Torah Series - Book of Genesis

A. Chapters 17:1-19:38 – Abram Continued

Genesis 17:1-2 – Blameless at 99

- At age 99, the Lord **appears** to Abram (not just a voice) and says, "I am your God. Be pleasing before me and blameless" (cf. earlier "walk before me and be righteous").
- God promises to **establish** (secure/solidify vs. started) His prior covenant and multiply Abram exceedingly, reiterating the promises.

Genesis 17:3-5: ~~Abram~~ Abraham

- Abram falls on his face; God renames him **Abraham** ("father of a multitude/many nations") and declares he will be the father of **many nations** (not just one favored nation), with kings coming from him.

Genesis 17:6-8: Nations & Kings

- God will make Abraham exceedingly fruitful; **nations and kings** from him;
- Everlasting covenant with Abraham **and his seed** (plural) after him in their generations — to be their God; the land of Canaan as everlasting possession.
- **Who is Abraham's seed?** — not merely biological descent, but reckoned through faithfulness and firstborn status (ex: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau; ultimately through the Messiah, Christ, as the ultimate heir).
- True **sonship** means embodying Abraham's faithful image.

Genesis 17:9-14: The Snippy Snip!

- Covenant responsibilities: Abraham and his seed must **keep the covenant**.
- Every male is to be **circumcised** (including on the **eighth day**, household-born or bought slaves/foreigners) as a **sign** of the covenant — a visible mark of faithfulness, not a substitute for ongoing righteousness ("walk pleasing before God").
- **Notice**: doesn't wait for kids to grow up & make their own choice!
- A ritual "**cutting off**"/separation from the world: sin, death, and evil powers (echoing Gen 1-11 problems). Applied to the organ of **procreation** (central to ancient concerns about legacy, heirs, and meaning beyond death) — entrusting the future to God rather than self-effort or worldly systems.
- **Women** (& daughters) in the household made holy/set apart via the circumcised males (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:14)
- St. Paul links it to **baptism** (makes the other spouse/children holy; applies to both sexes); Christians are "circumcised with Christ's circumcision" (Colossians (2:9-14), tied to feast of Christ's circumcision).
- Gentile Christians **need not** pursue physical circumcision, as it would reject sufficiency in Christ (fulfilled in Baptism).
- **Includes slaves** in the household: they receive the sign, become sons/heirs and holy/set apart — mitigating/transforming the institution (parallels NT teachings on Christian slavery/master relationships).
- **Uncircumcised** males are "cut off" from the promise (wordplay).

Genesis 17:15-16: ~~Sarai~~ Sarah

- Sarai renamed **Sarah** ("princess" to "queen").
- God will bless her, give Abraham a son by her; nations and kings from him.

Genesis 17:17-21: That's a laugh!

- Abraham falls on his face and laughs (internal: "100 and 90 years old?"), suggests **Ishmael**.
- God insists on **Isaac** ("laughter") through Sarah for the everlasting covenant line; blesses Ishmael greatly (12 nations, great nation) but establishes the covenant with Isaac. Ishmael/Other Nations **not demeaned**, rather blessed in parallel.

Genesis 17:22-27: Snips ahoy!

- Abraham immediately obeys, circumcising himself (age 99), Ishmael (13), and all males in his house that very day.

Genesis 18:1 – God Appears

- God (Yahweh) **appears** to Abraham at the oak of Mamre at noon while Abraham sits at his tent door. This is one of several theophanies in Genesis; the pattern is that key episodes begin with God appearing to Abraham.

Genesis 18:2-8 – Huge Hospitality

- Abraham sees three men, runs to greet them, bows, and offers **lavish hospitality** (water to wash feet, rest under the tree, bread/cakes, a tender calf, butter, and milk).
- Calf is lavish. Bread is lavish: 3 'seahs' is like 25-50 modern sandwich loaves of Bread!
- He stands and serves them as they eat. This is a major act of **sacrifice** and kindness (killing a valuable young calf). The three speak with one voice ("**they said**").
- The three men (God + two angels) serve as an ***image/icon*** of the Holy Trinity (not literally the Trinity in human form). This is the basis for St. Andrei Rublev's canonical Holy Trinity icon.

Genesis 18:9-15 – Sarah will conceive!

- One of the three (identified as the Lord/Yahweh) asks about Sarah, reaffirms she will have a son.
- Sarah **laughs** inwardly (doubting due to their ages). Yahweh knows her thoughts and confronts her; she denies it out of fear.
- Parallel to Christ in the Gospels knowing and responding to people's **inner thoughts**, showing the same Person (prefiguring the Incarnation).
- **Christological connections**: This bodily appearance of God (eating, having feet washed, walking/talking) points to Christ as the visible Yahweh.
- OT **theophanies** are understood in the NT as appearances of the **pre-incarnate Christ** (ex: John 1:18; Christ eating post-resurrection). Gospel writers subtly identify Jesus with the God of the OT.

Genesis 18:16-21 – Showdown at Sodom

- The men head toward Sodom/Gomorrah; Abraham escorts them. Yahweh decides to reveal His plan to Abraham (because of the covenant and Abraham's role in teaching righteousness).
- **Outcry** against Sodom and Gomorrah's great sins has reached God (from the victims of sin, much like Abel's blood crying out from the ground).
- He will "go down" to see (echoing **Tower of Babel** language). Sins are many and serious (not just one issue); destruction is already decided, with later events as examples.

Genesis 18:22-33 – Abraham's Intercession

- Abraham **pleads** that the righteous not be destroyed with the wicked, bargaining down from 50 to 10 righteous people for whose sake God would spare the whole city. God agrees each time.
- This highlights God's justice (vs. 25 "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?") and mercy.
- Tension between God's **mercy** & God's **judgment** (ending evil). Time to repent & heal relationships. God spares or delays judgment on wicked places for the sake of even a small righteous remnant ("salt of the earth" principle).
- Judgment **ends unrepentant evil** (not vengeful torture) when it reaches a point of intolerable harm (analogies to stopping severe evil today).
- Lot is called "righteous Lot" but is compromised; he will be rescued separately (foreshadowing ch. 19).

Genesis 19:1-3 – 'Lots' of Hospitality

- Lot is sitting in the gate of Sodom (a position of some status/judgment). He sees the two angels, rises, bows with his face to the ground (mirroring Abraham's hospitality), and urgently presses them to stay at his house rather than in the square. He prepares a feast with unleavened bread.
- **Contrast with Abraham**: Both show hospitality, but Abraham lives nomadically outside the city (in a tent), while Lot has become settled/compromised within the wicked city. This highlights themes of civilization/cities in Genesis and the dangers of compromise.
- Emphasizes hospitality vs. extreme inhospitality/wickedness

Genesis 19:4-11 – Iniquity Abounds Everywhere!

- The men of Sodom surround the house, demanding the visitors for **sexual abuse** ("that we may know them").
- Lot offers his two virgin daughters instead - a shocking and sinful offer! This illustrates the **extreme hospitality** of Lot. He has no sons, future livelihood/well-being rests on dowries. Non-virgins can't be married off. Lot is sacrificing his own future stability with this odd gesture to protect these two strangers.
- The mob rejects this and presses in. The angels intervene, strike the men with blindness, and pull Lot inside. These deranged/demonic people continue to try to find the door, despite being blind! (You'd expect them to runoff!)

Genesis 19:12-14 – Get outta Dodge!

- Angels warn Lot to flee with his family because God will destroy the city.
- Lot warns his sons-in-law (betrothed), but they think he is joking and refuse to leave.

Genesis 19:15-23 – Do not look back!

- At dawn, angels urge Lot, his wife, and daughters to flee.
- Lot lingers/hesitates; angels seize them and lead them out. Lot pleads to go to nearby Zoar (‘*to flee’)* instead of the mountains; this is granted (“I have shown you this great mercy”).

Genesis 19:24-26 – Pass the salt!

- Yahweh rains brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah (from Yahweh out of heaven) destroying & cutting off the iniquity
- Lot’s wife looks back and becomes a **pillar of salt** — a warning against attachment to/lingering in wickedness/returning to it. (Cf. Israel after the Exodus, longing to go back to Egypt for garlic & meat pots vs. freedom from slavery!)
- Proverbs 26:11 “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

Genesis 19:27-29 – Evil is destroyed by fire

- God’s wrath: blazing inferno
- Abraham sees the smoke from afar.
- God remembers Abraham and rescues Lot (highlighting the power of intercession and covenant relationship).

Genesis 19:30-38 – Brought to you by tonight’s sponsor, Incest!

- Lot and daughters settle in a cave - thinking “this is the end of the world!”
- Fearing no men left, the daughters get Lot drunk on successive nights and conceive by him. This is a carryover from growing up in sin-city. The girls don’t have a strong moral compass!
- They bear **Moab** (ancestor of Moabites) and **Ben-ammi** (ancestor of Ammonites).
- This is presented as the **wrong kind of legacy** stemming from compromise and desperation. (// Abraham & Hagar vs. Abraham & Sarah)
