

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 13

This chapter gives an account of the return of Abram from Egypt to the land of Canaan, and to the same place in it he had been before, (^{<0130>}Genesis 13:1-4) and of a strife between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot, and the occasion of it, (^{<0135>}Genesis 13:5-7) which was composed by the prudent proposal of Abram, (^{<0138>}Genesis 13:8,9) upon which they parted; Abram continued in Canaan, and Lot chose the plain of Jordan, and dwelt near Sodom, a place infamous for wickedness, (^{<0130>}Genesis 13:10-13) after which the Lord renewed to Abram the grant of the land of Canaan to him, and to his seed, (^{<0134>}Genesis 13:14-17) and then he removed to the plain of Mamre in Hebron, and there set up the worship of God, (^{<0138>}Genesis 13:18).

Ver. 1. *And Abram went up out of Egypt*, etc.] That country lying low, and so more easy to be watered by the river Nile, as it was, and Canaan being higher; whither he went, but not till the famine in Canaan ceased: he went out of Egypt, as the Jewish ^{f923}chronologers say, after he had been there three months; but Artapanus ^{f924}an Heathen writer, says, he stayed there twenty years:

he and his wife, and all that he had; servants and cattle:

and Lot with him: from whence it is clear that he went down with him into Egypt, and it is highly probable had great respect and favour shown him on account of his relation to Abram and Sarai; for it appears by what follows, that he was become very rich: and they all went up

into the south; into the southern part of the land of Canaan, for otherwise they came to the north; for as Egypt lay south with respect to Canaan, Canaan was north from Egypt; but they journeyed to that part of that land which was commonly called the south, either Negeb, as here, or Daroma; (see Gill on "^{<3007>}Zechariah 7:7").

Ver. 2. *And Abram was very rich*, etc.] He was rich in spiritual things, in faith, and in all other graces, and was an heir of the kingdom of heaven;

and in temporal things, as it sometimes is the lot of good men to be, though but rarely, at least to be exceeding rich, as Abram was; or “very heavy”,^{f925}, as the word signifies, he was loaded with wealth and riches, and sometimes an abundance of riches are a burden to a man, and, instead of making him more easy, create him more trouble; and, as we may observe presently, were the occasion of much trouble to Abram and Lot. Abram’s riches lay

in cattle, in silver, and in gold; cattle are mentioned first, as being the principal part of the riches of men in those days, such as sheep and oxen, he and she asses and camels, (see ⁻⁰¹²⁶Genesis 12:16) and besides these he had great quantities of silver and gold: the Jews say^{f926} he coined money in his own name, and that his coin had on one side an old man and an old woman, and on the other side a young man and a young woman. His riches no doubt were greatly increased by the gifts and presents he received from the king of Egypt during his stay there.

Ver. 3. *And he went on in his journeys from the south*, etc.] He took the same tour, went the same road, stopping at the same resting places, as when he went down to Egypt; having learned, as Jarchi observes, the way of the earth, that a man should not change his host. Though some, as Ben Gersom, understand it of his taking his journeys as were suitable for his cattle, as they were able to bear them, and not overdrive them, lest he should kill them, but made short stages, and frequently stopped and rested. And thus he went on through the southern part of the land, until he came

even to Bethel; as it was afterwards called, though now Luz, (⁻⁰¹²⁸Genesis 28:19)

unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning; when he first came into the land of Canaan, to a mountain

between Bethel and Hai; afterwards called Mount Ephraim, and was four miles from Jerusalem on the north^{f927}; (see ⁻⁰¹²⁸Genesis 12:8).

Ver. 4. *Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first*, etc.] When he first came to that place, and before he went down to Egypt: it is not said he came to the altar, but “to the place”, where it had stood, for it seems now to have been demolished, either having fallen of itself, being made of earth, or had been destroyed by the Canaanites, since Abram left it; or perhaps it might be pulled down by Abram himself before he went from thence, that it might not be used and polluted by the idolatrous Canaanites.

And there Abram called on the name of the Lord; prayed unto him, and gave him thanks for the preservation of him and his wife in Egypt; for the support of himself and his family there during the famine in Canaan; for the increase of his worldly substance, and for the protection of him, and all that belonged to him, in his journey from Egypt thither; and for all the instances of his grace, and the rich experiences of his goodness he had favoured him with; (see Gill on “^{Q118}Genesis 12:8”) where the same form of expression is used.

Ver. 5. *And Lot also, which went with Abram*, etc.] into Egypt, and was now come back with him;

had flocks, and herds, and tents; flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle, of oxen, asses and camels, and tents for himself and his servants to dwell in, and put his substance in.

Ver. 6. *And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together*, etc.] That part of the country where Abram and Lot were could not afford them room enough for their several tents; or however could not furnish them with sufficient pasturage for their flocks and herds, they were so numerous; at least could not do it so as to be contiguous to each other, that there was a necessity of one of them going further off:

for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together; we have before an account of the substance of each of them, how great it was; and here now is noted an inconvenience which arises from a large increase of riches, that relations and friends are obliged to part, and cannot dwell together; what one would think would make them more comfortable together, is the cause and occasion of their separation.

Ver. 7. *And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle*, etc.] Not between the two masters, but between their servants, their upper servants, that had the care of their herds to feed them, and water them; and it is very probable their strife was about pasturage and watering places, the one endeavouring to get them from the other, or to get the best; which is much more likely than what Jarchi suggests, that the herdmen of Lot were wicked men, and fed their cattle in the fields of others, and the herdmen of Abram reproved them for their robbery; but they said, the land is given of Abram, and he hath no heir, but Lot is his heir, and what robbery is this? and to this sense are the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem:

and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land; which observation is made by Moses to point to a reason why they could not both of them have a sufficiency for their large flocks and herds, because the country was in the possession of others; and though there was to spare, yet not enough for them both. The Canaanite, though it was a general name for the people of the whole land, yet was given to a particular family in it, and was derived from their first founder Canaan, the son of Ham; the Perizzite was another family or tribe of the same nation, who had their name from *zwrp*, “a village”; these being Pagans or villagers, living in huts, or houses, or tents scattered up and down in the fields, and were a rough, inhuman, and unsociable sort of people, and therefore it could not be expected that they would oblige them with much pasturage and water for their flocks: and besides, this may be remarked, partly to show the danger that Abram and Lot were in through the dissension of their herdsmen, since those people that were so nigh might take the advantage of their quarrels among themselves, and fall upon them both, and destroy them, and therefore a reconciliation was necessary; and partly to observe the reproach that was like to come upon them, and upon the true religion, for their sakes, should they differ among themselves, which such sort of men would gladly catch at, and improve against them.

Ver. 8. *And Abram said unto Lot,* etc.] Being either an ear witness himself of the contentions of their servants, or having it reported to him by credible persons, he applied himself to Lot, in order to make peace, being a wise and good man; and though he was senior in years, and superior in substance, and higher in the class of relation, and upon all accounts the greatest man, yet he makes the proposal first, and lays a scheme before Lot for their future friendship, and to prevent quarrels, and the mischievous consequences of them:

let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee; there had been none yet, but it was very likely there would, if the dissension should go on between their servants; they could not well avoid interesting themselves in it, when it related to their respective properties; and there must be a right and wrong in such cases to be looked into and adjusted, which might occasion a difference between them; and this Abram was desirous of preventing, and therefore bespeaks his kinsman in this loving, affectionate, and condescending language:

and [or] between my herdmen and thy herdmen; as he understood there was, and which, if not timely put an end to, might be of bad consequence to them both, especially as to their peace and comfort, giving this excellent reason to enforce his request:

for we [be] brethren; or “men brethren we [be]”^{f928}; we are men, let us act like such, the rational and humane part; they were brethren being men, so by nature all are brethren; by natural relation, Lot being the son of his brother Haran; brethren in religion, of the same faith in the one true and living God, and worshippers of him; and therefore on all accounts, by the ties of nature, relation, and religion, they were obliged to seek and cultivate peace and love.

Ver. 9. [*Is not the whole land before thee?* etc.] Signifying, that though there were not room and convenience for them both in that part of the country in which they were, yet there were in other parts; and though the land was given to Abram, he did not desire Lot to depart out of it; nay, he sets it all before him to choose what part he would dwell in, which was great condescension in him:

separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; not that he was weary of his company and fellowship with him, but, as things were circumstanced, a separation was necessary for the subsistence of their herds and flocks, and for the peace and comfort of their respective families; nor did he desire him to go out of the land, or be so far from him, that he could be of no advantage to him; but though separate, yet so near him as to give him help and assistance, as there might be occasion for it, and as there was some time after, which appears from the history of the following chapter.

If [thou wilt take] the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if [thou depart] to the right hand, then I will go to the left; or as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan are,

“if thou wilt go to the north, I will go to the south, or if thou wilt go to the south, I will go to the north:”

for when a man stands with his face to the east, the principal part, the north is on his left hand, and the south on his right; and this was an usual way of speaking in the eastern countries; but they were not, as Grotius observes, Aristotelians, who make the east the right hand, and the west the left. This was an instance of the peaceable disposition of Abram, and of his humility and condescension to give his nephew leave, who was in all respects

inferior to him, to make his choice, to go which way he would, and take what part of the country he pleased.

Ver. 10. *And Lot lifted up his eyes*, etc.] He immediately fell in with Abram's proposal, but had not the ingenuity to return back the choice to Abram which he gave him, but took the advantage of it; nor did he show any uneasiness or unwillingness to part from Abram, though so near a relation, and so wise and good a man, and by whose means greatly he had obtained his riches; but without giving himself any concern about this, he at once cast about in his mind where to make his choice; he considered within himself which was the best part of the country, and most convenient for his flocks and herds, and where he was most likely to increase his substance; for this phrase chiefly has respect to the eyes of the understanding, he made use of, consulted with himself with his rational powers what was fittest to be done; unless we can suppose him situated on some considerable eminence, from whence he could have a view of the whole country he made choice of, as follows:

and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it [was] well watered every where; a large plain, full of rich pasturage, which had its name from the river Jordan, which by various windings and turnings ran through it, and which at harvest time overflowed its banks, and greatly contributed to the richness of the soil:

before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah: as he afterwards did by fire from heaven, and then that part of the plain on which those cities stood was turned into a sulphurous lake:

[even] as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt; as any most excellent garden that is full of plants and trees, well watered, and well cultivated, and taken care of; as things most excellent are sometimes expressed by having the name of God, or the Lord, added to them, as the "cedars of God", etc. or as the garden of Eden, which was planted by the Lord, abounding with all kind of trees, and was well watered by a river running through it: and some think that the plain of Jordan, and the parts thereabout, were the real garden of Eden; wherefore one learned^{f929} man takes the "as" here not to be a note of similitude, but of reality, and not merely comparative but causal, giving a reason why it was so watered, being the garden God; so that the plain was not like unto, but really was the garden of Eden: and another observes^{f930}, that the words should be rendered, "so was the garden of the Lord, as the land of Egypt", and that

the repetition of the similitude only makes one comparison, and not two; not that the plain of Jordan is first compared with the garden of the Lord, and then with the land of Egypt; but the plain of Jordan, or garden of the Lord, is only compared with the land of Egypt; and with that undoubtedly it is compared, it being once a year overflowed by the river Jordan, as the land of Egypt was with the Nile, and was a most delightful and fruitful spot like that:

as thou comest unto Zoar; which is not to be connected with the land of Egypt, for Zoar was at a great distance from Egypt, but with the plain of Jordan, well watered everywhere till you come to Zoar, at the skirts of it, and which is by an anticipation called Zoar; for at this time, when Abram and Lot parted, it was called Bela, and afterwards, on another account, had the name of Zoar; (see ^{<014P>}Genesis 14:2 19:20,22).

Ver. 11. *Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan*, etc.] Because of its good pasturage, and because of the plenty of water there; the want of both which was the inconvenience he had laboured under, and had occasioned the strife between his and Abram's servants:

and Lot journeyed east, or "eastward"; for the plain of Jordan, and that part of the land on which Sodom and Gomorrah stood, were to the east of Bethel: the phrase is by some rendered "from the east"^{f931}, and the particle used most commonly so signifies; and Jarchi observes, that he journeyed from east to west; and Aben Ezra says, that Sodom was at the west of Bethel, in which he is most certainly wrong, for it was most clearly in the eastern part of the land; wherefore others, that follow this version, interpret it, that he went from the east of Bethel, or he went into that country situated at the east with respect to the land of Canaan; but it is best to render it as we do, east or eastward, to or towards the east^{f932}:

and they separated themselves the one from the other; that is, Abram and Lot, they parted good friends by consent; and the one went with his family, flocks, and herds, to one place, and settled there; and the other in another place, and so further animosities and contentions were prevented.

Ver. 12. *Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan*, etc.] In that part of the land strictly so called, where the family of the Canaanites had their abode; for otherwise taking Canaan in a more general sense, the plain of Jordan, and cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, were in the land of Canaan.

And Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain; in the neighbourhood of them, or near those cities, which were built on the plain of Jordan, for he could not dwell in more than one, if in one; for it looks as if at his first settlement he did not dwell in any, but near them all, especially Sodom: since it follows,

and pitched [his] tent toward Sodom, or “even unto Sodom”^{f933}; and it may be rendered, as it is by some, “he pitched his tents”^{f934}, for himself, his family, and his servants, his shepherds and his herdsmen, which reached unto Sodom, and where he afterwards dwelt, at least at the gate of it.

Ver. 13. *But the men of Sodom [were] wicked*, etc.] Which either he knew not, and so ignorantly made this bad choice, to take up his abode among such very wicked men, which occasioned a great deal of grief, trouble, and vexation to him; or if he knew it, the pleasing prospect of convenience for his cattle, and of enriching himself, was a temptation to him, and prevailed upon him to take such a step; and so Jarchi interprets it, “although” they were so, Lot was not restrained from dwelling among them:

and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; exceeding great sinners, guilty of the most notorious crimes, and addicted to the most scandalous and unnatural lusts that can be thought of; and these they committed openly and publicly in the sight of God, in the most daring and impudent manner, and in defiance of him, without any fear or shame. The Targum of Jonathan reckons up many of their sins, as defrauding of one another in their substance, sinning in their bodies, incest, unclean copulation, shedding of innocent blood, worshipping of idols, and rebelling against the name of the Lord; (see ^{218D}Isaiah 3:9 ^{266D}Ezekiel 16:49).

Ver. 14. *And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him*, etc.] The Lord appeared unto him as he had before, and with an articulate voice spoke unto him, to comfort him upon the separation of his kinsman from him, and to renew the grant of the land of Canaan to him and his seed, and to assure him, that though Lot had chosen the most delightful and fruitful part of the country, yet it should not be an inheritance to him and his posterity, but the whole land should be Abraham’s and his seed’s.

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art; being upon Mount Ephraim, between Bethel and Hai, (see ^{012B}Genesis 12:8 13:3); from whence his view of the land might be extended very far:

northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; the north of the land of Canaan was Mount Lebanon, the south of it Edom or Idumea, the

east the plain and river of Jordan, the west the Mediterranean sea; and the word for “westward” here is “to the sea”¹⁹³⁵; northward of it was Babylon, southward Egypt, eastward Arabia, and westward the Mediterranean sea.

Ver. 15. *For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it*, etc.] Not only so much of it as his eye could reach, but all of it, as far as it went, which way soever he looked; and this he gave him to sojourn in now where he pleased, and for his posterity to dwell in hereafter; he gave him the title to it now, and to them the possession of it for future times:

and to thy seed for ever; the meaning is, that he gave it to his posterity to be enjoyed by them until the Messiah came, when a new world would begin; and which Abram in person shall enjoy, with all his spiritual seed, after the resurrection, when that part of the earth will be renewed, as the rest; and where particularly Christ will make his personal appearance and residence, the principal seed of Abram, and will reign a thousand years; *see Gill* “¹⁹³⁶*Matthew 22:32*”; besides, this may be typical of the heavenly Canaan given to Abram, and all his spiritual seed, and which shall be enjoyed by them for evermore.

Ver. 16. *And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth*, etc.] An hyperbolic expression denoting the great multitude of Abram’s posterity, as they were in the days of Solomon, and as they will be in the latter day; and especially as this may respect all the spiritual seed of Abram, Jews and Gentiles, and as they will be in the spiritual reign of Christ, (see ¹⁹³⁷Hosea 1:10,11);

so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, [then] shall thy seed be numbered; but as it is impossible to do the one, so the other is not practicable, (see ¹⁹³⁸Numbers 23:10).

Ver. 17. *Arise, walk through the land*, etc.] And take a survey of it, and see what a land it is, how good and how large, and take possession of it for himself and his, though he was only to be a sojourner in it; and so the Targum of Jonathan adds, and making in it a possession, which in civil law was done by walking:

in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; the extent of it is variously settled by geographers; some giving it no more than about one hundred and seventy or eighty miles in length, from north to south, and about one hundred and forty in breadth from east to west, where broadest, as it is towards the south, and but about seventy where narrowest, as it is towards

the north: but it is observed ^{f936} from the latest and most accurate maps, that it appears to extend near two hundred miles in length, and about eighty in breadth about the middle, and ten or fifteen more or less where it widens or shrinks:

for I will give it unto thee; that is, to his seed, the whole of it, in its utmost extent, as to length and breadth; which if he pleased for his own satisfaction he might take a tour through, whereby he would be a judge what was bestowed on him and his

Ver. 18. *Then Abram removed [his] tent*, etc.] From the mountain between Bethel and Hai, (^{<0133>}Genesis 13:3);

and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, or “in the oaks of Mamre” ^{f937}; in a grove of oaks there, as being shady and pleasant to dwell among or under, and not through any superstitious regard to such trees and places where they grew; which has obtained since among the Heathens, and particularly among the Druids, who have their name from thence. Indeed such superstitions might take their rise from hence, being improved and abused to such purposes; and both Jerom ^{f938} and Sozomen ^{f939} speak of the oak of Abram being there in the times of Constantine, and greatly resorted to, and had in great veneration; and they and others make mention of a turpentine tree, which it is pretended sprung from a walking stick of one of the angels that appeared to Abram at this place, greatly regarded in a superstitious way by all sorts of persons: this plain or grove of oaks, here spoken of, was called after a man whose name was Mamre, an Amorite, a friend and confederate of Abram:

which [is] in Hebron; or near it, an ancient city built seven years before Zoan or Tanis in Egypt, (^{<0132>}Numbers 13:22); it was first called Kirjath Arbab, but, in the times of Moses, Hebron, (^{<0212>}Genesis 23:2). The place they call the Turpentine, from the tree that grows there, according to Sozomen ^{f940}, was fifteen furlongs distant from Hebron to the south; but Josephus ^{f941} says it was but six furlongs, or three quarters of a mile; who speaking of Hebron says,

“the inhabitants of it say, that it is not only more ancient than the cities of that country, but than Memphis in Egypt, and is reckoned to be of 2300 years standing: they report, that it was the habitation of Abram, the ancestor of the Jews, after he came out of Mesopotamia, and that from hence his children descended into

Egypt, whose monuments are now shown in this little city, made of beautiful marble, and elegantly wrought; and there is shown, six furlongs from it, a large turpentine tree, which they say remained from the creation to that time.”

A certain traveller^{f942} tells us, that the valley of Mamre was about half a mile from old Hebron; from Bethel, whence Abram removed to Mamre, according to Sir Walter Raleigh^{f943}, was about twenty four miles; but Bunting^{f944} makes it thirty two:

and built there an altar unto the Lord; and gave thanks for the prevention of strife between Lot and him, and for the renewal of the grant of the land of Canaan to him and his seed; and performed all acts of religious worship, which the building of an altar is expressive of.