



Peter Paulus Rubens, *Departure of Lot and His Family from Sodom*

The holy men urged Lot to take his wife and two unmarried daughters and get out of Sodom immediately.

Reexamining Lot

ROSEANN BENSON

RoseAnn Benson (rabenson@byu.edu) is an adjunct professor of ancient scripture and Church history and doctrine at BYU.

The story of Lot as found in the Old Testament leaves us with many unanswered questions about this man and how to interpret whether he was ultimately an example of good or evil or something in between. For instance, why would the Apostle Peter call Lot a “righteous man,” considered by God to be both “godly” and “just” (2 Peter 2:7–9), in light of the fact that Lot had “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Genesis 13:12) and then moved his family to a city known throughout scripture for its wickedness (see Genesis 19:1, 16, 29)?

The Book of Abraham and the Joseph Smith Translation provide significant insights into the relationship between Lot and Abraham, but neither comments on Lot’s righteousness, because their focus is on Abraham.¹ This paper examines canonical evidence and notes noncanonical statements that support Peter’s pronouncement of Lot as a righteous, godly, and just man who was comparable to Noah, “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). Assuming that the reader is well aware of the story from Genesis and the Book of Abraham, this article will focus on the following key points regarding Lot, to propose that the negative view held by some Latter-day Saints ought to be

reexamined: (1) family background and acceptance of God; (2) chosen status and ministering; (3) separation from Abraham and the choice of Sodom; (4) war, capture, rescue, and Melchizedek; (5) return to Sodom; (6) visitation by holy messengers and deliverance from Sodom; and (7) progeny and an inheritance from God.

Family Background

According to the Book of Abraham, Lot was born into a Mesopotamian society described as Chaldean with heathen Egyptian religious practices (see Abraham 1:1, 6; 2:4). Idol worship and the sacrifice of men, women, and children were part of their rituals (see Abraham 1:5, 8–10, 27).² Lot, the orphan son of Haran, left with Abraham³ and Sarai at the command from the Lord: “Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, . . . and I took Lot, my brother’s son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; and also my father followed after me” (Abraham 2:3–4).⁴ As will be seen, Lot and Abraham had a close bond and the same belief in “one God.”⁵

Chosen by God and Ministering

The small group stayed for a time in an area they called Haran, gathering flocks and apparently converts to God (see Abraham 2:15; Genesis 11:31; 12:5). Terah, Lot’s grandfather, returned to idol worship and chose to remain in Haran, but Abraham and Lot prayed together, seeking direction from God (see Abraham 2:6; there is no mention of this prayer in Genesis).⁶ God appeared personally and commanded Abraham, “Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice” (Abraham 2:6). This phrasing indicates that Jehovah had chosen Abraham and perhaps also Lot for special purposes—one of which was to bear witness of Jesus Christ in a land that would become the covenant home.⁷

In obedience to God’s direction, Abraham, Sarah, Lot, and those “souls that [they] had won” traveled from Haran to Canaan, and then to Egypt and later back to Canaan (Abraham 2:15; see also vv. 16–25; Genesis 12:5–13:1). Genesis records that Abraham and his family went to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan, and the Book of Abraham adds that he made sacrifices and prayed that the famine might be stayed (see Genesis 12:10; Abraham 2:17, 21).



Abraham prayed on the plains of Mamre.

From the records of the patriarchs that Abraham obtained, he learned about the beginning of the Creation and particularly about the planets and stars (see Abraham 1:28, 31). Additionally, on the way to Egypt, God taught Abraham through the Urim and Thummim and through personal interaction the hierarchy of the physical universe, a topic of interest to the Egyptians, and likened it to the hierarchy of the spiritual universe so that Abraham could also teach the Egyptians about God (see Abraham 3:1–19).⁸ During their time in Egypt, Abraham and Lot collected substantial “flocks, and herds, and tents” (Genesis 13:2, 5). Herdsmen and perhaps others accompanied them out of Egypt.⁹ Whether Abraham was successful in converting any of the Egyptians or if Lot participated in teaching with him is not recorded. A main focus for God, however, was the saving of souls in Haran, Canaan, and Egypt.

Separation

The hill country of Canaan apparently could not support the numerous flocks, herds, and property of the two men and the native peoples. The herdsmen of Abraham and Lot contended among each other for grazing rights, and Lot’s herdsmen allowed his cattle to graze on the lands of the people who lived there (see Genesis 13:6–7).¹⁰ Genesis chapter 13 explains that Abraham gave Lot first choice between the plain of the Jordan River and the land of Canaan

(see vv. 8–10).¹¹ Lot looked toward the plain of Jordan and noted “it was well watered” and thought it comparable to the “garden of the Lord” (v. 10).¹² After Abraham gave Lot first choice of territory, the Lord told Abraham to look in all directions and promised him an inheritance as far as his eyes could see, as well as an innumerable posterity (see vv. 14–17).¹³ Lot went east to the plain of Jordan near Sodom, and Abraham went to the plain of Mamre near Hebron, in Canaan.

Regarding Sodom, the Genesis account succinctly states, “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” (v. 13). Both Old and New Testament prophets elaborated on the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord, railing against false priests and prophets in Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah, accused them of adultery, lying, and helping the wicked. He concluded his denunciation with this indictment: “They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah” (Jeremiah 23:14). Ezekiel identified some of the sins of Sodom as their pride, greed, idleness, failure to care for the poor and needy, arrogance, and sexual sins (see Ezekiel 16:49–50). Jude deplored one of the particular sins of Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby cities: that their inhabitants were guilty of “giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh” (Jude 1:7).¹⁴

War, Captivity, Rescue, and Melchizedek

Genesis chapter 14 narrates that the region Lot chose to live in came under control of the kingdom of Elam for twelve years, and the inhabitants were presumably required to pay yearly tribute (see vv. 1–2).¹⁵ In the thirteenth year, however, the cities of the Jordan plain rebelled against their foreign overlord. Josephus states (whether historically accurate or not) that Lot joined in battle with the men of Sodom against Chedorlaomer and four other kings who came to confront their vassals. Perhaps this is one reason that some have thought Lot was very involved in Sodom.¹⁶ The victorious overlords invaded Sodom and Gomorrah to gather riches, and they captured Lot and others to take with them (see vv. 10–12).¹⁷ When Abraham heard what had happened to his nephew Lot, he deemed him worth saving (see vv. 13–16).¹⁸ After a successful rescue, Abraham met with the new king of Sodom, informing him that he would return the retrieved goods (see vv. 21–24).

Placed within this challenging account is Abraham’s interaction with Melchizedek (see vv. 18–20).¹⁹ This arrangement makes it difficult to know whether or not Lot and the king of Sodom were present with Abraham

and Melchizedek (I presume at least Lot was). Melchizedek was the king of the city of Salem, and his name in Hebrew means “My (Divine) King Is Righteousness.”²⁰ Melchizedek blessed Abraham and praised God, who had given him success (see vv. 18–20). As part of giving thanks to God, Melchizedek “brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God” (v. 18). The Joseph Smith Translation adds before the final phrase “and he break bread and blest it; and he blest the wine” (JST, Genesis 14:17; footnote 18d). Clearly this was a sacramental ordinance prefiguring the commemoration of “the atoning flesh and blood of Christ” that would be shed in the future.²¹ One wonders if Lot was a participant in or at least an observer of this ordinance.²²

The record in Genesis concludes the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek with one sentence, almost as if an afterthought—“And he gave him tithes of all”—without clearly identifying who paid tithes to whom or what “all” means (v. 20). However, it is generally assumed that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, something the Joseph Smith Translation makes clear (see JST, Genesis 14:37–39; p. 798).²³

At this point in the story, the Joseph Smith Translation adds sixteen additional verses to those contained in the biblical text. One of the most interesting additions is that Melchizedek brought peace to his city, Salem (see JST, Genesis 14:33, 36; p. 798).²⁴ In fact, his people became so righteous that they “obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch” (JST, Genesis 14:34; p. 798). Elder Bruce R. McConkie declared, “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sought an inheritance in the City of Zion, as had all the righteous saints from Enoch to Melchizedek.”²⁵

After this astonishing revelation about the translation of the people of Salem, the Joseph Smith Translation explains that not only was Melchizedek a high priest but he was also the “keeper of the storehouse of God,” the appointed caretaker of offerings for the poor (JST, Genesis 14:37–38; p. 798). Now, paying “tithes of all” is clarified: Abraham paid tithes of his own belongings to Melchizedek, he kept none of the treasures belonging to the king of Sodom for himself, and “all” included an additional offering of that “which God had given him more than that which he had need” (JST, Genesis 14:39; p. 798).

Presuming Lot was at this sacred celebration near Salem, he would have been in the company of two great high priests, Abraham and Melchizedek.²⁶ He likely observed the great contrast between a king of righteousness and the



Walter Rame, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Melchizedek blessed Abraham and praised God, who had given him success.

king of Sodom.²⁷ He had been miraculously delivered from captivity, and this success was attributed to God in rituals expressing gratitude and praise to the coming Savior. Additionally, Abraham paid a full tithe and generous offerings for the poor to Melchizedek. If Lot did witness all this—the blessing of Abraham, the ordinance, the prayers of gratitude, and the consecration of goods—the examples of Abraham and Melchizedek provided a stark contrast to the wicked society in Sodom, which was caught up in worldly wealth and pursuits and which was unwilling to take care of the poor.

Return to Sodom

One wonders if Lot knew what transformation was taking place in Salem and why he did not then choose to take his family to live there. Could he really

have preferred Sodom over Salem? Why would he return to a city described only as depraved?

The pattern of preaching the gospel as prelude to the establishment of Zion is demonstrated in Enoch's and Noah's missions, which were aided by other patriarchs such as Methuselah, Lamech, and angelic ministrants (see Moses 6:26–27; 7:27; 8:16). Although it is not stated in the text, I presume this was also how God likely gathered a righteous people to Salem. Melchizedek, Abraham, and perhaps Lot were called as missionaries to testify and gather the righteous among them prior to an impending destruction. This earlier preaching of the gospel makes more understandable the forceful conquest of the remaining Canaanite population in the promised land about four hundred years later by Joshua and the children of Israel (see Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:4–5). Nephi emphasized this very point by verifying that “he that is righteous is favored of God,” but that the people who were residing in the land of promise “had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity” (1 Nephi 17:35).

Those who were left behind in the land of Canaan had apparently refused to listen to the prophetic message and had by the time of the conquest—several hundred years later—become completely wicked. If this was so, then Melchizedek, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, their families, and perhaps unnamed others could have represented one last attempt to save the people of Canaan by preaching the gospel and bringing them to safety in Salem.

Just as Melchizedek's ministry was to the people of Salem, the Book of Abraham suggests that Abraham's ministry was to the people of Ur, Haran, Egypt, and Canaan. Presumably, Lot had learned with Abraham in Haran and Egypt how to be a preacher of the gospel, and conceivably he was then a minister to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. As Latter-day Saint scholar William Hamblin noted, God's revelations “were not limited only to those given to the Israelites and Christians in the Bible.”²⁸ The Qur'an declares that “for every nation there is a messenger” and “we have sent to every nation a messenger.”²⁹

Arabic literature regards Lot highly and supports the idea of his role as a missionary. According to the Qur'an, Lot was chosen, guided, given judgment and knowledge, and counted among the righteous. He was established in the land as a man who prayed, paid alms, and gave honor to God. He was called a faithful missionary to the people of Sodom and warned them of impending destruction for their sins. The Qur'an also declares that Lot was a trustworthy

apostle to the people of Sodom.³⁰ According to Ka'b al-Ahbar, a seventh-century Jewish rabbi who may have converted to Islam, Abraham sent Lot as a prophet to the greatest cities of that day, those of the Jordan plains, where he lived for forty years preaching repentance to the inhabitants.³¹

Melchizedek was successful in helping raise his people to a Zion society (see JST, Genesis 14:34; p. 798). If Lot was a missionary attempting to find righteous souls in Sodom and Gomorrah, it appears he was less successful. Yet he stayed with his responsibility until he was told to flee.³²

Some thought-provoking comments about Sodom and Gomorrah have been made by latter-day prophets.³³ Elder Neal A. Maxwell warned about “the tugs and pulls of the world—including its pleasures, power, praise, money, and preeminence,” encouraging Saints to choose the Lord first because “so much depends on whom and what we seek *first*.” He contrasted the choices made by the people in the city of Enoch with those of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah.³⁴ In juxtaposing types of Zion and Babylon, Elder Maxwell may have implied that similar circumstances regarding rescue and destruction were in play. Just as all the people who were taught the gospel by Enoch, Noah, and other patriarchs were gathered to safety either to the city of Zion or to a sacred ark (see Moses 7:27; Genesis 7:1), perhaps most of those at the time of Melchizedek who accepted the gospel came to Salem and were taken up to the city of Enoch. This time, instead of a flood to cleanse the earth, God sent fire to a particularly wicked area; nevertheless, Lot was spared.³⁵

The Lord’s way of teaching is one of patience. Surely there were several warnings before the great destruction; this seems to be the Lord’s pattern, and we may expect that it happened at Sodom, even if we don’t have all the records of it.

Holy Messengers and Deliverance

In sharp contrast to Sodom’s pride in its wealth and its unwillingness to share it, Abraham and Lot were kind and generous to outsiders. When Abraham saw three individuals approaching his tent, “he ran to meet them” and offered them hospitality, including washing their feet and giving them rest and food (Genesis 18:2–4).³⁶ The Joseph Smith Translation identifies the three men as “angels which were holy men, and were sent forth after the order of God” (JST, Genesis 18:23; footnote 22a).³⁷ Following this episode, the Lord announced his intentions to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 18:17–21). Concerned that both the wicked and the righteous might be destroyed

together, Abraham began to intercede with the Lord (see Genesis 18:23).³⁸ First, Abraham proposed that the city should be saved if God could find fifty righteous individuals in it, and the Lord agreed. It appears that Abraham was not sure fifty could be found, so he asked if the city would be preserved if there were forty-five, then forty, thirty, twenty, and finally only ten righteous people; and the Lord said yes (see Genesis 18:23–33).³⁹ Ten righteous souls would save Sodom.

In the evening, the three messengers appeared to Lot at the city gate of Sodom (see JST, Genesis 19:1).⁴⁰ Lot bowed to them and invited them into his home for lodging, exhibiting the same hospitality his uncle had shown. Lot showed the “proper hospitality, including the providing of water for the washing of feet, but the town ask[ed] for the guests to be delivered to them without providing even a promise of safety.”⁴¹ At dark the men of Sodom surrounded the house and called for Lot to bring his guests outside for sexual purposes (see Genesis 19:4–5). According to the received text, Lot offered his two virgin daughters in place of the three holy men since ancient hospitality required guests under his roof to be protected (see vv. 1–8).⁴² The Joseph Smith Translation describes a very different response by Lot. In the Joseph Smith Translation, the citizens of Sodom considered Lot an outsider living in their society; they were angry that he was judging their purposes in wanting the men and threatened to do “worse with [him], than with them” (JST, Genesis 19:10; footnote 1a). They then announced, “We will have the men, *and* thy daughters also; and we will do with them as seemeth us good” (JST, Genesis 19:11; p. 798; emphasis added).⁴³ Lot offered neither his guests nor his daughters. The men of Sodom were unwilling to countenance criticism of their sexual practices from outsiders living among them. In their desire to drive out righteous individuals, they made their desolating destruction certain, as had the Nephites living in Ammonihah who cast into the fire those who believed the words of Alma and Amulek (see Alma 14:7–11; 25:2). The men of Sodom were deaf to Lot’s pleading for mercy on behalf of his visitors and his daughters, and in their anger they attempted to break down the door, but the holy men pulled Lot inside and shut the door (see JST, Genesis 19:12–15; 798; Genesis 19:10). The story concludes with a miracle: the men of Sodom were stricken with blindness and could not find Lot’s door to break it down (see Genesis 19:11).⁴⁴

This incident makes clear that Lot and his family would no longer be safe in Sodom and that the Lord loved and protected Lot and his family. The

holy men warned Lot that destruction of the city was imminent and that he must get his family out. Lot informed his sons-in-law that they must all leave Sodom because “the Lord will destroy this city,” but they thought he was overstating their danger (v. 14).⁴⁵ The holy men urged Lot to take his wife and two unmarried daughters and get out of Sodom immediately. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland expressed it, “With less than immediate obedience and more than a little negotiation, Lot and his family ultimately did leave town but just in the nick of time.”⁴⁶ Because Lot and his family lingered, the holy men took them by the hand and brought them safely out of the city gates, “the Lord being merciful unto him” (v. 16). Their final instructions to Lot’s family were to save their own lives: “Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed” (v. 17).⁴⁷ Lot feared he could not travel to the mountains quickly enough and begged the holy men to allow them to go to Zoar, a small city in the Jordan plain not marked for destruction (see vv. 20, 22).⁴⁸ The holy men gave their permission, and Lot with his wife and young daughters traveled in that direction. Unfortunately, Lot’s wife “looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt” (v. 26)⁴⁹ as fire and brimstone rained down on the two cities of the plain (see vv. 24–25).⁵⁰ Joseph Smith declared that “in consequence of rejecting the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Prophets whom God has sent, the judgments of God have rested upon people, cities and nations, in various ages of the world, which was the case with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed for rejecting the prophets.”⁵¹ Which prophets are referred to in this quotation—the three holy messengers, Lot, all of them, or perhaps others?

Progeny and Covenant of Land

Lot, fearful of living even in Zoar, continued on to the mountains with his two daughters (see Genesis 19:30). All his flocks, herds, and wealth were gone, his home destroyed, most of his family members dead, and he was living with his two remaining adolescent daughters in a mountain cave. The young girls, perhaps naively, may have worried that the destruction of their homeland included the destruction of the entire ancient world, just as in the time of Noah. So they concocted a plan to get their father drunk and “lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father” (v. 32).⁵² The daughters named the children born to them through this means Moab and Ammon.⁵³ The Moabites and Ammonites are later mentioned throughout the historical portions of the Old Testament. Though related to the children of Abraham,

they bitterly opposed Jacob’s offspring, the house of Israel, when the Israelites claimed their inheritance among them in the promised land (see Numbers 22–24; Judges 3:28–30; 2 Kings 3:7, 21–27; 13:20; 2 Chronicles 20:1; 27:5).⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the Lord commanded the Israelites regarding how they were to treat the Moabites and Ammonites in Canaan: “Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession. . . . And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession” (Deuteronomy 2:9, 19).⁵⁵ Just as God had given Abraham a covenant of land and honored that covenant for Abraham’s children, so had he made a similar covenant with Lot and honored that covenant with his descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites.

Lessons from Lot

What might we conclude about Lot and his curious choice to live in Sodom and his apparent reluctance in leaving? The scriptures are silent about why Lot initially was reticent to leave Sodom. Lot was, however, in Zoar by daybreak when the fire and brimstone began to fall on Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 19:23). Was it family, friends, continued missionary efforts, or possessions that impeded his immediate compliance with the directions of holy men (see v. 16)? One can only speculate about Lot’s motives. Admittedly, doubts arise when we read the account of Lot in Genesis, including (1) separating from Abraham, (2) orienting his tent toward Sodom, (3) moving into the city, (4) offering his daughters to wicked men, and (5) being reluctant to leave that wicked city.

Terence E. Fretheim said, “Historically, quarreling among nomads over pastureland and water for their herds was common in that era.”⁵⁶ He notes that the scriptural account does not lay blame on either man, nor does it regard the separation as unfortunate, but rather as a reasonable way to respond to the situation. More problematic is the fact that the King James account reports that Lot pitched his tent “toward” the city of Sodom (Genesis 13:12) and, in seeming contrast, Abraham’s tent was always near, if not actually facing, the altars he built (see Genesis 12:8; 13:18; Abraham 2:17, 20). However, newer translations do not declare the *orientation* but rather the *location* of Lot’s tent, as evidenced in these examples: “pitched his tent close to Sodom” (Common

English Bible), “moved his tent as far as Sodom” (Hebrew Bible in English), or “pitching his tents on the outskirts of Sodom” (New Jerusalem Bible).⁵⁷ This is because the Hebrew preposition *‘ad*, rendered “toward” in Genesis 13:12 in the KJV, is more correctly translated as “by,” “near,” or “unto.” The KJV translates the same Hebrew preposition in regard to Abraham’s proximity to Haran with “and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there” (Genesis 11:31).⁵⁸ This comparison may point to bias against Lot on the part of the translator, perhaps because of the incorrect story found in the received text of Lot offering his daughters to the Sodomites. At the very least, this translation choice has produced an interpretation centered on tent orientation that has no real basis in the Hebrew text.

Peter’s writings and the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 19 suggest that Lot did not approve of or participate in any of the egregious sins of Sodom. In the Joseph Smith Translation, in contrast to the received text, Lot offered neither his guests nor his daughters to the men of Sodom. Instead, he exhorted the people of Sodom to respect his daughters and the men in his home and refused to give in to their wicked demands. And despite Lot’s supposed poor choices found in the received text of Genesis, the Apostle Peter declared Lot a “righteous man” (2 Peter 2:8). Furthermore, Peter boldly mentioned Lot in conjunction with Noah. Both of these men were miraculously spared, one from water and the other from fire, when the people among them were destroyed.

And [God] spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. (2 Peter 2:5–9)

In an effort to set up a clear standard of righteousness, some Latter-day Saints have emphasized that Lot chose to live in an extremely wicked city and that his life was spared only because of Abraham.⁵⁹ By contrasting Lot with the righteous Nephites whose tents faced the temple so they could listen to their prophet-king Benjamin (see Mosiah 2:5), the apparent lesson is that where Lot chose to live and orient his tent indicated where his allegiance

lay and to whom he listened (although this contrast is weakened when the Hebrew preposition is correctly rendered, as indicated above). Should we assume that although Lot knew the ways of the Lord, he ultimately was so seduced by the things of the world that he enjoyed living in Sodom? Did he sin by having mixed allegiances or by failing to balance “being in the world but not of it”—treading some middle ground without complete fidelity to the commandments? One cannot argue against Abraham’s righteousness. He was called “the Friend of God,” and his obedience was noted in both the Old and New Testaments (James 2:23; see Genesis 26:5).⁶⁰ But could we not also suppose this about Lot’s character? Peter, the chief Apostle of the New Testament Church, testified that Lot was a “righteous man” who was “vexed” by the “filthy conversation” and “unlawful deeds” he saw and heard in Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:7–8). One wonders what source Peter had that caused him to make this statement in apparent contrast to what we read about Lot in the received text of Genesis.⁶¹

Conclusion

Lot apparently went willingly with Abraham from Ur to Haran, and then on to Canaan and even Egypt. The Book of Abraham points out the missionary efforts of Abraham in Haran and Egypt, and Lot possibly aided in these efforts. The Apostle Peter’s comments about Lot are in context with praising Noah as “a preacher of righteousness” and make it plausible that Lot was also a preacher of righteousness in Sodom and Gomorrah. Joseph Smith declared that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because they rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ and the prophets who were sent to teach them. In harmony with this type of information, Arabic tradition regards Lot as a righteous missionary, an apostle, and a prophet to the people of Sodom. Lot’s selection of the lushest land for his inheritance was perhaps unwitting, as it also turned out to be inhabited by the people of Sodom and was eventually made barren.

When Abraham learned of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he prayed not just for Lot and his family but also for the Lord to spare the cities for the sake of any righteous people living there, possibly including converts of Lot’s efforts. God sent messengers to Sodom who were welcomed into the home of Lot for the specific purpose of preserving the lives of Lot and his family. The full context of Peter’s comments regarding Lot imply that the Lord intended to save Lot and his family independent of Abraham’s prayers—Lot was an example of God’s willingness to punish

the wicked and save the righteous.⁶² Additionally, like Noah and Abraham, Lot's descendants were given an inheritance in a promised land, signifying that God also had made a covenant with him. Since God warned the children of Israel not to battle with the Moabites and Ammonites, it is apparent that the covenant with Lot was still in effect. The Lord continued to honor that covenant hundreds of years later in Moses' day.⁶³

Although not provable with extant canonical texts, it is possible that God chose both Lot and Abraham to be ministers in foreign lands. Lot demonstrated his chosen status by remaining righteous while surrounded by evil, welcoming holy visitors into his home, protecting those visitors and his daughters, being the beneficiary of several miraculous rescues, and having his posterity receive an inheritance from God. If this perspective is true, it is no wonder Peter evaluated Lot as "a righteous man" with a "righteous soul" (2 Peter 2:8). An incomplete scriptural record and an Old Testament account not in harmony with the revelatory pronouncements of Peter and Joseph Smith ought to warrant reexamining our previous notions about Lot. **RE**

Notes

1. There are numerous noncanonical sources such as rabbinic traditions and early Christian writers who undoubtedly derived most of their accounts about Abraham and Lot from Genesis and other existing records, and then made their own interpretive commentary based on the traditions of their culture and era. Like the biblical record, their writings also variously interpret Lot as both a good and bad example. For example, the Book of Wisdom, sometimes called the Wisdom of Solomon, is one of the deuterocanonical books of the Bible and part of the books of wisdom literature included in the Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew Bible. It includes a brief comment on Lot. O. S. Wintermute, trans., "Jubilees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 35–142. *The Book of Jubilees* is an account of revelations given to Moses on Mount Sinai and is sometimes called "The Little Genesis." The author was a Jew who lived in Palestine in the middle of the second century BC or perhaps somewhat earlier. Fragments written in Hebrew were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and then translated into Greek and from Greek to Latin and other languages. It describes the biblical period from the Creation to the time of Moses and is a retelling of Genesis and the first part of Exodus. The material is largely the same as that found in the Hebrew Bible, but details are added, the order of some events is slightly changed, and some elements are left out. Kugel calls *Jubilees* a fanciful "first-person narrative put in the mouth of a biblical hero"; it represents one tradition that grew up around Abraham, and its sources may reach back to the same time period as that of the Book of Abraham. Nevertheless, he calls the writer "a bold, innovative interpreter . . . something of a genius—and subsequent generations valued highly, even venerated, his book's insights into Scripture." James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3, 32. *The Genesis Apocryphon* was one of the original Dead Sea scrolls found in Cave I at Qumran. It is an incomplete manuscript written in Aramaic and considered a

pseudepigraphal conversation with Lamech, Methuselah, Enoch, and Noah which foresees the time of Abraham, Sarai, and Lot. It has been described as a "mixture of Targum, Midrash, rewritten Bible and autobiography." Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 480–91. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, in *Josephus: The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1960). Titus Flavius Josephus was a first-century Jewish historian and Roman citizen. *Antiquities of the Jews* begins with the account of the Creation in Genesis and includes the history from Josephus's point of view of other prominent Hebrew leaders such as Abraham and Moses. The Qur'an is a record of the words of Allah given by Gabriel to Muhammad in the seventh century AD.

2. The prophet Joshua also mentions the idol worship of Terah: "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even *Terah, the father of Abraham*, and the father of Nachor [Nahor]: and they served other gods" (Joshua 24:2; emphasis added). See also Joshua 24:14.

3. In Genesis and *Antiquities of the Jews*, the name Abram is changed to Abraham. In the Pearl of Great Price Abraham is the only name mentioned. To avoid confusion, Abraham is used in this paper, except when direct quotations use Abram.

4. Josephus concurs that they "left the land of Chaldea at the command of God" and adds an interesting detail: "Abram, having no son of his own, adopted Lot, his brother Haran's son, and his wife Sarai's brother." Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 7:1. This idea is also put forth in a legend: "Lot, for the sake of whom I journeyed as far as Damascus, where God was my protection, would be well pleased to be my heir." Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America) 1:234. According to Jewish legend, Haran, the son of Terah and father of Lot, was cast into a furnace with Abraham. Abraham was saved by the Lord, but Haran perished "because his heart was not perfect with the Lord." Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:216. The Qur'an states: "We delivered him [Abraham], and Lot, unto the land that We had blessed for all beings." *The Qur'an Interpreted*, trans. A. J. Arberry (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1955), 21:70.

5. Josephus records that Abraham was a messenger of God to the Chaldeans and Mesopotamians, teaching "that there was but one God, the Creator of the universe," which caused a great tumult among the people. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 7:1.

6. The Jewish pseudepigraphical text *Jubilees* purports to give both the prayer of Abraham and God's response to it. It records that Abraham prayed: "My God, God Most High, Thou alone art my God, and Thee and Thy dominion have I chosen. And Thou hast created all things, and all things that are[,] are the work of Thy hands. Deliver me from the hands of evil spirits who have sway over the thoughts of men's hearts, And let them not lead me astray from Thee, my God. And [e]stablish Thou me and my seed for ever that we go not astray from henceforth and for evermore." *Jubilees* 12:19–20. It also records Abraham's question and God's answer: "Shall I return unto Ur of the Chaldees who seek my face that I may return to them, or am I to remain here in this place? The right path before Thee[,] prosper it in the hands of Thy servant that he may fulfil (it) and that I may not walk in the deceitfulness of my heart, O my God." *Jubilees* 12:20–21.

7. The word *choose* is used frequently to designate people and places chosen by God. Although the word *choose* is not used in this case, the context makes clear that this is what the Lord's words are implying. Dana M. Pike, "Before Jeremiah Was: Divine Election in the Ancient Near East," in *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Andrew C. Skinner (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 33–59.

8. See Joseph Fielding McConkie, "The Heavens Testify of Christ," in *Studies in Scripture: Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millett and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 2:85–88. See also Kerry Muhlstein, "Encircling Astronomy and the Egyptians: An Approach to Abraham 3," *Religious Educator* 10, no. 1 (2009): 33–50.

9. The *Genesis Apocryphon* records that Abraham left Egypt with flocks, silver, and gold and that Lot also had great flocks, as well as an Egyptian wife. The text does not state if his wife was a Hamite but calls her a "daughter of Egypt." This may be a political term rather than a racial term. Abraham said that he returned to all the encampments that he had previously used, including Bethel, where he had built an altar. He built a second altar and made sacrifice "to the Most High God. And there I called on the name of the Lord of worlds and praised the Name of God and blessed God, and I gave thanks before God for all the riches and favours which He had bestowed on me. For He had dealt kindly towards me and had led me back in peace into this land." Vermes, "The Genesis Apocryphon," in *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 487–88.

10. See also LXX 1, 7:7. The *Genesis Apocryphon* relates the ill behavior of the shepherds as well as Abraham's sadness that he and Lot had to separate. "After that day, Lot departed from me on account of the deeds of our shepherds. He went away and settled in the valley of the Jordan, together with all his flocks; and I myself added more to them. He kept his sheep and journeyed as far as Sodom, and he bought a house for himself in Sodom and dwelt in it. But I dwelt on the mountain of Bethel and it grieved me that my nephew Lot had departed from me." Vermes, "The Genesis Apocryphon," 488. One Jewish legend claims that in separating from Abraham, Lot also separated himself from God. "Now when the strife extended from the servants to the masters, and Abraham vainly called his nephew Lot to account for his unbecoming behavior, Abraham decided he would have to depart from his kinsman, though he should have to compel Lot thereto by force. Lot thereupon separated himself not from Abraham alone, but from the God of Abraham also, and he betook himself to a district in which immorality and sin reigned supreme, wherefore punishment overtook him, for his own flesh seduced him later into sin." Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:228.

11. See also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 8:3.

12. Another report describes it as the "fruitful Vale of Siddim," the canals of which later formed the Dead Sea. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:230. Apparently, this area had beautiful vistas and rich pastureland prior to its ancient destruction. Scientists have compared the cellulose of ancient tamarix (tamarisk) trees used to construct the fortress at Masada to the same type of trees growing in the Masada area today and concluded "the ancient trees enjoyed less arid environmental conditions during their growth compared to contemporary trees in this desert region," indicating "regional climatic change in desert areas." Dan Yakir, Arie Issar, Joel Gat, Eilon Adar, Peter Trimborn, and Joseph Lipp, "13C and 18O of Wood from the Roman Siege Rampart in Masada, Israel (AD 70–73): Evidence for a Less Arid Climate for the Region," *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* 58, no.16 (August 1994), 3535–39.

13. See also Vermes, "The Genesis Apocryphon," 488.

14. Josephus corroborated the prophetic denunciations with these observations: "The Sodomites grew proud, on account of their riches and great wealth; they became unjust towards men, and impious towards God, inasmuch that they did not call to mind the advantages they received from him: they hated strangers, and abused themselves with Sodomitical practices." Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 11:1. Rabbinic traditions are also rife with stories about the immoral practices of the people living in these cities. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:247–50.

15. In addition to Sodom, the cities of the Jordan plain also included Gomorrah, Admah, and Zoar. According to rabbinic tradition, these cities were inhabited by Hamites. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:229.

16. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 9:1.

17. See also Vermes, "The Genesis Apocryphon," 489.

18. Genesis 14:14 records that Abraham and his household of 318 trained servants pursued the victorious kings of Elam and their hostages, catching up with them west of Damascus in a valley by the spring of Dan. They successfully killed the invaders who were in a celebratory drunken stupor, rescued the hostages, and retrieved the goods that had been stolen. Josephus states that Abraham "was at once afraid for Lot his kinsman, and pitied the Sodomites, his friends and neighbors and thinking it proper to afford them assistance, he did not delay it." *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 10:1. The LXX adds that Abraham "recovered all the cavalry of Sodom, and he recovered Lot his nephew, and all his possessions, and the women and the people." LXX 14:16. According to rabbinic tradition, they took Lot because their secret desire was to strike at Abraham. None of Abraham's household converts except Eliezer would join him in rescuing Lot. Accordingly God spoke and said, "All forsook thee save only Eliezer. Verily, I shall invest him with the strength of the three hundred and eighteen men whose aid thou didst seek in vain." Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:230–31. In Hebrew gematria, 318 is the number of Eliezer's name.

19. For additional insight on Genesis 14 from scholarly commentaries, see John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Genesis–Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 164–68; and Terence E. Fretheim, "Genesis," *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 1:438–42.

20. Kent P. Jackson, *The Restored Gospel and the Book of Genesis* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 119.

21. Jackson, *Restored Gospel and the Book of Genesis*, 119. See John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1882; repr. 1973), 83–84; also found in *The Gospel Kingdom: Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 139–40.

22. It is difficult from the record to tell exactly who was present at this ordinance besides Melchizedek and Abraham. Others could have included Lot, Abraham's men, the other captives, and the King of Sodom. Josephus states that Melchizedek "supplied Abram's army in a hospitable manner, and gave them provisions in abundance." *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 10:2. See also Vermes, "The Genesis Apocryphon," 490. The Genesis account records that the king of Sodom also interacted with Abraham, desiring the return of his people and offering as a reward to Abraham all the goods that he had recaptured. Abraham, however, refused the king of Sodom's offer of a reward with this solemn declaration: "I will stretch out my hand to the Lord the most high God, who made the heaven and the earth, that I will not take from all thy goods from a string to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich" (LXX Genesis 14:22–23). Josephus, however, added that Abram gave Melchizedek "the tenth part of his prey: but the king of Sodom desired Abram to take the prey" but to return the people that belonged to him. *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 10:2. See also Vermes, "The Genesis Apocryphon," 490.

23. In Genesis, Melchizedek is a mysterious side note, but in the Joseph Smith Translation he is a central figure, the prominent high priest of his time. First, Melchizedek blessed Abraham's covenant with the Lord that he would not receive the wealth of Sodom. What follows next in the Joseph Smith Translation is a brief description of Melchizedek's

great faith and righteousness that brought about miracles even when he was a child, and his ordination to the high priesthood after the order of Enoch (see JST, Genesis 14:25–31; p. 797). Through his holding the same priesthood authority as Enoch, he had the power to perform the miracles that Enoch did, including bringing peace to his city, Salem (see JST, Genesis 14:27, 33, 36; pp. 797–98). The brief comment in the Joseph Smith Translation is an interesting summary of the Book of Moses' information on Enoch found in chapters 6 and 7. For more on the relationship of Abraham to Enoch, their priesthood, and their cities, see Frank F. Judd Jr. "Melchizedek: Seeking After the Zion of Enoch," in *Thy People Shall Be My People and Thy God My God: The 22nd Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 35–48.

24. Salem was possibly located on the site of what would later be Jerusalem. Bible Dictionary, "Salem," 768. However, Tabor, Gerizim, Shiloh, and Beth Shan have all been mentioned as locations for Salem.

25. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal and New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), 3:205.

26. The *New Interpreter's Bible* suggests that Lot was present and that Abraham by not accepting any of the spoils also refused to "take Lot's goods and use them (and that of others) for gaining hegemony in Lot's land." Because Abraham does not enrich himself with Lot's land he is not obligated to the king of Sodom. *New Interpreter's Bible*, 1:440, 442.

27. According to one commentary, the text is arranged to contrast the two kings and to illustrate Abraham's very different responses to them, one positive and the other negative. Sailhamer, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 166.

28. William J. Hamblin, "Pre-Islamic Arabian Prophets," in *Mormons and Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1983), 87. D&C 90:11 alludes to this idea in a future era: "For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ." Additionally, the First Presidency made the following pronouncement: "The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals." "God's Love for All Mankind," First Presidency Statement, February 15, 1978.

29. Qur'an 10:47; 16:36.

30. Qur'an 6:86–87; 21:75; 22:40; 26:160–73; 205–9.

31. W. M. Thackston Jr., trans., *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1978), 2:155.

32. Multiple examples exist in the scriptures of prophets sent to call certain cities to repentance, such as Jonah's call to preach in Nineveh, and Alma and Amulek's call to preach to Ammonihah, the one mission successful and the other not, one to Gentiles and the other to members of the house of Israel.

33. Other members of the Quorum of the Twelve have made similar comments regarding the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. In an October 2001 general conference address, President Gordon B. Hinckley testified that "all of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society." Gordon B. Hinckley, "Living in the Fulness of Times," *Ensign*, November 2001, 4. President Boyd K. Packer declared, "I know of nothing in the history of the Church or in

the history of the world to compare with our present circumstances. Nothing happened in Sodom and Gomorrah which exceeds in wickedness and depravity that which surrounds us now." Boyd K. Packer, "The One Pure Defense" (address to CES religious educators, February 6, 2004), 4. President Thomas S. Monson warned, "Today we have a rebirth of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah. From seldom-read pages in dusty Bibles they come forth as real cities in a real world, depicting a real malady—pernicious permissiveness." Thomas S. Monson, "Pornography, the Deadly Carrier," *Ensign*, July 2001, 2–5. Elder Neal A. Maxwell also warned, "Brothers and sisters, we do not go many hours in our lives without having to decide again 'which way do we face' and whether we will pitch our tents facing Sodom or the holy temple (see Gen. 13:12; Mosiah 2:6)." Neal A. Maxwell, "How Choice a Seer!," *Ensign*, November 2003, 99–102. Elder L. Tom Perry noted, "Most of the problems that Lot later encountered in his life, and there were several, can be traced back to his early decision to position the door of his tent to look upon Sodom." L. Tom Perry, "The Power of Deliverance," *Ensign*, May 2012, 94–97.

34. Neal A. Maxwell, "The Tugs and Pulls of the World," *Ensign*, November 2000, 35; emphasis in original.

35. When the children of Israel came into the promised land, they were required to redeem by force their covenant inheritance from the remaining Canaanites. This requirement taught them clearly that God would mete out the penalties of which Moses had warned them if they failed to keep their covenants with him (see Deuteronomy 27:10–26). Moses commanded the people as they prepared to enter the promised land that they must obey God and his statutes. To remind the people of the blessings God promised to the house of Israel, six tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim to shout them out. Standing opposite them on Mount Ebal were the other six tribes, who shouted the cursings for disobedience.

36. Scholar Daniel L. Belnap noted that "hospitality has long been recognized as an important part of ancient Mediterranean culture." "And Those Who Receive You Not": Ritual (Dis)continuity in the Rite of the Dusting of Feet," in *Our Rites of Worship*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, forthcoming).

37. The word *apostle* means "one sent forth." Bible Dictionary, "Apostle," 612. The phrase "after the order of God" would refer to their priesthood. For more commentary on "tripartite messengers," see Alonzo L. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols: Finding Meaning in Rites, Rituals, & Ordinances* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2011), 13–15. Rabbinic tradition identifies the three angels as Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Gabriel was the angel who was sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and Michael to save Lot and his family. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:241, 255. Josephus also called them "angels of God" and affirmed that one of their assignments was to inform Abraham about the coming destruction of Sodom. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 11:2. According to Jewish legend, Abraham was informed because the cities marked for destruction were part of Canaan, the land promised to Abraham. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:250.

38. According to the Qur'an, Abraham was worried only about Lot (Qur'an 29:32).

39. According to rabbinic tradition, Abraham did not ask for more when the Lord promised he would save the cities if ten righteous souls could be found, because even Noah and the seven other righteous family members were not sufficient to avert destruction by the Flood. Abraham may have assumed that Lot's family with daughters and sons-in-law would make the number ten and be enough to save the cities; however, though better than the rest of the people in the cities, Lot and his family were far from good. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:252.

40. Genesis 19:1 records that “there came two angels to Sodom”; however, the JST corrects that verse to read that there were “three angels.”

41. Belnap, “And Those Who Receive You Not.” Belnap makes the case that Christ, in the washing of the feet of his Apostles, extends this rite of ancient hospitality to mean much more: Abraham and Lot accepted not only their guests, but also the Lord who had sent them.

42. See also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 11:3; Qur’an 11:78. The code of Israelite hospitality is recorded in Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 16:14; 26:12. The examples in Exodus and Leviticus specifically mention that the house of Israel had been strangers in Egypt; therefore, they were commanded to love the strangers that dwelled among them. Although these passages in the Covenant code, priestly laws of Leviticus, and deuteronomic law code had not yet been given, “it can be deduced that hospitality was an important custom [or obligation] throughout a significant portion of ancient Israel’s history.” Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 57. See also Michael Herzfeld, “As in Your Own House: Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 75–79.

43. See also Genesis 19:8–9. The Qur’an, rather than following the Genesis account, appears to more closely agree with the Joseph Smith Translation: “The inhabitants of the City came in (mad) joy (at the news of the young men). Lot said, ‘these are my guests: disgrace me not: But fear God and shame me not.’” (Qur’an 15:67–69). Lot questioned the people, “Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practice your lusts on men in preference to women,” and warned, “Ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds” (Qur’an 7:80). The men of Sodom responded angrily to Lot’s accusations with a command to “drive them out. . . . These are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!” (Qur’an 7:82–83).

44. See also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 11:4. The Qur’an declares they were intoxicated and wandered about unable to find the door (Qur’an 15:72).

45. Josephus states that Lot’s daughters were betrothed but that the marriages had not yet been consummated. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 11:4. The two remaining daughters were not yet betrothed, meaning that likely they were very young adolescents.

46. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Best Is Yet to Be,” *Ensign*, January 2010, 23; from a Brigham Young University devotional address, January 13, 2009.

47. The Qur’an states that the instructions were to “travel by night. . . . Let no one amongst you look back, but pass on whither ye are ordered” (Qur’an 15:65). The chronology in the Qur’an gives these commands prior to the incident regarding the men of Sodom desiring Lot’s holy visitors (Qur’an 15:61–77).

48. Although the Genesis account does not name the city, LXX Genesis 19:19 declares that Zoar was the city that was not to be destroyed.

49. What was the sin that brought forth her destruction? Elder Holland gives a partial answer: “Apparently, what was wrong with Lot’s wife was that she wasn’t just *looking* back; in her heart she wanted to *go* back. It would appear that even before she was past the city limits, she was already missing what Sodom and Gomorrah had offered her. . . . It is possible that Lot’s wife looked back with resentment toward the Lord for what He was asking her to leave behind. . . . So it isn’t just that she looked back; she looked back *longingly*. In short, her attachment to the past outweighed her confidence in the future. That, apparently, was at least part of her sin.” Holland, “Best Is Yet to Be,” 22, 27. Josephus added this thought: “But Lot’s

wife [was] continually turning back to view the city as she went from it, and being too nicely inquisitive what would become of it, although God had forbidden her so to do.” *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 1:4. Rabbinic tradition maintains that Lot’s wife, out of motherly love, looked back to see if her married daughters were following them out of the city. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:255. The Qur’an declares that “she is of those who lag behind” (Qur’an 29:32–33). Philo differentiated between the penalty of the Sodomites which were destroyed by sulphur and fire, and Lot’s wife, who was “changed into the nature of salt. All these indicated unproductiveness and unfruitfulness.” Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, trans. Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), supplement 1:330, *Genesis*, Book 4:52. Likely, Philo is correct in his assessment of rich symbolism as part of the description “pillar of salt.” Generally, “salt” is identified as an agent for the preservation of purity and one that prevents corruption. See Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Gospel Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 88, 271; Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 323. The phrase “covenant of salt” (Numbers 18:19; see also Leviticus 2:13) indicates that salt was an essential part of covenant making. Also, the faithful were admonished to be the salt of the earth in order to be both the savor and saviors of men (see 3 Nephi 12:13; D&C 101:39; 103:10). A *pillar* of salt would be a large amount of salt and, rather than acting as a preserving agent, would symbolize the destruction of something harmful. Also, since salt was an integral part of covenant making, perhaps the symbolism of Lot’s wife becoming a pillar of salt represents both her contamination with the ideals of Sodom and the penalty for not keeping her covenants, the salt of her covenants raining down upon her and causing death. The valley in which Sodom and Gomorrah were located was later called the Valley of Salt—a great contrast to Lot’s initial description of the land as Edenic. The ungodliness of the cities, demonstrated by their failure to heed the testimony of Lot, secured their destruction and made the land thenceforth unproductive. Additional scholarly comments in this area include the following: “In ancient treaty texts, salination of the earth is a symbol of judgment.” J. Gerald Janzen, *International Theological Commentary: Genesis 12–50—Abraham and All the Families of the Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 64. Salt can provoke “powerful images of death, desolation, and curse.” Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 752.

50. Josephus identified the destruction of the city as caused by a thunderbolt that set the city and its inhabitants on fire. *Antiquities of the Jews* 1, 11:4.

51. George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1888; repr., n.p.: Kessinger, 2006), 430.

52. Both Ireneus and Origen comment on this liaison. Ireneus advised, “With respect to those actions . . . we should not become the accusers. . . . The daughters [of Lot] spoke according to their simplicity and innocence, imagining that all mankind had perished . . . [and] supposed that only they, along with their father, were left for the preservation of the human race.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 1:504–5. Origen, a Christian scholar writing in the late second to mid-third century AD, addressed the situation similarly, emphasizing that Lot’s daughters were “young maidens” (i.e., teenagers) and, further, that “sacred Scripture is nowhere found to distinctly approve of their conduct as good, nor to pass sentence upon it as blameworthy.” *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 4:518.

53. Both the Moabites and the Ammonites worshiped idols: Chemosh was the Moabite god, and Milcom was the Ammonite god (see 1 Kings 11:33). A curse by the prophet Zephaniah compared Moab and Ammon to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and

prophesied nettles, salt pits, desolation, and defeat by the children of Israel. See Zephaniah 2:9; see also LXX Sophonias 2:9.

54. Bible Dictionary, “Moab,” 733; and “Ammon, Ammonites,” 607.

55. Nevertheless, the Lord periodically chastised Lot’s descendants who were wicked. For example, Saul, having been anointed by Samuel to be captain over the Lord’s host, led the children of Israel against the Ammonites and so completely destroyed them “that two of them were not left together” (1 Samuel 11:11). The prophet Elisha promised that a confederation of the northern and southern kingdoms would be victorious against the Moabites (see 2 Kings 3).

56. Fretheim, “Genesis,” *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 1:433.

57. All of these excerpts are from Genesis 13:12. See also the Complete Jewish Bible, English Study Bible, Jewish Publication Society Bible, New American Standard Bible, New English Translation, New International Version, New Revised Version, and more. I am indebted to Dana M. Pike for pointing me to the translation of this Hebrew preposition.

58. Furthermore, none of the other occurrences of “toward” in the KJV translation of Genesis are translations of ‘ad. They usually render the suffixed directional *he* or the Hebrew phrase ‘al pēney.

59. “Living Righteously in a Wicked World,” in *Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 32, http://classic.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?locale=0&sourceId=0e63c106dac20110VgnVCM100000176f620a___&vgnnextoid=d7561b08f338c010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD; and *Old Testament Seminary Teacher Resource Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 47, <http://seminary.lds.org/bc/content/seminary/materials/english/teacher-resources/old-testament-teacher-resource-manualeng.pdf>. It doesn’t appear that any of the Christian commentaries are critical of Lot. For example, after reciting the events of Lot’s life recorded in Genesis, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* concludes that the Lot narrative illustrates God’s election of Israel and his providential guidance of the patriarchs, his judgment of sin, his accommodation to man’s weakness, and his saving grace. Keith R. Crimm and George A. Butterick, “Lot,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962; repr. 1986), 162. See also C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1866), 1:198–216, 228–38; Albert E. Barnett and Elmer G. Homrighausen, *The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1957), 12:189–91; Daniel J. Harrington, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Sacra Pagina 15 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), 265–71. *The New Interpreter’s Bible* comments that Peter’s illustrations of the destruction of the ancient world by flood and of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire are warning examples. Noah and Lot are given expanded descriptions of how the righteous suffer in an evil world but will be rescued by God. Duane F. Watson, *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 12:347–48.

60. Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jewish biblical philosopher of the first century AD, agreed that “Lot was saved not for his own sake so much as for the sake of the wise man, Abraham, for the latter had offered prayers for him.” Philo, *Questions and Answers in Genesis*, Book 4:54. The author of *Jubilees* wrote that Lot was saved because “God remembered Abraham, and sent him out of the midst of the overthrow.” *Jubilees* 16:6–8. Origen believed that “if he [Lot] was able to escape Sodom, as Scripture indicates, he owed this more to Abraham’s merits than his own.” Origen, “Homily V: On Lot and His Daughters,” in *The Fathers of the Church* 71, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 115–16.

61. Several ancient interpreters corroborate Peter’s assessment of Lot as a righteous man. In addition to the previously cited Arabic tradition of Lot being a missionary and righteous prophet, the Book of Wisdom from the Septuagint records: “Wisdom rescued a righteous man when the ungodly were perishing; he escaped the fire that descended on the Five Cities. Evidence of their wickedness still remains: a continually smoking wasteland, plants bearing fruit that does not ripen, and a pillar of salt standing as a monument to an unbelieving soul. For because they passed wisdom by, they not only were prevented from recognizing the good, but also left for mankind a reminder of their folly, so that their faults would not be able to pass unseen.” One of the early Christian Fathers, Clement of Rome, writing in the late first century AD to the Corinthians, declared, “Because of his hospitality and godliness, Lot was saved out of Sodom when all the country round was punished by means of fire and brimstone, the Lord making it manifest that He does not forsake those that home in Him.” Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 1 Clement 11:1.

62. Peter’s examples of Noah and Lot are parallel in another way: the translation of Enoch and his city, but not of Noah and his family, is a type and shadow of the translation of Melchizedek’s people, but not of Abraham and Lot and their families, prior to the destruction of a wicked “world.”

63. Moses, however, declared that “an Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever: because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee” (Deuteronomy 23:3–4). God must have felt differently about Ruth, a Moabitess, because she was righteous (Ruth 1:4, 16: 4:17) or perhaps because she was in the tenth generation. Additionally, Rehoboam, king of Israel, and later of Judah, was the son of Solomon and Naamah, an Ammonitess (1 Kings 14:31). Both of these lines provide the inclusion of Lot into Jesus Christ’s ancestry.