



Key Places:

Ai

A city lying east of Bethel and “beside Bethaven.” (Joshua 7:2; 8:9) It was the second city taken by Israel after the passage of the Jordan, and was “utterly destroyed.” (Joshua 7:3-5; 8:1; Joshua 9:3; 10:1,2; 12:9) [Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible online]

Bethel

(the house of God) well known city and holy place of central Palestine, about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. If we are to accept the precise definition of (Genesis 12:8) the name of Bethel would appear to have existed at this spot even before the arrival of Abram in Canaan. (Genesis 12:8; 13:3,4) Bethel was the scene of Jacob’s vision. (Genesis 28:11-19; 31:13) Jacob lived there. (Genesis 35:1-8) The original name was Luz. (Judges 1:22,23) After the conquest Bethel is frequently heard of. In the troubled times when there was no king in Israel, it was to Bethel that the people went up in their distress to ask counsel of God. (Judges 20:18,26,31; 21:2) Authorized Version, “house of God.” Here was the ark of the covenant. (Judges 20:26-28; 21:4) Later it is named as one of the holy cities to which Samuel went on circuit. (1 Samuel 7:16) Here Jeroboam placed one of the two calves of gold. Toward the end of Jeroboam’s life Bethel fell into the hands of Judah. (2 Chronicles 13:19) Elijah visited Bethel, and we hear of “sons of the prophets” as resident there. (2 Kings 2:2,3) But after the destruction of Baal worship by Jehu Bethel comes once more into view. (2 Kings 10:29) After the desolation of the northern kingdom by the king of Assyria, Bethel still remained an abode of priests. (2 Kings 17:27,28) In later times Bethel is named only once under the scarcely-altered name of Beitin . Its ruins still lie on the righthand side of the road from Jerusalem to Nablus. [Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible online]

Canaan

1. The fourth son of Ham, (Genesis 10:6; 1 Chronicles 1:8) the progenitor of the Phoenicians [ZIDON], and of the various nations who before the Israelite conquest people the seacoast of Palestine, and generally the while of the country westward of the Jordan. (Genesis 10:13; 1 Chronicles 1:13) (B.C. 2347.)
2. The name “Canaan” is sometimes employed for the country itself. [Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible online]



Canaanites

a word used in two senses:

1. A tribe which inhabited a particular locality of the land west of the Jordan before the conquest; and
2. The people who inhabited generally the whole of that country.

In (Genesis 10:18-20) the seats of the Canaanite tribe are given as on the seashore and in the Jordan valley; comp. (Joshua 11:3). Applied as a general name to the non-Israelite inhabitants of the land, as we have already seen was the case with "Canaan." Instances of this are, (Genesis 12:6; Numbers 21:3) The Canaanites were descendants of Canaan. Their language was very similar to the Hebrew. The Canaanites were probably given to commerce; and thus the name became probably in later times an occasional synonym for a merchant. [Smith's Dictionary of the Bible online]

Gomorrah

(submersion), one of the five "cities of the plain" or "vale of Siddim" that under the irrespective kings joined battle there with Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14:2-8) and his allies by whom they were discomfited till Abraham came to the rescue. Four out of the five were afterwards destroyed by the Lord with fire from heaven. (Genesis 19:23-29) One of them only, Zoar (or Bela; which was its original name), was spared at the request of Lot, in order that he might take refuge there. The geographical position of these cities is discussed under SODOM. [Smith's Dictionary of the Bible online]

Jordan

(the descender), the one river of Palestine, has a course of little more than 200 miles, from the roots of Anti-Lebanon to the head of the Dead Sea. (136 miles in a straight line. —Schaff.) It is the river of the "great plain" of Palestine —the "descender," if not "the river of God" in the book of Psalms, at least that of his chosen people throughout their history. There were fords over against Jericho, to which point the men of Jericho pursued the spies. (Joshua 2:7) comp. Judg 3:28 Higher up where the fords or passages of Bethbarah, where Gideon lay in wait for the Midianites, (Judges 7:24) and where the men of Gilead slew the Ephraimites. ch. (Judges 12:6) These fords undoubtedly witnessed the first recorded passage of the Jordan in the Old Testament. (Genesis 32:10) Jordan was next crossed, over against Jericho, by Joshua. (Joshua 4:12,13) From their vicinity to Jerusalem the lower fords were much used. David, it is probable, passed over them in one instance to fight the Syrians. (2 Samuel 10:17; 17:22) Thus there were two customary places at which the Jordan was fordable; and it must have been at one of these, if not at both, that baptism was afterward administered by St. John and by the disciples

of our Lord. Where our Lord was baptized is not stated expressly, but it was probably at the upper ford. These fords were rendered so much more precious in those days from two circumstances. First, it does not appear that there were then any bridges thrown over or boats regularly established on the Jordan; and secondly, because "Jordan overflowed all his banks all the time of harvest." (Joshua 3:15) The channel or bed of the river became brimful, so that the level of the water and of the banks was then the same. (Dr. Selah Merrill, in his book "Galilee in the Time of Christ" (1881), says, "Near Tarichaea, just below the point where the Jordan leaves the lake (of Galilee), there was (in Christ's time) a splendid bridge across the river, supported by ten piers." —ED.) The last feature which remains to be noticed in the scriptural account of the Jordan is its frequent mention as a boundary: "over Jordan," "this" and "the other side," or "beyond Jordan," were expressions as familiar to the Israelites as "across the water," "this" and "the other side of the Channel" are to English ears. In one sense indeed, that is, in so far as it was the eastern boundary of the land of Canaan, it was the eastern boundary of the promised land. (Numbers 34:12) The Jordan rises from several sources near Panium (Banias), and passes through the lakes of Merom (Huleh) and Gennesaret. The two principal features in its course are its descent and its windings. From its fountain heads to the Dead Sea it rushes down one continuous inclined plane, only broken by a series of rapids or precipitous falls. Between the Lake of Gennesaret and the Dead Sea there are 27 rapids. The depression of the Lake of Gennesaret below the level of the Mediterranean is 653 feet, and that of the Dead Sea 1316 feet. (The whole descent from its source to the Dead Sea is 3000 feet. Its width varies from 45 to 180 feet, and it is from 3 to 12 feet deep. -Schaff.) Its sinuosity is not so remarkable in the upper part of its course. The only tributaries to the Jordan below Gennesaret are the Yarmuk (Hieromax) and the Zerka (Jabbok). Not a single city ever crowned the banks of the Jordan. Still Bethshan and Jericho to the west, Gerasa, Pella and Gadara to the east of it were important cities, and caused a good deal of traffic between the two opposite banks. The physical features of the Ghor , through which the Jordan flows, are treated of under PALESTINE. [Smith's Dictionary of the Bible online]

Mamre

(strength, fatness) an ancient Amorite, who with his brothers, Eshcol and Aner, was in alliance with Abram, (Genesis 14:13,51) and under the shade of whose oak grove the patriarch dwelt in the interval between his residence at Bethel and at Beersheba. ch. (Genesis 13:18; 18:1) In the subsequent chapters Mamre is a mere local appellation. ch. (Genesis 23:17,19; 25:9; 49:30; 50:13) [Smith's Dictionary of the Bible online]

Negeb

nəg'ēb [הַנֶּגֶב, the dry land]. One of the main regions of Canaan, comprised in an inverted triangle, with one side along the Wadi el-Arabah; another near the Sinai Peninsula, from the Gulf of Aqabah to the vicinity of Gaza; and its base a somewhat irregular line from the coast to the Dead Sea a little N of Beer-sheba. As it lay to the S of the hill country of W Palestine, the word has come to mean “south,” and it is sometimes difficult to determine in biblical passages whether the district or the direction is denoted. Thus in Gen. 12:9; 13:1 the term is correctly rendered by “the Negeb” (so RSV), while the KJV incorrectly translated it as “the SOUTH.”

Despite the fact that the name Negeb indicates a region which has considerably less rain than the rest of the country, the district was never a desert in pre-biblical or biblical times. This may be partly due to the fact that in those times vegetation which helped hold the moisture in the soil was more abundant, and that this has been lost by the neglect of more modern times. Nelson Glueck, in his explorations in the region from 1952 on, found hundreds of sites of former settlements, indicating that the region was frequently well populated and an important area. [Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, iPreach online]



Perizzites

villagers; dwellers in the open country, the Canaanitish nation inhabiting the fertile regions south and south-west of Carmel. “They were the graziers, farmers, and peasants of the time.” They were to be driven out of the land by the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 15:20; Exodus 3:8,17; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11). They are afterwards named among the conquered tribes (Joshua 24:11). Still lingering in the land, however, they were reduced to servitude by Solomon (1 Kings 9:20). [Easton's Bible Dictionary, online]

Sodom

(burning), one of the most ancient cities of Syria. It is commonly mentioned in connection with Gomorrah, but also with Admah and Zeboim, and on one occasion — (Genesis 14:1) ... —with Bela or Zoar. Sodom was evidently the chief town in the settlement. The four are first named in the ethnological records of (Genesis 10:19) as belonging to the Canaanites. The next mention of the

name of Sodom, (Genesis 13:10-13) gives more certain indication of the position of the city. Abram and Lot are standing together between Bethel and Ai, ver. 3, taking a survey of the land around and below them. Eastward of them, and absolutely at their feet, lay the “circle of Jordan.” The whole circle was one great oasis — “a garden of Jehovah.” ver. 10. In the midst of the garden the four cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim appear to have been situated. It is necessary to notice how absolutely the cities are identified with the district. In the subsequent account of their destruction, (Genesis 19:1) ... the topographical terms are employed with all the precision which is characteristic of such early times. The mention of the Jordan is conclusive as to the situation of the district, for the Jordan ceases where it enters the Dead Sea, and can have no existence south of that point. The catastrophe by which they were destroyed is described in (Genesis 19:1) ... as a shower of brimstone and fire from Jehovah. However we may interpret the words of the earliest narrative, one thing is certain — that the lake was not one of the agents in the catastrophe. From all these passages, though much is obscure, two things seem clear:

1. That Sodom and the rest of the cities of the plain of Jordan stood on the north of the Dead Sea;
2. That neither the cities nor the district were submerged by the lake, but that the cities were overthrown and the land spoiled, and that it may still be seen in its desolate condition. When, however, we turn to more modern views, we discover a remarkable variance from these conclusions.
3. The opinion long current that the five cities were submerged in the lake, and that their remains—walls, columns and capitals—might be still discerned below the water, hardly needs refutation after the distinct statement and the constant implication of Scripture. But,

A more serious departure from the terms of the ancient history is exhibited in the prevalent opinion that the cities stood at the south end of the lake. This appears to, have been the belief of Josephus and Jerome. It seems to have been universally held by the medieval historians and pilgrims, and it is adopted by modern topographers probably without exception. There are several grounds for this belief; but the main point on which Dr. Robinson rests his argument is the situation of Zoar. (a) “Lot,” says he, “fled to Zoar, which was near to Sodom; and Zoar lay almost at the southern end of the present sea, probably in the mouth of Wady Kerak.” (b) Another consideration in favor of placing the cities at the southern end of the lake is the existence of similar names in that direction.

(c) A third argument, and perhaps the weightiest of the three, is the existence of the salt mountain at the south of the lake, and its tendency to split off in columnar masses presenting a rude resemblance to the human form. But it is by no means certain that salt does not exist at other spots round the lake. (d) A fourth and yet stronger argument is drawn from the fact that Abraham saw the smoke of the burning cities from Hebron. (e) A fifth argument is found in the numerous lime-pits found at that southern end of the Dead Sea. Robinson, Schaff, Baedeker, Lieutenant Lynch and others favor this view.—ED.) It thus appears that on the situation of Sodom no satisfactory conclusion can at present be readied: On the one hand, the narrative of Genesis seems to state positively that it lay at the northern end of the Dead Sea. On the other hand, long-continued tradition and the names of the existing spots seem to pronounce with almost equal positiveness that it was at its southern end. Of the catastrophe which destroyed the city and the district of Sodom we can hardly hope ever to form a satisfactory conception. Some catastrophe there undoubtedly was but what secondary agencies, besides fire, were employed in the accomplishment of the punishment cannot be safely determined in the almost total absence of exact scientific description of the natural features of the ground round the lake. We may suppose, however, that the actual agent in the ignition and destruction of the cities had been of the nature of a tremendous thunder-storm accompanied by a discharge of meteoric stones, (and that these set on fire the bitumen with which the soil was saturated, and which was used in building the city. And it may be that this burning out of the soil caused the plain to sink below the level of the Dead Sea, and the waters to flow over it—if indeed Sodom and its sister cities are really under the water.—ED.) The miserable fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is held up as a warning in numerous passages of the Old and New Testaments. (Mark 8:11; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:4-7) [Smith's Dictionary of the Bible online]

The definite position of Sodom is, and probably will always be, a mystery; but there can be little doubt that the plain of the Jordan was at the north side of the Dead Sea and that the cities of the plain must therefore have been situated there instead of at the southern end of the lake, as it is generally taken for granted they were. [SODOM] (But the great majority of scholars from Josephus and Eusebius to the present of the Dead Sea.) [Smith's Dictionary of the Bible online]

Zoar

(smallness), one of the most ancient cities of the land of Canaan. Its original name was BELA. (Genesis 14:2,8) It was in intimate connection with the cities of the "plain of Jordan" —Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, See also (Genesis 13:10) but not Genesis 10:19 In the general destruction of the cities of the plain Zoar was spared to afford shelter to Lot. (Genesis 19:22,23,30) It is mentioned in the account of the death of Moses as one (of the landmarks which bounded his view from Pisgah, (34:3) and it appears to have been known in the time both of Isaiah, (Isaiah 15:5) and Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 48:34) These are all the notices of Zoar contained in the Bible. It was situated in the same district with the four cities already mentioned, viz. in the "plain" or "circle" of the Jordan, and the narrative of (Genesis 19:1)... evidently implies that it was very near to Sodom. vs. (Genesis 19:15; 23:27)

Genesis 13:1-18

NASB:

1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev,^{F191} he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. 2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. 3 He went on^{F192} his journeys from the Negev^{F193} as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 And the land could not sustain^{F194} them while^{F195} dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. 7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. 9 "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."

10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley^{F196} of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere — *this* was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah — like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. 11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley^{F197} of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled^{F198} in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled^{F198} in the cities of the valley,^{F199} and moved his tents as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly^{F200} and sinners against the LORD.

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and

NRSV

1 So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb. 2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. 3 He journeyed on by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place where he had made an altar at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the land could not support both of them living together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together, 7 and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land. 8 Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen; for we are kindred. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left."

10 Lot looked about him, and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. 11 So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward; thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and

NLT

1 So they left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev — Abram with his wife and Lot and all that they owned, 2 for Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. 3 Then they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where they had camped before. 4 This was the place where Abram had built the altar, and there he again worshiped the LORD.

5 Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, was also very wealthy with sheep, cattle, and many tents. 6 But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. There were too many animals for the available pastureland. 7 So an argument broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land. 8 Then Abram talked it over with Lot. "This arguing between our herdsmen has got to stop," he said. "After all, we are close relatives! 9 I'll tell you what we'll do. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want that area over there, then I'll stay here. If you want to stay in this area, then I'll move on to another place."

10 Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 Lot chose that land for himself — the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. 12 So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain. 13 The people of this area were unusually wicked and sinned greatly against the LORD.

14 After Lot was gone, the LORD

southward and eastward and westward; **15** for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants^{F201} forever. **16**“I will make your descendants^{F202} as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants^{F202} can also be numbered. **17**“Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” **18** Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks^{F203} of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

FOOTNOTES:

F191: *Lit {sent}*
 F192: *I.e. South country*
 F193: *Lit {by his stages}*
 F194: *I.e. South country*
 F195: *Lit {bear}*
 F196: *Lit {to dwell}*
 F197: *Lit {circle}*
 F198: *Lit {circle}*
 F199: *Lit {dwelt}*
 F200: *Lit {circle}*
 F201: *Lit {wicked and sinners exceedingly}*
 F202: *Lit {seed}*
 F203: *Lit {seed}*

southward and eastward and westward; **15** for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring^{F37} forever. **16** I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. **17** Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” **18** So Abram moved his tent, and came and settled by the oaks^{F38} of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the Lord.

FOOTNOTES:

F37: *Heb [seed]*
 F38: *Or [terebinths]*

said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction. **15** I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring^{F47} as a permanent possession. **16** And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted! **17** Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you.” **18** Then Abram moved his camp to the oak grove owned by Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the LORD.

FOOTNOTES:

F47: *Hebrew seed.*

Notes:

Old Testament Library, iPreach online:

[2-7] Abraham has returned to the region of Bethel. (Regarding the hypothesis that the narrative ch. 12:10-20 was only later incorporated into the Abraham story and the complication of Abraham's route which thus came about, see above, pp. 167 f.) To understand the outward life and nature of the patriarchs it is extremely important that they not be delineated from the narratives as actual Bedouins, i.e., as nomads on camels like the Midianites or Amalekites, for example (Judg. 3:13; 6:3, 7, 33 ff.). They were, rather, nomads with small cattle, who regularly sought out tilled areas with absolutely peaceful intention in order to let their herds graze during the summer on the already harvested fields, according to amicable agreement with the permanent population. Their movements between the steppe and the sown, therefore, are determined by the law of the so-called "change of pasture". In contrast to the nomads on camels they are completely unwarlike, a feature which of course is conditioned by the slowness of their large flocks of goats and sheep. A degree of settledness is not at all incompatible with their nomadic existence. Cities do attract them, but not to settle in them by force, which would at once compel them to give up their nomadic life as shepherds; but they attract them rather because of their character as cultural centers—primarily therefore for reasons of commerce and connubium (cf. Gen. 20; 26; 34; etc.).^{ref1} The reader must connect Abraham's great wealth with the increase that he received in Egypt. The difficulties of keeping together two greatly increased herds are not hard to understand. For subsistence, one herd requires a rather large radius for movement in the harvested fields of the resident farmers in addition to being dependent on the few valuable watering places. The collision of interests in the mountainous region of Benjamin—in other districts other nomads with small cattle may have had their use of pasture—and the proposal to separate with reference to the pasture available is therefore quite true to life. [8-13] Abraham was the first to feel the unworthiness of such strife between men of the same clan, and, although he is the older, he intends to abide by Lot's prior choice. The narrative here shows Abraham in the best light. It is one of the few passages in the patriarchal history where the figure of the patriarch is also intended by the narrator to be exemplary (cf. also chs. 15:1-6; 22:1 ff.). The contrast which this picture of Abraham makes with that of the previous story is great, but the Yahwist was not acquainted with the demand for a unified psychological penetration, a psychologically credible portrayal. The traditions he used were varied in this respect and were not, of course, harmonized with one another. Verse 10 depicts simply a wonderful scene. Lot has considered the proposal, and now he "lifts up his eyes" to the commanding view. (The narrator exposes the inner psychological process of reflection and decision completely in this outward attitude of gazing, where indeed it does take place.) From Bethel one sees the entire Jordan valley as far as the southern tip of the Dead Sea where Zoar lay (cf. ch. 19:20, 25). Here and there, especially in the vicinity of Jericho, it is still richly watered even today; but the narrator considers it all before the catastrophe of Sodom to have been "like the garden of the Lord". (The twofold comparison with Paradise and with Egypt sounds surprisingly worldly and enlightened. Compare pp. 17, 29.) Lot, therefore, chooses quickly. Striking for our usually reticent narrator are the strong superlatives used to describe the beauty of the land and the wickedness of its inhabitants, as well as the broad ceremoniousness with which the fascinating impression and then the making of the decision are painted (four verses!). But the narrator wants to make a strong impression here. The unheard of beauty of the land—a fruitful land is beautiful to Palestinians—and the unheard of depravity of its inhabitants! And how quickly and naturally the man on the heights of Bethel made his choice! And afterward—as though drawn by the city—how step by step he approached the city of profound depravity! "Jordan valley" is a technical geographical term (1 Kings 7:46; Deut. 34:3, "the valley").

The narrative is the first of the Lot stories which are now significantly parallel to the Abraham stories. The intent to contrast the two in the juxtaposition of ch. 13:1-13 and vs. 14-18 is unmistakable. But at the same time our narrative serves as a kind of commentary on the following Lot stories (ch. 19:1-29). Lot escapes from Sodom; Lot settles in Zoar, moves from there into the mountains and begets Ammon and Moab (vs. 30-38). Though the units of ch. 19 are very old and were combined relatively late into a larger story, there is no original independent tradition behind ch. 13:1-10. The narrative is fictional and presupposes a connected story of Lot's fate. (For the story of Lot, cf. pp. 224 f.)

[14-17] Some exegetes, following Wellhausen, have considered the following paragraph, vs. 14-17, as a later addition. What is correct in this is only the observation that the Yahwist did not find this divine address to Abraham in the ancient tradition about Lot (see above), but that he here expanded the old traditional material according to this special theme. (Seams that occur in the coupling of different traditions are not always to be explained literally as signs of various "authors". Compare p.75.) There is no need for considering the contrast between vs. 1-13 and vs. 14-17 as the unwilling result of "one who put them together". Rather, here the narrative as a whole (vs. 1-17) reaches

its climax. Abraham is now alone, but Yahweh comes to him; and while Lot took the land that pleased him, God now says, “I will give it to you”. The summons in v. 17 originally belongs in the sphere of legal proceedings, as what is done is a symbolic legal act by which the occupation of land is recognized in law.^{ref1} Abraham chooses the south and settles by the terebinths of Mamre. Mamre has been fairly well identified with modern Râmet el-Khalil, somewhat north (two miles) of Hebron. The cultic area was excavated in 1926-1927 by P. Mader. Among the ruins were remains of a Christian basilica from the time of Constantine, surrounded by a massive rectangular wall (Temenos, 130 feet by 195 feet) of Roman stone, in which was an Arabian layout for a pool. Below that were Israelite sherds and traces of Bronze Age (thus pre-Israelite) settlement (Oriens Christianus, 1927, 333 ff.; 1928, 360 ff.). This shrine, therefore, because of its reputation and its immense sacred tradition has been a cultic attraction in Canaanite, Israelite, Roman, Byzantine, and Arab times. The shrine existed as such, according to the ancient cultic legend of Mamre, Gen. 18 (see pp. 198 ff.), prior to the Israelite-Canaanite period, while later Israel believed it was founded by Abraham. Hebron, however, was Calebite in the Israelite period (Num. 13:22; Judg. 1:20) and lay outside the later kingdom of Judah. The name Mamre is possibly non-Semitic.

The church historian Sozomen, himself a Palestinian (fifth century), describes vividly how the shrine in the early Christian era attracted to its festivals a motley throng from the immediate vicinity:

“This place, which today is called the Terebinths, lies about fifteen stadia north of Hebron. History tells that God’s son together with two angels appeared to Abraham at this place and foretold to him the birth of a son. Here during the summer the inhabitants of this place and those who live at some distance, Palestinians, Phoenicians, and Arabs, hold a famous fair once a year. Many assemble here for other reasons too, some to buy and some to sell. This festival is celebrated with a visitation in very great numbers of all men: Jews, because they boast of Abraham as the father of their people; heathen, because angels are present; Christians, because the One who was later born of a virgin and revealed to all for the salvation of man once appeared there to a devout man. Each one reveres this spot according to his cult and his religion. This place is under the open sky”.

The immediate continuation of our narrative was originally ch.15. Chapter 14 was inserted into the composition by a later hand.

Believer’s Church Bible Commentary, iPreach online:

A Tale of Conflict in the Family 13:2-18

As in the first tale (12:10–13:1), so here again the introduction and conclusion of the story tell of Abraham’s journey. In this introduction the movement is north to Bethel (13:3). In the conclusion the journey takes Abraham back south to Hebron (13:18). Bethel and Hebron were important religious and political centers for the North (Israel) and the South (Judah) before the establishment of Jerusalem. Even afterward, these two cities functioned almost as “capitals” for the South (2 Sam. 5:1; 15:7-10) and the North (1 Kings 12:29; Amos 7:13). Hence the journey framework of this episode ties Abraham to those two important sanctuaries.

13:5-7 Conflict

This introduction presents Abraham as one blessed with wealth. Lot too has prospered. But prosperity brings conflict — conflict over land for pasture. The conflict does not involve Abraham and Lot directly but those who herd their respective flocks. The last half of verse 7 seems out of place. It has nothing to do directly with the narrative. Nevertheless, like a similar remark in 12:6, the phrase *at that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land* reminds the reader that although the story concerns one family, they live in the context of many families. We are not told how the others relate to this episode, just that they exist. These “others” will become a factor in the family’s future.

13:8-13 Outcome: Separation

Abraham’s speech (13:8-9) calls for an end to strife between kinfolk and proposes a settlement: Abraham and Lot should separate, each occupying a specific territory for grazing their flocks. Abraham gives Lot the first choice. We do not have Lot’s words, just a statement of his action. Lot chooses the best land, the well-watered Jordan Valley. This choice leaves Abraham with the rocky hill country. [*Occupation: Keeper of Livestock*, p. 324.] Apparently the process of taking ownership of “all the land that the eyes could see” was not just an informal agreement between kinfolk. Such a procedure had the force of customary law (Daube, 1947:24-39).

Seemingly, Abraham acts here as a model person, one interested in peace and willing to allow the other to choose first. The narrative from 13:2-12 at least suggests that. However, in terms of the larger context of this narrative, Abraham's proposal does not look as good. Abraham manages the conflict between the herdsmen, but at a high price. Lot may choose the land he wants, but that choice permanently separates him from the carrier of blessing (Coats, 1983: 117). Genesis 13:13 foreshadows what the next two narratives portray. The separation leaves Lot joined to another group, the people of Sodom. Such an association brings nothing but trouble. Abraham's suggestion of separation as a means to handle the conflict leaves Lot victimized. In the course of the history of Abraham's people this decision will create more conflict than it resolves (Deut. 2:9-19; 23:3-4).

Abraham offers to give away the land of the promise. The narrative does not tell us whether we are to evaluate that as a generous gesture or a problematic resolution to a family quarrel. The promised land is not lost, though perhaps only because it appeared to have the most rocks and the least water.

13:14-17 Reiteration of Divine Promise

The narrative concludes with a speech by God reiterating the promise: both land and descendants. [*Promise in the Family Stories*, p.325.] The reiteration of this promise calls attention to the narrative time between promise and fulfillment. Some fulfillment has happened: Abraham's wealth. But much has not been fulfilled. The land, which he almost gave away, is shared with Canaanites and Perizzites. The ritual of walking and seeing may strengthen the promise of land with legal sanction, but it does not provide Abraham a home, not yet. Most distressing of all, Sarah and Abraham have no children.

However delayed, Abraham still carries the promise. Association with the promise and Abraham, its bearer, brings blessing. Hence this tale ends on a sad note, even if we should decide that Abraham acted wisely, perhaps even generously, toward his nephew. Separation from Abraham leaves Lot with no blessing.