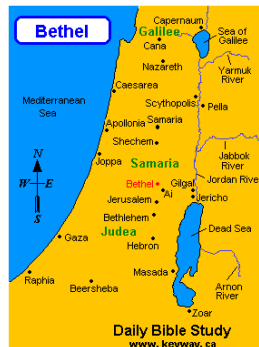


## Escaping the Lowlands

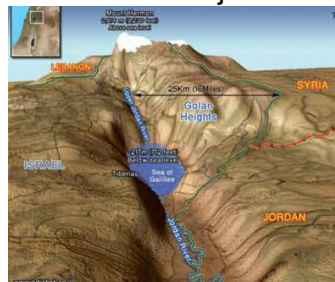
### Temporal values

**Genesis 13:8-18 HCSB** Then Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives. (9) Isn't the whole land before you? Separate from me: if *you go* to the left, I will go to the right; if *you go* to the right, I will go to the left." (10) Lot looked out and saw that the entire Jordan Valley as far as Zoar was well-watered everywhere like the LORD's garden and the land of Egypt. This was before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. (11) So Lot chose the entire Jordan Valley for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other. (12) Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot lived in the cities of the valley and set up his tent near Sodom. (13) Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning greatly against the LORD. (14) After Lot had separated from him, the LORD said to Abram, "Look from the place where you are. Look north and south, east and west, (15) for I will give you and your offspring forever all the land that you see. (16) I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if one could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted. (17) Get up and walk from one end of the land to the other, for I will give it to you." (18) So Abram moved his tent and went to live beside the oaks of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

Abraham travelled to the area between Bethel and Ai, up on the ridge to the west of the Jordan Valley, northeast of Jerusalem. To give you a general sense of the location of our story, here's a **map** with both Bethel and Ai shown.<sup>1</sup>



Now, to give you some idea of the topography involved, here's a **depiction** of the same ridge line upon which Bethel and Ai are located but just a little further north.<sup>2</sup>



In all actuality, the difference is even MORE exaggerated since the Dead Sea is the lowest body of water on the earth, and the lowest point on the earth that is not hidden by the ocean! The Dead Sea is actually 400 meters lower than the Ocean's level!

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.keyway.ca/gif/bethel.gif>

<sup>2</sup> [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_n7RlTmTdk-g/Sd8Xj0UY4BI/AAAAAAAAAu0/kVJAfF7ZzFk/s400/Golan+topographical+map.bmp](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_n7RlTmTdk-g/Sd8Xj0UY4BI/AAAAAAAAAu0/kVJAfF7ZzFk/s400/Golan+topographical+map.bmp)

So, Abraham and Lot are up on this ridge discussing the difficulties of coping with Hashem's blessings! May we all be cursed with such problems! He and Lot look down and eastward and Lot chooses to go down from the mountainous area into the lowlands. He travels east (which is always ominous biblically speaking) and out of Canaan (which is even worse) separating himself from the man who'd been told "I'll bless all those who bless you."

The overflow of blessing for Abram in Egypt had benefited Lot according to the promises, "You will be a blessing"<sup>3</sup> and "I will bless those who bless you".<sup>4</sup> Lot's decision in chap. 13 shows that separation from the patriarch led to the forfeiture of continued blessing and resulted in the opposite outcome.<sup>5</sup>

Abram advised their parting, so it is not the parting per se that caused Lot to forfeit the blessing. It was the circumstances under which Lot left that led to the forfeiture. He exhibited poor judgment by adopting a worldly, materialistic mindset. Chapter 13 indicates his disregard for the promissory land. Lot ignored Canaan for the deceptively attractive "cities of the plain."<sup>6</sup>

Abram, on the other hand, "called on the name of the LORD" (v. 4) and resided in the land of Canaan (v. 18). By granting Lot first option on the coveted Canaan, the patriarch resisted any proprietary jealousy, leaving his future in the hands of the Lord. The spiritual disparity between Lot and Abram is implied by the description of Lot's choice of the Jordan plain (vv. 10-13).

We use this true, biblical account as an allegory of two types of people. We call the larger group Lowlanders and the much smaller group **Highlanders**. Lowlanders follow the example of Lot. Highlanders consider Abraham to be their spiritual father.

- **Galatians 3:6-7 HCSB** Just as Abraham **believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, (7)** so understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons.
- **Galatians 3:29 HCSB** And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

**Highlanders choose to follow in the footsteps of their spiritual ancestor Abram** who forsook the valley life of Sodom and chose to follow God to the high city whose maker and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

**Highlanders are free citizens of that high city** (Galatians 4:26; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 21:2ff). **Our city is like no earthly city for she was designed and built by the Master Carpenter** (John 14:2-3; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22-24).

Highlanders do not get too excited about the things of this earth but instead **consider themselves mere foreign nomads, temporary residents here at best** (Hebrews 11:9, 13).

Having said that, our King demands that we

1. pray for the authorities of our host countries (1 Timothy 2:1);
2. obey the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-2; Titus 3:1);
3. pay our taxes (Matthew 22:18-21; Romans 13:7);
4. pay our debts (Romans 13:7-8);
5. and live quiet lives (1 Timothy 2:2)
6. marked by hard work (Ephesians 4:28), as well as
7. frugal living and care for the poor (Proverbs 19:17; Galatians 2:9).

**Highlanders should thus be considered model citizens by their host countries**, even while placing their first loyalty and patriotism in heaven.

---

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 12:2

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 12:3

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 19:30-38

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 13:12; 19:29

Lot, while standing on the high ridge with his uncle Abram, looked down into the valley of Sodom and chose its delights to his eventual destruction. A Lowlander is thus someone who is not heavenly minded; an unbeliever; a pagan; someone who has chosen to continue his citizenship in this world.

A Lowlander considers collecting the baubles of this world to be a priority. A Lowlander stands agape at the shenanigans of movie stars and singers. Their view is horizontal, earthly, and sensuous.

In contrast Highlanders consider most of this world's shiny things and meaningless titles and short-lived fame to be pretty much worthless.

- **Hebrews 11:24-27 HCSB** By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (25) and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. (26) For he considered reproach for the sake of the Messiah to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on the reward. (27) By faith he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for he persevered, as one who sees Him who is invisible.
- **Philippians 3:7-8 HCSB** But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. (8) More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ

The problem is that worldly things are temporal and are passing away.

- **Psalms 102:25-27 HCSB** Long ago You established the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. (26) They will perish, but You will endure; all of them will wear out like clothing. You will change them like a garment, and they will pass away. (27) But You are the same, and Your years will never end.

Temporal values can never offer real satisfaction they have cotton candy satisfaction - good for a moment, but quickly dissolving and leaving you hungry for more.

- **Luke 12:29-34 HCSB** Don't keep striving for what you should eat and what you should drink, and don't be anxious. (30) For the Gentile world eagerly seeks all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. (31) "But seek His kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. (32) Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. (33) Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. (34) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- **Mark 8:36 HCSB** For what does it benefit a man to gain the whole world yet lose his life?

We should have as our prayer that

With God as our ruler and guide, may we so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal. May we act, but not cling to the fruits of action.

This is what we call detachment. Detachment does not mean

- separating from the world in the sense of isolationism
- or withdrawing from everything
- or not caring about anything,

Detachment means being active in the world, really engaging with the world, but always in a way to serve God's purposes, not just our own. To pass through things temporal in such a manner that we lose not the things eternal means getting right into the thick of ordinary everyday life, engaging each temporal moment as it comes along, but always being attentive

to the love and compassion and justice and peace that are God's eternal ideals. What we have to do is so pass through the moment, so act in the moment without clinging to the moment, that we let God's love shine through.

## Derashot

**Value relationships over personal material gain.** Notice that Abraham was the one who was distressed over the quarreling while it does not seem to have troubled Lot in the least.

- **Proverbs 3:3-4 HCSB** Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. (4) Then you will find favor and high regard in the sight of God and man.

**Value God's will and direction even over your own common sense.** Lot set an example which has been followed by innumerable people who have reached out for what they thought was an easy gain but instead got disaster.

- **Proverbs 3:5-8 HCSB** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; (6) think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. (7) Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. (8) This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.

**Do whatever you can to stay in "Canaan" (God's Kingdom and culture) and away from traveling "east" into the world.**

- **Romans 12:2 HCSB** Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

**Allow your mind and heart to rest lightly on this world's things and instead put the Kingdom of God first in your list of priorities.**

- **Matthew 6:20-21 HCSB** But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- **Matthew 6:31-33 HCSB** So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' (32) For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. (33) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

**Develop a mindset that keeps you on the moral high ground and avoid descending into the world's lush moral quagmires.**

- **Deuteronomy 4:8-9 HCSB** And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today? (9) "Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don't forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don't slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren.

**Develop the mindset of a spiritual nomad and avoid putting down roots in the culture of this world.**

- **Hebrews 11:8-9 HCSB** By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise.
- **Hebrews 11:13 HCSB** These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth.

Study Questions:

Why are our relationships with God, our spouse and others more important than even our service to God? Luke 10:38-42

Why can't a person focus their primary attention on two things at once? Matthew 6:24

Why is it so difficult for a believer to stay focused on relationships with God and others?

If we choose to make relationships a priority in our personal lives, what will need to change?

What commitments should we make as we set priorities in our relationships?