

1. Sodom and Amorah: Genesis 18



Abraham Sees Sodom in Flames, watercolor by James Jacques Joseph Tissot , circa 1896-1902

1 Now the LORD had said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham is to become a
2 great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him? For I have singled him
3 out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is just and
4 right, in order that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.”

5 Then the LORD said, “The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave! I will go down
6 to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note.”
7 The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

8
9 Abraham came forward and said, “Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? What if there
10 should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the
11 innocent fifty who are in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the
12 guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

13
14 And the LORD answered, “If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole
15 place for their sake.”

16
17 Abraham spoke up, saying, “Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes: What if
18 the fifty innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?”

19
20 And He answered, “I will not destroy if I find forty-five there.”

21
22 But he spoke to Him again, and said, “What if forty should be found there?”

23
24 And He answered, “I will not do it, for the sake of the forty.” ...

25
26 And he said, “Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?”

27
28 And He answered, “I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten.”

29
30 When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

31 32 2. Bereishit Rabbah 39:6

33 R. Acha said: (Abraham argued) You have sworn that You will not bring a flood on the world, so why are you
34 being deceptive with Your oath? A flood of water You will not bring but a flood of fire You will bring?!? If so, You
35 have not fulfilled Your oath! R. Levi said: "Shall the judge of all the earth not perform justice?" (ibid). If you
36 desire the existence of the world then there cannot be judgement, but if you desire judgement, then there can be
37 no world. How can You grasp the rope from both ends?!? You want both a world and judgement. Pick one of
38 them; but if You do not relent a little, the world cannot endure.

3. The Binding of Isaac: Genesis 22



The Sacrifice of Isaac (1603) Caravaggio 1573 – 1610

1 Some time afterward, G-d put Abraham to the test. He said to him, “Abraham,” and he answered, “Here I am.”

2
3 And He said, “Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and
4 offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.”

5
6 So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac.
7 He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which G-d had told him.

8
9 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his servants,
10 “You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you.” Abraham
11 took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and
12 the two walked off together.

13
14 Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he answered, “Yes, my son.” And he said, “Here are
15 the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “G-d will see to
16 the sheep for His burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them walked on together.

17
18 They arrived at the place of which G-d had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood;
19 he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his
20 son.

21
22 Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: “Abraham! Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I
23 am.” And he said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear
24 G-d, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me.”

25
26 When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went
27 and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham named that site Adonai-
28 yireh, whence the present saying, “On the mount of the LORD there is vision.”

29
30 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I swear, the
31 LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, I will bestow My
32 blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore;
33 and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your
34 descendants, because you have obeyed My command.”