

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 19:1-38

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary
APR	Creation and Blessing

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

Genesis 19:1-11

(KUR) – “Gen 19, by the way, is the only chapter in the Abraham story in which the patriarch does not utter a word. He is a silent spectator of the consequences of wickedness and great evil.”

(KUR) – Kuruvilla sees a direct comparison between Gen 18 and Gen 19 in the author's presentation of both of these stories. See Image #1 at the end of the document for further details.

(SOG) – “Abraham runs; Lot rises. Abraham offers water and food; Lot does not. And the food that Abraham actually provides—“a calf tender and choice...curds and milk” as well as the cakes that he bids Sarah to rush to bake—contrasts with Lot's “feast,” of which the only item mentioned is “baked unleavened bread...the largest contrast lies in the initial purpose of the visitations of the two men. The one to Abraham is for the purpose of announcing a birth; the one to Lot, for the purpose of announcing impending death.”

(SOG) – “At the end of the previous chapter, God had set out toward Sodom and Gomorrah with two attending angels. However, only the two angels actually enter the city of Sodom. Perhaps the sinfulness of the city kept the holy God from actually entering into its precincts.”

(BKW) – Referring to the time of day, namely evening, Waltke says, “Etymologically, the Hebrew term for “evening” means “black.” The physical blackness of the city, with the setting of the sun, matches the moral blackness of the events that follow.”

(NAC) – ““Sitting” translates the root term *yasab*, which often means “to live, reside”; It is reminiscent of chap. 13, where the same word is integral to describing Lot’s choice to “live” in Sodom. The imagery of the city gate adds to the picture of Lot’s urban profile versus Abraham’s tents, where he was “sitting” when the visitors appeared. The word “gateway” also may imply Lot’s social status; the city gate was the traditional location for civil decisions. Perhaps his position at the gate infers that Lot had an influential role in the community.”

(PTW) – “Lot’s position in the gate indicates that he was a major player in Sodom. Significantly, Genesis records the progression of Lot’s assimilation into Sodom. Initially, he had “moved his tent as far as Sodom” (13:12), next he is described as “dwelling in Sodom” (14:12, and here he is pictured as “sitting in the gate of Sodom” (19:1).”

(SOG) – “The gate of an ancient city was not only its public square but also a place where the leaders of the city would meet. His presence in the gate may well imply that he is a leader in the city.”

(NAC) – “Yet another significance of the “gateway” is its possible relation to the imagery of “door” as a protective boundary; as another incongruity in the account, the gate should indicate safety within the city, but Lot cannot provide that safety, for the city is perilous to strangers.”

(BKW) – By bowing down in front of his guests, Lot shows that “his hospitality to strangers through the story” and “ his desire to do righteousness.”

(SOG) – In Lot providing a meal of unleavened cakes, Tremper Longman says, “The meal includes bread without yeast that makes one thing of the future exodus, which of course had already taken place by the time the book of Genesis was written, so we must imagine that this connection was intended by the author of the story.”

(NAC) – “Sleep usually follows the evening meal, but “before they had gone to bed” the Sodomite men disturbed the household. The pack who “surrounded” the house is inclusive, involving men from every sector of the city and each age group. The merism “both young and old,” that is, everybody, shows that their homosexual practices had become generational.”

(PTW) – Kent Hughes believes that Lot knew the wickedness of Sodom and thusly pressed the angelic visitors to stay with him, knowing full well what might happen to them if they decided to stay unguarded outside of his home.

(APR) – “The verb “pressed” (*pasar*) foreshadows the pressing in of the men of the city in verse 9: Lot pressed them to stay, but the men of the city pressed them for their vile pursuits. By such devices the narrative begins to contrast Lot and his world.

(NAC) – “Sodom’s sexual immorality was pervasive. They first “surrounded” the house before addressing those inside, showing their hostile intentions from the beginning...News of the strangers in the town has spread, and the men very well know where they can find the visitors. They make no pretense about their business; they openly make known their intentions to assault the visitors sexually.”

(PTW) – “The violent depravity of the Sodomites was extraordinary. Lot’s home was encircled by a vast, gibbering mob of lusting men of every age, howling for perverted satisfaction.”

(SOG) – “The desire of the men of the city to have sex with the visiting men was almost certainly not because the former were gay themselves. Rather, it was a way of exerting power over these visiting foreigners.”

(BKW) – “The city is guilty here of two crimes: violation of guests and unnatural lusts. The men of the city cry not just for homosexuality but for rape...The sin of Sodom’s act is presumably the worst sort of sexual offense: homosexual gang rape.”

(NAC) – “Figuratively [Lot’s] “door” conveys multiple meanings. The door is in effect the boundary between the saved and the condemned; it is the symbolic line between the righteous and the wicked, the civil and the vulgar.”

(NAC) – Lot reasons with the intruders using three tactics: (1) “he makes an urgent plea, “Don’t do this thing.” (2) “Lot offers his two virgin daughters in lieu of the two strangers, (3) “Lot contends that if they carry out such contemptible behavior it would be an appalling breach of hospitality.”

(NAC) – “When we remember the outcome of the Levite’s concubine in the hands of a brutal city gang (Judg. 19:25-26), we can only conclude that Lot jeopardized the lives of his daughters, even any hope for a heritage—all for the sake of the strangers. By a bizarre twist, however, it is his daughters who finally take advantage of Lot, sexually abusing their father by which he gains male heirs after all.”

(NAC) – “That Lot sanctions the rape of his daughters indicates a moral compass gone awry; he places hospitality above the protection of his own children. It is difficult to conceive of such a custom that would put a guest’s well-being over family. Such treatment by a father was despicable in the eyes of Israel; forcing a daughter into prostitution is specifically forbidden in Mosaic law (Lev. 19:29). Yet offense against aliens was also grievous in the Mosaic tradition (Ex. 22:21; Lev 19:33-34; Deut. 10:19). Lot is caught in a web of the most vile of circumstances, and he opts for a way out that can never salvage any good. He surely offends his own sense of right behavior while attempting to save face with the strangers. For a moment it is Sodom that has taken up residence in Lot’s soul.”

(SOG) – “The law of hospitality was an important one in this ancient society, and by offering protection and sustenance to strangers who might otherwise be vulnerable, it is a virtuous custom. Lot, though, perverts it by attempting to substitute his daughters for the men. Lot tries to maintain his virtue as a host only to shame himself as a father.”

(PTW) – “Conflicted, compromised Lot placed the sanctity of hospitality above the sanctity of his family. Even if he thought that his daughters would suffer no harm, because they were betrothed as virgins to their fellow Sodomites, the offer was a monstrous breach of fatherly duty.”

(NAC) – “Since Lot would not voluntarily move aside, they would move him aside. The Sodomites ridicule Lot as a “know-it-all,” so to speak, a self-righteous “carpet bagger” who as a foreigner thought himself a judge of their behavior. Their vitriolic rebuff includes two ideas important to the whole of the Lot-Sodom narratives. He is an “alien” in their midst who wants to play the judge!”

(NAC) – “By Lot defending the traditional rights of his guests, he was also in effect defending himself as an outsider. This was not lost on the Sodomites, whose envy against Lot may have fueled their hatred in concert with their aggression against the newcomers.

(NAC) – “The men, not satisfied with mockery, charge forward, pressing Lot so fiercely that the door buckled. At this the two heavenly witnesses had heard and seen enough. The visitors first yanked Lot inside, shutting the door, and then struck the thugs with blindness...Their dramatic intervention prepared Lot for accepting the unbelievable message of the two envoys.”

Genesis 19:12-22

(SOG) – God “is acting in response to the “outcry...against its people,” though we are never explicitly told who exactly is crying out to God. Certainly, whoever they are, they experienced the oppression and violence of the people of Sodom.”

(BKW) – The author uses the language of women who are pledged to be married as we read of Lot’s sons-in-law who have yet to consummate their marriage through sexual relations with Lot’s daughters.

(NAC) – “The sons-in-law scorn Lot and appear as blind to the inevitable as their fellow citizens are actually blind. The sons-in-law are unmoved by the stunning events at Lot’s house and thus rate more dim-witted than the recalcitrant members of the mob.”

(NAC) – “It will take all morning to get Lot out of town to nearby Zoar. Twice the angels strongly exhort Lot to flee, but he is uncooperative. First, he hesitates, but they force him to move; and second, he stops abruptly, bargaining to divert to Zoar, one of the cities scheduled for annihilation...The story leaves it to us to explain why Lot “hesitated,” that is, he delayed. He appears to be paralyzed with fear, which corresponds with his own

explanation later for diverting to Zoar...There is a childlike feature in this depiction of the Lot family, led by hand to safety.”

(APR) – “Lot lingered. The exposition can thus demonstrate how much Sodom had become a part of Lot...The angels thus seized him by their hands and took them out of the city.”

(NAC) – “Verse 17 alone contains four exhortations in chiastic arrangement: “flee...don’t look back...don’t stop...flee.”

(NAC) – “By looking back, Lot’s wife not only disobeyed the angel but also failed to separate herself completely from Sodom’s hold on her.”

(BKW) – Lot’s wife “was a resident of Sodom. Lot’s wife vacillates, probably longing for what she left behind, and experiences the fate of the city with which she identifies.”

(APR) – “Lot’s wife [became] a monument of disobedience.”

(PTW) – “Why did she fatally linger?...“On that day, let the one who is on the housetop with his good in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:31-32). Apparently, she lost her life because of her reluctance to let go of her household stuff...As she tarried, she succumbed to the sulfurous gases. And then as her corpse lay exposed, it was encrusted in salt and debris so that she became a pillar of salt...An angel of grace had taken her by the hand, led her away from certain destruction, and charged her to flee. But having been dragged away from the city of destruction, she returned in heart.”

(NAC) – “In what way Lot expected the calamity to “overtake” him is unstated; perhaps this adds to the depiction of Lot, who is slow, at times resistant, versus Abraham, who is immediately responsive in his demeanor.”

(KUR) – “Lot is clearly skeptical about God’s ability to rescue him and his family: he is certain the disaster will overtake him (19:19). And so he pleads with the angels that he and his family be permitted to go to Zoar.”

(NAC) – “If Lot continued dawdling, the angel could not destroy the wicked. The divine timetable for destruction is temporarily suspended for the outworking of divine grace.”

Genesis 19:23-29

(NAC) – “The author calls on the description of Noah’s flood to describe this deluge by fire at Sodom; “rained down” and “from the heavens” repeat the language of the flood account. Twice v. 24 attributes the fiery destruction to the Lord’s initiative. This heaven’s rain cannot be explained solely as a natural phenomenon, such as earthquake; it was exceptional, never again repeated, providing the parade illustration of the fiery eschatological judgment against the wicked (e.g., 2 Pet 2:6–9). The twin calamities of Noah and Lot illustrate Jesus’

teaching on the suddenness of the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26–30). The Sodomites carried on their usual activities, “eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,” on the day of their destruction, unaware of the imminent end. The Son of Man’s appearance will likewise surprise the unexpecting world.”

(KUR) – Quoting Wenham, Kuruvilla writes, “Clearly, Genesis sees the two events [the flood and the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah] as parallel: two cataclysmic acts of divine judgment on outrageously sinful communities, with the only righteous man and his family spared. The flood involved the destruction of the whole human race except Noah and his family; here the destruction involves a group of cities and the saving of one man and his family. Noah is seen as a second Adam from whom all humanity descended; the destruction of Sodom, though not as awesome as the flood, speaks once again of the terrible depravity to which human society can descend and of the need for redemption. So if Noah is seen as a second Adam, Abraham is probably viewed as a third Adam, the new hope of mankind. It was Noah’s sacrifice that mollified God’s anger after the flood and spared the world another annihilation. Now the narrator suggests that it is Abraham’s prayer that saved the righteous Lot and that in Abraham all the nations of the earth may hope to find blessing.”

(NAC) – “This reversal of the region’s vegetation spoils what originally had attracted Lot; now all is lost, including his possessions.”

(NAC) – “Verse 26 reports that Lot also lost his wife; by looking back she evidenced her affections for her life at Sodom. Lot’s wife may have been a Sodomite; there is no mention of her prior to chap. 19, unless we are to assume she was among the “women” (14:16) rescued by Abram. In any case, the woman is nameless, no more than a prop in the story whose tragic end became a dreaded lesson.”

(NAC) – “Remembered” (*zākar*), another allusion to the flood (8:1), is typical covenant terminology, indicating loyalty (e.g., Exod 2:24; 6:5; 32:13; Pss 105:42; 106:45). Wenham observes that “God remembered Lot” would be the true parallel to “God remembered Noah” (8:1) since the Lord delivers Noah and Lot. “God remembered” identifies the prior covenant obligation (12:3) as the basis for the divine intervention, not the righteousness of Lot...That God’s benevolence toward Lot arose from his commitment to Abraham thus begins and ends the Sodom segment.”

(APR) – “The verb *zakar*, “remember,” is important in the terms of God’s covenantal faithfulness and warrants some examination in the study of this verse. Sodom was evil enough to be destroyed, but the Lord was faithful to his promise to Abraham and spared “righteous Lot” (2 Peter 2:7-8).”

(KUR) – “While the compassion of Yahweh was upon Lot (19:16), the ground of the divine saving grace was Abraham and his intercession...It had nothing to do with Lot’s righteousness.”

(SOG) – “It is perhaps fair to say that Lot is relatively righteous compared to the inhabitants of Sodom, but even so, it is tempting to see that they are saved rather out of concern for Abraham, who pressed God not to destroy the city even if there are ten righteous people living it.”

Genesis 19:30-38

(SOG) – “Lot was afraid to stay in Zoar, which likely participated in the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah and only survived because of the presence of Lot.”

(APR) – “Even after the destruction of Sodom, the mentality of Sodom remained... “the one who offered his daughters for the sexual gratification of his wicked neighbors now becomes the object of his daughter’s incestuous relationship.””

(NAC) – “Lot’s age and reclusive life meant the end of the family line without male heirs; the daughters were deprived of husbands and children, the customary role of women...The intent to “preserve our family line” was honorable, but the means of incest was deplorable...the author wants it clearly understood that the hapless man was sexually exploited.”

(SOG) – “They have no husbands; there are no men around, yet they want children...Their father had offered them to be raped by the men of Sodom and now they will take advantage of him sexually. As we have commented, there are some similarities with the earlier story of Noah and his sons. In both accounts, the children take advantage of the father while the latter is under the influence of wine. Their transgression is clearly sexual in both stories.”

(BKW) – Referring to Lot’s daughter saying there is “no man” for her, Waltke says that “marriages were arranged. She may mean that the family has no social connections for such an arrangement after the destruction of their social life.”

(PTW) – “The girls’ names being withheld implies censure. Lot’s daughters sinned intentionally.”

(PTW) – Quoting Delitzch, Kent Hughes says, “The word “He did not know” (Gen 19:33) do not affirm that he was in an unconscious state—“they merely mean, that in his intoxicated state, though not entirely unconscious, yet he lay with his daughters, without clearly knowing what he was doing.” “In the morning he did not recall what he had done. But he was guilty, just as any father would be today. Alcohol was no excuse. Lot’s drunkenness simply facilitated the working out of the dark side of his own heart.”

(NAC) – ““Moab” was apparently derived from the combination of *min* (“from”) plus *’āb* (“father”), which becomes *mē’āb*, “from [my] father”; “Ben-Ammi,” born to the younger daughter (v. 38), is “son of my [paternal] kinsmen” or singular “kinsman.””

(NAC) – “The long history of Israel’s relations with these transjordan nations involved continued hostilities even down to the time of the Maccabees (e.g., 36:35; Num 22–25 with Micah 6:5; Judg 3:13, 29; chaps. 10–11; 1 Sam 11:2; 2 Sam 10; 2 Kgs 3; 25:25; Neh 2:10, 19; 4:3, 7; *1 Mac* 5:6), but Israel was required initially to spare them by virtue of their ancestral relationship (Deut 2:9, 19–21, 37)... Historically, the union of Ruth the Moabitess and Judah’s descendant Boaz reconciled the alienated families of Lot and Abraham, providing for Israel’s greatest king.”

Conclusion:

(KUR) – “Lot is the one who chose land by sight and dwelt with sinners (13:10-13); as for seed, he generated descendants by incest. Abraham, on the other hand, though exhibiting a spotty faith, waited on God for the allotment of land and, despite some false starts, waited on him for seed, too. “[Lot] fails as a host, as a citizen, as a husband, as a father. He wants to protect his guests but needs to be protected by them; he tries to save his family, and they think he is joking; afraid to journey to the mountains, he pleads for a little town, but afraid of the town, he flees to the mountains. His salvation depends on God’s mercy (19:16) and Abraham’s blessing (19:29).” In sum, in Gen 13, Abraham is the generous uncle to a foolish nephew; in Gen 14, he is the intrepid warrior who rescues a hapless prisoner-of-war. In Gen 18, the patriarch is the gracious host, a consultant of Yahweh, and a solicitous pleader, unlike his kinsman in Gen 19, who is less than bountiful, who is rejected as head of his household and as a citizen, and who is focused only on his own survival. Later, in shameful circumstances, Lot is inebriated and abysmally ignorant about his own misdeeds.”

(KUR) – “Lot’s final disposition, as far as we are told, is in a cave (19:30). “Caves in the OT are used either as graves (25:9) or by refugees (Josh 10:16; 1Sam 13:6). Lot, the rich rancher who had so many flocks and herds that he had to separate from Abraham (Gen 13:8-11), chose to live in the fertile Dead Sea valley, which has been destroyed and with it all his other relations and property. He and all he has can be accommodated in a cave. His ruin can hardly be more complete.””

(PTW) – “At the conclusion of the two storied narratives of divine judgment (one primeval flood and the other patriarchal judgment in the destruction of Sodom), those who had been spared God’s wrath (Noah and Lot) succumbed to sins similar to those who died in the judgements. And here we witness the rebirth of Sodom in the cave. Sodom was alive and well in “righteous” Lot’s family. And he was the father of all of it!”

Genesis 18	Genesis 19
<p>Abraham "sitting" at tent "door," פתח (<i>ptkh</i>, 18:1)</p> <p>Setting: daytime (18:1)</p> <p>"Seeing" visitors, he runs to them (18:2)</p> <p>Abraham "bowed" (18:2)</p> <p>"He said, 'My Lord ...'" (18:3)</p> <p>Abraham requests "favor" of guests (18:3)</p> <p>Refers to himself as "servant" (18:3)</p> <p>Requests that visitors wash feet (18:4)</p> <p>Guests show no hesitation to accept Abraham's offer</p> <p>Feast prepared and served and "eaten" (18:6–8)</p> <p>Abraham prepares a royal feast (18:6–8)</p> <p>"Where is your wife?" (18:9)</p> <p>Yahweh promises a son (18:10)</p> <p>Abraham cooperates with God; others doubt (18:12–15)</p> <p>Sarah questions Yahweh's words (18:12)</p> <p>Sarah "laughed" (צחק, <i>tskhq</i>, 18:12, 13, 15)</p> <p>Doubting wife humbled (18:12–15)</p> <p>Great "outcry" (18:20, 21)</p> <p>Abraham heads household (18:19)</p> <p>Warning before destruction (18:10)</p> <p>Pleading for Sodom, remnant (18:22–33)</p> <p>Abraham pleads with Yahweh: he uses הִנֵּה נָא and אֵל-נָא (<i>hinneh-na</i> and '<i>al-na'</i>) (18:27, 30, 31, 32)</p> <p>"Sweep away" (18:23, 24)</p> <p>"Slay" (בִּירַח, <i>mut</i>, 18:25)</p> <p>"Destroy" (18:28 [x2])</p> <p>Promise to "spare" (נִשָּׂא, <i>nsh'</i>, 18:26)</p> <p>"Do" (= destroy, 18:17, 25, 29, 30)</p> <p>Abraham will be a nation (18:18)</p>	<p>Lot "sitting" (19:1); "doorway" (פֶּתַח, 19:6)</p> <p>Setting: nighttime (19:2)</p> <p>"Seeing" visitors, he stood to greet them (19:1)</p> <p>Lot "bowed" (19:1)</p> <p>"He said, '... my lords'" (19:2)</p> <p>Lot requests "favor" only for his own escape (19:19)</p> <p>Refers to himself as "servant" (19:2)</p> <p>Requests that visitors wash feet (19:2)</p> <p>Guests initially refuse Lot's offer (19:2–3)</p> <p>Feast prepared and served and "eaten" (19:3)</p> <p>Lot prepares a regular meal (19:3)</p> <p>"Where are the men?" (19:5)</p> <p>Lot offers daughters (19:8)</p> <p>Lot cooperates with angels; others doubt (19:14, 26)</p> <p>Sodomites question Lot's words (19:9)</p> <p>Lot's sons-in-law thought he was "joking" (צָחַק, 19:14)</p> <p>Disobedient wife petrified (19:17, 26)</p> <p>Great "outcry" (19:13)</p> <p>Lot rejected as head of household (19:14)</p> <p>Warning before destruction (19:13)</p> <p>Pleading for Zoar, for himself (19:18–22)</p> <p>Lot pleads with the Sodomites: he uses הִנֵּה נָא and אֵל-נָא (19:7, 8)</p> <p>"Sweep away" (19:15, 17)</p> <p>"Die" (בִּירַח, 19:19)</p> <p>"Destroy" (19:13 [x2])</p> <p>Request "granted" (נִשָּׂא, 19:21)</p> <p>"Do" (= destroy, 19:22)</p> <p>Lot fathers two nations (19:37–38)</p>

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