

Genesis 19:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

Analysis

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; loo... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Sodom's Destruction emerge from this passage?
2. How should this truth about Lot's Daughters shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי	כִּי-הָזִיאוּ מִ	בַּחֲזִירָה אֲחֵר מִ
H1961	And it came to pass when they had brought them forth	H853
	H3318	abroad
that he said	Escape	for
H559	H4422	H5921
thy life	look	not behind thee
H408	H5027	H310
neither stay	thou in all the plain	to the mountain
H5975	H3605	H3603
	רְכָבֶר	בְּהַרְ
	בְּכָל	הַמְּלָטָה
	תְּעַמֵּד	פָּנִ
	lest thou be consumed	Escape
	H5595	H4422
	תְּשִׁבְתָּה:	

Additional Cross-References

Luke 9:62 (Parallel theme): And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Genesis 19:26 (Parallel theme): But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Genesis 19:22 (Parallel theme): Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

Matthew 3:7 (Parallel theme): But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Jeremiah 48:6 (Parallel theme): Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.

Genesis 13:10 (Parallel theme): And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

1 Kings 19:3 (Parallel theme): And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

Psalms 121:1 (Parallel theme): I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

1 Samuel 19:11 (Parallel theme): Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

Genesis 18:22 (Parallel theme): And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.