14 but "one may make the case that Abram's behavior with Lot, separating from him to avoid strife, is what caused God to make the promise to Abram stated in Gen 13:14. So thematically the two passages do cleave to the base verse, even though in form they appear distinct."

³⁹⁶ Cf. *Midrash Tanhuma* (Yelammedenu) 7.11.

not assign his name in their midst.”³⁹⁷ Thus in both *Pesikta Rabbati* and *Midrash Tanhuma*, Abram cannot hear from God if “wicked” Lot is around.³⁹⁸ As a result, the separation of Abram from Lot becomes something that is not simply done out of convenience but ultimately out of necessity.

There are two disparate foci espoused here. One focuses on the problematic nature of Abram’s separation from Lot in light of the promised blessings to the nations through Abram and the second focuses on the problematic nature of Lot’s accompaniment with Abram in light of God’s initial command to “go away from your land, go away from your kin and go away from your father’s household” (Gen 12:1). Note at the end of the *Genesis Rabbah* quotation the connection between Lot and the “scorner.” Lot is the cause of the problems in the land. Abram’s separation from Lot is something that, morally and religiously, had to happen. In order for God to fully bless Abram Lot had to be totally out of the picture.

From the above discussion it seems clear that Jewish commentators had a great interest in Genesis 13. It also seems clear that the main interpretive focus was twofold: (1) solve the problematic portions regarding Abram (striving herders, offer of land, accompaniment of Lot) and (2) characterize Lot as the ethical opposite of Abram.

5.6 Two Stories of Separation – Lot and Ruth

As noted earlier the rabbinic writers, more often than not, viewed Lot’s decision to separate from Abram as a reflection of his character. His decision to separate is tantamount to his rejection of Abram, Yhwh and Torah. *Genesis Rabbah* noted that Lot utterly rejected both God and Abram. The Talmud, as noted above,

³⁹⁷ *Midrash Tanhuma* also mentions, in this context, the necessity of Jacob’s separation from Laban.

³⁹⁸ Rashi also notes the connection between Lot’s departure and Yhwh’s address to Abram. He notes that as long as wicked Lot is with Abram, the word of Yhwh could not come to him.

paints Lot as one who “snarled against all sound wisdom.” Here, I want to examine the account of Abram and Lot’s separation by comparing it with the account of Ruth, Orpah and Naomi in Ruth 1. Both are centered around stories of separation, though the stories end up in different places. Both are also linked through the shared genealogical focus on Moab—Lot is the father of the eponymous ancestors of Moab and Ammon, and Ruth, the text continually reminds us, is a Moabite. Both stories are also linked because they deal with the response of “Moabites” to a request by an “Israelite” for separation. The rabbinic commentators, while not explicitly reading Ruth as a contrast to Lot, end up doing so, implicitly, by the way in which they describe their respective “separation” stories. This comparison shows how rabbinic ideology functioned as the account of Abram and Lot’s separation was interpreted.

I will begin by discussing some parallels between the two accounts:

Genesis 13:8-9

And Abram said to Lot, ‘Please, let there be no strife between me and between you and between my herders and between your herders for we are men who are brothers. Is not all the land before you? Separate please from me. If to the left then I will go to the right; if to the right, then I will go to the left.

Ruth 1:8

Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May Yhwh treat you with *hesed*, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.”

First, it should be noted that both the Genesis story and the account in Ruth deal with kinship relationships. One is literal blood relatives (Lot and Abram) and the other is kinship ties forged through the bonds of marriage (Ruth, Orpah and Naomi). Second, one member of the kinship group seeks separation from the other member of the kinship group.³⁹⁹ While the phraseology is obviously different the desire is the same in both accounts.

Next I will take a brief look at the responses of Lot, Orpah and Ruth:

³⁹⁹ Both Abram and Naomi use imperatives. הפַּרַד (*niphal impv*) and לַכְנָה (*qal impv*) respectively.

Genesis 13:10-11

And Lot lifted his eyes and he saw all the plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, before Yhwh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Yhwh, like the land of Egypt as you come to Zoar. And Lot chose, for himself, all the plain of the Jordan and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus each man separated from his brother.

Ruth 1:10-11a; 14-19a

They said to her, “Surely we will return with you to your people.” But Naomi replied, “Return my daughters...” Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. She said, “Behold your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” But Ruth said, “Please don’t implore me to abandon you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay; your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May Yhwh do so to me and more if even death separates me from you.” And when she saw that she was determined to go with her, she ceased to speak to her. So the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem.

There are a few things which immediately present themselves in light of the current discussion. The first is that while both Orpah and Ruth, initially, desire to stay with Naomi we have no such mention of any desire on Lot’s part to stay with Abram. Abram doesn’t need to plead with Lot beyond his initial request that they part. Second, while Lot chooses a particular land in which to dwell, Orpah returns to a particular land to dwell. Lot travels “east” and according to Naomi, Orpah has traveled, “back to her people and her gods.” Third, the accounts of separation end on contrasting notes. While Orpah and Lot seem to parallel one another with their movement away from the “Israelite” characters in the stories, Ruth and Lot are contrasted with one another through the reference to what they and their “Israelite” counterpart do. Ruth “went on” with Naomi, and Lot “separated from” his brother.

Upon the death of her sons, Naomi calls for her daughters-in-law to separate from her, to return to the land of Moab. After Ruth and Orpah refuse her initial two

requests, she states a third time, “Return, my daughters. Go...” (1:12).⁴⁰⁰ The midrash on Ruth notes that the three requests by Naomi “correspond to the three times that people are to turn a proselyte away,” thereby placing the request for separation in the category of conversion. It continues, “if he is insistent beyond that point, he is to be accepted” (*Ruth Rabbah* 16:2).⁴⁰¹ Orpah is no longer insistent and travels back “to her people and to her gods,” or as the midrash interprets: “Because she has gone back to her people, she has gone back also to her gods.” The implication is clear: Orpah wants neither Naomi nor her God. Orpah’s decision to accept the call for separation reflects the fact that she is not willing to submit to God, she is not willing to convert. The result is that she is gang raped:

Said R. Isaac, For that entire night that she departed from her mother-in-law, the gentile semen of a hundred men was mixed up with her: “And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion out of the ranks of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 17:23). What is written for “ranks” is so spelled as to suggest a sexual relationship, that is, the semen of a hundred uncircumcised men that was mixed up in her. R. Tanhuma said, “Even a dog (got involved): And the Philistine said, Am I a dog?” (*Ruth Rabbah* 18:2)

While nothing is explicitly stated in *Ruth Rabbah* about the connection between the rejection of God and his people (one could read here, Torah) and the impending consequences, it seems clear the writers want the reader to make such a connection. To reject God and his people, by accepting a call for separation, is to open oneself up to all kinds of evil—and the consequences of rejection are dire indeed. In regard to Orpah and Lot, the consequences of rejecting God and his people involve the birth of Israel’s enemies—in Orpah’s case, with Goliath. If one rejects God and his people, it is tantamount to being an enemy of God and of God’s people.

⁴⁰⁰ There is a double imperative here in Naomi’s call for separation (שבנה and לכן are both *qal* imperatives). The first is a repetition of Naomi’s imperative in 1:11 (שבנה בנתי).

⁴⁰¹ Translation from: Jacob Neusner, *Ruth Rabbah: An Analytical Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). Neusner dates *Ruth Rabbah* to the later fifth or sixth centuries.

Returning to Genesis 13, the fact that Lot decided to leave on the initial call for separation demonstrates, for rabbinic interpreters, that Lot “wants neither Abram nor his God.” Unlike Orpah, Lot showed no desire to remain. Ruth, on the other hand, willingly rejected Naomi’s call for separation and therefore, for the interpreters, becomes a foil of both Orpah and Lot. The midrash breaks down each part of Ruth’s reply to Naomi’s statement: “Behold, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law” (1:15). Ruth replies, “Please don’t implore me to abandon you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay; your people will be my people and your God my God” (1:16). The midrash takes each phrase in this text and applies to it Ruth’s desire to convert and submit to Torah:⁴⁰²

“Under all circumstances I intend to convert, but it is better that it be through your action and not through that of another.” When Naomi heard her say this, she began laying out for her the laws that govern proselytes. She said to her, “My daughter, it is not the way of Israelite women to go to theaters and circuses put on by idolaters.” She said to her, “Where you go I will go.” She said to her, “My daughter, it is not the way of Israelite women to live in a house that lacks a mezuzah.” She said to her, “Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people.” This refers to the penalties and admonitions against sinning. “And your God my God”: this refers to the other religious duties. Another interpretation of the statement, “for where you go I will go”: to the tent of meeting, Gilgal, Shiloh, Nob, Gibeon, and the eternal house. “...and where you lodge I will lodge”: “I shall spend the night concerned about the offerings.” “...your people shall be my people”: “so nullifying my idol.” “...and your God my God”: “to pay a full recompense for my action.” (*Ruth Rabbah* 20:3)

The focus of the story shifts from the familial connection between Ruth and Naomi to the desire for Ruth to “convert.” The story then becomes more about Ruth’s commitment to Torah than her commitment to Naomi. As Neusner notes, “her

⁴⁰² Note also the comment concerning proselytes in *Midrash Tanhuma (Buber)*, “Dearer to God is the proselyte who has come of his own accord than all the crowds of Israelites who stood before Mount Sinai. Had the Israelites not witnessed the thunder, lightning, quaking mountain and sounding trumpets they would not have accepted the Torah. But the proselyte, who saw not one of these things, came and surrendered himself to the Holy One, blessed be He, and took upon himself the yoke of heaven. Can anyone be dearer to God than this man?” (6.1.32).

personal loyalty to Naomi is shown not to be the principal motivation.⁴⁰³ The central thrust of Lot and Orpah's separation was their rejection of God and his people, the implication being that they rejected Torah. The central thrust of Ruth's accompaniment with Naomi is her acceptance of and submission to Torah. While Lot wanted "*neither* Abram nor his God," Ruth clearly wanted "*both* Naomi and her God."

As I noted earlier, the verb פָּרַד appears three times in Genesis 13. The first use is in Abram's call for separation in 13:9 (הִפְרַד נָא מֵעָלַי). The second use is in the context of Abram and Lot's parting in 13:11 (וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אַחִיו) and the third is the context of the promise in 13:14 (אַחֲרַי הִפְרַדְדִּי לְיֹט מֵעַמּוֹ) which comes after the separation is complete. Thus the repetition of the verb פָּרַד becomes an important literary device for highlighting their separation. I noted above that one of the contrasting elements in the stories of Lot and Ruth is the lack of any desire, on Lot's part, to stay with Abram. Incidentally, Ruth phrases her desire to stay with Naomi with an oath⁴⁰⁴ in the language of life and death: "Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. Thus may Yhwh do to me, and worse, if even death separates me and you" (1:17).⁴⁰⁵ Ruth's final plea to stay with Naomi in 1:17 provides an interesting textual contrast with Lot through the use of יִפְרִיד in her final statement. Lot is pictured as one who separates (פָּרַד) from Abram without challenge, Ruth is pictured as one who won't even let death separate (פָּרַד) her from Naomi.

⁴⁰³ Neusner, *Ruth Rabbah*, 80.

⁴⁰⁴ וְכֵן יִסִּיף כִּי Cf. 1 Sam 3:17; 2 Sam 3:9; 1 Kg 2:23; 2 Kg 6:31. See also, *HALOT*, 418.

⁴⁰⁵ Literally, "between me and between you."

5.6.1 Lot as Man, Ruth as Woman

As Neusner correctly notes, the story of Ruth focuses on the issues surrounding Israel's relationship with Moab.⁴⁰⁶ There is a real tension in that neither Lot, nor Ruth, are truly "Israelite." Lot, unlike Ruth, is a blood relative of the supreme Israelite ancestor, Abraham. Ruth, unlike Lot, ends up being exalted both in the Hebrew Bible and in later Jewish interpretation as one who opted not to separate but rather to submit. One of the things that Jewish interpreters had to wrestle with is the Moabite genealogy of the quintessential king of Israel, David. If, on the one hand, Moab is to be rejected (Deut 23) how can Moab, on the other hand, still be connected? The answer lies in the command in Deut 23:3: "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of Yhwh. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of Yhwh forever." When Boaz asks the "next of kin" about the possibility of his marriage to Ruth the next of kin expresses no desire to marry Ruth but willingly allows Boaz to do so. Jewish interpreters see in this a lack of full understanding of the law expressed by the "next of kin":

He (*the next of kin*) was dumb as to the words of the Torah. He thought: "The ancients (*Mahlon and Chilion*) died only because they took them as wives. Shall I go and take her as a wife? God forbid that I take her for a wife! I am not going to disqualify my seed, I will not disqualify my children." But he did not know that the law had been innovated: "A male Ammonite but not a female Ammonite; a male Moabite but not a female Moabite." (*Ruth Rabbah* 68:3)

What we have here is the legitimization of Boaz's marriage to Ruth because marrying a Moabite is not contrary to the law of separation. A Moabite woman may enter the assembly of Yhwh and therefore marriage to a Moabite woman is justifiable.

Furthermore, as a man who exemplified Torah obedience, much like Abraham, Boaz would not have engaged in something contrary to the clear dictates of Torah. Lot's

⁴⁰⁶ Jacob Neusner, *The Theology of Rabbinic Judaism: Prolegomena* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 170.

separation from Abram was justified by his rejection of Torah which is a reflection of the Deuteronomic law prohibiting *male* Moabites and Ammonites from the assembly. Ruth's inclusion into the Israelite family is rooted in her willingness to submit to Torah which is also a reflection of the Deuteronomic law—though reflective of the fact that *women*, only, are not to be prohibited from worship.

The biblical text of Deut 23:4 does not make such an explicit distinction between male and female: לא־יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל יהוה גם דור עשירי לא־יבא להם בקהל יהוה עד־עולם. If one reads the initial 3ms verb (יבא) in “no Ammonite or Moabite will enter” as specifying exclusivity rather than inclusivity, it becomes possible to read the opening statement as: “He will not enter, an Ammonite or Moabite, the assembly of Yhwh.” Furthermore, the terms עמוני ומואבי are both masculine in gender. In light of the “gendered” language of the text, rabbinic interpreters argued that only males are being spoken of and therefore Boaz's marriage to Ruth is not outside the boundaries of written Torah. This is reflected in the Mishnah: “The male Ammonite and Moabite are prohibited, and the prohibition concerning them is forever. But their women are permitted forthwith” (*Yev.* 8:3).⁴⁰⁷ The implication being that the women are accepted upon conversion. There is, therefore, allowance made for the conversion of females but not the conversion of males. It comes as no surprise that Lot would be seen as utterly rejecting Torah because there is no possibility of his inclusion in the first place.

The *Sifre to Deuteronomy*⁴⁰⁸ (Piska 249) follows this same line of argumentation when discussing who should be prohibited from the assembly:

A male Ammonite, but not a female one, a male Moabite but not a female one; so taught R. Judah. The sages say: “Because they did not meet you with bread and water” (23:5). Who is it that goes out to meet guests? Men, not women.

⁴⁰⁷ Translation from Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁴⁰⁸ Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 273, date the final redaction of the Sifre to the 3rd century.

One might reason that since in the case of the bastard, where “forever” is not used, both women and men are included, certainly in the case of Ammonites and Moabites, where “forever” is used, both women and men should be included. Or one might reason the other way around: If in the case of Ammonites and Moabites, where “forever” is used, women are not included along with men, should not the same apply in the case of the bastard, where “forever” is not used, so that women should not be included along with men? Therefore, the verse states, “A bastard shall not enter” (23:3) – whether male or female; thus after the Scripture has added, namely that if in the case of the bastard, where “forever” is not used, both women and men are included, should not the same apply to the case of the Ammonites and Moabites, where “forever” is used, so that both women and men should be included? Hence that is why Scripture uses the masculine gender Ammonite, not “Ammonitess.”⁴⁰⁹

One of the issues regarding such a reading is that there doesn't appear to be any distinction made between male and female in Nehemiah's restatement of the prohibition in Neh 13:1-3:

On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. So when they heard the law, they excluded all people of foreign origin from Israel.

In Nehemiah it would seem, especially given the focus on the problematic issue of intermarriage, that the writer envisions all Ammonites and Moabites, both male and female, as “people of foreign origin” who out of necessity must be excluded. Given the desire to safeguard David's bloodline, Ruth is read as righteous in her actions and decisions while there is no safeguard for Moabite men, or their ancestor Lot. It is, therefore, a logical deduction that they, or specifically he, is not worthy to be united with Abraham and his descendants.

The rejection of Lot and the acceptance of Ruth based upon their respective rejection of and submission to Torah is intriguing not simply within their own context but also within the wider context of the Hebrew Bible and midrashic comments on

⁴⁰⁹ Translation from Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

Moab and Ammon. Perhaps the most telling in this regard comes from *Sifre to Deuteronomy*. Here God offers the Torah to the nations surrounding Israel beginning with Seir (Esau) and ending with Paran (Ishmael). The nations which fall between these two are Moab and Ammon. The kinship connection here is clear. Esau and Ishmael are relatives of Israel—so, too, Lot and his descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites. The *Sifre* notes:

He then went to the descendants of Ammon and Moab and asked them, “Will you accept the Torah?” They replied, “What is written in it?” He said, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod. 20:13). They replied, “Adultery is their (our) very essence, as it is said, ‘Thus the two daughters of Lot came to be with child by their father.’” (Gen 19:36)⁴¹⁰

There is a similar tradition reflected in the text of the *Mekhilta* and its commentary on Ex 20:2 (the first commandment):

He revealed himself to the descendants of Ammon and Moab saying to them, “Will you accept the Torah?” They said to him, “What is written in it?” He said to them, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod. 20:12). They said to him that they were all children of adulterers, as it is said, “Both of the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.” (Gen. 19:36)⁴¹¹

There are subtle differences here between the comments in the *Sifre* and the *Mekhilta*.

In the *Sifre* adultery appears to be the “way of life” for Moabites and Ammonites and in the *Mekhilta* their adulterous behavior is predetermined by their ancestry.

Regardless of the subtle differences—and they may simply be semantic in nature—what is important in each is that Moab and Ammon were offered Torah but chose to reject it.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ It should be noted that the comments regarding the nations fall in the order of the Ten Commandments, “Esau” – murder; “Moab/Ammon” – adultery; “Ishmael” – stealing. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 33, notes that the order here corresponds to the “order of the three universal prohibitions in Ex 20:13 (murder, adultery, and theft).” Translation is from Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 33.

⁴¹¹ Translation from Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*.

⁴¹² Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 34, notes that the wider context of God’s offer to the nations differs slightly in the *Sifre* and *Mekhilta* as well, “the *Sifre*’s version stresses that God disclosed Himself to each and every nation in actively seeking that they accept His Torah, whereas the *Mekhilta* stresses that God offered the Torah to the nations already knowing that they would not accept it, to prevent their later claiming that they would have accepted it had it been offered to them.”

5.6.2 Reading Lot and Ruth in Rabbinic Interpretation

As I return to my discussion of Lot and Ruth we find that interpreters have read “Torah offers” into both stories of separation. “The exegete,” Milikowsky notes, “is led by the text—and controlled by rabbinic ideology.”⁴¹³ Thus, it is not surprising that Lot, though ambiguous in the biblical text, is recreated in the midrash as an exemplar of Torah rejection, because he separated himself from Abram. Furthermore, given the wider traditions regarding the nations of Moab and Ammon being offered Torah, it is not surprising that Lot rejects Torah, for as the Talmud states:

What is meant by the Biblical text, A brother transgressed against a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle? - A brother transgressed against a strong city refers to Lot who separated himself from Abraham; and their contentions are like the bars of the castle, because he caused contentions between Israel and Ammon, as it is said, an Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord. (*b. Hor. 10b*)

“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city,” refers to Lot who separated from Abraham, “And their contentions are like the bars of a castle,” for he gave rise to contentions [between Israel and Ammon] for An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord. (*b. Naz. 23b*)

Ruth, in contrast, accepts and willfully submits. Lot’s rejection of Torah is, as appears from the discussion above, simply a reflection of his status as an “outsider” and thus he becomes an unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram.

5.7 Concluding Thoughts

It was demonstrated that the problematic issues surrounding Abram (Lot’s accompaniment, striving herders, offer of land) were clearly on the minds of Jewish interpreters as they retold the story to exalt Abram and suppress Lot. Josephus, for example, solved the issue of Lot’s accompaniment via adoption. Furthermore, Lot, it

⁴¹³ Chaim Milikowsky, “Why Did Cain Kill Abel? How Did Cain Kill Abel” in *From Bible to Midrash: Portrayals and Interpretive Practices*, ed. Hanne Trautner-Kromann (Lund: Arcus, 2005), 80. Likewise, Ramon Kasher, “Scripture in Rabbinic Literature” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 577, comments, “the *derash* approach analyses all the expressions and phrases of the Bible, attributing to them meanings in accord with the views of the Sages.”

was shown, became a full-fledged lustful, wicked individual.⁴¹⁴ The tensions in the narrative surrounding Abram are solved through painting Abram as an exemplar of Torah obedience and Lot as an exemplar of Torah rejection.⁴¹⁵ Lot became a “foil” to righteous Abram.

As I move now into early Christian interpretation of Genesis 13, it will be demonstrated that there was, as with Jewish interpreters, a conscious awareness of the potentially problematic portions in the narrative surrounding Abram (Lot’s accompaniment, striving herders, offer of land). As with Jewish interpreters, Christian writers were careful to safeguard Abram both by solving problematic portions (like his taking of Lot) and by highlighting Abram’s righteous behavior as a model for the faithful to emulate. However, Lot—while depicted as making a foolish decision to move near Sodom—is not characterized with the same harsh negativity that one finds in the early Jewish writings, though he is still clearly a “foil” to righteous Abram.

⁴¹⁴ Given the connections that are often made between Genesis 13 and 19 in rabbinic literature, it could be assumed that Genesis 13 is being read in light of Lot’s actions in Genesis 19. If, however, the story of Lot’s separation from Abram has become an account of Torah rejection, as I am arguing here, it may be that Lot’s actions in Genesis 19 are being interpreted through his refusal to submit to Torah.

⁴¹⁵ It is clear that rabbinic writers in both the Tannaitic (10-220 C.E.) and Amoraic (220-500 C.E.) periods had a great interest in Genesis 13. Much of the discussion above falls into the latter time period. One wonders if the vastly negative portrayal of Lot as a rejecter of Torah is in any way a response to the Christian interpretation of Lot as righteous.

6. LOT AS IN-BETWEEN: EARLY CHRISTIAN RECEPTION OF GENESIS 13

Rowan Greer notes that while patristic biblical interpretation certainly functioned to provide warrant for theological views, it also “supplied a warrant for convictions about how Christians should live their lives and was, more than that, an important resource in enabling the moral and spiritual progress of believers.”⁴¹⁶ As I move out of Jewish exegesis and interpretation of Genesis 13 and into early Christian readings of Abram and Lot’s separation, it will be this moral element which will provide the foundation for the vast majority of the ways in which the story is interpreted.⁴¹⁷ Papandrea notes nine major assumptions in patristic exegesis: (1) the divine inspiration of Scripture, including the NT; (2) revelation is progressive; (3) any given text has multiple meanings; (4) paradox is to be embraced, not avoided; (5) patristic exegesis follows the lead of apostolic exegesis; (6) Scripture interprets Scripture; (7) in general, interpretation of the Old Testament was nonliteral; (8) in general, interpretation of the NT was literal; and (9) interpretation is to be done in the context of prayer.⁴¹⁸ Below, I will examine the patristic readings of Genesis 13 under two main categories: (1) patristic interpretation of the separation of Abram and Lot⁴¹⁹ and (2) early Christian art.

⁴¹⁶ James Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation: Two Studies of Exegetical Origins*, LEC 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), 190.

⁴¹⁷ “It is no surprise to find Christian writers using biblical examples in their exhortations. Both Jews and pagans adopted this obvious approach. We should probably think of the Christian sermon and its roots in Jewish synagogue practice where the homiletical use of biblical figures can treat them as models to be followed or cautionary tales to be avoided” (Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, 137).

⁴¹⁸ James L. Papandrea, *Reading the Early Church Fathers* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 125-34. Many of these assumptions will be played out in the interpretation of Genesis 13 outlined below.

⁴¹⁹ Below, I will be focusing my attention on those patristic writers who reference Lot and his characterization in Genesis 13. So while it may appear that I am selecting a few out of a much wider array of interpreters, the reality is that I could find no other direct patristic references to Lot’s characterization in Genesis 13. There are some, like Clement and Irenaeus, who reference the promises to Abram at the close of Genesis 13 but the commentary on Lot in Genesis 13 is limited, as far as I am aware, to those analyzed below.

As with Jewish interpreters, early Christian writers were careful to safeguard Abram both by solving problematic portions, like his taking of Lot, and by highlighting Abram's righteous behavior as a model for the faithful to emulate.⁴²⁰ I noted previously, however, that there is a divergence in reception history with regard to the way in which Lot's characterization in Genesis 13 is understood. While Lot is depicted as unrighteous in Jewish interpretation, there is a decidedly more positive tone to Christian readings.⁴²¹ I argued that Jewish, particularly rabbinic, interpreters were viewing Lot through the lens of conversion and thus understood Lot's separation from Abram as his rejection of Torah. For Christian interpreters, the characterization of Lot cannot simply be confined to the pages of the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament Scriptures must also be allowed to affect one's interpretive decisions. As I did with rabbinic interpreters, I will propose a framework for understanding why Christian interpreters are more positive in their interpretation of Lot in Genesis 13. While Jewish interpreters were reading Lot through the lens of conversion, Christian interpreters were reading Lot through the lens of salvation.

6.1 Origen

6.1.1 Lot's Choice of the Jordan Plain

A recurring theme among the early Christian writers is that Lot chose poorly when moving his tent "as far as Sodom." The third century theologian Origen, for example, comments:

Lot was far inferior to Abraham. For if he had not been inferior, he would not have been separate from Abraham nor would Abraham have said to him, "if you go to the right, I will go to the left; if you go to the left, I will go to the

⁴²⁰ Christian writers are, most likely, also influenced by the NT which lauds Abram for his obedience (Heb 11). As I noted earlier, that Abram was partially disobedient in his taking of Lot should not reflect negatively on his willingness to go (which is what Hebrews 11 seems to be focused on) but rather the taking of Lot raises questions about his willingness to leave his father's household.

⁴²¹ It should also be noted that outside of Ambrose and Chrysostom, early Christian writers dealt with Genesis 13 more in bits and pieces as opposed to the more coherent Jewish approaches to the text.

right.” And if he had not been inferior, the land and habitation of Sodom would not have pleased him. (*On Genesis: Homily IV*)⁴²²

Origen’s reading here is intriguing for a couple of reasons. First, he provides a justifiable reason for Abram to tell Lot to separate. Lot is inferior to Abram. How or why Lot is “inferior,” Origen does not say. Given what he will say below about Lot being a kind of “in-between” character, it would seem that Origen is simply saying Lot is not on par with Abram as regards righteousness. The call for separation, however, is no longer based on quarreling herders or desire for grazing area but rather on Lot’s inferiority. Second, Lot’s inferiority is evidenced by his allowing the land of Sodom to “please him.”

In a later homily, Origen again discusses Abram’s call for separation but provides greater clarity on his understanding of Lot in the story line. He envisions him as a kind of “in-between” character, one who is neither as righteous as Abram nor as wicked as the people of Sodom:

He, therefore, was neither such that he should perish among the inhabitants of Sodom, nor was he so great that he could dwell with Abraham in the heights. For if he had been such, Abraham would never have said to him: “If you go to the right, I will go to the left, or if you go to the left, I will go to the right,” nor would the dwellings of Sodom have pleased him. He was, therefore, somewhere in the middle between the perfect and the doomed.⁴²³ (*On Genesis: Homily V*)

Here Origen connects Genesis 13 and Genesis 19. Abram’s call for separation was based upon the fact that Lot was not on par with Abram. Lot, however, was not to be considered unrighteous. While he is not to be counted among the perfect he is, likewise, not to be counted among the doomed.

⁴²² Translations from: Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

⁴²³ Cf. *Philo Abr.* 27.148.

6.2 Ephrem

6.2.1 Lot's Presence with Abram

While Ephrem, writing in the fourth century, does not mention the reason that Abram took Lot, he does note that Lot “believed the promise made to him [Abram]” (*Commentary on Genesis 9.2*).⁴²⁴ Thus, Lot is commended for his decision to go. Lot, like Abram, trusts the promises.

6.2.2 Striving Herders

Ephrem does not discuss the cause of the quarrel or any potential issues that may arise between Abram and Lot, as other interpreters do, but instead sees the movement of Lot's household to Sodom as a way of judging the contentious herders: “Justice sent the contentious servants of Lot to the quarrelsome Sodomites to be chastised along with them and so that Lot might be delivered from them” (*Commentary on Genesis 10.1*). It would appear that, for Ephrem, Lot is totally innocent in the quarrel and his move to Sodom is not the result of a bad, or immoral, decision but rather a way to demonstrate both God's justice and his salvation.

6.2.3 The Call for Separation

Following the mention of the strife, Abram tells Lot they need to separate (Gen 13:8-9). As noted above, the offer of land by Abram is quite problematic. Ephrem focuses not on problems raised by the offer but rather on Abram's generosity in the process when he states: “Although the land had been promised to Abraham, he allowed Lot to choose the land of the Jordan, that is, all the land of Sodom, which was watered by the Jordan” (*Commentary on Genesis 10.1*). Though it isn't exactly clear in the biblical text whether or not Lot ended up dwelling inside or outside of the

⁴²⁴ Translations from: Ephrem, *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*, trans. Edward G. Mathews, Jr. (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

land,⁴²⁵ Ephrem appears to envision Lot as dwelling “in” the Promised Land.

Abram’s generosity is implied in Ephrem’s comment that Abram was willing to allow Lot a portion of the land, even though all of the land had been promised to him alone.

6.3 Jerome

6.3.1 We are Brothers

Jerome, the fourth century interpreter, takes the language of brotherhood in Genesis 13 and 14 and uses it as proof texts for his assertion concerning the perpetual virginity of Mary.⁴²⁶ He writes:

Moreover they are called brethren by kindred who are of one family, that is πατρία, which corresponds to the Latin *paternitas*, because from a single root a numerous progeny proceeds. In Genesis we read, “And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen;⁴²⁷ for we are brethren.” And again, “So Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east: and they separated each from his brother.” Certainly Lot was not Abraham’s brother, but the son of Abraham’s brother Aran. For Terah begat Abraham and Nahor and Aran: and Aran begat Lot.⁴²⁸ Again we read, “And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son.” But if you still doubt whether a nephew can be called a son, let me give you an instance. “And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen.” And after describing the night attack and the slaughter, he adds,

⁴²⁵ See discussion above in my exegetical analysis.

⁴²⁶ Here Jerome’s use of both the “literal” and “spiritual” sense of Scripture is quite evident. Jay notes that while Jerome “scarcely ever troubled to lay out in systematic fashion the rules of his hermeneutic” his exegetical practice is “normally set in the traditional framework of the two great senses of Scripture: the literal sense and the spiritual interpretation” (Pierre Jay, “Jerome” in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, vol 2, ed. Charles Kannengiesser [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 1104). As with Jerome, Augustine, in his *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*, uses the language of brotherhood in Genesis 13 as a proof text for the perpetual virginity of Mary (Cf. *Homilies on John* 2:12-21). For discussion of Jerome’s reading of Genesis as a whole see: C.T.R. Hayward, *St Jerome’s Hebrew Questions on Genesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴²⁷ Vulg. simplifies the verse by removing some of the redundancy, *Unde et facta est rixa inter pastores gregum Abram et Lot* (“and already a quarrel had broken out between Abram’s shepherds and Lot’s”). Translations of the Vulg. are taken from the Knox Bible, 1956. Everson notes that the single use of *inter* is typical of Jerome’s rendering of the *בן...בן* construction. Of the 31 times this construction appears in Hebrew, there are only four occasions where Jerome doubles the preposition *inter*. See discussion in: David L. Everson, “The Vetus Latina and the Vulgate of the Book of Genesis” in *The Book of Genesis Composition, Reception and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen, VTS 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 529.

⁴²⁸ Vulg. Gen 11:27, *Hæ sunt autem generationes Thare: Thare genuit Abram, Nachor et Aran. Porro Aran genuit Lot* (“These are the descendants of Thare; Thare’s sons were called Abram, Nachor and Aran, and Aran had a son called Lot.”)

“And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot.”
(*The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary: Against Helvidius*)⁴²⁹

Jerome’s argument is that the language of brotherhood in the gospels does not need to be taken literally in reference to the “brothers” of Jesus. Lot, after all, is not really Abram’s brother. He is actually a nephew and therefore the language of brotherhood in Genesis 13-14 is not to be understood literally but rather in a broader sense referring to kinship.⁴³⁰

6.3.2 Lot’s Choice

I noted in my analysis of Genesis 13 that Lot does not appear to travel in the direction that Abram offers. Abram said, “left or right” (i.e., north or south) and Lot went east. Jerome uses the illustration of Lot’s choice of the plain in his *Letter to Pammichius* to encourage the recipient to allow those who “turn aside” to go their own way:

Well done. You have surpassed my poor beginning. You have reached the highest point. You have made your way from the root to the top of the tree. You are the first of monks in the first city of the world: you do right therefore to follow the first of the patriarchs. Let Lot, whose name means “one who turns aside” choose the plain and let him follow the left and easy branch of the famous letter of Pythagoras.⁴³¹

There are several important elements to Jerome’s interpretation of Genesis 13 at work here. First, he, like Philo, provides a definition of Lot’s name calling him “one who turns aside.”⁴³² Thus, in Jerome’s understanding, Lot’s actions are a direct reflection of his character. Second, he views Lot’s choice of the plain as an example of that which should not be emulated. Those that choose to follow the “left and easy branch” should be left to endure the consequence of their decision.

⁴²⁹ Translations from: NPNF 6.

⁴³⁰ Vulg. removes the awkwardness of Gen 13:8 (“we are men, brothers”), *fratres enim sumus* (“are we not brothers?”).

⁴³¹ Translations from: NPNF 6.

⁴³² Cf. Philo *Abr.* 27.148-149.

Jerome, in his *Letter to Lucinius* uses Lot's choice of the Jordan Plain⁴³³ as an illustration of what one should not choose:

Do not like Lot set your heart on the plain or upon the pleasant gardens;⁴³⁴ for these are watered not, as the holy land, from heaven but by Jordan's muddy stream made salt by contact with the Dead Sea.⁴³⁵

While Lot's plain may have looked like the "garden of Yhwh" it was not really the picturesque place it appeared to be. In fact, it was not at all like the "garden of Yhwh" for it was nourished by a polluted stream as opposed to the living water from heaven.

6.4 Ambrose

6.4.1 Lot's Presence with Abram

Ambrose, writing in the fourth century, does not explicitly state that Abram adopted Lot, but may imply this in his comment that Abram "showed paternal affection" to Lot (*On Abraham* 1.3.10).⁴³⁶ In his discussion of the dual mentions of Lot's presence with Abram in 13:1 and 13:5, Ambrose mentions an interpretation which sees this repetition as a reference not to two Lots, but rather one Lot with "two issues." Ambrose argues that Lot is one person while he is traveling with Abram, and another when he dwells in Sodom. Thus, the mention here of Lot's presence is meant to draw a distinction between the moral Lot who abides with Abram and a second Lot who degenerates "not only from a righteous man, but also from his own nature" (*On Abraham* 2.6.25). Lot, it would appear, is an ethically conflicted character, sometimes righteous and sometimes not.

⁴³³ Vulg., also, has Lot "in Sodom," *habitavit in Sodomis* ("camping at Sodom").

⁴³⁴ Vulg. has *sicut paradisus Domini* ("the garden of the Lord").

⁴³⁵ Rabbinic interpreters often defined the sinfulness of Sodom in the language of human relations. They were sinful with their bodies, against each other, in violence, etc. Jerome's comment on Sodom's sinfulness is similar when he states, "the inhabitants of Sodom were evil and sinners against men" (*Hebrew Questions on Genesis*).

⁴³⁶ Cf. Josephus *A.J.* 1.154. Translations from: Ambrose, *On Abraham*, trans. Theodosia Tomkinson (Etna: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2000).

6.4.2 Abram and Lot's Possessions

Abram, the biblical text says, was very wealthy in livestock, silver and gold. At least a portion of this wealth was received from the Egyptians (Gen 12:16). Ambrose sees in the mention of Abram's wealth not a focus on material goods but rather on his "righteousness" because, for Ambrose, contentment and the control over what he calls "irrational senses" is of chief importance. He notes that:

The worldly riches of a righteous man do not appear laudable to me. Hence, I interpret the cattle as the bodily senses, because they, too, are irrational, while the silver is speech and the gold is the mind. Fittingly was Abraham rich because he mastered his irrational senses. Thus, he conquered and tamed them, to become rational. His speech was radiant with the splendour of faith, purified by the Grace of spiritual discipline, his mind was full of wisdom. And, therefore, his mind is likened to gold, because just as gold excels all other metals, so a pure mind in a man is mightier than all other elements of human substance. (*On Abraham* 2.5.20)

In Genesis 13, Abram is said to have "livestock, silver and gold" and Lot is said to have "flocks, herd and tents." Ambrose interprets the differences as a way the text is contrasting Lot and Abram from a spiritual standpoint. He notes that Lot "had no silver, because he was not yet just."⁴³⁷ Furthermore, Lot does not possess gold because "gold" speaks of the spiritual splendor of seeing Christ which Abram enjoyed (*On Abraham* 2.5.24). Ambrose makes a connection between Abram's seeing the "posterity" or "back" of Christ and the passage in LXX Ps 67:14 (MT 68:14) which describes the "posterity" or "back" (μετάφρενα) of the dove (περιστερᾶς) as "gold." Thus, because Abram was worthy to see "the day" of Christ (Jn 8:56) so Abram is rich with "gold" while Lot is not.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Cf. Philo *Abr.* 38.220-222. Here Ambrose may also be drawing on Prov 10:10 which states, "the tongue of the just is tried silver."

⁴³⁸ Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 107. Clearly, Ambrose is reading this text through a decidedly christological lens. Hall defines Ambrose's hermeneutic as follows, "Ambrose, like many fathers in the Alexandrian tradition, believed that behind the literal shell of a biblical text lay enclosed a deeper meaning, a message to be discerned through the Holy Spirit and in line with the central biblical narrative centered on God's work in Christ"

6.4.3 Striving Herders

Above, I noted that the rabbinic interpreters were quick to blame Lot and his herders for the issues that arose while Abram and Lot were in the land.⁴³⁹ This was a way to safeguard Abram from any possible criticism or blame for the ensuing strife between the herders. Ambrose, while not totally condemning Lot, still shifts the blame away from Abram by focusing attention on Lot and his estrangement from his uncle. That estrangement appears to be moral in nature:

[H]e began to be estranged from his uncle; “The land was not large enough for them,” for no space can suffice for those who disagree. Moreover, narrow limits contain abundance for the meek, and peaceable and spacious places contract when morals are at odds. (*On Abraham* 2.6.26)⁴⁴⁰

There are a few intriguing things in Ambrose’s reading. First, his discussion of their inability to dwell together is not so much based in actual pragmatic concerns over grazing space but rather is based on the conflict which arose from Lot’s character. Second, the focus is on the inability of the meek and peace-loving Abram to dwell with the disagreeable Lot. Finally, Lot’s morals are brought into question. If Lot is the one who has become “estranged,” then the strife must somehow be in connection to that estrangement. The strife arises because meekness and peacefulness don’t, in fact, characterize both parties involved. Ambrose later remarks on the nature of the cattle and the responsibility of the herders. Given his earlier comments concerning Lot, it stands to reason that he has Lot and his herders in mind when he says:

The herdsmen are in charge of the flocks... Therefore, expert custody of the herdsmen is needful... We can designate these herdsmen “herdsmen of cattle,” but we take the cattle to signify the irrational senses of the body. So who are the herdsmen of the senses, if not their preceptors and, as it were, certain teachers and guides, the counsellors of our speech and the thoughts of our minds? If these are expert in, and tenacious of, pastoral discipline, they do not allow the flock of the senses to roam far and seek out useless or dangerous nourishment, but recall it with prudent leadership, apply the reins of reason,

⁴³⁹ Cf. Tg. Neof. 13:7; Tg. Ps-J. 13:7

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 41:8.

and curb those who resist. But bad preceptors and vain disputations allow them to run amok, to stampede to a steep and dangerous place, to trample cultivated fields, and feed on their harvest, so that if there are any fruits of virtue thus far in the same soul, they scatter them too. (*On Abraham* 2.6.27)

Above, I noted that Ambrose depicted Lot as one who is disagreeable. With regard to the proposal by Abram that he and Lot separate, Ambrose begins by stating that Abram enjoyed having Lot with him: “The venerable Abraham was soothed by the presence of his nephew, to whom he showed paternal affection.” He then states that the strife was between the servants of Abram and Lot, and Abram did not want the strife to spill over into the relationship between him and his nephew. In order to safeguard this from happening, he thought it best to have the two separate. Abram thus “cut off the hem of dissension lest the ill will spread. For he thought it more tolerable that the bond be broken than that friendship be destroyed.” This response by Abram becomes for Ambrose what all believers “should do... if perchance such a situation arise” (*On Abraham* 1.3.10). Furthermore, Ambrose interprets the phrase “Behold, the whole land is before you” (Gen 13:9) to mean: “If there cannot be agreement, I yield all; take everything if there is dispute about territory or possessions. But if this does not suit you, depart from me.” Earlier, I noted that Abram’s call for separation is an imperative and thus Abram does not give Lot the option of not separating. Ambrose, however, reads Abram’s offer as providing Lot with the option of not separating: “What great concessions he offered lest he be obliged to depart” (*On Abraham* 2.6.30). Ambrose, like other earlier interpreters, has put the responsibility for the separation on Lot.⁴⁴¹ Lot didn’t have to go. He was not “obliged to depart” but he still chose to leave his uncle.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. *Jubilees* 13:7-8; *Genesis Apocryphon* 21:5-7.

6.4.4 We Are Brothers

As detailed above, Abram frames his call for separation in the context of brotherhood. Given that Abram and Lot are uncle and nephew, respectively, ancient interpreters wrestled with Abram's statement that he and Lot are "brothers." While, at times, rabbinic interpreters saw this as a reference to Abram and Lot's physical resemblance,⁴⁴² Ambrose reads Abram and Lot as human beings who personify the two dimensions or "parts" of humanity. He writes:

We read that Abraham is uncle and Lot his nephew. Why does he call him brother? But note that the wise man invokes the causes of harmony. Hence, he premises, "We are men." So all men are of one nature and birth, conceived within its flesh, nurtured and cast out from one womb. Hence, we are linked like brothers by a certain law of kinship, begotten by one father and brought forth from one mother like uterine brothers. . . . But, as we have said before, this is referred far more truly to a single soul, the rational part of which incorporates senses akin to the irrational soul; but the flesh and the soul of which man consists are joined, so to speak, by the law of wedlock. (*On Abraham* 2.6.28)

In the above, Ambrose has taken the language of brotherhood and interpreted it in a twofold sense. First, there is an actual human connection between Abram and Lot and second, Abram and Lot end up being a picture of the human self. Ambrose moves from a discussion of two individuals bonded as human beings to talking about humanity in an individual sense with "two parts": the rational and irrational. Earlier, Ambrose described Abram as being in control of his irrational senses. Lot is described above as one who is estranged and (as I will discuss below) appears to succumb to the irrational senses. Ambrose had already drawn a spiritual distinction between Abram and Lot when discussing the possessions of the family members. Here he seems to be drawing a distinction through the language of brotherhood.

While it may be the case that Ambrose simply chose this opportunity to discuss what he calls the "human parts" (flesh and soul) of vice and virtue united by

⁴⁴² Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 41:6.

the “law of wedlock,” his earlier and subsequent comments regarding Abram’s virtue and Lot’s vice may point to a more subtle way of using Abram and Lot as personifications of the rational and irrational components of humanity. This is further substantiated by his later comment that “man must, as it were, ally his parts and compel them to peace.”⁴⁴³ My argument for reading Ambrose in this way unfolds as follows: (1) Abram had to make peace between him and his nephew; (2) humans have to make peace between their irrational and rational components (flesh and soul); (3) the irrational (fleshly) portion is characterized by vice; (4) the rational (soul) portion is characterized by virtue; (5) Abram is described as virtuous; (6) Lot is described as estranged and presumptuous;⁴⁴⁴ (7) Abram and Lot then become for Ambrose the personification of the human struggle between vice and virtue which each person needs to “ally...and...compel to peace” and (8) Ambrose, therefore, connects Abram and Lot together as humans but then uses the story of their separation as a personification for the struggle of all humans with vice and virtue.⁴⁴⁵

6.4.5 Lot’s Look

I noted above, that, for Ambrose, Lot seems to serve as an example of those who succumb to their “irrational senses.” This is further emphasized in his discussion of the dualistic character of Lot in Genesis 13. The meaning Ambrose provides for Lot’s name is similar to that of Philo and Jerome when he says it “denotes avoidance according to the Latin interpretation,”⁴⁴⁶ but that avoidance can be in reference to

⁴⁴³ Ambrose then, referencing Eph 2:14-16 and Rom 7:24, comments that no person can conquer the flesh in themselves and therefore true peace can only come through Christ.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. *On Abraham* 2.6.33. In his comments on Gen 13:10, which I will discuss below, Ambrose actually uses the terms “virtue” for Abram and “wickedness” for Lot. This would appear to bolster my understanding that Ambrose is doing far more than showing a connection on a human level between Abram and Lot and is in fact using them as a personification of vice and virtue.

⁴⁴⁵ This is similar to what Philo does in his characterization of Abram and Lot as discussed above.

⁴⁴⁶ Literally here Lot’s name is said to mean *declinatio* (“step aside”; “turning away.” See: Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997], 66). Cf. *On Abraham* 1.3.14 where Tomkinson translates Lot’s name as meaning “deviation” though the same term is used (*declinatio*).

“both good and evil.”⁴⁴⁷ So Lot, on the one hand “turned aside from evil” when “he was associated with his uncle” but “turned aside from good” when he “kept company with shame”⁴⁴⁸ (*On Abraham* 2.6.25).⁴⁴⁹

Above, I noted there are several nuances of the phrase “lifted the eyes” in Genesis and that the rabbinic writers interpreted Lot’s “looking” as one of lust.⁴⁵⁰

Ambrose, while reading Abram as humble, reads Lot as presumptuous. This is based on the fact that Lot “lifted his eyes” and saw only the physical realities of the Jordan Plain and was thus drawn away by that which is not of chief importance:

[L]ike Abraham, who offered the choice humbly, and like Lot, who claimed the choice presumptuously—virtue abases itself, but wickedness extols itself—and he who should have deferred to the older man, that they may be safe, did not know how to choose. For first he lifted up his eyes and observed the countryside...the matter which is not the first in order but the third...For the first are things which are good for the soul; the second, those which are corporeal...salvation, virtue, beauty and comeliness of form; the third, those which befall...riches, powers, homeland, friends and glory. (*On Abraham* 2.6.33)⁴⁵¹

6.4.6 God’s Promise to Abram

The placement of the promise after the separation of Abram and Lot and the narrational comment that Yhwh spoke to Abram “after Lot had separated from him” becomes, for Ambrose, a way to provide a final exaltation of Abram in the passage by either explicitly or implicitly contrasting him with Lot. Above, I argued that, for Ambrose, Abram and Lot become the personification of the vice and virtue within

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Philo *Abr.* 27.148-49.

⁴⁴⁸ Ambrose says that the language of Sodom’s sinfulness is inserted into the story for more pragmatic reasons, “to help us understand that the harsh gravity of sin can compel a gentle God to retaliate.” (*On Abraham* 2.6.36)

⁴⁴⁹ One finds a very similar interpretation of Lot’s name in Didymus the Blind’s comments on Gen 12:4 (213.20) when he states that Lot means both ἀποκλίστις (which is the same term Philo uses) and λελυτρωμένος (perf. masc. sing. middle/passive participle from λυτρόω – “set free, rescue, redeem” in *BDAG*, 606) highlighting Lot’s positive character when with Abram but his negative qualities when he was not.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. *b. Naz.* 23a; *Genesis Rabbah* 41:7; Tg Ps-J 13:10.

⁴⁵¹ Ambrose will then continue by informing his hearers that they should avoid that which appears to be more pleasing and to choose that which is truly better.

each human. This is perhaps more clearly articulated in his interpretation of God's promise to Abram:

Then follows a passage whereby we are taught how much the mind benefits when the unnecessary things of its irrational part are emptied, and how much vices added to vices bring of evil. Scripture did not idly say, "And God said to Abraham after Lot was separated from him, 'Look up with thine eyes and behold from the place where thou now are.'" (*On Abraham* 2.7.37)

Clearly, Ambrose wants the reader to see not only a strong distinction between Abram and Lot but also he uses Abram and Lot as a personification for the rational and irrational parts of humanity. Abram is the rational, Lot is the irrational. When Lot was around there was an accumulation of "vices" which thus required separation. Above, I discussed the way in which rabbinic writers connected God's promise at the close of Genesis 13 with Abram's separation from Lot. Lot had to be "cast out" in order for the strife to cease.⁴⁵² Ambrose's interpretation is quite similar when he continues:

Abraham, as long as Lot, namely, perversity,⁴⁵³ cleaved to him, had not accepted the portion of these things. Truly, when set free from the uncertainty and crookedness of his perversity, he begins to follow the straight paths of the virtues with successive footsteps of his soul. (*On Abraham* 2.7.39)

For Ambrose, Abram needed to separate from Lot to rid himself of "perversity" and receive the full blessing of God. Here again, it appears that Ambrose is reading the account of Abram and Lot as a personification of the struggle, within every human, between vice and virtue.

While Ambrose's reading of Lot in Genesis 13 is, at times, quite negative, it needs to be read within the framework which Ambrose appears to construct. Lot provides a test case for the faithful. Lot exhibited righteous qualities in that he chose to be with Abram. When he chose to be in Sodom, however, he exhibited unrighteous

⁴⁵² Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 41:8.

⁴⁵³ Ambrose, here, has provided another spiritualization of Lot's name. Twice he used *declinatio* (cf. 2.6.25; 1.3.14) and here he uses *deflexio morum* which Tomkinson translates as "perversity."

qualities. Lot then becomes an exemplar of what happens when people who are properly connected to the righteous choose to separate themselves from the righteous. Lot is not wholly wicked but his unwise decisions reflect one who is not wholly righteous either. He becomes an example of a righteous one gone astray.

6.5 Chrysostom

Of the patristic interpreters, fourth century commentator Chrysostom provides the most detailed analysis of Genesis 13. His interpretation also provides the clearest example of the way in which patristic writers both dealt with the problematic issues surrounding Abram and also provided a more positive view of Lot than their rabbinic counterparts.

6.5.1 Lot's Presence with Abram

As I have argued in my exegetical analysis, the fact that Lot is accompanying Abram on his journey to Canaan appears quite problematic. It would seem that Abram has not been totally obedient to the call to go away from his father's household. The most popular interpretation of Lot's accompaniment, in modern scholarly writings, has been to understand Lot as the adopted son of Abram. If Abram has, in fact, adopted Lot, then Abram's fidelity is no longer in question. *Jubilees*, as I outlined above, apparently recognized the dilemma of Lot's accompaniment and so constructed a dialogue between Abram and Terah where Terah tells Abram to take Lot with him "as his son." Thus, in *Jubilees*, the blame was shifted from Abram to Terah. It will also be remembered that Josephus argued Abram "adopted Lot."⁴⁵⁴ The tradition of Abram's adoption of Lot, not surprisingly, shows up in early Christian interpretation as well. While Ephrem implied a father-son relationship between Abram and Lot, Chrysostom clearly viewed Lot as adopted:

⁴⁵⁴ A.J. 1.154.

Although God has said, “Go forth from your country, your kindred and your father’s house,” why did he bring Lot with him? It was not that he was disobedient to the Lord; but perhaps because Lot was young and Abram held the place of a father in his regard, and because he was reluctant on the grounds of love and equity to be separated from the good man. Abram could not bear to leave him behind out of this sense of responsibility. From now on Lot took the place of a son to him, since at his advanced age he was without children owing to Sarah’s infertility. (*Homilies on Genesis* 31.16)⁴⁵⁵

Chrysostom raises the issue of Abraham’s potential disobedience but he wants his hearers to understand that Lot’s place on the journey should not reflect negatively on Abram. Rather it should reflect quite positively. Abram’s adoption of Lot is an act of love for his younger, orphaned nephew. Interestingly, Chrysostom does not stop there. He continues by painting Lot in a very positive, wise, even Abram-like, light:

In particular the youngster’s values were quite in keeping with the just man’s: does this not emerge from the fact that, in associating himself with the just man when he had the choice of the two brothers, he showed great insight in making the wise decision as to which of his uncles it would be to whom he should entrust his fortunes? Likewise his choice of exile was itself further proof of the nobility of his values; even if eventually he seemed to fall in some matters when he appropriated the prime lands, nevertheless he lost no time in following the good man’s footsteps. Hence the good man took him as companion in his travels, and Lot enthusiastically preferred exile to life at home. (*Homilies on Genesis* 31.16)

Chrysostom has done two main things here. The first, and most obvious, is that he has characterized Lot as a righteous person regardless of his eventual decision to live near Sodom. The second continues the move toward liberating Abram from any wrongdoing by characterizing Lot as one who “made the choice” to go with Abram. This seemed implied in Ephrem’s reading as well. Though Gen 12:5 seems to put the responsibility for Lot’s accompaniment at the feet of Abram, Chrysostom argues that Lot’s accompaniment really wasn’t totally Abram’s decision. Lot, too, had a choice in the matter and, as Chrysostom states, he chose wisely. While *Jubilees* solved the problem by shifting the blame from Abram to Terah, Chrysostom shifted

⁴⁵⁵ Translations from: John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 18-45*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), 2001.

the blame from Abram to Lot. Chrysostom began by pointing out the potential dilemma in Lot's accompaniment with Abram but then solved the problem by introducing not only the notion of adoption into the storyline but also by relieving Abram of final responsibility through the inclusion of Lot's decision to accompany his uncle on the journey.

6.5.2 Lot's Wealth

One of the questions that goes unanswered in the biblical text of Genesis 13 is where does Lot get his wealth? There is no mention of the source of his wealth as there is regarding at least a portion of Abram's. Early on, as discussed above, interpreters, both ancient and modern, connected the wealth of Lot to Abram. In other words, Lot was wealthy, at least in part, because Abram, out of his abundance, gave him many possessions. It is not surprising then, that Chrysostom echoed the same tradition when he commented:

Not only had there been an increase in wealth in the patriarch's favor, but "Lot too had flocks, herds and cattle."⁴⁵⁶ Perhaps on the one hand, Abram, being generous, was in the habit of favoring his nephew with these things, while on the other hand other people would supply him with them out of regard for the patriarch. (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.3)

Chrysostom's interpretation of the origin of Lot's wealth is well in keeping with the prevailing traditions. Lot received his wealth because of Abram. Either it was given to him by Abram and/or it was given to him because of Abram. Presumably, Chrysostom had in mind the Egyptians who gave Abram a great deal of wealth earlier in chapter 12 which Chrysostom linked to God's providence.⁴⁵⁷ *Genesis Apocryphon*, it will be remembered, seemed to imply that Lot's wealth came from both Abram and the Egyptians. Later rabbinic interpreters implied that Lot's wealth came solely from

⁴⁵⁶ The use of κτήνη ("cattle") by Chrysostom here for the Hebrew אהלים ("tents") is attested in Alexandrinus.

⁴⁵⁷ *Homilies on Genesis* 33.5.

Abram. Chrysostom, while being somewhat cautious about the origin of Lot's wealth, was quite clear that Lot is wealthy, either directly or indirectly, because of Abram.

6.5.3 Striving Herders

As I noted earlier, the biblical text provides no details on the strife between the herders or discusses which herders are to blame for the strife.⁴⁵⁸ Jewish retellers and interpreters placed the blame for the event at the feet of Lot. It was Lot and his herders who were to blame, Abram was the innocent party. Patristic readers, on the whole, were much less concerned about blaming Lot for the strife and tended to focus more on the way in which the strife provided an opportunity to discuss how Abram's offer reflects the moral requirements of believers.

Chrysostom rooted the reason for separation in the actions of the herders: "They are the ones who provide the occasion for separation, who sunder the harmony, who give evidence of bad feeling" (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.6). However, it should be noted that, in contrast to Jewish interpreters, Chrysostom placed the blame for the strife not at the feet of Lot or his herders, but at the feet of *Abram's* herders: "I have the impression that the outbreak of trouble had no other origin than in the refusal of the patriarch's herdsmen to allow Lot to enjoy the same privileges as they" (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.8).

There are two points in Chrysostom's reading which are pertinent to my thesis. First, this particular reading may seem problematic, given the penchant of

⁴⁵⁸ Chrysostom argues that the reason that Abram and Lot could not dwell together was due to the lack of adequate space for their surplus of goods: "Notice the abundance of their possessions proving at once responsible for their separation, creating a division, sundering their harmony and undoing the bond of kinship." This lack of space eventually led to the discord between the herders which Chrysostom interprets as an issue between Abram and Lot: "Notice how the relatives are responsible for the first signs of separation: invariably this is the source from which spring all problems—discord among brethren." The lack of space wasn't the only issue facing the family members, however, for the land "was still occupied by these peoples (i.e., the Canaanites and Perizzites)" (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.8).

interpreters to provide a more positive view of Abram. Though Chrysostom implies that it was Abram's herders who were to blame, he provides no connection, explicitly or implicitly, between the actions of the herders and the actions of their master.⁴⁵⁹

Second, Chrysostom's reading safeguards Lot from any blame. Had Chrysostom, like rabbinic interpreters, understood Lot to be an unrighteous outsider, one would expect at least some of the blame to fall on Lot. Here, however, Lot is wholly innocent.

6.5.4 We Are Brothers

Chrysostom opted to read the use of "brothers" in Gen 13 through the lens of Abram's humility: "The elder, the senior, addresses his junior and calls his nephew 'brother,' admits him to the same rank as himself and retains no special distinction for himself" (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.7).⁴⁶⁰ Through the offer and language of brotherhood Abram, for Chrysostom, fulfills the "apostolic law" as set forth by Paul in 1 Cor 6:7-8 where he admonishes the "brothers" (ἀδελφούς) to neither wrong nor defraud one another. For Chrysostom, Abram exemplifies such an attitude towards his "brother" and thus becomes an example for others to follow:

You see, it was important for him in his role of teacher of wisdom sent to the inhabitants of Palestine, far from providing any bad example or offering any encouragement, rather to give them all the clearer instruction through the clarion call of his restraint in manners and to convert them into imitators of his own virtue. (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.7)

Abram's offer not only demonstrates his generosity but also his humility and wisdom:

Choose whatever you wish, and I will be ready with great contentment to accept the part you have left for me. Tremendous wisdom on the just man's part: in every way he tries to be no burden to his nephew. His meaning is, after all, "Since what I didn't want has taken place—the need for parting of the ways so as to allay the outbreak of hostility—"accordingly I give you prior right of choice and confer on you complete authority so that you may choose whatever land you decide is more desirable and leave the rest to me." Did anyone ever deign to do as much for a very brother of his own, such as the

⁴⁵⁹ Unlike *Pesikta Rabbati* 3.3.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. *Midrash Tanhuma* 3.16.4.

patriarch was shown to do in favor of his nephew? (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.12)⁴⁶¹

Chrysostom even provided an answer for some of the objections he saw being raised against Abram in his relationship to Lot:

I mean, in case anyone should condemn the just man for proving ill-disposed towards Lot or believe he uprooted him from his home,⁴⁶² led him into foreign parts and now drives him from his new home, or think he does this out of enmity, instead of our all learning that it is under the impulse of peace that he does it, he even yielded the choice to Lot and made no objection when he chose the prime land, so that everyone would be in a position to know the goodness of our hero's attitude and the object of his peaceable disposition. (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.14)⁴⁶³

The choice to focus on Abram's generosity does two things for the interpreter.

First it makes the problematic offer of land by Abram into something positive.

Second, it takes the emphasis off Abram's imperative that he and Lot separate by putting the focus of the story on Lot's choice.⁴⁶⁴ The problems with Abram have been resolved.

6.5.5 Lot Does Not Show Regard for Abram

Chrysostom, after a lengthy discussion about Abram's generosity and humility noted that Lot does not afford Abram the same benefits and respect he was shown:

Accordingly, Lot, too, should have behaved this way in regard to the patriarch, yet on account of his youth and being a prey to waxing greed he usurped what he thought to be the best parts and made his choice on that basis. (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.13)

Chrysostom, like the previously discussed rabbinic interpreters, interpreted Lot's looking at the "well-watered" Jordan Plain and subsequent choice to move to the plain as an indication of his "greed." This may be drawn from a negative reading of "and he lifted his eyes" (13:10). Lot, however, isn't to be perceived as unrighteous. He

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Philo *Abr.* 37.216.

⁴⁶² It will be remembered that Chrysostom has already answered this objection earlier by his argument that Lot, after being given the offer to stay home or go on the journey, chose to go with Abram.

⁴⁶³ Cf. *Homilies on Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians* 35.10.

⁴⁶⁴ There is an interesting addition in the *Palaea Historica* about Lot "asking" Abram if he can dwell in the land of Sodom.

simply made a bad choice. This series of events is actually meant to teach Lot that “it had not been proper for him to make the choice.” The reason is so that Lot may serve as an example to the people of Sodom and they, in turn, “might come to know Lot’s virtue.”⁴⁶⁵

In his homily on 1 Cor 10:25, Chrysostom discussed the way in which virtue is expressed through the willingness to put the interest of others above one’s own. Here, Chrysostom used Lot as an example of selfishness, similar to what is stated above, but went further with regard to Lot’s unwillingness to consider Abram’s interests:

So likewise Abraham sought not his own profit, but the profit of many. Wherefore he both exposed himself to dangers and besought God for those who in no wise belonged to him. Well these indeed so became glorious. But as for those who sought their own, consider what harm too they received. The nephew, for instance, of the last mentioned, because he listened to the saying, “If thou wilt go to the right, I will go to the left;” and accepting the choice, sought his own profit, did not even find his own: but this region was burned up, while that remained untouched.⁴⁶⁶

While Lot’s obedience to his uncle’s command to separate could be viewed, at least to some extent, as something positive, Chrysostom opted to view Lot’s lack of response to the command as something negative. In other words, Lot’s silence and separation does not denote his willingness to submit to the wishes of his uncle but rather his unwillingness to think about Abram’s interests. Chrysostom’s point is that Lot shouldn’t have accepted the offer. Lot’s lack of response shows his selfishness. He should have sought to propose a counter offer. The end result is that what looked like

⁴⁶⁵ In the anonymous third century work *Strain of Sodom* one reads the following: “The walls of Sodom. There was dwelling Lot, A transplantation from a pious stock” (Translation from: ANF 4). Lot, in the poem, becomes the antithesis of the people of Sodom as one who is not actually of their “stock” but is rather of Abram’s “pious stock.” The poem also mentions that Lot saw the “fertility” of the land. Bede, *On Genesis* 13:13, sees Lot as “blessed” and “pure from all these sins” (i.e., the sins of the Sodomites).

⁴⁶⁶ Translation from: NPNF 12.

a wise choice on Lot's part ended up being scorched while Abram's land remained untouched.

6.5.6 The Place Lot Chose

In my exegetical analysis, I noted that there may be a subtle distinction between the place Abram chooses to dwell and the place Lot chooses to dwell. The LXX appears to heighten the distinction through the use of the particle $\delta\epsilon$.

Chrysostom appears to pick up on the contrast when he commented on Gen 13:12-13:

Do you observe Lot having regard only for the nature of the land and not considering the wickedness of the inhabitants? What good, after all, is the fertility of the land and abundance of produce⁴⁶⁷ when the inhabitants are evil in their ways? On the other hand, what harm could come from solitude and a simple lifestyle when the inhabitants are more restrained? The summit of blessing, you see, is the uprightness of those who dwell in a place. Lot, however, had eyes for one thing only, the richness of the countryside. (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.15)

Notice that Chrysostom faulted Lot for choosing to live near people who were “wicked and sinners before Yhwh” which Chrysostom interpreted to mean that “the extent of their sins was extreme and their wickedness superabounded” (*Homilies on Genesis* 33.14). Whereas Origen envisioned a time when Sodom was not so wicked and thus Lot could not be faulted on ethical grounds, Chrysostom pictured Lot as one who failed to see the wickedness that was already present in Sodom because he was looking at the wrong thing.

6.5.7 Promises

Chrysostom opted to read the statement of promise as the response of Yhwh to Abram's offer of land to Lot. The promise becomes a way to “reward” Abram for his actions. In some ways, it could be said, based upon Chrysostom's reading, that the

⁴⁶⁷ In his homily on 1 Thess 4:15-17, Chrysostom describes Sodom as a place whose abundance rivaled all countries.

account in Genesis 13 is akin to a test for Abram to see how he will respond under such circumstances. He wrote:

Then for our precise realization that he said this by way of rewarding him for what had been done for Lot, it added, “God said to Abram after Lot’s parting from him” as if to say the following words to him without demur, “You ceded the beautiful region to your nephew on account of your great restraint and thus gave evidence of eminent humility and showed such concern for peace as to put up with anything for the sake of preventing any rivalry coming between you— hence accept from me a generous reward.” (*Homilies on Genesis* 34.5)

For Chrysostom, Abram becomes the exemplar of righteous conduct, and his willingness to lay aside desire for selfish gain⁴⁶⁸ is rewarded by God. In that way, those who follow Christ can, as Abram did, take little “account of present realities” and “constantly keep the love for him fixed firmly in our soul” (*Homilies on Genesis* 34.19).

6.6 Augustine

6.6.1 Striving Herders

Augustine, writing in the fourth and fifth centuries, saw the separation as a way to avoid further conflict. As with Chrysostom, he blamed the behavior of the herders for the separation but made clear that, even after the separation, there was still great affection between Abram and Lot:

When Abraham returned from Egypt to the place whence he had come, his nephew Lot left him and went away into the land of Sodom, although without any lessening of their love. Indeed, they had become wealthy men, and had begun to have many herdsmen for their flocks, who squabbled among themselves. Abraham and Lot therefore separated to avoid strife and discord between their servants; otherwise, human nature being what it is, quarrels might have arisen between themselves also. (*The City of God* 16.20)⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ In his homily on 1 Thess 5:12-13, Chrysostom states that Abram actually chose to be “wronged by his nephew.” He comments that Abram’s lack of response to Lot’s choice of Sodom, demonstrated Abram’s great restraint and unwillingness to wrong Lot even though Lot had wronged him.

⁴⁶⁹ Translation from: Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.A. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Cf. Bede, *On Genesis* 13:5-7.

It is intriguing that Augustine reasoned that both Abram *and* Lot wanted to avoid a future quarrel. It is not simply Abram who acts for peace but Lot, too. Augustine later described the cause of the separation not in terms of discord but rather as a means to help their families. The separation, he said, “came about not as a result of unseemly discord, but because of the need to succor their families” (*The City of God* 16.21). It would appear that Augustine wants the reader to understand that the strife was not between Abram and Lot and thus the separation did not result from any discord between them. They simply wanted to do the best thing for each of their families.⁴⁷⁰

6.7 Initial Concluding Thoughts

As in my earlier discussion of Jewish interpretation of Genesis 13, the patristic writers sought to minimize and/or solve any difficulties surrounding Abram. While the patristic commentators highlighted the questionable actions of Lot in the narrative, the overall picture of Lot is far more positive than that which the rabbinic interpreters provided. The focus for the patristic writers appears to be on highlighting the perceived positive actions of Abram like his generosity and humility. Lot is, while certainly questionable at times, not really a “bad guy” in the story—he just made some bad decisions and thus provides an illustration of unwise decision-making.

⁴⁷⁰ Augustine reads the promise of Yhwh in Gen 13:14-15 through a decidedly christological lens and envisions all Christians as being partakers in the promise, Augustine comments: “Since, then, it is not only to the Israelite nation that the promise of many sons is given, but to the whole seed of Abraham in the spiritual rather than the fleshly sense and since the latter are more aptly compared to the multitude of the sands, we can therefore understand that the promise here given is of both a fleshly and spiritual posterity” (*City of God* 16.21). Papandrea, *Reading*, 137, notes that for Augustine, “the historical meaning of the Old Testament was not always adequate for the Church, and that the Old Testament had to be read through the lens of the New.” This christological reading of Abraham’s seed clearly echoes that of Paul: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed. It does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many; but it says, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, to one, who is Christ... And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:16, 29). Cf. Bede, *On Genesis* 13:14-15.

6.8 Early Christian Art

As has been shown, ancient interpreters and retellers wrestled with some intriguing and provocative issues that the story of Abram and Lot's separation bring to the forefront. This wrestling with the text led to some quite novel and fascinating interpretive maneuvers, omissions and inclusions. The interpretive retelling of the separation of Abram and Lot is not confined, however, to scribal practice, written sources or patristic sermons but finds its way, with some novel twists, into a fifth century mosaic in the nave of the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome.⁴⁷¹ First, I will demonstrate how this particular piece reflects interpretive elements both prior to, and contemporary with, the mosaic.⁴⁷² Then, I will investigate ways the mosaic becomes an interpretive voice in its own right through its inclusion of elements not found in either the biblical text or the early retellings.

Mosaics played an important role in the early church, decorating the interior walls of Christian buildings. Some believe that the use of mosaics in churches was a tool both to provide a more celestial setting for liturgy and to instruct congregants about biblical tales and Christian dogma.⁴⁷³ Carnevale comments: "Art...had its place along with the catechism and other instruments of oral communication for the propagation of biblical and Christian knowledge."⁴⁷⁴ The mosaic probably assumes viewers had some basic knowledge of the biblical tale, though it may not have gone

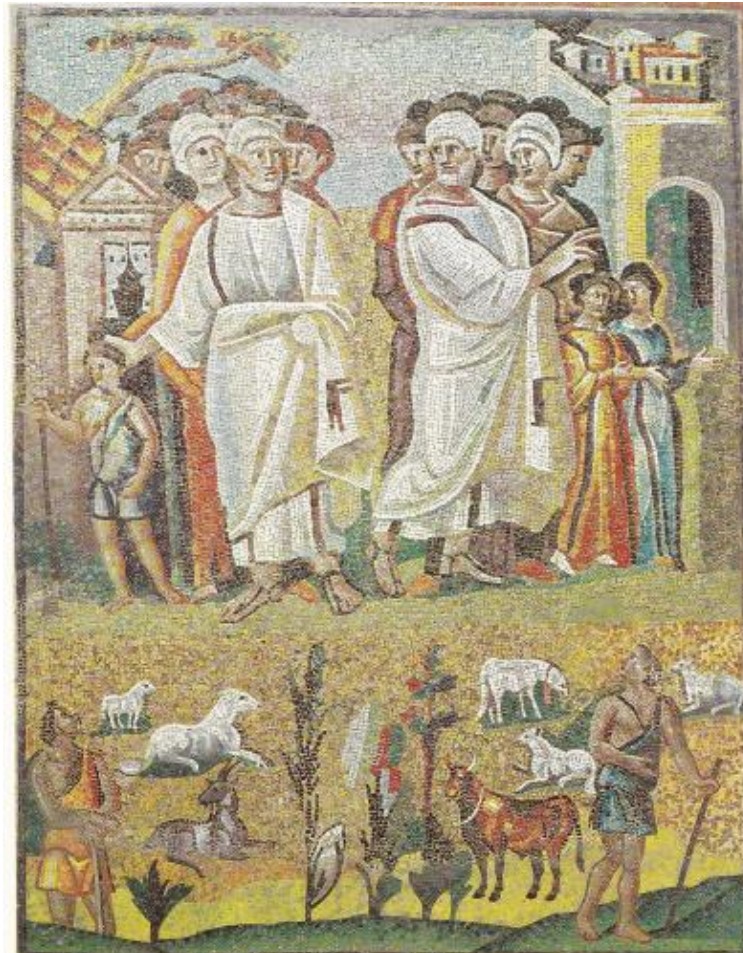
⁴⁷¹ This particular mosaic is part of a mosaic cycle completed in 432-40 CE for the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome. The mosaic itself is located along with other Old Testament scenes high along the left side of the nave. Incidentally, the mosaic follows the account of Melchizedek from Genesis 14 and Abraham's hospitality to the three visitors in Genesis 18 thus differing from the order of the biblical account where Abram and Lot's separation precedes these stories. See: P.C.J. van Dael, "Biblical Cycles on Church Walls: *Pro Lectione Pictura*," in *The Impact of Scripture in Early Christianity*; ed. J. den Boeft and M.L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 131 n. 49.

⁴⁷² By this I am not implying that the artist was using or even familiar with all of the sources mentioned but that the traditions reflected in those sources appear to be, at times, reflected in the artistic interpretation, as well.

⁴⁷³ Fred S. Kleiner, ed., *Gardener's Art Through the Ages: The Western Perspective*, 13th ed (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), 221.

⁴⁷⁴ Laura Carnevale, "The Bible and Early Christian Art" in *Imaging the Bible: An Introduction to Biblical Art*, ed. Martin O'Kane (London: SPCK, 2008), 37.

beyond a general familiarity with the story line ascertained through the hearing of Scripture read and seasoned with the interpretive analysis of the homilies. The mosaic then becomes an apt addition to the biblical and theological development of the congregants.⁴⁷⁵



The first thing one notices in the mosaic⁴⁷⁶ is the prominence of both Abram and Lot. They are the central figures and draw the immediate attention of viewers. Below them are the herders and the vast amount of goods that both Abram and Lot possessed.

⁴⁷⁵ For discussion of the Basilica itself including issues of architecture and restoration see Richard Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae Vol. III* (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1967), 1-60.

⁴⁷⁶ The mosaic of Abram and Lot's separation is from: Heinrich Karpp, *Die frühchristlichen und mittelalterlichen Mosaiken in Santa Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Baden-Baden: Grimm, 1966), fig. 37 (Langhaus, links. Lots Trennung von Abraham). I wish to thank Dr. Gerhard Karpp for his kindness in granting permission to use this image from his father's book.

The mosaic provides no hint of strife between the herders. This lack of focus on the tension between the herders is common in early retellings of Genesis 13. *Jubilees*, as was noted above, totally omits the strife and *Genesis Apocryphon* mentions only the “behavior” of the herders. In the mosaic, however, one does notice that the herder below Abram looks up at his master as if waiting patiently to see what decision will be made while the herder below Lot is already on the move.

Following the mention of the strife, Abram tells Lot they need to separate. He frames his call for separation in the context of brotherhood. Given that Abram and Lot are uncle and nephew, respectively, ancient interpreters wrestled with Abram’s statement that he and Lot are “brothers.” On the one hand, in *Genesis Rabbah* the focus is on the physical likeness of Abram and Lot. Ambrose and Chrysostom, on the other hand, focused on a shared humanity and Abram’s humility, respectively. While most interpreters have understood Abram to be older than Lot, the artist depicted them almost identically. One must look beyond the main characters themselves to determine, in the mosaic, who is who. It would appear that the artist wanted to depict Abram and Lot as being of similar age.

One finds a comparable rendering in the depictions of Laban in his interactions with Jacob. Laban, who looks much like Abram and Lot here, is clearly depicted as being older than the younger-looking Jacob. The elder Jacob is also pictured in a similar fashion, though with slightly longer hair, in contrast to his obviously younger sons. If nothing else then, it would seem the artist wanted the viewer to envision Abram and Lot as similar in age. Perhaps the artist also desired to depict further connections, resemblance or familial, between the Abram and Lot, though this is inconclusive.

As I demonstrated in my exegetical analysis, in the biblical account it is clearly Abram who seeks to separate from Lot. The reason that Lot parts from Abram is because Abram told him to do so. This squarely puts the reason for Lot's departure at the feet of Abram. In the mosaic there is no hint of any reason for the separation nor is there any reason to believe that it was Abram's idea.

After Abram's "command" Lot examines his options and chooses the Jordan Plain, a place dangerously close to the wicked sinners of Sodom. Lot settles in the cities of the plain while Abram settles in the land of Canaan. This is where the mosaic, specifically, picks up the story. As noted previously, Abram and Lot are the central figures of the mosaic. There are several interpretive elements at play in the way in which the mosaic chooses to depict the family members. I noted above that ancient retellers moved the focus of the story away from the striving herders and Abram's command for separation to the decision of Lot to separate himself from Abram. The way in which the mosaic retells the story does the same.

As discussed earlier, in *Jubilees* one reads:

In the fourth year of this week Lot separated from him. Lot settled in Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were very sinful. He [Abram] was brokenhearted that his brother's son had separated from him for he had no children. (*Jubilees* 13:17-18)

By omitting any mention of the strife or Abram's responsibility for the separation, the writer put the responsibility for departure squarely on Lot. It will be remembered that for Ambrose, Lot was "not obliged to depart." In these interpretations there is no justifiable reason for Lot to leave Abram. Without a justifiable reason then it is quite easy to pin Lot as the guilty party, the one who willfully chose to leave Abram.

The mosaic depicts Abram with torso facing forward and face turning towards Lot. Abram's hand is behind the head of Isaac almost telling him to wait, to see what Lot will decide. Lot, with his shoulder clearly turned away from his waiting uncle has

made his decision. He will go toward the city. He will leave his uncle. While Abram's hand is behind the waiting Isaac, Lot's hand is outstretched as if prodding his children toward Sodom. Lot's feet, and the feet of his children, are turned toward the city in the background while Abram's and Isaac's are still firmly planted in one place and are facing toward the viewer. He has not turned away from his family member. Lot has chosen to leave.

Furthermore, the placement of the mosaic lends itself to the exaltation of Abraham. The appearance of the Melchizedek story and the account of Abraham's hospitality not only begin the ordering of the mosaics with Old Testament portraits of Christ and the Trinity, but also exalt Abraham as the chosen of God, the righteous recipient of the promises. Thus when one views the separation of Abram and Lot, one is already aware that Abraham is righteous which, in turn, makes Lot look all the more questionable for turning away from him.

For Christian interpreters, Lot becomes an example of what not to do. Ambrose saw Lot as presumptuous.⁴⁷⁷ For Ambrose, Lot became a paradigm for a call to wise decision-making: "let us not choose what outwardly seems more pleasing, but what is in truth superior" (*On Abraham* 2.6.35). Chrysostom opted to focus on Lot's inability to perceive the sinful reality of the place he was choosing.⁴⁷⁸ In its turn, the mosaic becomes an apt illustration of the moral lessons that Christian interpreters wanted their hearers to grasp. Lot's actions are not to be emulated by those who follow Christ.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ *On Abraham* 2.6.33.

⁴⁷⁸ *Homilies on Genesis* 33:15.

⁴⁷⁹ Dulaey comments that the viewer is invited to choose between "les exigences de la vie chrétienne et les facilités du monde." (M. Dulaey, "L'exégèse patristique de Gn 13 et la mosaïque de la séparation d'Abraham et de Lot à Santa Maria Maggiore" in *Studia Patristica Vol. XXX – Biblica et Apocrypha, Ascetica, Liturgica*, ed. E.A. Livingstone [Leuven: Peeters, 1996], 7).

The brief analysis above shows that the interpretive qualities of the mosaic share much in common with the interpretive traditions both prior to, and contemporary with, the mosaic. While this particular retelling in the mosaic is well in line with these interpretive traditions, the artist also made some intriguing additions to the biblical tale. I will examine two below.

First, and most obvious, is the inclusion of the children of both Abram and Lot. In the biblical text Lot's children do not appear until Genesis 19 and Abram's son Isaac does not appear until Genesis 21. So why would the artist include the progeny of Abram and Lot? Perhaps it is simply to link the story of separation to the later story of Sodom's demise in Genesis 19. This certainly would enable the viewers to more readily ascertain the magnitude of Lot's movement toward Sodom. Perhaps it is to fill in the gap about both Lot's wife and his daughters.⁴⁸⁰ In the Hebrew Bible we are never told where Lot gets his wife, nor anything about the birth of his children. Presumably, Lot's wife is standing behind him in the mosaic just as we can presume that Sarai stands behind Abram. Filling in the gap about the origin of Lot's wife, prior to Abram and Lot's separation is not unknown in ancient retellings. For example, *Genesis Apocryphon* informs the reader that Lot took a wife for himself "from the daughters of Egypt" (20:33-34) and that this occurred prior to Abram's separation from him.

Even if this were the case it still does not answer the question regarding the presence of Isaac in the mosaic. It is the presence of Isaac that I believe becomes the lens through which to understand the presence of the children. God's promise of descendants to Abram "after Lot had separated from him" (Gen 13:14), confirms that

⁴⁸⁰ The tradition that Lot's family was with him prior to his separation from Abram is one which finds support in later interpretation as well. Luther, for example, comments that on the journey from Haran to Canaan, Abraham "is not alone; he is taking along a large number of souls, among whom are some that are very close and very dear to him—his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot and Lot's daughters."

Lot was not to be viewed as part of the promise. Abram's "line" and Lot's "line" are distinct, they are separate. The mosaic, therefore, with the inclusion of both Abram's and Lot's children has clearly delineated the line of Abram from the line of Lot.⁴⁸¹

While the two may be family members they are, in the end, relationally discrete.

With the inclusion of the children we no longer have simply the separation of individuals but the separation of peoples. The movement toward Sodom by Lot and his line then characterizes those on the "outside."⁴⁸² This juxtaposition of lines fits well within the framework of early Christian art which portrays Isaac as a prefiguration of Christ.⁴⁸³ It is through the line of Abram that Messiah will come.

With the inclusion of the basilica, which I will discuss below, and Isaac, the mosaic adds a decidedly Christological element to the story.⁴⁸⁴

The second addition I would like to focus on is the way in which the eventual destinations of the travelers are depicted. The depiction evokes a strong contrast between Abram and Lot. As noted above, the mention that Lot "settled" in the "cities of the plain" appears to be contrasted with Abram "settling" in "Canaan." Lot is pictured in the mosaic as moving his family toward a city, the city of Sodom. The rendering of the city "would not be out of place in a Pompeian mural."⁴⁸⁵

Abram's destination is clearly depicted as sacred space. In contrast to the city which Lot and his family are moving toward, Abram and his family are moving

⁴⁸¹ Even the short vertical spacing between the two family members provides a visual line of demarcation between the groups. See Bottari Stefano, Pelloni Stefano and Bottari Carlo, eds., *Tesori D'Arte Cristiana Vol 2: Roma Basilica Di S. Maria Maggiore* (Officine Grafiche Poligrafici Il Resto del Carlino: Bologna, 1966), 36.

⁴⁸² Further, Abram's right hand lies behind the head of Isaac while his left hand is apparently covered. The lack of an open hand to Lot may be an indication of Lot's separation from the family of Abram.

⁴⁸³ See also Dulaey, "Lexégèse," 7.

⁴⁸⁴ "The mosaics at Sta. Maria Maggiore...depict the history of salvation. They begin with Old Testament scenes along the nave...and end with the life of Jesus as the Messiah on the arch across the nave. The scheme is not only a historical cycle but a symbolic program that presents a higher reality – the Word of God" (H.W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson, *History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 6th ed. [Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2004], 238).

⁴⁸⁵ Kleiner, *Gardener's*, 221.

toward a basilica-like building with a tree overhead. Here, the land of Canaan has been transformed into the home of the Christian church. The open entrance to the building invites those of the chosen line into its sacred and separate space. The tree overhead may be a reference to the “oaks of Mamre” mentioned in Gen 13:18. It may also, however, refer to the Garden of Eden. From a New Testament perspective, the tree overhead may connect Abram’s destination to the Johannine depiction of Jesus as the vine and the church as the branches (John 15). Or the inclusion of the tree may be a combination of these or other elements. Either way, Abram is going to inhabit a sacred space where one can meet with God and properly worship him.⁴⁸⁶ The depiction of Lot’s destination as a city and Abram’s as a basilica is a common motif to juxtapose space in the mosaics at St. Maria Maggiore. The way in which the city is portrayed here is very similar to the way the home of the Shechemites, Egyptians and Canaanites are portrayed, and the basilica structure is a common destination/dwelling of God’s chosen (e.g. Moses, Jacob and Abraham). It should be noted, however, that Lot is not depicted as explicitly bad, but the mosaic does provide a particular lens through which to view him. He and his line are separate from Abram and his line.

6.9 Concluding Remarks on Christian Interpretation

From my analysis of early Christian retellings and interpretation, three things, as pertains to my thesis, are apparent in their readings of Genesis 13. First, Lot’s accompaniment with Abram is problematic. Some dealt with this by depicting Lot as the adopted son of Abram, others by saying it was Lot’s decision to go. Chrysostom combined the two. Second, subsequent interpreters tended to shift the focus away from the potential problems surrounding Abram to Lot’s choice of the Jordan Plain.

⁴⁸⁶ These two additions fit well the symbolic function that Old Testament narratives had in early Christian art. Carnevale, “The Bible and Early Christian Art,” 33, notes, “While the New Testament episodes played a predominantly narrative function, the Old Testament episodes had a more markedly symbolic function.”

For example, the problematic call for separation and offer of land were turned, by Chrysostom, into positive actions on Abram's part. Abram's offer of land was seen as a demonstration of Abram's humility which should be emulated by all believers. Lot, while not deemed wholly unrighteous, made a "greedy" decision which provides an example which should not be emulated. Third, while, on the whole, the biblical text was seen to be ambiguous regarding Lot, there are times when phrases and/or gaps in the story "left the door open" for negative readings. The lack of a recorded response by Lot to Abram's offer was seen as an indication of his selfishness and disregard for his uncle's welfare.

Generally, Christian interpreters were not as decidedly negative as Jewish interpreters in their treatment of Lot. Origen, for example, saw Lot not as a wholly unrighteous individual but more a mixture of virtue and vice, whose character was not on par with Abram. Lot certainly made a bad decision in moving to Sodom but that didn't, necessarily, imply he was a bad person. Ambrose, at times, interpreted Lot as almost the antithesis to Abram, with Lot representing the irrational part of a person while Abram represented that of the rational. Ambrose is thus more in line with Jewish interpreters like Philo,⁴⁸⁷ though his comments need to be understood within the framework he erected, as he did characterize Lot as a righteous person when he was with Abram. For Ambrose, Lot was an exemplar of what happens when people who are properly connected to the righteous choose to separate themselves from the righteous. For Ephrem, Lot was not wicked like his herders and was thus rescued

⁴⁸⁷ He still, however, characterized Lot as a righteous person when he was with Abram. David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 297, notes that *On Abraham* 2.1-48, which provides an allegorical interpretation of Gen 12:1-15:6, "has a distinct Philonic flavour." He also, along with others, reasons that while there is a gap in the exegesis of Gen 12-15:6 between books 2 and 3 of Philo's *Questions on Genesis*, Ambrose is drawing on this missing section of Philo's work. Even Origen, who at times is more negative in his view of Lot, would not go as far as to say that Lot was totally wicked but rather an "in-between" character. That is not to say that there aren't Philonic tendencies in Origen. For a good overview of Origen's use of Philo see Runia, *Philo*, 157-83.

from their fate. Chrysostom noted Lot's greed but did not strongly condemn Lot as being immoral. In fact, while in Sodom, Lot's virtue was on display for all to see.

6.9.1 Why the Difference?

While there are certainly times when Christian interpreters placed Lot in a far less than positive light, overall the portrait that one finds is of a righteous person who made a bad decision. His action became an illustration of what not to do. The separation also reflects the necessity that sometimes it is best for those in a relationship to part ways to ensure peace. Above, I argued that the rabbinic writers read Lot through the lens of his unwillingness to stay with Abram. This was in marked contrast with, for example, his later descendant Ruth. His decision to go away from his uncle reflected his rejection of God and Torah. Thus, the rabbinic writers read Lot through both their interpretation of the text and their own rabbinic ideology. Christian writers did the same, particularly in the way the NT affected their interpretation.

6.9.2 New Testament Witness Concerning Lot

There are two places where Lot is specifically mentioned by name in the New Testament. Both occurrences deal with Lot's rescue from Sodom in Genesis 19. Early Christian writers, reading the Old Testament through the lens of the New, saw Lot's rescue as a paradigm for the rescue of Christians from judgment. In other words, God's rescue of Lot parallels God's rescue of believers. I argued earlier that rabbinic interpreters were reading Genesis 13 through the lens of conversion. Here I will argue that patristic interpreters were reading Genesis 13 through the lens of salvation.

6.9.2.1 The Rescue of Lot in Luke 17

In Luke 17:20-37, Jesus first responds to the Pharisees' inquiry about the coming kingdom (17-21) and then discusses, with his disciples, the coming of the Son of Man (22-34). It is in this latter portion that Jesus references the story of Lot's rescue in Genesis 19. Jesus begins by discussing the sudden arrival of the flood during the days of Noah. Prior to the flood, people were going about life as they normally would and thus were taken by total surprise. He follows this by providing a parallel story of judgment and rescue:

ὁμοίως καθὼς ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις⁴⁸⁸ Λώτ· ἤσθιον, ἔπινον, ἠγόραζον, ἐπώλουν, ἐφύτευον, ὠκοδόμουν· ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἐξῆλθεν Λώτ ἀπὸ Σοδόμων, ἔβρεξεν πῦρ καὶ θεῖον ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ⁴⁸⁹ καὶ ἀπόλεσεν πάντας. κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ἔσται ἡ ἡμέρα ὃ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκαλύπτεται.

Similarly, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building,⁴⁹⁰ but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all—it will be like that on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. (28-30)⁴⁹¹

Jesus invites his hearers to: “Remember Lot's wife.”⁴⁹² Those who try to preserve their life will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it” (Luke 17:32-33).

However, the parallel Jesus draws between Lot and Noah is more pertinent to my thesis. Both Lot and Noah are contrasted with the “others” and both Lot and Noah are saved prior to an act of judgment. For Noah it was through the ark, for Lot it was through his vacating Sodom. Both Noah and Lot are paradigms of salvation.

⁴⁸⁸ On the use of ἐν + the dative for time see: Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 155.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. θεῖον καὶ πῦρ παρὰ κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (LXX 19:24).

⁴⁹⁰ Each verb in this sequence is 3MPL imperfect active indicative.

⁴⁹¹ Translations from the NT are my own.

⁴⁹² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Luke*, Sacra Pagina 3 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 265, comments, “This exhortation is unique to Luke and is connected to the example only he includes... Luke attaches the loss of life to the desire for possessions. Reminding someone of past examples is one of the staples of Hellenistic paraenesis.”

Interestingly, Lot’s wife appears to become the unrighteous counterpart to her righteous husband.⁴⁹³

Furthermore, both Lot and Noah provide a parallel to Jesus himself. In 17:25 Jesus says that the coming of the Son of Man must be preceded by his suffering and rejection. Likewise, Noah must enter the ark and Lot must leave Sodom before God can rain down judgment. Something must happen prior to judgment. For Jesus, it was suffering and rejection. For Noah it was entering into the ark. For Lot it was leaving Sodom.

6.9.2.2 The Rescue of Lot in 2 Peter

Second Peter, like Luke 17, uses the account of Lot’s rescue from Sodom. In Luke the focus was on Jesus’s sudden return. Here, the focus is on the judgment of the ungodly and the rescue of the righteous. In 2 Pet 2:6-9 one reads:

καὶ πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας τεφρώσας [καταστροφῆ] κατέκρινεν ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἀσεβέ[ς]ιν τεθεικώς, καὶ δίκαιον Λῶτ καταπονούμενον ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀθέσμων ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ ἀναστροφῆς ἐρρύσατο· βλέμματι γὰρ καὶ ἀκοῇ ὁ δίκαιος ἐγκατοικῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας ψυχὴν δικαίαν ἀνόμοις ἔργοις ἐβασάνιζεν· οἶδεν κύριος εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ πειρασμοῦ ῥύεσθαι, ἀδίκους δὲ εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν,

[A]nd *if*⁴⁹⁴ he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah [to ruin], reducing them to ashes making them an example of what is coming for the ungodly; and *if* he rescued righteous Lot who was oppressed by the licentious conduct of the lawless⁴⁹⁵ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless⁴⁹⁶ works that he saw

⁴⁹³ Joel B. Green, *Luke*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 633, comments that Jesus’s admonition to “remember Lot’s wife,” “both interprets her action as the manifestation of an unwillingness to relinquish everything at the time of judgment and serves to warn Jesus’s followers against similarly misplaced values.”

⁴⁹⁴ The “if” here, and in 2:7, being implied given the earlier use of *Ei* in 2:4 (*Ei* γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων) which began the discussion of God’s acts of judgement. On the use of *ei* in arguments which assume particular aspects to be true see discussion in: Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 692-94. He notes that translating *ei* as “if” in these kinds of instances provides “greater rhetorical power” than “since” (cf. Mt 12:27-28; Lk 4:3; 1 Thess 4:14).

⁴⁹⁵ Masc. plural genitive from ἄθεσμος which pertains to “refusing to be subjected to legal requirements—‘lawless, unruly, not complying with law’” (J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. [New York: United Bible Societies, 1999], 757; cf. A. Oepke, “ἄθεσμος,” *TDNT* 1:167).

⁴⁹⁶ In 2:7 the author uses ἀθέσμων to describe the people’s “lawless” behavior and here in 2:8 he uses ἀνόμοις.

and heard), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly out of trial, and to preserve the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.⁴⁹⁷

There are three things here which are pertinent to my discussion of Lot's characterization in Christian interpretation of Genesis 13. First, Lot is said to be "righteous" (δικαιον).⁴⁹⁸ While there is some debate, as discussed in my earlier narrative analysis, about whether or not Lot is saved because he is righteous or solely because "God remembered Abraham" it is clear that the author of 2 Peter is siding with the former view.⁴⁹⁹ Second, Lot is characterized as being "oppressed" (καταπονούμενον) or "distressed, with the implication of being worn out"⁵⁰⁰ by the moral depravity of his fellow city dwellers.⁵⁰¹ He was "tormented" that he had to live amongst such wickedness. Thus, Lot is not characterized as "one of them" but rather

⁴⁹⁷ This particular reading of Lot, in Genesis 19, shows up in numerous early Christian works (cf. *1 Clem* 11:1; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 1:4; *Apocalypse of Paul* 27).

⁴⁹⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 252, notes the contrast between Lot as "righteous" and the Sodomites as "lawless."

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Wisdom 10:6. It would appear, then, that at some point there were two strands in Second Temple Judaism regarding Lot's characterization in Genesis 19. *Pirkê R. El.*, 25, seems to imply Lot's characterization is distinct from those of Sodom because he learned "good deeds and ways" from Abraham. Further, Abraham is said to pray specifically for Lot in his plea for the righteous in Genesis 18 (cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 49.13 where "ten" refers to "Lot, his wife, his four daughters and four sons-in-law" though the rabbinic interpretation of Lot in Genesis 19 is far from a righteous portrayal). An earlier, and more negative portrayal, is reflected in *Jubilees*. *Jubilees* provides a harsh condemnation of Lot and his descendants for his actions with his daughters in its brief retelling of Genesis 19 (16:5-9)—a condemnation which is said to be engraved on the heavenly tablets (i.e., it cannot be revoked). It is the more negative portrayal which seems to "win the day" with early Jewish writers (cf. Philo *Q.G.* 4.54; *b. Ber.* 54b; *Genesis Rabbah* 50.4, 9; Tg. Ps.-J. 19:27).

⁵⁰⁰ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English lexicon*, 313. It is possible to read καταπονούμενον here as "mistreated" or "oppressed" (cf. Acts 7:24). I have opted for "oppressed" because it provides some ambiguity and thus allows for both an understanding of emotional/psychological anguish which connects well with the author's discussion of Lot's "torment" and a reading which envisions actual physical harm which may fit better with the emphasis on "trials" that the author highlights in 2:9.

⁵⁰¹ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 252, connects the description of Lot as righteous both to the passage from *Pirkê R. El.* and to Philo, *Mos.* 2.58 but provides no elaboration on the connection. Ruth Ann Reese, *2 Peter and Jude*, 152, comments that, "Philo describes Lot as a person with a nature of perfect excellence" and provides a quote of *Mos.* 2.58. Upon close examination, however, Philo doesn't exactly provide a clear cut "righteous" portrayal of Lot. He notes, "this man (Lot) had not attained to any perfection of wisdom, so as to be thought worthy of such an honour by reason of the perfect excellence of his nature; but he was spared only because he did not join the multitude who were inclined to luxury and effeminacy" (quoted from Reese, 152). Reese interprets the phrase "so as to be thought worthy of such an honour" as implying "the honor of assimilating to the culture in which he lived." From the context, however, it seems that Philo is speaking of the "honor" of being "spared." In other words, Lot did not attain any perfection of wisdom so as to make him worthy of being saved from Sodom. His salvation, for Philo, does not seem to imply that Lot is wholly righteous but rather that Lot is not as bad as the Sodomites. This particular reading would be more in line with Philo's discussion of Genesis 13 which was analyzed above.

as “one of us.” Third, Lot is understood as a paradigm for those who are “rescued” from judgment. Lot becomes the archetypical Christian living amongst the ungodly of the world who are awaiting God’s destruction of the wicked. Bauckham summarizes well the focus:

Lot suffers not because he is a victim of the wicked, but because he is a genuinely righteous man, a man who loves righteousness, who longs to see righteousness done in the world, and is afflicted by its absence. If 2 Peter’s readers can identify with him, they too may hope for deliverance.⁵⁰²

The reason for the difference becomes clear: rabbinic interpreters were reading Genesis 13 through the lens of conversion and Lot’s rejection of a call to submit to Torah (unlike Ruth). Christian interpreters were reading Lot through the lens of salvation as one who was rescued from destruction (as with Noah). While Jewish and Christian interpreters were both engaging Genesis 13 closely and wrestling with both spoken and unspoken aspects in the text, their conclusions were not simply driven by the text, but also by their theological presuppositions.

When one deals with Lot’s characterization in Genesis, there is much to question. He chooses to live near Sodom, ends up in Sodom, offers his daughters to the mob, balks at the call to vacate Sodom, impregnates his two daughters and becomes the eponymous ancestor of Moab and Ammon. While each of these episodes can be ambiguous, it is difficult to argue that Lot should be seen as a wholly righteous person. For Jewish interpreters, Lot’s unrighteous behavior is due to his wanting “neither Abraham nor his God.” Therefore, Genesis 13 becomes the foundation for how Lot is to be understood and the lens through which his subsequent actions are to be read.

In Christian interpretation, there is a subsequent voice in how Lot is to be understood and read. That voice declares authoritatively that Lot is righteous. The

⁵⁰² Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 256-57.

NT provides a message that Lot is indeed righteous and, therefore, his prior actions and characterization are to be read back through that lens. Lot, while certainly unwise in his decision-making, becomes not a prototypical outsider, but rather an insider who made some very poor decisions. He is not a model of rejection but rather a model for the discussion of proper ethical practice. So while Jewish interpreters were reading Lot from Genesis 13 onward, Christians were reading Lot from the New Testament backward.

The preceding analysis has also demonstrated that both Jewish and Christian interpreters regularly safeguard Abram from wrongdoing (e.g. adoption of Lot; Lot wanting to go) and often shift the focus from problematic portions regarding Abram (e.g. the striving herders; Abram's offer of land) to highlight negative decisions by Lot. Thus, whether Lot is viewed as unrighteous or as a righteous one gone astray, he in one way or another serves as a contrast to Abram.

6.10 The Separation of Abram and Lot in Medieval and Renaissance Reception

A brief discussion is warranted of how these early interpretations of Genesis 13 impacted later interpreters in the Medieval and Renaissance periods. I outlined earlier some examples of the way in which reading Lot as adopted and/or as foil have been popular among later Jewish and Christian interpreters. One finds these readings being articulated by such influential medieval commentators as Rashi, Nicholas of Lyra and Peter Comestor and such influential Renaissance commentators as John Calvin and Martin Luther. Some brief comments on the connection between these interpreters and the earlier ones discussed above will be outlined below.

That Abram did not disobey in taking Lot continued to be prominent in subsequent interpretation from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Radak, writing in the 13th century, for example, notes that Lot wanted to go, "Lot left his grandfather

behind, preferring the company of his uncle... Lot did not merely join Avram because he was his uncle... but he shared his religious beliefs⁵⁰³ and was active as an evangelist for that faith,⁵⁰⁴ while Luther sees God as the source of Lot's accompaniment:

Behold God's marvelous counsel! The promise pertained to Abraham only, not to Lot. Nevertheless, God attaches Lot, like a proselyte, to Abraham as his companion and moves his heart so that he wants to go into exile with his uncle rather than remain in his native country among the idolaters.⁵⁰⁵

Luther's language that Abram and Lot were both "exiles"⁵⁰⁶ is similar to that of Chrysostom who described Lot as being willing to go into "exile" with Abram.⁵⁰⁷ One prominent way to safeguard Abram, as demonstrated earlier, was by seeing Lot as the potential heir. See here, for example, my earlier references to Calvin, *Historia Scholastica*, Nicholas of Lyra and Rashi. Further, there continued to

⁵⁰³ Rabbi Chayim ben Attar writing in the 18th century comments in contrast that while Lot "insisted on accompanying Abraham, he did not so for the same reason, i.e. a divine command." Quotation from, Rabbi Chayim ben Attar, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1, trans. Eliyahu Munk (Jerusalem: Eliyahu Munk, 1995), 123.

⁵⁰⁴ *Hachut Hameshulash: Commentaries on the Torah by Rabbeinu Chananel, Rabbi Sh'muel ben Meir, Rabbi David Kimchi, Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno*, vol.1, trans. Eliyahu Munk (Lambda Publisher: New York, 2003), 274. Radak here reads the "they made" in 12:5 as referring to the people which Abram and Lot converted and thus sees Lot as believing and evangelizing along with his uncle. The reading of "they converted" is also found in Tg. Onq., Tg. Neof., Tg. Ps.-J. and *Genesis Rabbah*. While none of the targums elaborate on who the "they" is who were converting people, *Genesis Rabbah* notes that it was Abram and Sarah. Abram converted the men and Sarah the women. There is no mention of Lot in this regard (39.14). Cf. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 31.16.

⁵⁰⁵ Translations from: Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 6-14* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1960). Here Luther is, apparently, drawing from a long-standing tradition about the idolatrous milieu out of which Abram was called (cf. *Jubilees* 11:16-12:31; *Apoc. Of Abraham* 1-8).

⁵⁰⁶ The language of "exile" also appears in *Cave of Treasures*, dated sometime prior to 630 CE. The writer, in keeping with more positive characterizations of Lot (who is called "the just") in Christian interpretation, notes that God honored Lot's willingness to travel with Abram by including him in the sacred bloodline. This would be in keeping with Chrysostom's comments about Lot making the wise decision to travel with Abram rather than stay behind at home (*Homilies* 31.16). As noted above, as with Chrysostom, the language of exile is used to describe Abram and Lot's journey, "Old Boaz married Ruth so that Abraham's nephew Lot might participate in the transmission of kingship. Thus God did not refuse Lot the just his labour's wages, for he had worn himself out in exile with Abraham and received God's angels in peace. Therefore Lot the just was not cursed for having slept with his daughter. God granted that from the seed of those two might derive the royal blood-line and from the seed of Lot and Abraham Christ would be born" (33:7-11). For translation and background information see: Bauckham, et al, *More Noncanonical Scriptures*.

⁵⁰⁷ *Homilies on Genesis* 31.16. On Luther's use of Chrysostom in his Genesis commentary see: Mickey Leland Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs: Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Enarrationes in Genesis, 1535-1545*, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* 92 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 127-8.

be a contrast between Abram and Lot. While Luther and Calvin both tend to see Lot in a very positive light, he is still not on the same level as Abram. Luther comments that Lot is “far beneath him (Abram) in age, prestige, influence and position.” Calvin provides a specific critique of Lot’s ethics in his comments regarding Lot’s choice of land, “As the equity of Abram was worthy of no little praise; so the inconsideration of Lot, which Moses here describes, is deserving of censure. He ought rather to have contended with his uncle for the palm of modesty.”

6.10.1 Medieval and Renaissance Influences

Many early interpreters were highly influential in later Christian interpretation. Patristic commentary became the source of the material found in the influential 12th century work, the *Glossa Ordinaria*, with Chrysostom and Ambrose used throughout the Gloss on Genesis.⁵⁰⁸ It goes without saying that Patristic writers like Chrysostom were not only available but also influential on Calvin and Luther as is attested in their commentaries.⁵⁰⁹ The influence, also, of Josephus on later Christian interpretation cannot be overemphasized.⁵¹⁰ Peter Comestor, for example, drew heavily on Josephus and it seems probable that Peter's understanding of Lot as adopted was

⁵⁰⁸ For discussion of the gloss as an interpretive technique see: Frans van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For discussion of the *Glossa Ordinaria* specifically and its importance see: David A. Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012) and Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Commentaria 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

⁵⁰⁹ For example, Calvin possessed his works and Chrysostom is one of the three most often cited interpreters in Calvin’s exegesis (Augustine and Jerome being the other two). See discussion in: Anthony S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 222-25 and; Johannes Van Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vol, ed Irena Backus (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 661-700. Chrysostom was also widely available and used among Puritan writers. See: Ann-Stephane Schäfer, *Auctoritas Patrum: The Reception of the Church Fathers in Puritanism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011).

⁵¹⁰ For discussion of this influence see especially: Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, eds., *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

influenced by Josephus.⁵¹¹ Peter's *Historia Scholastica* was subsequently of great influence on later interpreters including Nicholas of Lyra.⁵¹²

The highly influential Jewish commentator Rashi clearly engaged the earlier rabbinic commentators for much of his interpretation of Genesis 12-13 and often quotes from the Rabbis approvingly.⁵¹³ Rashi is a favorite of influential medieval Christian commentator Nicholas of Lyra,⁵¹⁴ who was subsequently an influence on Martin Luther.⁵¹⁵ Rashi along with Radak, who engaged Rashi as well as other previous rabbinic writers,⁵¹⁶ would also have been available during the

⁵¹¹ For Josephus' influence on the *Historia* see: Maria C. Sherwood-Smith, *Studies in the reception of the Historia Scholastica of Peter Comestor* (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Language and Literature, 2000), 3-14. I noted earlier the mention of Lot's adoption in *Historia Scholastica* and Abram's calling Lot "son" in *Palaea Historica*. The latter may have been drawing on Josephus as well. For Josephus' influence on the *Palaea* see: Steven Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium" in Feldman and Hata, *Josephus*, 370.

⁵¹² Herman Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), 111. Hailperin notes that Peter may have been impacted by Rabbinic writers including Rashi though through the mediation of writings of Andrew of St. Victor. James H. Morey, "Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible" *Speculum* 68:1 [1993]: 6, notes, "the *Historia* was the single most important medium through which a popular Bible took shape, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century in France, England, and elsewhere."

⁵¹³ Though Rashi was familiar with Christian exegesis there is some doubt that Christianity influenced his Torah commentary. See discussion in: Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Rashi vs. Rashbam and Bekhor Shor" in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* eds. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman, JSJSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 449-72.

⁵¹⁴ Wiesel comments that Lyra cited Rashi so much that he was nicknamed "Solomon's (Shlomo's) ape" (Elie Wiesel, *Rashi* [New York: Schocken Books, 2003], 28). For analysis of Lyra's use of Rashi and Rashi's impact on Christian interpretation see especially: Hailperin, *Rashi*, 103-248 and; Deena Copeland Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers: Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Readings of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Due to Lyra's knowledge of Rabbinic texts and his ability to work directly with the Hebrew Klepper, *Insight*, 109; 133, comments, "Nicholas was widely understood to be the single most important Christian authority on Jewish traditions in the medieval church" and further, "Carefully interweaving exegesis and polemic, Nicholas successfully Christianized medieval rabbinic text for his readers, bringing fruits of Jewish learning to a phenomenally broad Christian audience."

⁵¹⁵ Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjerna, *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 14-5; See also: Wiesel, *Rashi*, 28.

⁵¹⁶ For discussion of Radak's use of and engagement with earlier Rabbinic sources see: Naomi Grunhaus, *The Challenge of Received Tradition: Dilemmas of Interpretation in Radak's Biblical Commentaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Reformation⁵¹⁷ and were, in fact, engaged by Calvin.⁵¹⁸ Further, medieval and renaissance Jewish writers, like Radak, were familiar with Christian writings and theology.⁵¹⁹

6.10.2 Lot as positive and negative in Jewish interpretation

I noted above Radak's very positive interpretation of Lot's choice to accompany his uncle. There is a still, however, a moral contrast to be seen between Abram and Lot. Radak later comments that it was Lot not Abram who "severed the relationship." Further Lot, "although aware of the evil reputation of the people in the cities of that plain, had decided to ignore this, preferring to concentrate on the advantages offered by the land itself." Likewise, Sforno, writing in the sixteenth century, comments that "Avram – as opposed to Lot – settled in the land of Canaan. He settled in the part of the land inhabited by Canaanites. They were not as evil as the Sodomites. Avram did not move close to the boundary of Sodom at all." Further, Sforno comments regarding God's subsequent promise to Abram, "G'd did not say

⁵¹⁷ Kugel notes that it is during the Renaissance period that one can "for the first time speak of a thorough-going Jewish learning" among Christian scholars. This new class of scholars has been referred to as "Christian Hebraists" as they were "trained in Hebrew by Jewish teachers." See discussion in James L. Kugel, "The Bible in the University" in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, ed. William Henry Propp, Baruch Halpern and David Noel Freedman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 143-49.

⁵¹⁸ "Calvin's Old Testament commentaries use both Rashi and Kimhi" (Debora Shuger, "Isaiah 63 and literal senses of Scripture" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, C. 1530-1700* ed. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith and Rachel Judith Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 158. It is not clear, however, whether Calvin was engaging these directly or through Nicholas of Lyra. See discussion in: David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 2nd Ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 97; David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 52-81 and; Lane, *Calvin*, 228-9. One interesting potential parallel is with regard to Abram's seed not mixing with Lot's. Rabbinic interpreters noted that the separation of Abram and Lot had to occur because the "seed of Abram" could not mix with the "seed of Lot." (*Genesis Rabbah* 41:6) Calvin, likewise, comments, "Seeing that the Lord promises the land to the seed of Abram, we perceive the admirable design of God, in the departure of Lot. He had assigned the land to Abram alone; if Lot had remained with him, the children of both would have been mixed together. The cause of their dissension was indeed culpable; but the Lord, according to his infinite wisdom, turns it to a good issue, that the posterity of Lot should possess no part of the inheritance."

⁵¹⁹ See, for example, discussion in: Robert A. Harris, "Medieval Jewish Biblical Exegesis" in *A History of Biblical Interpretation Vol. 2: Medieval through the Reformation Periods*; ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 141-71. Harris makes the interesting point that fourteenth century commentator R. Bahya ben Asher of Sargossa was the first to utilize a fourfold exegetical system (contextual; philosophical; homiletical; mystical) similar to that of earlier Christian fourfold exegesis (literal; allegorical; tropological; anagogic).

what follows while Lot was still in Avram's company, so that the latter would not boast and his shepherds would engage in stealing grazing land from the local inhabitants claiming G'd's promise to Avram of future possession as their justification." These commentators are often interacting heavily with Rashi and earlier rabbinic works. And while there are times when later Jewish commentators raise questions their about interpretations of events in the storyline,⁵²⁰ there is still in some sense a contrast, in the text, between the Abram and Lot though that contrast doesn't appear to always be quite as explicit as with earlier Jewish interpreters.

6.10.3 Concluding Thoughts

Both the interpretation that Lot was seen as Abram's heir and that Lot serves as an ethical contrast⁵²¹ to Abram as espoused by ancient patristic and rabbinic commentators was widely circulated in subsequent interpretive history.⁵²² The point of this analysis, however, is not to simply trace back possible connections throughout the interpretive stream or to discuss the potential awareness of Jewish and Christian interpreters of one another. The point, rather, is to highlight that these traditions have been a part of interpretive history for thousands of years, and given their vast

⁵²⁰ This is particularly true when it comes to the lack of grazing space as the reason for the quarrel. Whereas many earlier interpreters (e.g. Targums; *Genesis Rabbah*; *Pesikta Rabbati*) saw Lot and his herders as the source of the quarrel, some later interpreters simply saw the lack of grazing space as the origin. For example, thirteenth century commentator Nahmanides (Ramban) notes that the quarrel and the potential consequences are contemplated in Abram's mind prior to the call for separation (though he still says that Lot's shepherds "encroached" on Abram's land): "Now Abram and Lot were both strangers and sojourners in the land. Abram, therefore, feared that the Canaanites and the Perrizite, who inhabit the land, might hear of the abundance of their cattle, (whose great number was made apparent when Lot's shepherds encroached on Abram's land, thereby combining the flocks), and drive them out of the land or slay them by sword and take their cattle and wealth since the mastery of the land belonged to them, not to Abram." Translation from: Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah: Genesis*, trans. Charles Ber Chavel (Brooklyn: Shiloh Publishing House, 1971). With regard to Nahmanides' interpretation Levine comments that, Abram "internalizes the fact that he currently dwells in a foreign land, concluding that his sustained presence among the Canaanites and Perizzites is precarious. If Abram's and Lot's livestock remain together, the sight of their large possessions will raise alarm among the inhabitants of the land and bring harm to Abram and Lot" (Michelle J. Levine, *Nahmanides on Genesis: The Art of Biblical Portraiture*, BJS 350 [Providence: Brown University Press, 2009], 64).

⁵²¹ Thus, while, at times, Lot is characterized as wholly wicked as with early Jewish interpretation or as a righteous person gone astray, as with early Christian readings, there is still a consistent notion that Lot's actions are in one way or another in contrast to those of Abram.

⁵²² The notion that Lot wanted to go with Abram was also well attested.

influence throughout that time, it is not surprising to see them continuing to be utilized the modern era.

6.11 Moving Toward an Interpretation

I began this thesis by asking three questions: (1) Does the text necessitate a reading of Lot as being the first “potential heir” and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram? (2) If not inherently from the text, then where do these readings of Lot as the “potential heir” and as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram originate from and how can a study of the early reception of Genesis 13 aid in answering that question? (3) If these common assumptions are not derived inherently from text, then how are Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, to be understood?

Thus far, I have argued that the text does not necessitate reading Lot as the first “potential heir” and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram. Second, I proposed that the origination of these readings is found in the way in which the account of Abram and Lot’s separation has been received. In other words, it seems that the predominant interpretations of Genesis 13 are, consciously or unconsciously, inherited readings. This should not be read as a criticism and is certainly not a bad thing but it does raise questions about what the text really does or does not say. In the following chapter, I will address the third question—how Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, are to be understood.

7. LOT AS BROTHER

In this closing chapter, I will address the third and final question posed at the outset of this thesis: If the common assumptions of Lot as potential heir and foil are not derived inherently from the text, then how are Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, to be understood? I will begin by discussing the question of Lot as heir in comparison to Abram's remarks concerning Eliezer and Ishmael. This will provide greater clarity on how Lot's function differs from that of the two stated potential heirs. This analysis will lead naturally into the discussion of how exactly Lot does function in the Abraham narrative in general, and Genesis 13 in particular, by way of comparison with other "brother" stories in Genesis. This analysis will be structured around the dual themes of brotherhood and separation (13:11) which we find running throughout the other "brother" stories. As I will argue below, it seems that Abram and Lot's separation foreshadows the subsequent tension in the patriarchal narratives about brothers being co-dwellers in the land. This tension requires separation, even if the relationship is amicable, and the necessity of the brothers to dwell in different places, with only one occupying the land.

7.1 Lot in light of Abram's potential heirs

I argued above that, for ancient interpreters, the driving force behind the interpretation that Lot was the potential heir of Abram was a means to safeguard Abram from wrongdoing. The same could also be said of the interpretation that Lot chose to go and that Lot is Abram's ethical counterpart. As this reading of Lot as presumed heir is reapplied in modern interpretive discussions, it seems as if the basis for the argument that Lot is to be viewed as Abram's "son" is, at the heart, located in the promise of descendants—a central theme running through the Genesis narrative. Clines, in his assertion that the theme of the Pentateuch is the "partial fulfillment—

which implies the partial non-fulfillment—of the promise to or blessing of the patriarchs” isolates three elements of that promise: posterity, divine-human relationship and land. He notes that the posterity aspect of the promise is “dominant in Genesis 12-50.”⁵²³ The proposed centrality of posterity in the Abraham narrative has been, most likely, the framework behind reading Lot as potential heir. Sternberg connects the promise and Lot’s presence in the narrative:

In his very first address to Abraham, God promises “I will make of thee a great nation” (12:2). The ensuing reference to the patriarch’s age (“five and seventy years”) indicates the need for urgency in fulfillment. The constant presence of Lot as his uncle’s fellow traveler rubs in the absence of a son, and their growing estrangement and ultimate parting even quashes the possibility that “the great nation” will issue from an adopted rather than a natural heir.⁵²⁴

As with other interpreters, Sternberg reads the account of Abram and Lot’s separation as the removal of Lot as potential heir to the promise. Kaminsky, who briefly discusses the separation of Abram and Lot in light of several other stories of “dis-election” in Genesis, likewise comments:

While Abram is the recipient of the promises in chapter 12, Lot may be the most likely figure to inherit these promises because Abram has no other viable heir. But chapter 13 makes clear that this eventually will not come to pass...Lot further confirming God’s promises to Abram from chapter 12, removes himself as a possible heir to these promises by choosing to settle in the (at that time) more verdant area of Sodom.⁵²⁵

Steinmetz remarks that Lot’s departure, “initiated Abraham’s quest for a son.”⁵²⁶ The

⁵²³ David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 27-9.

⁵²⁴ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, ISBL (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 248. See also, Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 133.

⁵²⁵ Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 31. See also the brief comments in Joel N. Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish-Christian Interpretation*, SIPHRUT 2 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 108. There has been an increased interest of late in the concept of “election” in the Hebrew Bible (see especially the works by Kaminsky, Lohr, Levenson, Dicou, Heard, Anderson). There are none, however, which I am aware of, who read the story of Lot’s “dis-election” through the lens of brotherhood. All see Lot as functioning as the potential and eventually rejected heir.

⁵²⁶ Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, 69.

order would then be as follows: (1) Lot, (2) Eliezer, and (3) Ishmael.⁵²⁷ As I have argued above, however, the text of Genesis never explicitly sets Lot up as a potential heir. This becomes clearer when Lot's story is compared with that of Eliezer and Ishmael. Both Eliezer and Ishmael are explicitly mentioned as potential heirs by Abram:

After these things the word of Yhwh came to Abram in a vision saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be exceedingly great." But Abram said, "O Lord Yhwh what will you give to me, for I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "You have not given me a descendant, and behold a son of my house is going to be my heir." Then behold, the word of the Yhwh came to him, saying, "This one will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." (Gen 15:1-4)

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, because Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and also I will give a son to you from her. Then I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples will be from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" But God said, "No, rather⁵²⁸ Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him." (Gen 17:15-19)⁵²⁹

As is clear from both of these texts, the focus of the narrative is on the identity of Abram's heir. In both texts, Abram provides Yhwh with the identity of the one he assumes will be his heir. Even the terminology used in each instance is quite telling. In Genesis 15, Abram explicitly states that Eliezer will be his "heir" and identifies him as a "son" of his house. In Genesis 17, God tells Abraham that Sarah will have a son. Abraham questions the validity of this statement and counters with, "Oh that

⁵²⁷ Levenson, *Abraham*, 41, who appears to favor the notion that Lot is to be seen as potential heir, notes that, if this is the case, then Lot "is the first of the three men who initially seem to be the heir to the patriarchal promises but then turn out not to be." See also Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob*, 31.

⁵²⁸ I am following *HALOT* here translating the particle אַבֵּל as "no, rather" (see also NRSV; NASB). NJPS has "nevertheless" and NAB has "even so." Regardless, the point seems to be that God recognizes Abraham's request and then proceeds to move in a different direction.

⁵²⁹ This does not deny that Ishmael, too, will be blessed by God (17:20) but it does make clear that the promise will pass through Isaac.

Ishmael might live before you.” While this phrase may seem somewhat ambiguous the subsequent response by God informs the reader of what exactly Abraham was saying: “No, rather Sarah your wife will bear you a son.” In other words, Abraham believes that Ishmael, his first true son, should be his heir.⁵³⁰ What makes the contrast between Lot, Eliezer and Ishmael more emphatic is the fact that in all three instances God initiates the conversation with Abraham.

In the Eliezer and Ishmael pericopae Abraham responds to God’s initial declaration with a question regarding his progeny. In Genesis 13 Abraham says nothing about his lack of descendants nor does God even raise the issue. The focus of God’s promise and Abraham’s actions in Genesis 13 is not on Abraham’s descendants but rather on Abraham’s dwelling in the land and separating himself from Lot. Thus, when one examines God’s words and Abraham’s response in the Lot, Eliezer and Ishmael pericopae, one finds that only two of the three are ever called or explicitly thought to be the potential heir. Lot, unlike the other two, is only called a brother.⁵³¹

7.2 Lot and brotherhood

While the promise of descendants is certainly of great interest to the story line, the issue of brotherhood is also an important and central theme throughout the Genesis narratives.⁵³² The main way in which this theme is developed is not through ethical distinctions, which has been a primary focus of interpreters, but rather through demonstrating the necessity of separation between brothers. From an ethical

⁵³⁰ Heard, *Dynamics*, 75, notes that up till Genesis 17, “Abraham probably thought of Ishmael as the heir.”

⁵³¹ Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*, 81, comments that by calling Lot his brother, Abram has “misdefined” Lot. As I will demonstrate below, however, the language of brotherhood in Genesis 13 is integral to understanding the purpose and function of Lot in the Abraham narrative.

⁵³² The relationship of Israel to its “brothers” is also of importance in other places in the Pentateuch (cf. Deut 2).

standpoint it should be noted that the “unchosen brother”⁵³³ is not, explicitly, characterized as being “bad.” In reality, the unchosen brother is portrayed as a rather ambiguous character possessing (not unlike the “hero” in the stories), both positive and questionable qualities.⁵³⁴ The necessity of Lot’s separation from Abram is remarkably similar to the necessity for other brothers in Genesis to be separated from one another. The theme of brotherhood provides another lens, therefore, through which the patriarchal promises can be understood and applied.

I should note, however, that I am not focusing on the issue of “sibling rivalry” or even “family rivalry” within the Genesis narratives.⁵³⁵ While this is certainly an important issue in several Genesis stories, it isn’t exactly clear that Abram and Lot are themselves quarreling.⁵³⁶ The tension in the story line appears to be, as I will argue below, centered on Lot’s presence with Abram in the land, not on any particular issue between the “brothers.” This provides a more contextual way to connect Lot to the other brother stories in Genesis. The promises of God are not for “brothers,” they are for one of the brothers and his descendants. This distinction, therefore, also implies that the brothers cannot dwell together, they must separate.⁵³⁷ Or in the words of Gen 13:11, “and each man separated from his brother.” This becomes clearer when the account of Abram and Lot’s separation is compared with other brother stories in

⁵³³ The language of “unchosen brother” is, obviously, not original to me. Bert Dicou, *Edom*, 126-36, uses this terminology in describing Ishmael and Esau. Heard, *Dynamics*, and Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, opt for the language of “dis-election” with regard to Lot as well.

⁵³⁴ Heard, *Dynamics*, 137, makes a similar point about the ethics of Lot, Ishmael and Esau.

⁵³⁵ See: Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*; Wénin, *La Question*; Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*; Petersen, “Genesis and Family Values”; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 130; Matthias Millard, *Die Genesis als Eröffnung der Tora: Kompositionen – und auslegungsgeschichtliche Annäherungen an das erste Buch Mose*, WMANT 90 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001), 79-80.

⁵³⁶ There is also a lack of strife between Noah’s sons and while there may be some form of strife between Isaac and Ishmael, it isn’t entirely certain.

⁵³⁷ Several interpreters (e.g., Heard, Kaminsky, Dicou) have noted the importance of separation though none has examined in detail the way Lot functions as a “brother” in the story line.

Genesis.⁵³⁸ This analysis will lead, logically, into a new proposal for Lot's relationship to Abraham.⁵³⁹ Lot, it will be argued, fills in the gap for Abraham's deceased brother Haran.⁵⁴⁰

7.3 The Use of אָח in Dialogue Prior to Accounts of Separation

I will begin by examining the use of "brother" in dialogue⁵⁴¹ and I want to pay particular attention to the way in which אָח is used in dialogue prior to accounts of separation. I will briefly discuss each occurrence⁵⁴² and the impact each has on one's reading of אָח in Genesis 13.

7.3.1 Cain and his Brother

After the account of Cain and Abel's offerings and prior to the story of Cain's

⁵³⁸ The study below in no way attempts to provide an exhaustive treatment of each of these pericopae. There are many details which I will opt not to discuss because they are not germane to my thesis. Therefore, I will limit my discussion to those things which are directly related to my particular objective outlined above.

⁵³⁹ While there have been some who have raised doubts about Lot's role as "potential heir" (T.E. Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections*, NIDB [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994], 433; cf. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 281) there has not been, to my knowledge, a counter proposal offered. I am offering such a proposal below.

⁵⁴⁰ Dicou, *Edom*, 131-33, comments briefly that Lot is Abraham's brother but understands Lot's primary role as that of potential heir.

⁵⁴¹ There are a number of works which discuss kinship relations within ancient Israel and some which discuss the role of kinship relations in Hebrew narrative. Regarding the former, see especially: Leo Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel*; Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*; Robert A. Oden, Jr., *The Bible Without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Patricia Dutcher-Walls, ed., *The Family in Life and Death: The Family in Ancient Israel Sociological and Archaeological Perspectives*, LHBOTS (New York: T & T Clark, 2009); Ken M. Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003); Karel Van Der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, SHCANE (Leiden: Brill, 1996). Regarding the latter I am thinking primarily of: Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*; Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son*; Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation*. This particular study attempts to build upon previous kinship studies not by focusing, primarily, on the relational terminology which stands "behind" the text but rather the kinship language, specifically in dialogue, "of" the text. Thus, I will not be discussing how the language of kinship fits within the wider issue of politics, for example, but rather how the language of kinship in dialogue, specifically אָח, provides an interpretive lens to view Genesis 13 by showing its connection to the wider context of brother stories in Genesis.

⁵⁴² The point of this survey is not to give an exhaustive account of every occurrence of אָח in Genesis but rather to give an overview which will lay the groundwork for later discussion as it pertains to Gen 13:8. It should be pointed out, though, that of the 178 uses of אָח in Genesis in *BHS*, 85 occur within context of direct speech. It comes as no surprise that over half (50) of these occurrences fall within Genesis 37-50 which focuses primarily on the account of Joseph and his "brothers."

murder of Abel,⁵⁴³ there is a dialogue between Yhwh and Cain in which Yhwh begins by asking Cain a question: “Where is Abel, your brother (אָחִיךָ)?” To which Cain responds, “I do not know, am I my brother’s (אָחִי) keeper” (4:9)? It is this dialogue and use of kinship language that precedes the subsequent account of Yhwh’s “cursing” of Cain from the ground (אֲדָמָה) which has “opened its mouth to take the blood of your brother (אָחִיךָ) from your hand” (4:11). In the curse, Yhwh notes that Cain will be a “fugitive (נֹעַ)”⁵⁴⁴ and “wanderer (נָדַד) on the earth” (4:14).⁵⁴⁵ Cain does settle, but he settles in the “land of Nod” or if one connects the name of Cain’s land to the verb נָדַד, “the land of wandering.”⁵⁴⁶ Furthermore, after “sinning” Cain is said to travel “east,”⁵⁴⁷ just as Adam and Eve did at the close of Genesis 3. Cain is separated both relationally and geographically and this separation culminates in the genealogies of both Cain and Seth.⁵⁴⁸ This division is not only between Cain/Abel and Cain/land,⁵⁴⁹ but when read in the context of what follows, it moves on to become a

⁵⁴³ There are a great number of gaps in the biblical account of Cain and Abel and the history of interpretation has shown that commentators have taken great liberty in filling in those gaps. For example, one finds a lacuna regarding what exactly Cain said to Abel prior to the murder. While many follow the LXX “let us go out into the field” other texts have offered different possibilities. One which has direct relation to the present essay puts words similar to those of Abram in Genesis 13 on the lips of Cain, “Let there not b[e a quarrel] between me and you; separate from me and take the flock as your lot” (Oxford Bodelian Ms. Heb. C. 74r). The best available overview of the history of interpretation surrounding the Cain and Abel pericope can be found in: John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition* TBN 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁵⁴⁴ *Qal* MS participle נֹעַ. Literally, a “trembler” or possibly a “vagrant.”

⁵⁴⁵ *Qal* MS participle נָדַד. I have opted for the traditional “wanderer on the earth” (NRSV; NASB; NIV; NAB; NJPS) though given the context of the “cursing” from the “ground” it may be possible to read Cain as being a “wanderer against the land” (בְּאֶרֶץ). Reading the כ as “against” here further heightens the separation that Cain now has with the land. Cain is “against” the land or, perhaps, the land is “against” Cain. Further, reading אֶרֶץ here as the more specific “land” rather than the more general “earth” would connect this to later accounts of “land” in subsequent separation stories.

⁵⁴⁶ The locality of this “land” is unknown (See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 110).

⁵⁴⁷ “[P]resumably even farther from the ‘garden of delight’ from which his parents had been expelled” (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 110).

⁵⁴⁸ Interestingly, there are a few significant characters who have genealogies, but no *toledot*. Two of those characters are Cain and Lot. After Cain’s move “east” of Eden one reads, “Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch” (Gen 4:17). There is no “these are the generations of,” there is simply the comment that Cain’s wife bore Enoch which is followed by the genealogy of Cain’s descendants. The same is true for Lot. In Genesis 19 one finds the comment that Lot’s daughter’s conceived and bore Moab and Ben-Ammi. While there is no expanded genealogy, outside the comment regarding the Moabites and Ammonites, there is also no “these are the generations of.”

⁵⁴⁹ “Cain is banished from the soil, the earth itself is to deny him the power of blessing” (Von Rad, *Genesis*, 106).

distinction between “lines.” There is, therefore, both kinship connection through the language of brotherhood and relational and geographical demarcation following this use of kinship language by Yhwh.

7.3.2 Noah and his Sons

The next occurrence of אָח used in dialogue in the context of actual relationships in the text of Genesis comes in 9:25 following the flood narrative of Genesis 6-9.⁵⁵⁰ After the flood narrative in Genesis 9-11, one finds the account of Noah’s drunkenness and his son Ham’s “seeing” Noah’s “nakedness.”⁵⁵¹ After this incident, which has been variously interpreted by scholars, one finds the genealogies of all three of Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. As I have already outlined above, the genealogical structure begins by focusing on all three brothers but then the narrative focuses solely on Shem.

Here we have the very first words of Noah in the entire narrative: “Cursed be Canaan; lowest of servants shall he be to his brothers (אָחַיִם)” (9:25). God had earlier united the sons of Noah with blessing (9:1), but here Noah divides them with cursing. These words of cursing by Noah immediately follow the story of Ham’s encounter with his father’s “nakedness.” While these initial words by Noah may, or may not, be the direct result of Ham’s encounter, the use of אָחַיִם at the opening of the curse provides an interesting introduction to the curse as a whole and the genealogies which follow in Genesis 10-11.

Within the genealogical structures of Shem, Ham and Japheth, one not only finds the mention of “descendants” but also people groups which have dispersed

⁵⁵⁰ I realize that the first occurrence of אָח in dialogue in post flood narrative occurs in 9:5 when God states: “Surely, your lifeblood I will require, from every animal I will require. And from humanity, from everyone’s אָח I will require the life of a human.” However, this instance is not connected, directly, to *actual* relationships in the text of Genesis.

⁵⁵¹ The history of interpretation has provided some very intriguing interpretations around what exactly the encounter between Ham and his father’s “nakedness” actually was. For a good introduction to the interpretive options, see the discussion in Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 199-200.

throughout the known world. Ham's line includes "Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan" (Gen 10:6).⁵⁵² Later in chapter 10, the Canaanite territory is more specifically defined: "And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon, in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah,⁵⁵³ Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha" (Gen 10:19).⁵⁵⁴ Again, the language of brotherhood is used in dialogue, here by Noah, which highlights the connection, but also precedes an account of separation between brothers.⁵⁵⁵

7.3.3 Ishmael and Isaac

Upon fleeing the presence of Sarai, in 16:8, Hagar is "found" by the angel of Yhwh near a spring of water "in the wilderness." It is during this encounter that the angel tells Hagar she will give birth to a son. This son, who is to be named Ishmael, is promised numerous descendants and, according to the angel of Yhwh in 16:12, will "dwell opposite the face of all his brothers (אחיו)."⁵⁵⁶ What is curious about this

⁵⁵² "Among the sons of Ham are some of Israel's closest neighbors, who exercised a profound influence on her political and cultural life" (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 219).

⁵⁵³ Some of the territories mentioned in connection to Ham and his descendants are mentioned in connection to Lot in Genesis 13. Lot travels with Abram into the land inhabited by "the Canaanites." Lot, upon being offered his share of the land by Abram, sees the "Jordan Plain" and that it looked like "the garden of Yhwh...like the land of Egypt." Finally, Lot is said to move his tents "as far as Sodom." The mention of "Canaan" is not surprising, given that the Promised Land is the land of Canaan. The mention, however, of "Egypt" and "Sodom" are quite intriguing given their connection to the cursed line of Ham. Egypt, obviously, is one of Ham's descendants and "Sodom and Gomorrah," whether or not they are actually inside or just outside the borders of Canaan, still add an ominous note to the genealogy and geographical locale of Ham's descendants.

⁵⁵⁴ For description of these territories see: Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 211-27.

⁵⁵⁵ The use of "brother" prior to separation also occurs in Genesis 19, though not in an explicit kinship context. Though I deal with Genesis 19 in detail above, here it should be noted that Lot does refer to the people who have come to his door as "my brothers" (אחיו). What follows is Lot's removal from Sodom and his separation from his "brothers." Lot's final dwelling in the cave near Zoar is separate from the ruined Sodom but is also distinct from Abraham's land from which he "looks down" on the scorched plain.

⁵⁵⁶ Here I am opting to translate this as "opposite the face" while admitting that על-פני is a somewhat ambiguous remark. While many translations favor something like, "at odds with" (NRSV) or "over against" (ESV) it is also possible to translate the phrase as "in the presence of" (KJV) or, even, "alongside of" (NJPS; NAB). I am opting to read the phrase as "opposite the face of" because it allows for the possibility that the phrase implies some kind of hostility or simply refers to location. For further discussion of the ambiguities see: Heard, *Dynamics*, 71-3; *HALOT*, 826; 943.

statement is that, at this point, he has no “brothers,”⁵⁵⁷ at least none the text has told us about. Furthermore, as we have seen, in chapter 17, following God’s promise of a son through Sarah, Abraham replies, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before you” (17:18). This is followed by God’s response to Abraham: “No, rather Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him” (17:19). A few things should be noted here as pertains to my thesis: (1) Isaac and Ishmael are clearly juxtaposed in 17:18-19; (2) this juxtaposition immediately follows an account where אָבִי is used in dialogue; and (3) here we are introduced to Ishmael’s potential first “brother,” albeit a half-brother. Together, these observations point to a relational connection—but also relational demarcation. When we turn our attention to the second Hagar/Ishmael pericope we find that not only are Ishmael and Isaac juxtaposed relationally⁵⁵⁸ but they are juxtaposed geographically as well.

In chapter 21, following Sarah’s advice, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away. This sending away from Abraham and Isaac marks a clean separation of Ishmael from the covenant that God previously made with Abraham in chapter 17.⁵⁵⁹ This movement away also marks the geographical distinction between Isaac and Ishmael. While Isaac remains with Abraham, in the land God promised in Genesis 17, Ishmael is sent into the “wilderness.” This distinction is further highlighted by the remark that Hagar chose for Ishmael a “wife from the land (אֶרֶץ) of Egypt.” This stands in direct contrast to the later remark by Abraham (24:7) that Isaac’s wife is to

⁵⁵⁷ As I have noted above, אָבִי can, and quite commonly does, mean “family member” or “kin” (so NRSV “he shall live at odds with all his kin”). Given the subsequent juxtaposition relationally and geographically with Isaac, however, I feel it may be best to translate the phrase literally as “brothers.” This reading does not rule out a “future” reference to Ishmael’s later kindred, but it does provide a more contextual reading, given the close proximity of “brothers” to the account of Ishmael’s connection with and distinction from Isaac.

⁵⁵⁸ The relational juxtaposition is most explicit in God’s words to Abraham in 21:12, where Isaac is the only son mentioned by name: “Don’t let this be grievous in your eyes because of the *boy* and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through *Isaac* your descendants shall be named.”

⁵⁵⁹ The irony is that Ishmael is marked with the “sign” of the covenant, circumcision, in 17:23.

come from the “land (אֶרֶץ) of my kindred.” Thus, as with the previous stories, we find the use of brotherhood language—here by the angel of Yhwh, which provides relational connectedness but which, in turn, precedes the subsequent pericopae concerning Ishmael and Isaac’s relational and geographical separation.

7.3.4 Jacob and Esau

Immediately following their birth (25:24-28) the narrator records the story of Esau selling his birthright (25:37-34). However, the actual separation of Jacob and Esau doesn’t happen until chapter 27, after Jacob has stolen Esau’s blessing. It is within the context of chapter 27 that we find the first use of אָח in dialogue. In 27:6 Rebekah remarks, “I heard your father speak to Esau your brother (אָחִיךָ).” This dialogue precedes the account of Jacob’s deception of Isaac, his subsequent blessing and Esau’s subsequent “inferior blessing.”⁵⁶⁰ The two have now been divided and this is further brought out in Isaac’s words to Esau which in many ways are a combination of both Yhwh’s words to Cain and Noah’s words to Ham: “Behold, away from the fertility of the land (אֶרֶץ) shall be your dwelling...and your brother (אָחִיךָ) you shall serve” (27:39). Mention should be made here of the interesting comment by Isaac in his blessing of Jacob: “May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master of your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you.” The use of the plural “brothers” here seems somewhat out of place given that Jacob has, as far as we know, only one brother. Kaminsky notes that, while this may be either simply interpolated from the Joseph story or be stock “blessing” language, it may also reflect “the fact that Esau is the ancestor of other rival peoples...and thus, there are other

⁵⁶⁰ Isaac never actually uses the word “curse” in his remarks to Esau, unlike Yhwh’s words to Cain and Noah’s words to Ham. Thus, I have opted for “inferior blessing” which is borrowed from Levenson, *Death*, 62. He comments that while Esau does receive a blessing it is “one inferior to that of which Jacob robbed him.” Isaac alone, for example, is given the patriarchal provision of “blessing/cursing” that Abram received in Gen 12:3.

relatives...who will bow down to Jacob.”⁵⁶¹ This is similar to what I noted above regarding Ishmael. The use of the plural links Esau and Ishmael to both their proximate brother (Jacob/Isaac) but also to the subsequent peoples who will arise from them.

The separation of the two brothers is finalized in chapter 36 when Esau settles in a land away from Jacob. It is the language of brotherhood spoken by Rebekah that highlights Jacob and Esau’s relationship but also, in light of the various words of Isaac and the subsequent “lands” they dwell in, precedes the account of their separation. Esau is, at the same time, a brother and an outsider.

7.3.5 Jacob and Laban

Upon hearing of Esau’s plot to kill him after Isaac’s death, Jacob heeds the instruction of Rebekah and Isaac to travel to the country of Rebekah’s kinspeople in general, and her brother Laban in particular.⁵⁶² When Jacob finally arrives in the “land of the sons of the east” he greets the first people he encounters with the phrase, “my brothers” (אָחֵי) “where are you from?” Jacob then asks about Laban, whether they know him and how he is doing. What follows is the story of Laban’s deception of Jacob with Leah and Rachel and Jacob’s subsequent deception of, and running from, Laban to return to his “land.”⁵⁶³ The story ends with a “covenant” between the two as Laban eventually catches up with Jacob. As noted above, the first instance of אָח occurs with Jacob’s remark to the people he first encounters as he enters this “land.”

The second time that אָח is used in dialogue is in Laban’s initial encounter with Jacob,

⁵⁶¹ Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob*, 53.

⁵⁶² Obviously, the story of Jacob/Laban is not a story between literal brothers, as is true with the separation of Abram and Lot in Genesis 13. Heard, *Dynamics*, 139, correctly notes that the Laban narrative is not about his inclusion or exclusion from the Abrahamic covenant.

⁵⁶³ “While Laban regards Jacob’s departure as a flight, an abandonment of Jacob’s family’s proper home, Jacob on the contrary regards his time spent with Laban as time away from his proper home in the land of his father” (Oden, *The Bible without Theology*, 126). As with Abraham and Isaac before, Jacob and his descendants are promised a unique space: “I, Yhwh, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac; the land (הָאָרֶץ) upon which you lie, I will give to you and to your descendants” (28:13).

“because you are my brother (אחי) should you therefore serve me for nothing?”
(29:15).

At the outset of the Jacob/Laban pericope therefore, we have kinship language being used to show connection but, in light of what follows, this language precedes the account of their separation. This separation is highlighted especially in the final encounter between Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31. First, the narrator remarks in 31:25 that Laban had taken *his* אחים with him in his pursuit of Jacob. Second, in 31:46, Jacob tells *his* אחים to “gather stones” for the “heap.” The narrator has provided an explicit separation between the two men and those connected to them by his reference to two *different* groups of אחים.⁵⁶⁴ This division is further highlighted by the narrator’s remark in 31:54 that Jacob offered a sacrifice and “called אחיו (“his brothers”) to the meal and they ate the meal and they spent the night on the mountain.” One could conclude that the “brothers” here refers to both Jacob and Laban’s kinsmen.⁵⁶⁵ However, given the previous division noted between the two groups it may be that the narrator implies here that only Jacob’s אחים enjoyed the post-sacrificial meal. Furthermore, it is no small matter that the narrator closes the pericope with the remark: “Laban departed and returned to *his place* (למקומו)” (31:55).⁵⁶⁶ Earlier, following Yhwh’s promise to Jacob that “the land upon which you lie, I will give to you and to your descendants” (28:13), he responds, “Surely Yhwh is in *this place* (במקום הזה)” (28:16). The separation is now complete and it is clear that Laban cannot and does not occupy the same “place” as Jacob whose “place/land” is in

⁵⁶⁴ This distinction makes Laban’s remark in 31:32 that, “The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the sight of *our brothers* (אחינו)” quite ironic. What Laban believes about the relationship between him and Jacob is subverted by both the preceding words of the narrator (31:25) and the subsequent words of Jacob (31:46).

⁵⁶⁵ So Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 281, “As was customary in the ancient world, the covenant was concluded by the offering of sacrifice and a communal meal.”

⁵⁶⁶ 32:1 (MT)

Canaan.⁵⁶⁷ It is the language of brotherhood used by Jacob, and later Laban, that highlights their relationship but also, in light of the subsequent story, precedes an account of their separation.

7.3.6 Joseph and his Brothers

This same pattern is found in the Joseph narrative as well, though there are obvious differences. In Genesis 37-50 one finds the highest concentration of the use of אָח in Genesis, though this is really no surprise at all. What is intriguing, however, is the placement of the first use of אָח in dialogue (37:10).⁵⁶⁸ Joseph has just related his dreams to his brothers and Jacob. The initial dream concerning the sheaves in the field is told only to his brothers and the subsequent dream regarding the sun, moon and eleven stars is told to both his brothers and his father. Upon hearing Joseph's initial dream concerning the sheaves in the field, Joseph's brothers "hated him even more" than they had previously. They respond: "Surely will you reign over us? Surely will you rule over us?" (37:8).⁵⁶⁹ Joseph's telling of the second dream in which the sun, moon and eleven stars are bowing down to him causes his father to "rebuke" him (37:10). His rebuke is quite similar to the brothers' earlier statement with the addition of אָח: "Surely will I and your mother and your brothers (אָחֵיךָ) come⁵⁷⁰ to bow down before you to the ground?" What follows is the story of the brothers selling Joseph and thus bringing about physical separation between them and Joseph. The narrator had already made clear that there was a distinction between Joseph and his brothers at the beginning of chapter 37: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons" (37:3).

⁵⁶⁷ Heard, *Dynamics*, 169, comments, "Jacob's genealogical kinship with Laban is affirmed, but a distinction between Jacob's family and Laban's is nevertheless strongly drawn."

⁵⁶⁸ Ironically, between chapters 34-36 אָח is not used at all in dialogue.

⁵⁶⁹ המלך תמלך עלינו אם-משול תמשל בנו. On the interrogative use of אם see: *IBHS*, 316.

⁵⁷⁰ As with the brothers' earlier statement in 37:8 one finds here an infinitive absolute + imperfect construction (הבוא הבוא נבוא). On the emphatic use of the infinitive absolute see: *IBHS*, 584-88.

There is one other element in the Joseph story which is pertinent to our discussion. At the close of the story, Joseph dies while his brothers are still alive. We are told that Joseph has two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. What we don't find is any discussion of Joseph's brothers viewing them as potential sons. Ephraim and Manasseh are said to have their own children and grandchildren (50:23), so it could be argued that they have formed their own household. While there is no mention of Lot's children prior to Genesis 19, he is said to be quite wealthy and he does possess servants. Furthermore, both accounts are situated in the context of the deceased father's "father's household" (Gen 11:26-28; Gen 50:22). Given these similarities, it may be inferred that these uncle-nephew relationships can be read in a similar light. There is no explicit comment about the adoption of Lot, Ephraim, or Manasseh by their respective uncles.⁵⁷¹ Just as Ephraim and Manasseh appear to "fill in the gap" for their deceased father, Joseph, so Lot appears to "fill in the gap" for his deceased father Haran.⁵⁷² This is further substantiated by the fact that the subsequent tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are not "swallowed up" by their uncle's tribes. Note the comment in Josh 14:4 that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are still considered the "sons of Joseph." Ephraim and Manasseh serve brotherly roles in occupying the land. It would appear that in both the Lot/Abram story and the Ephraim/Manasseh/Joseph's brothers' story, to be a "nephew" is to be in relation as a brother.

Ironically, the process of separation is culminated by a reversal of the process.⁵⁷³ Here a rival brother does not have to be "put out." Even with the ethically questionable activity between family members, they end up dwelling together. So

⁵⁷¹ Perhaps, one could argue, that Jacob adopted Joseph's sons given their inclusion in the promises of Genesis 50. However, as Barmash, "Adoption," 7, notes, the focus here appears to be on the reason Joseph's descendants "held two tribal territories" and why there is no tribe of Joseph.

⁵⁷² I will discuss this more fully below.

⁵⁷³ Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 56.

while the previous stories depict the necessity of brotherly separation, the Joseph story ends with the necessity of brotherly unity.

7.3.7 Reexamining the Placement of אחים in Genesis 13:8

The above discussion has a significant bearing on the way in which one understands Gen 13:8 in which Abram calls him and Lot “brothers.” The use of kinship language here by Abram serves to connect his household and Lot’s household as “family.” This connection, however, is followed by the subsequent story of their division. The use of נא by the narrator in 13:11, then, becomes all the more telling: “and they separated, each man, from his brother (אחיו).” Not only has Lot been relationally defined as “brother’s son” and “brother,” but he is also geographically defined. It is upon Abram’s settlement in the land, and Lot’s settlement “near Sodom,” that one finds the very pregnant remark that God came and spoke to Abram regarding the promise of land to Abram and his descendants “after Lot had separated from him.”

Lot does not have the proper relational connection to Abram, and his dwelling is separate from that of Abram. Lot has quite subtly, but unmistakably, been separated from his “brother” both relationally and geographically. As with the other stories of separation between brothers what precedes the account of separation is the language of “brother,” used here by Abram. Lot is at the same time a brother and an outsider.⁵⁷⁴ Abram’s remark that “we are men, אחים” becomes important for understanding Lot’s placement and function in Genesis 13. Not only does it lead into the climax in 13:11—“and each man separated from his brother”—but it also connects to other brother stories throughout Genesis which utilize the language of kinship in

⁵⁷⁴ One may argue of course that such use of “brother” in these stories is to be expected given the fact that the stories deal with brothers. That very fact, however, makes the use in Genesis 13 all the more telling.

dialogue, specifically אָח, to show relational connection and precede accounts of separation.

When one includes Genesis 19 in the discussion, it is also clear that Lot’s line and Abram’s line are contrasted.⁵⁷⁵ Lot fathers Moab and Ben-Ammi while Abraham fathers Isaac in Genesis 21.

The following charts outline the connections of the pericopae examined above:

Pericope	First Occurrence of אָח in relational dialogue	Character who uses אָח	Account of Separation
Cain and Abel	Gen 4:9-11	Yhwh	4:12-5:32
Noah and his sons	Gen 9:25	Noah	9:25-11:26
Lot and Abram	Gen 13:8	Abram	13:9-18
Ishmael and Isaac	Gen 16:12	Angel of Yhwh	17-18; 21
Jacob and Esau	Gen 27:6	Rebekah	27:7-45
Jacob and Laban	Gen 29:4; 29:15	Jacob; Laban	29:16-31:55
Joseph and his brothers	Gen 37:10	Jacob	37:12-36

Pericope	Kinship (“Relational”) Connection	Discussion of Land (“Spatial Distinction”)	Genealogical Context
Cain and Abel	אָחֵךְ	אָרֶץ – Cain and the earth	Cain’s line (Gen 4) Seth’s line (Gen 5)
Noah and his sons	אָחֵם	אָרֶץ – Separation of peoples into “their lands”	Ham’s line (Gen 10) Japheth’s line (Gen 10) Shem’s line (Gen 11)
Lot and Abram	אָחֵם	אָרֶץ – Abram alone is said to dwell in the “land”	Lot is both the “son of Abram’s brother” (12:5) and Abram’s “brother” (13:11); Lot fathers Moab and Ben-Ammi (Gen 19) and Abraham fathers Isaac (Gen 21)
Ishmael and Isaac	אָחֵי	אָרֶץ – Hagar takes a wife for her son from the “land” of Egypt.	Descendants of Ishmael (25:12-18) juxtaposed to the descendants of Isaac

⁵⁷⁵ The use of the plural in Gen 13:8, therefore, may be said to link Abram and Lot as family but also, as with Esau and Ishmael, to the subsequent peoples who will arise from them.

			(25:19)
Jacob and Esau	אָהֶיךָ	אָרֶץ – Esau dwells in a different “land”	Sons of Jacob in Gen 35 and the line of Esau in Gen 36
Jacob and Laban	אָהֶי אָהֶיִם	אָרֶץ – Jacob’s “land” and Laban’s “land/place”	The “brothers” of Jacob and Laban in Gen 31.
Joseph and his brothers	אָהֶיךָ	N/A	N/A

7.4 The Themes of Brotherhood and Separation in the Patriarchal Narratives

Above, I examined the language of brotherhood in accounts of separation.

Below, I will examine the dual themes of brotherhood and separation which run throughout the patriarchal narratives. I have noted above that the tension in Genesis 13 appears to be centered on Lot’s presence with Abram in the land not on any particular issue between the “brothers.” The issue of brothers being “co-dwellers” in the land is also a tension which one finds in the stories of Isaac/Ishmael and Jacob/Esau. The promises of God are not for “brothers,” they are for one of the brothers and his descendants. This distinction, therefore, also implies that the brothers cannot dwell together, they must separate. Or in the words of Gen 13:11, “and each man separated from his brother.” This becomes clearer when the account of Abram and Lot’s separation is compared with other brother stories in the patriarchal narratives. Below, I will discuss the “unchosen” brother stories⁵⁷⁶ contained in the patriarchal narratives and the connections between these stories and Abram’s separation from Lot.

7.4.1 Lot, Ishmael and Abram’s Other Sons

I begin by discussing the way in which the separation of Abram and Lot connects with the later story of Isaac and Ishmael. While many commentators have

⁵⁷⁶ I will, therefore, not be discussing the Joseph narrative in detail. While there is some separation/connection tension in the story line none of the brothers is separated relationally and geographically in the way that one finds in the Lot, Ishmael and Esau stories.

focused on the tensions surrounding the identity of Abram's heir in the Ishmael/Isaac pericopae there is an additional, and perhaps more poignant, tension regarding the occupation of the land. The tension regarding the brothers inhabiting the same space will provide a point of connection between the Ishmael/Isaac pericopae and the separation of Abram and Lot.

The question regarding the identity of Abram's heir is raised first in Genesis 15 with Abram's remark that Eliezer will be his heir. God tells Abram that his heir will come from his own body and therefore Eliezer is discounted from the outset. When no heir has been born, Abram impregnates Hagar, his maidservant, and she bears him Ishmael in Genesis 16. The question of whether or not Ishmael is to be considered the heir is answered in the negative via God's remark in Genesis 17 that Abraham's heir will come through Sarah (17:19). Thus, the issue of who will be Abraham's heir is solved quite quickly in the story line. One just needs to wait now for Sarah to have a son. When she does, in Genesis 21, the real tension of the story emerges.

With the birth of Isaac, Abraham has two sons. Isaac and Ishmael are brothers, albeit half-brothers. The tension now becomes, can the brothers coexist? Sarah wants Ishmael removed from the equation so that her son Isaac may be the focal point, "Drive out this slave and her son, for the son of this slave shall not be an heir with Isaac" (Gen 21:10). Note here that Sarah realizes the dilemma of the brothers dwelling together. Isaac is to be the heir, not Ishmael. Ishmael, Sarah reminds Abraham, is the son of the slave woman and therefore is not in the proper genealogical connection to Abraham.⁵⁷⁷ The remark by Sarah is difficult for Abraham to hear. He is disheartened at the prospect of losing his son. God, however,

⁵⁷⁷ "Sarah's real concern now becomes clear. She is disturbed not by Ishmael's behavior, but by the possibility that this *ben-'amâ* is in a position, legally, to share the inheritance with Isaac" (Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 80).

concurr with Sarah: “Do not let it be displeasing in your eyes concerning the boy and concerning your maid; listen to all that Sarah says to you, for in Isaac your descendants will be named” (Gen 21:12).

Now the tension about the brothers dwelling together has been resolved by Sarah and by God. In Genesis 21:14, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away: “Abraham arose early, took food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her and the boy off. She went and wandered about in the desert of Beersheba.” The separation is instigated by actions between the family members:

The child grew and he was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast⁵⁷⁸ on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she bore to Abraham, playing.⁵⁷⁹ Then she said to Abraham, “Drive out (גרש)⁵⁸⁰ this slave and her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.” (Gen 21:8-10)

This is not unlike when Abram tells Lot they need to separate.⁵⁸¹ The brothers could not dwell together in Genesis 13 and they cannot dwell together in Genesis 21. If Abram really viewed Lot as his heir in Genesis 13, it is a wonder that he is not recorded as feeling any remorse for Lot’s separation. He is not said to be troubled by the prospect of Lot leaving or that Lot leaves at all.⁵⁸² The separation was Abram’s idea in the first place. Furthermore, the fact that Abram calls Lot his “brother” does

⁵⁷⁸ ויעש להם משתה. Cf. Gen 19:3 where Lot is said to, “make a feast” for the visitors (וייעש להם משתה).

⁵⁷⁹ I am following NRSV; NAB; NJPS. *HALOT*, 1019, translates the participle מצחק, as “making fun of.” The ending of the sentence seems awkward in Hebrew. LXX and Vulg. add “with her son Isaac” (μετὰ Ἰσαακ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἀνδρῆς and *cum Isaac filio suo* respectively). Some translations render the term in the negative, “mocking” (NASB; NIV) while others leave it ambiguous “laughing” (ESV). Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 78, comments “Sarah was riled by Ishmael’s enjoying himself and playing happily on an occasion when the spotlight should be exclusively on her son.” Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob*, 187, surely rightly notes that the real hostility in the narrative, however, is not between Isaac and Ishmael but between Sarah and Hagar. Regardless, Sarah’s response denotes that she does not like what she sees and wants the brothers to be separated.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Gen 3:24 and 4:14 where the verb is applied to Adam (ויגרש) and Cain (גרשת).

⁵⁸¹ Here, in Gen 21:10, it is Sarah who tells Abram to “drive out” (*piel* imperative גרש) one of the brothers while in Gen 13:9 it is Abram who tells Lot to “separate” (*niphal* imperative פּרד). In both accounts of separation, then, one finds the subsequent separation being commanded by a character in the story line.

⁵⁸² As noted above, Abram’s “feelings” about Lot’s separation from him are added in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*.

provide some relational distance between the two that the language of “son” does not. Abram, apparently, doesn’t feel the same way about Lot that he does about Ishmael.

Ishmael and Isaac are eventually reunited in the burying of Abraham, “His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite” (Gen 25:9). This reuniting is followed by some poignant reminders that Ishmael is still to be considered an outsider. First, there is the mention that Isaac dwelt near “Beer-lahai-roi.” As Hamilton notes, “that Isaac settles in the place where Ishmael was born indicates that, geographically, Isaac is indeed the one son chosen by Yahweh to be blessed, and that Ishmael is to be either displaced, or more likely, replaced.”⁵⁸³ Second, there is the reminder that Ishmael, while connected to Abraham, is not properly connected to him, for Ishmael is the son of “Sarah’s slave, Hagar the Egyptian” (Gen 25:12). Third, there is the mention that his descendants dwelt, “from Havilah as far as Shur, which is on the border of Egypt, as you come to Ashur” (Gen 25:18). Ishmael is disconnected from his brother Isaac both genealogically and geographically.

This is quite similar to what transpires with Lot. The narrative twice reminds the reader that Lot is “the son of Abram’s brother” (Gen 12:5; 14:12), and four times he is called Abram’s “brother” (Gen 13:8, 11; 14:14, 16). Lot does not have the proper genealogical link to Abram. He is a nephew, a brother, but he is an outsider. Furthermore, Lot settles away from his brother Abram (Gen 13:12; Gen 14:12; Gen 19:1). In Genesis 13 there is tension about Abram’s dwelling in the land. Abram’s family has exclusive rights to the land but that family includes his descendants, not his brothers. In Genesis 21 there is tension about the brothers dwelling together. Isaac and Ishmael are brothers but Ishmael does not have the proper genealogical

⁵⁸³ Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 169.

connections. Furthermore, God makes promises concerning the land and descendants to Isaac in Genesis 26, immediately following the *toledot* of Ishmael in Genesis 25.

Prior to the *toledot* of Ishmael, one finds the mention of the other sons of Abraham (Gen 25:1-6). These sons, born to Keturah,⁵⁸⁴ are also set in contrast to Isaac.⁵⁸⁵ First, while these sons were given “gifts,” Isaac was given “all that Abraham had.” Secondly, and most telling in light of our discussion here, Abraham is said to send them away “from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east” (קדמה אל־ארץ) (קדמ).⁵⁸⁶ Lot, as the unchosen brother, journeyed “east” in Genesis 13. Just as Isaac’s “unchosen brothers” were sent eastward, and earlier Cain settled “east of Eden,” so Lot, too, traveled eastward. It will be remembered, however, that his separation from Abram was not his choice; it was predicated on Abram’s imperative that Lot move.⁵⁸⁷ Isaac’s half-brothers, and earlier Ishmael, are all sent away by Abram just as he had earlier sent away Lot his “brother.”⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁴ Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 165, notes the language of “wife” that is used for both Hagar (16:3) and Keturah (25:1) as opposed to the language of “concubine” in 25:6.

⁵⁸⁵ “Abraham is concerned that his sons by Keturah not be too close to his son by Sarah.” (Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 167).

⁵⁸⁶ Just as Abraham earlier sent Ishmael away, so here he sends his other sons away. “Abraham apparently viewed both dismissals as permanent” (Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 167).

⁵⁸⁷ Ironically, Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 30, comments that Lot brings his “dis-election” to “fruition through his free choice.” In reality, his dis-election is brought to fruition by Abram’s imperative that he separate.

⁵⁸⁸ Kyu Sik Hong, “An exegetical reading of the Abraham narrative in Genesis: semantic, textuality and theology” (Ph.D. diss, University of Pretoria, 2007), 53, also notes a connection between the Ishmael pericopae and Genesis 13. Hong, however, argues that the connection is not on the basis of brotherhood but rather on the basis of sonship. “At the outset of his journey, Abraham must have considered Lot as his possible heir because Sarah was barren at that time...Ishmael was also considered by Abraham as his legitimate heir in Gen 17:18. Thus, these two episodes deal with the separation of the illegitimate heirs from Abraham.” The problem with the reading is twofold: (1) Lot, as I have argued and demonstrated above, is never explicitly set up as Abram’s potential heir and; (2) the real tension in the Ishmael/Isaac story, when the final separation occurs, is on the brothers remaining together in the land. When Ishmael and Isaac separate the question of who will be the heir has long been answered. The question at the time of the separation is how can they dwell together? This is the same tension that one finds in Genesis 13. So, while I agree with Hong that there are literary connections between the separation of Abram and Lot and the separation of Isaac and Ishmael, I think it best to view the connection through the lens of brotherhood because that is a context which is more clearly proposed in the story line.

7.4.2 Lot and Esau

The most explicit parallels between Genesis 13 and the other “brother” stories in Genesis are found with the account of Jacob and Esau’s separation in Genesis 36.

When read side by side, the parallels are quite striking:

Gen 36:6-8

Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the possessions he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and moved to a land away from his brother Jacob. Their possessions were too great for them to dwell together; the land where they were staying could not support them both because of their livestock. So Esau (Esau is Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.

Gen 13:5-6, 11

Now Lot, the one going with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. The land could not support both of them dwelling together; because of the vastness of their possessions they could not dwell together...So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus each man separated from his brother.

There are significant similarities in these two texts: (1) The land is said to be unable to support the two families dwelling together; (2) both Esau and Lot are depicted as being quite wealthy; (3) both Esau and Lot settle in a land away from their respective “brothers”; and (4) Esau is said to move away “from his brother Jacob” and in Genesis 13 each man separates from “his brother.”⁵⁸⁹

The parallels, incidentally, help the reader understand the separation of Abram and Lot and its function in the narrative. What tension there may have been at the outset of the Jacob/Esau narrative regarding who the true heir of Isaac’s blessing will be is solved by the narrative comment, “the older will serve the younger”⁵⁹⁰ (Gen

⁵⁸⁹ Traditionally 36:6-8 are attributed to P, as are 13:6 and 11b. For further source discussion see Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 334-37.

⁵⁹⁰ There may also be a link between the name of Esau’s home (שעיר) and the fact that he, the one from שעיר, will be usurped by his צעיר (“younger brother”). See discussion in Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 177.

25:23),⁵⁹¹ and the subsequent account of Jacob arriving after his brother Esau.⁵⁹² The question of the text then, is not so much about whom the heir is going to be, but rather how can both coexist?⁵⁹³ The Jacob/Esau narrative unfolds a story of separation. Both are family; they are brothers, but both are not to inherit the blessing. Both engage in questionable activity, as well as commendable activity, but the focus of the story continually comes back to Yhwh's promises to Jacob as the heir. Esau is thus at the same time a "brother" and an "outsider." He is connected to Jacob relationally but not in terms of the promise. The promise Yhwh makes to Jacob is for his descendants, not for his brothers.

The same is true, in many ways, of Abram and Lot. Lot's problematic accompaniment is solved by his separation from Abram and the problematic offer is solved by his move toward Sodom and Yhwh's subsequent promise to Abram and his descendants. The focus of the narrative is shifted then from the problems to the promises. The Jacob/Esau story does the same. Jacob, it has been well noted, is far from innocent in the narrative cycle that bears his name. He is a deceiver, manipulator and con-man. The narrative, however, counteracts this by noting Esau's failure to

⁵⁹¹ This is not to deny the potential ambiguity surrounding the terms רב and צעיר which may provide value judgments ("greater/lesser") as opposed to birth order (see discussion in Anderson, *Brotherhood*, 25). Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 176, notes that the terms "hairy" (שער) and "younger" (צעיר) are homophones and the verb "will serve" (יעבד) is similar to Jacob (יעקב). These links may provide some ambiguity with regard to who is "greater" or "lesser." See also discussion in Heard, *Dynamics*, 99. There is also a verbal link between Lot and Esau with the term פָּרַד. As I noted above, the term is used three times in Genesis 13 which appears to highlight the necessity of separation. It is also used in the initial declaration to Rebekah concerning Jacob and Esau that "two peoples born of you shall be separated" (פָּרַד יִפְרְדוּ *niphal* imperfect of פָּרַד).

⁵⁹² Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 177, notes that God's explanation relays three things to Rebekah: "(1) she is carrying two peoples in her womb. (2) These boys are already designated as the ancestor of these peoples. (3) The older son will be subordinate to the younger son, and hence will surrender his right of primogeniture."

⁵⁹³ One could point to Jacob's stealing of the blessing but the tension there doesn't seem to be "which brother will get the blessing" but rather "how will Jacob get the blessing?"

honor his birthright and marry a woman of the proper line,⁵⁹⁴ though there is nothing which explicitly condemns Esau in the narrative.⁵⁹⁵ Furthermore, the story continues to come back to the promise to Jacob. This culminates in the account in Genesis 33 regarding Jacob and Esau's reunion. Prior to the reunion proper, a "man" comes to wrestle with Jacob. Jacob is blessed and his name is changed to "Israel." When Jacob meets with Esau things go quite well for the brothers. There is an amicable reunion between the two. Esau then invites Jacob to return with him to his home in Seir. Jacob says that he will go but then ends up going to Succoth, eventually returning to Canaan and building an altar (33:20) much like Abram builds an altar after Lot has separated from him (13:18).

Jacob and Esau come together one more time to bury their father. This is followed by Genesis 36 and the comment that the two of them cannot dwell together. They need to separate.⁵⁹⁶ The issue again is the inability of the land to "carry" (נשא) the two brothers living together. The land cannot "raise up" both brothers: only one is to inherit the promises. The narrative has been clear all along that it is Jacob who will inherit the promises, and therefore Esau must go. He is the brother, not a descendant. He is connected, but he is an outsider. The two were never meant to dwell together, they had to separate. Unlike the Abram and Lot pericope, there is no call for separation, it simply happens out of necessity. The story, however, closes with a reminder about Esau. He married women of foreign origin and he is "Edom:"

⁵⁹⁴ Esau took wives with Canaanite origin (Gen 26:34; 36:2). Cotter, *Genesis*, 206, reads Esau's later taking of an Ishmaelite wife (28:9) as his attempt to satisfy his parents. The irony, however, is that he marries within the line of the unchosen brother Ishmael and therefore cements his own status as an unchosen brother, or as Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 441, comments, "the connection of Esau and Ishmael is a fitting end to this slice of the narrative, for it matches the actions of the two outcast sons who form an ancestral bond."

⁵⁹⁵ For a detailed analysis of Esau's characterization in Genesis, see especially: Anderson, *Brotherhood*. Anderson elucidates many of the ambiguities in the text concerning Esau.

⁵⁹⁶ "Although living together is not only a possibility but a necessity for the brothers in the Joseph story, it is difficult to imagine how the Jacob story could end this way. Rather, Jacob alone must inherit the land of Canaan, and Esau, Edom's eponymous ancestor, must move on to Seir" (Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob*, 56).

These are the generations of the descendants of Esau, he is Edom. Esau took his wives from the daughters of the Canaanites: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. He also married Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and the sister of Nebaioth (Gen 36:1-3).

Genesis 13 ended with a reminder that Lot “separated” from Abram to dwell near a land of “wicked sinners.” Lot, it will be remembered, is also reunited with Abram in Genesis 14 after Abram rescues Lot: “He recovered all the goods and brought back his brother Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people” (Gen 14:16). It is not explicitly clear where Abram “brought them back” to but it is clear that Abram and Lot have been reunited. The next time we read of Lot, however, he is in Sodom, separated from Abram yet again. Even after the “brothers” are reunited, they are again separated. The brothers cannot coexist. The family cannot stay together. Abram’s family has exclusive claim to the land and the promise of that land is made solely to particular descendants. Lot, Ishmael and Esau are not those descendants. They are brothers, but they are outsiders. Lot, as with Ishmael and Esau, must be “separated from his brother” (Gen 13:11).

The account of Abram and Lot’s separation is set up in similar ways to other brother stories in Genesis. The brothers cannot coexist, they must separate one from another because the promises are for descendants, not brothers. It makes more sense to understand Lot and his separation from Abram in the context of the other brother stories than it does the issue of sonship as the tensions and problems raised in Genesis 13 are more closely connected to the concept of brotherhood. The chart below outlines some of the general connections between the stories in the patriarchal narratives:

<i>Brothers</i>	<i>Together in the Land</i>	<i>Separation</i>	<i>Reuniting</i>	<i>Final Separation</i>
Lot/Abram	Genesis 12-13	Genesis 13	Genesis 14	Genesis 19
Isaac/Ishmael	Genesis 21	Genesis 21	Genesis 25	Genesis 25
Jacob/Esau	Genesis 27	Genesis 28-32	Genesis 33/35	Genesis 36

As the preceding analysis demonstrated, there are many themes present in each of the brother stories which are also present in Genesis 13. Primarily, these are: the tension surrounding the brothers' dwelling together in the land and the subsequent need for the brothers to occupy separate geographical locations.

7.5 Lot's Function as a Brother

How does the above analysis help us understand the role and function of Lot in Genesis 13? I have demonstrated that the attempt to read Lot as the potential heir is quite problematic.⁵⁹⁷ I have also demonstrated that Genesis 13 provides the solution to Lot's problematic accompaniment and Abram's settlement in the land. Both of these solutions are predicated on Lot's separation from Abram. The necessity of Lot's separation from Abram, typified by the narrator's comment: "and each man separated from his brother" (13:11), is remarkably similar to the necessity for other brothers in Genesis to be separated from one another. The promises of God are not for "brothers," they are for one of the brothers and his descendants. This distinction, therefore, also implies that the brothers cannot dwell together; they must separate. Furthermore, I noted that the "unchosen brother" is not, explicitly, characterized as being "bad." In

⁵⁹⁷ One could ask then, if Abram doesn't take Lot to be his heir then why does he take him? The short answer is that the text doesn't say. It may be that Abram doubted the promises of Yhwh and wanted to provide security for himself and his family by pooling his resources together with Lot's. In the end, any answer to this question is simply an argument from silence. As I have demonstrated above, however, the focus of the text is not on *why* Abram took Lot but rather *that* Abram took Lot. Genesis 13, therefore, solves the issue of Lot's problematic accompaniment through the account of Abram and Lot's separation. Lot, as an "unchosen brother" cannot be a co-dweller in the land for the promises are for only one brother and his descendants and Lot doesn't qualify on either front.

reality, the unchosen brother is a rather ambiguous character possessing, not unlike the “hero” in the stories, both positive and questionable qualities.

The question remains though, why is Lot characterized as a “brother” in the Abraham narrative in general and Genesis 13 in particular? I noted above that Lot fills in the gap for Abraham’s deceased brother Haran. It is here that I believe one finds the answer to why Lot is described as a brother.⁵⁹⁸

As I noted above, the genealogy of Abram contains the mention of his two other brothers, Haran and Nahor. Following the flood narrative in Genesis 10-11, the reader is informed that each of Noah’s three sons dispersed into various regions and had offspring. The three sons are set up as three lines with Shem being the focus, the “chosen” line through which Abram and his brothers come. Genesis 11:28 tells the reader that Haran “died in the presence of his father Terah.” The only other information we are given about Haran is that he fathered Lot. Other than the mention of his wife, Milcah, we aren’t told anything else about Nahor. It appears that Nahor did not make the trek from Ur to Canaan as he is not mentioned in the list of travelers in 11:31.

It is clear from Gen 12:1-3 that Yhwh has a unique plan and purpose for Abram as he is the chosen one among his brothers. Abram is told to leave his land, kin and father’s household and go to the land Yhwh will show him. Abram, however, is not totally obedient to the call because he opts to take Lot, his nephew, with him. In Genesis 13, Lot, whom Abram, and the narrator, calls his “brother,” opts to move

⁵⁹⁸ Dicou, *Edom*, 135, sees the focus of Abram and Lot’s separation as exemplifying the separation between “fathers” (i.e., the Israelites vs. the Ammonites/Moabites) while characterizing the separations of Ishmael/Isaac and Jacob/Esau as separation between “sons” and “brothers,” respectively. As I noted above, the focus of each separation account is, at its core, about geography and thus about brothers dwelling together in the land. Further, the issue of Lot and Abram as “fathers” isn’t explicitly raised in Genesis 13. So, while Dicou’s categories may be somewhat helpful in ascertaining particular thematic elements, they do not appear to capture the central tensions in the text of each account which have to do with brothers dwelling together.

his tent “as far as Sodom” and settle in “the cities of the plain.” Lot has been separated from his “brother,” Abram. This separation culminates in Genesis 19 with the birth of Lot’s sons, Moab and Ben-Ammi. Lot then disappears from the story line. Nahor is not mentioned again until Gen 22:20-24 where the reader is told that Milcah has borne him children. The children are then mentioned and we hear nothing else of him.

Abram, as with Shem before him and Isaac and Jacob after, is set up as unique among his brothers because of the promises made to him, but also because of the land in which he lives and the descendants which follow. He is the one who has received the promise and dwells in the land of Canaan and his descendants are the chosen line. Nahor receives no promise, stays behind in Ur and his descendants are outside the chosen line. The fact that Lot is called Abram’s “brother” in Genesis 13 may be a way to “fill in the gap” regarding Abram’s deceased brother Haran. Furthermore, this is the only story in Genesis where a brother is said to die prior to the promises being confirmed on the chosen. Lot, then, becomes not the heir to the promises but rather the *ipso facto* “brother” of Abram. Lot, who is called “brother,” is distinct from Abram as he receives no promise, dwells in a land away from his “brother” and his descendants are clearly outside of the chosen line.

Finally, and perhaps most telling is the way in which the genealogical structure of each of the “unchosen” brothers in the patriarchal history is narrated. In the genealogies of Ishmael, Esau and Nahor, there is significance placed on the peoples which arise from their lines. For Ishmael, one finds the birth of twelve princes (25:16). For Esau and Nahor there are descendants which are of particular import in Israel’s history. Esau, who, is called “Edom” (36:8), is said to be the “father of the Edomites” (36:9) and is the grandfather of Amalek (36:12). Nahor is said to be the

grandfather of Aram (22:21). Interestingly, the only brother without an extended genealogy or mention of significant people groups within that list of descendants is Haran. The only offspring mentioned for him is Lot. Like Ishmael, Esau and Nahor, Lot—the father of Moab and Ben-Ammi—has a genealogy which lists significant people groups arising from his line. Furthermore, all of the other brother genealogies mention the particular brother by name (Ishmael, Esau, Nahor). With the discussion of Lot in Genesis 19, however, one does not find any mention of Haran. The following chart illustrates these points:

Brother	Extended genealogy	Peoples arising from line	Mention of brother by name in extended genealogy
Haran	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lot	19:36-38	Moabites/Ammonites	Yes
Nahor	22:21	Aram	Yes
Ishmael	25:16	Twelve princes	Yes
Esau	36:9; 12	Edom/Amalek	Yes

It would appear that the significance and role of Haran as Abram’s brother has been assumed, in the narrative sequence, by Lot. Lot, like Esau and Ishmael is the “unchosen” and must be “separated from his brother” (13:11).

7.6 Concluding Thoughts

Given the preceding analysis, it is my contention that Lot functions not as the “potential heir” in Genesis 13 but rather as the “unchosen brother.” This conclusion was substantiated several ways. First, it was shown that Lot’s relationship with Abram is never described in the language of a “father-son” relationship but only as an “uncle-nephew” and later “brother-brother” relationship. Second, it was shown that the account of Abram and Lot’s separation also connects to the other brother stories in

Genesis through the use of the language of brotherhood prior to an account of the brothers' separation in which they are presented as both relationally and geographically separate. Third, it was shown that the account of Abram and Lot's separation connects to the other brother stories in Genesis (together in the land, separation, reunion, final separation). Finally, Lot, it was demonstrated, fills in the gap for Abram's deceased brother Haran. Lot, as with the other brothers, is both connected to and separated from Abram, his "brother." Fretheim comments that, "while Lot may be an 'insider' to begin the Abrahamic journey ('kindred,' 13:8), he becomes an outsider over the course of the story."⁵⁹⁹ I agree that Lot is an outsider in the story though I would argue that he is one from the very beginning and would thus nuance this assertion to say: Lot begins the story as an outsider, given his connection to Haran, and that status as an outsider is exemplified and accentuated throughout the subsequent story line.

This particular aspect also connects to my initial discussion of Abram's disobedience in bringing Lot on the journey with him. Abram says that he and Lot are brothers, which, I noted above, implies a connection between groups and not just individuals. This is a poignant reminder to the reader that Lot is not a member of Abram's household, was not supposed to go with Abram and is not to be a dweller in the land. Lot is not functioning as Abram's son—he is the unchosen brother who needs to be separated from Abram.

At the outset of this thesis, I argued that the primary foci of Genesis 13 were to provide a solution to Abram's problematic taking of Lot and to settle Abram in the land. I also argued that Abram's settlement in the land necessitated his separation from Lot. This settlement immediately follows the climactic: "and each man separated

⁵⁹⁹ Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith*, SPOT (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2007), 68.

from his brother” (13:11). This separation was necessary precisely because Genesis does not want brothers dwelling together in the land.⁶⁰⁰ The land is promised to only one brother and his descendants. Therefore, it was argued that Lot does not function in Genesis 13 as a potential heir or even as an ethical contrast to Abram. Lot’s primary function is that of an unchosen brother. While there are certainly questions which can be raised about some of Lot’s decisions, it is not his decisions which amount to his rejection. Lot, as was shown, is actually more of an ambiguous character. The issue then is not Lot’s “ethics” but rather his familial connection. That is why he must separate. He never had the proper relational connection in the first place. He is a “brother” not a descendant and therefore he is an outsider, one who is relationally and geographically distinct from the “proper line.” His choice to move his tent “as far as Sodom” is simply a reflection of that status. Kaminsky notes that Abram and Lot’s relationship foreshadows the subsequent rivalries between siblings which “are filled with intrigue about which heir will be the vessel of God’s covenantal pledge.”⁶⁰¹ I would nuance this assertion and state that: Abram and Lot’s relationship foreshadows the subsequent tension, in the patriarchal narratives, about brothers being co-dwellers in the land. This tension requires separation, even if the relationship is amicable, and the necessity of the brothers to dwell in different places, with only one occupying the land.

⁶⁰⁰ Though, as noted, this was not the case with the brothers which make up the twelve tribes.

⁶⁰¹ Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob*, 31.

8. CONCLUSION

The thesis of this volume has centered around three interconnected questions: (1) Does the text necessitate a reading of Lot as being the first potential heir and/or as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram? (2) If not inherently from the text, then where do these readings of Lot as the potential heir and as the unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram originate from and how can a study of the early reception of Genesis 13 aid in answering that question? (3) If these common assumptions are not derived inherently from the text, then how are Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, to be understood? Below, I will provide an overview of the conclusions drawn regarding each question.

8.1 Reading Lot as Heir and Foil

In scholarly discussions of Genesis 13, it appears that the vast majority of interpreters understand Lot's role and function as Abram's potential heir and/or Abram's foil. But does the text necessitate such readings? The answer to this question was developed over the opening two chapters of the present volume. Based upon my detailed literary analysis of Lot's accompaniment in Genesis 12 and the account of Abram and Lot's separation in Genesis 13, the answer was demonstrated to be no—the text, in contrast, appears to point in different directions. I began by analyzing Lot's accompaniment of Abram. I demonstrated that Lot is always described in terms of his relationship to Terah (“grandson”) and Haran (“son”). There is nothing explicit at the outset of Abram's journey which would necessitate an “adoption” or “presumed heir” reading. Lot, in contrast, is depicted as a member of Terah's household, not Abram's. Given that God calls Abram to leave his father's household (Gen 12:1), the presence of Lot may indicate that Abram was only partially obedient in his “going” to Canaan.

With regard to Genesis 13, I demonstrated that in the Abraham narrative, Genesis 13 functioned to (1) separate Lot from Abram and (2) settle Abram in the land. Genesis 13 dealt, specifically, with these foci in two main ways: (1) The separation of Abram and Lot brought resolution to Lot's problematic accompaniment with Abram and (2) The question of Abram's settlement in the land was resolved through the problematic offer of land to Lot by Abram, Lot's choice to dwell "near Sodom," Yhwh's promise of land to Abram and Abram's settlement in Canaan. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that Lot is not to be understood as Abram's unrighteous counterpart but is rather an ethically ambiguous character in the story.

8.2 Genesis 13 in Early Reception

If, as I have argued, the readings of Lot as the presumed heir and as unrighteous counterpart to righteous Abram are not inherent in the text then where did they originate from? Here I demonstrated that the readings of Lot as presumed heir and as foil to Abram are not new readings. While I noted that both of these interpretive strands appear throughout reception history, I focused my attention specifically on the role and function of these readings in early Jewish and Christian interpretation.⁶⁰² Through examination of these early interpretations I demonstrated that early interpreters recognized the dilemmas surrounding Abram (Lot's accompaniment, striving herders, offer of land), and, in turn, shifted the focus by elaborating and even, at times, creating ways to safeguard Abram and suppress Lot.

8.2.1 Genesis 13 in the Second Temple Literature

The chief concern of early retellers was to shift the focus away from any potential difficulties surrounding Abram. *Jubilees*, for example, absolved Abram of the responsibility concerning Lot's presence on the journey by putting the

⁶⁰² As I noted above, these early readings became the foundation for subsequent readings and thus became entrenched in the interpretive stream.

responsibility for Lot's presence on Terah. When it comes to Genesis 13, it was shown that while, on the whole, the biblical text is ambiguous regarding Lot's status and character, there were times when phrases and/or gaps in the story appear to have "left the door open" for negative readings. The above analysis showed that by the end of the first century Lot had been further developed from his ambiguous characterization in Genesis 13. This continued development was made through changing wording (e.g., $\eta\upsilon$ to $\epsilon\upsilon$ in the LXX), adding interpretive information (e.g., the origin of Lot's wife in *Genesis Apocryphon*), or omitting problematic portions altogether (e.g., the removal of the striving herders and Abram's offer of land in *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*). In those problematic and/or ambiguous texts, retellers tended to shift the focus away from any potential difficulties surrounding Abram to Lot's ethical and relational separation from his uncle. It was noted for example, that Lot unjustifiably separated himself from Abram, purchased property in Sodom and even took for himself a wife of foreign origin. The result is that Lot had, by the end of the first century, been transformed from an ambiguous character into one who can be read as an unrighteous outsider.

8.2.2 Genesis 13 in Early Jewish and Christian Reception

The real tensions for later Jewish interpreters, as was seen with earlier scriptural retellers, revolve around: (1) The problematic portions regarding Abram (striving herders, offer of land, accompaniment of Lot) and (2) Lot's relationship to Abram. Josephus, like *Jubilees*, saw Lot as the adopted son of Abram. In the Targums and Talmud, the strife between the herders is caused by Lot and his herders. Many interpreters went to great lengths to show that Lot has no part in the promise. Philo and the midrashic literature, for example, depicted Lot as wicked and highlighted both the inability of his seed to mix with Abram's and the inability of God

to speak with Abram while Lot is still present. Lot is characterized as a rejecter of Torah and thus his ethics are simply a by-product of the fact that he is not a true “Israelite.” The tensions, then, in the narrative surrounding Abram were solved through painting Abram as an exemplar of Torah obedience and Lot as an exemplar of Torah rejection.⁶⁰³

From my analysis of early Christian retellings and interpretation, it appears that three things, as pertains to my thesis, are apparent in their readings of Genesis 13: (1) Lot’s accompaniment of Abram is problematic. Some dealt with this by depicting Lot as the adopted son of Abram (e.g., Chrysostom). Furthermore, at times, Lot was said to have been given the option to stay home or go with Abram and he opted to travel with his uncle. (2) Interpreters tended to shift the focus away from the potential problems surrounding Abram to Lot’s decision of the Jordan Plain. For example, the problematic call for separation and offer of land were turned, by Chrysostom, into positive actions on Abram’s part. Abram’s offer of land was seen as a demonstration of Abram’s humility which should be emulated by all believers. Lot, while not deemed wholly unrighteous, made a “greedy” decision, providing an example which should not be emulated (e.g., Ambrose and Origen). (3) While many rabbinic interpreters were decidedly negative in the treatment of Lot, Christian interpreters were, generally, more positive. Lot certainly made a bad decision in moving to

⁶⁰³ It was clear from the above discussion that rabbinic writers in both the Tannaitic (10-220 CE) and Amoraic (220-500 CE) periods had a great interest in Genesis 13. Does their treatment of Lot parallel that of other “outsiders” (e.g., Esau and Ishmael)? Here I am thinking of works like those by Jacob Neusner who has described the way in which, in Jewish exegesis, Esau and Ishmael became symbolic of Christianity embodied in Rome. They are “brothers” and “enemies.” See especially his *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine: History, Messiah, Israel and the Initial Confrontation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); *The Emergence of Judaism*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2004); *Persia and Rome in Classical Judaism*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008). Obviously, Lot is not described as “Rome” but there is still a clear depiction of Lot as one who is connected yet separate; who is kin with Abraham but whose rejection of Torah exemplified by his separation from Abraham marks him as an outsider. One wonders if the picture of Lot, in rabbinic circles, as a Torah-rejecter, is in any way a response to the Christian interpretation of Lot as a paradigm of salvation.

Sodom but that didn't necessarily imply that he was a bad person. Chrysostom, for example, noted Lot's greed but did not strongly condemn Lot as being immoral. In fact, while in Sodom, Lot's virtue was on display for all to see.

While early Jewish interpreters highlighted Lot's wickedness in Genesis 13, Christian interpreters were far less condemning. It would appear that the difference lies in the fact that the rabbinic interpreters were reading Genesis 13 through the lens of conversion and Lot's rejection of a call to submit to Torah (unlike Ruth). Christian interpreters were reading Lot through the lens of salvation as one who was rescued from destruction (as with Noah).⁶⁰⁴

I also demonstrated that the interpretation of Lot as adopted and/or ethical contrast was not limited to early writers but became part of the subsequent interpretive stream. This was evidenced through the prominence of these interpretations through the medieval and Renaissance periods.

8.3 Lot as Brother

The preceding analyses led directly into my final question: "If these common assumptions are not derived inherently from the text, then how are Genesis 13 in general, and Lot and his purpose and function, in particular, to be understood?" Lot, it was argued, does not function in Genesis 13 as a potential heir or even as an ethical contrast to Abram. Lot's primary function is that of an unchosen brother.

This conclusion was substantiated several ways. First, it was shown that Lot's relationship with Abram is never described in the language of a father-son relationship but only as an uncle-nephew and later brother-brother relationship. This

⁶⁰⁴ I argued above that one focus of ancient interpreters with regard to Genesis 13 was to safeguard Abram. In the process, the adoption of Lot and/or Lot's decision to go became a means to validate his presence on the journey and his characterization as foil became a means to shift the focus from problematic portions regarding Abram. While these particular readings have continued to enjoy prominence among modern interpreters, it does not appear that the main focus is to safeguard Abram (though this may be the case at times) as much of the focus has been on issues of source, redaction, literary continuity and discontinuity, etc.

was further substantiated by comparing Lot to the way Eliezer and Ishmael, the two potential heirs in the Abraham narrative, are described. When one examines God's words and Abraham's response in the Lot, Eliezer and Ishmael pericopae, one finds that only two of the three are ever called, or explicitly thought to be, the potential heir. Lot, unlike the other two, is only called a brother. Second, it was shown that the account of Abram and Lot's separation also connects to the other brother stories in Genesis through the use of the language of brotherhood prior to an account of the brothers' separation in which they are presented as both relationally and geographically separated. Finally, it was shown that the account of Abram and Lot's separation connects to the other brother stories in Genesis (together in the land, separation, reunion and final separation). Lot, as with the other brothers, is both connected to and separated from Abram, his "brother." He is simultaneously a brother and an outsider. Lot, therefore, appears to function not as a potential heir but rather as an unchosen brother ultimately filling in the gap for Abram's deceased brother Haran. Furthermore, the account of separation provides a foreshadowing for subsequent stories of familial separation between brothers.

8.4 Concluding Thoughts

As I have demonstrated throughout my textual and reception analysis of Genesis 13, there is an interesting narrative which develops within both the account of Abram and Lot's separation and its interpretation:

(1) The early account of Abram raises various problematic questions regarding Abram in his relationship with Lot. First, there is the problem of Lot's accompaniment, second the account of the striving herders and third the offer of land to his nephew.

(2) Early Jewish and Christian retellers recognized the dilemmas and, in turn, shifted the focus by elaborating and even, at times, creating ways to safeguard Abram and suppress Lot. The problem of accompaniment was solved through adoption and/or Lot's decision to go, the blame for the strife was placed at the feet of Lot, and the offer of land became a way to exalt Abram's generosity

and magnify Lot's selfishness. Within that shift, however, there was an underlying ideological outworking which saw Jewish interpreters reading Lot as an exemplar of Torah rejection and Christians reading Lot through the lens of his later salvation from Sodom. Thus, while Lot's decisions were seen as foolish in Christian interpretation, there was a far more negative slant to Lot's characterization in Jewish interpretation. These readings of Lot as adopted/potential heir and foil to Abram then became part of the subsequent interpretive stream.

(3) Thus, the widespread tendency of modern interpreters to see Lot as adopted and as an unrighteous counterpart to Abram does not appear to be something inherent in the text but rather reflects the interpretive concerns of ancient interpreters to safeguard Abram. In other words, it appears that the predominant interpretations of Genesis 13 are, consciously or unconsciously, inherited readings. This should not be read as a criticism and is certainly not a bad thing, but it does raise questions about what the text really does or does not say.

What my thesis has demonstrated, therefore, is the justification of my fresh reading of Genesis 13 which sought to understand its purpose and function within the context of both the Abraham narrative and Genesis as a whole. This analysis not only noted the problematic portions mentioned above but also allowed them to stand while avoiding unnecessary ethical conclusions. Doing so helped clarify that Lot's relationship to Abram is characterized as one of brotherhood and not as one of sonship. Furthermore, Abram and Lot's separation not only solved the problematic issue of Lot's accompaniment but, it was demonstrated, also foreshadowed the subsequent tension in the patriarchal narratives about brothers being co-dwellers in the land (Isaac/Ishmael; Jacob/Esau). This tension required separation, even if the relationship was amicable, and leaving the brothers to dwell in different places, with only one (Abram; Isaac; Jacob) occupying the land.

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