

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 18

Another appearance of God to Abraham is here recorded; three persons are seen by him in an human form, whom he kindly invites to stop with him, and generously entertains them, (~~0180E~~Genesis 18:1-8); they inquire concerning Sarah his wife, and one of them renews the promise of her bearing a son to him, which occasions laughter in her, for which she is reproved, (~~0180D~~Genesis 18:9-15); upon their departure the Lord thought fit, for reasons given, to make known to Abraham his intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, (~~0180G~~Genesis 18:16-22); when Abraham intercedes for the preservation of those cities in a most importunate and affectionate manner, (~~0180C~~Genesis 18:23-33).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre*, etc.] That is, to Abraham; and very likely this appearance of God was quickly after the affair of the circumcision, to show his approbation of his ready obedience to his command; and at this time he was in the plains, or at the oaks of Mamre, the oaken grove there, as has been observed on (~~0183B~~Genesis 13:18); and which seems to be the best rendering of the words, since in (~~0180F~~Genesis 18:4,8); mention is made of a tree to sit and stand under; and Abraham might choose this place for his habitation, because of the shadiness of it, in those hot countries:

and he sat in the tent door, in the heat of the day; partly to cool and refresh himself, and partly to observe if any passengers passed by, to invite them in; this being a time of day when such needed refreshment, and it was proper for them to lie by a while, and not proceed on their journey until it was cooler: or rather to or “near” the tent door, as Noldius^{f1110}, or before it, without or under the shade of the tree, after mentioned.

Ver. 2. *And he lifted up his eyes and looked*, etc.] To see if he could observe any passengers coming that way:

and, lo, three men stood by him; having perhaps descended at once from heaven upon the spot near where Abraham sat; for these, whoever they were, appeared in an human form, and they were took by Abraham at first

sight to be men, and as such he treated them: some have taken these to be the three divine Persons, as some of the ancients; of which opinion was Dr. Lightfoot, who expressly says ^{f1111},

“three months after this, (i.e. the institution of the circumcision,) the three Persons in the Trinity dine with Abraham, and foretell the birth of Isaac; again, the Son and the Holy Ghost go down to Sodom, but the first Person in the Trinity stayeth with Abraham”

and elsewhere ^{f1112},

“the three Persons in the Trinity, in the shape of three men, appear to Abraham and dine with him, and eat the first flesh mentioned eaten in all the Scripture.”

But to this may be objected, that the Father and the Holy Spirit are never said to appear in an human form, (see ~~<REV>~~John 5:37); or are ever called angels, as these are, (~~<GEN>~~Genesis 19:1); but they rather seem to be angels, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem call them, in the likeness of men, who were sent on three messages, as they suggest; one to bring the news of Sarah’s bearing Isaac; the other to deliver Lot; and the third to overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah; which is a much better sense than that of Ben Gersom, who takes them to be three prophets, and mentions the names of two of them, Shem and Heber; for two of these are expressly called angels, (~~<GEN>~~Genesis 19:1); and the apostle seems to refer to this history, (~~<HEB>~~Hebrews 13:2); in the Talmud ^{f1113} they are said to be Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael: the truth of the matter seems to be this, that one of them was the son of God in an human form, that chiefly conversed with Abraham, and who rained from heaven brimstone on Sodom; and the other two were angels in the like form that accompanied him in that expedition:

and when he saw [them], he ran to meet them from the tent door; for, though they are before said to stand “by him”, it must be understood of their being near him, but at some little distance; and as soon as he saw them, he did not stay for their coming up to him, but, to show how ready he was to entertain them, he arises from his seat at the tent door and ran to meet them, and gave them an hearty welcome to what he would provide for them:

and bowed himself toward the ground; not in a way of religious adoration, for, had he took them for angels, he could not have done that, and he knew not as yet that one of them was Jehovah; but in a civil manner, as was the

custom of those countries when in the presence of, or when they received? great personages, and such, by their look and habit, Abraham took these to be.

Ver. 3. *And said, my Lord*, etc.] He addressed himself to one of them who appeared to him to be the greatest and most honourable, either by the appearance of his countenance, or by his dress, or by the situation in which he was between the other two, and by their carriage and behaviour to him:

if now I have found favour in thy sight; signifying he should esteem it an honour done him, that he and his companions would vouchsafe to stop and refresh themselves:

pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant; they might seem, by some motion they made, as if they were going another way, and declined turning in to him.

Ver. 4. *Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet*, etc.] Which was very refreshing to travellers in hot countries, who walked barefoot or in sandals; and this he proposes to be done by one of his servants, whose business it was, only desires they would give him leave to order it, (^{Q254}1 Samuel 25:41); and so it was usual in other countries, and in later times, for servants to fetch water to wash the hands and feet of guests ^{f1114}:

and rest yourselves under the tree; before the tent door, under which doubtless were seats to sit down upon, where they might rest their weary limbs; it is very probable this was an oak tree, and which, and a turpentine tree the ancient writers speak of, continued unto the times of Constantine, (see Gill on ^{Q138}Genesis 13:18"); and the Jewish writers say ^{f1115}, that now near the city (Hebron), between the vineyards, are the oaks of Mamre, where is the house of Abraham our father, on whom be peace, and the tree under which the angels ate, and the stone on which he (Abraham) sat when he was circumcised.

Ver. 5. *And I will fetch a morsel of bread*, etc.] A piece or a loaf of bread, as De Dieu shows the word signifies; bread being put for all the necessaries of life:

and comfort ye your hearts; eat to refresh your spirits and renew your strength, that ye may be able to pursue your journey: and

after that ye shall pass on your way; I will retard you no longer:

for therefore are ye come to your servant; not that he thought they came this way on purpose to take some refreshment with him, but so it was ordered by the providence of God; and since it was, he desires that they would accept of his invitation:

and they said, so do as thou hast said; they agreed to it, that water should be fetched to wash their feet, and food for them to eat.

Ver. 6. *And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah*, etc.] In order to acquaint her with his guests, and to give proper instructions for providing food for them; and this he hastened to do, being hearty in the entertainment of them, and that he might not keep them too long from their journey:

and said, to Sarah his wife,

make ready quickly three measures of fine meal; which was ready sifted from the bran, and was the finest flour that was in the house, and only wanted to be mixed and kneaded and made up into cakes; and he ordered three measures or seahs of them, each of which held more than our peck, and all three made an ephah or bushel, being willing to have enough, and to make a generous entertainment for them; this he enjoined Sarah to do, but not of herself, but by her maids, and no doubt, for quicker dispatch, she might assist herself, wherefore it follows:

knead [it], and make cakes upon the hearth; after the fine flour was made dough and kneaded, it was made into round cakes, and these were put upon an hearth made hot, and then covered with hot embers, by which means they were soon baked and fit to eat; this was done “upon hot stones”^{f1116}; and a traveller^{f1117} into those parts some years ago reports, that, passing through the deserts of Arabia, when they chose to eat new bread, instead of, or for want of biscuits, they made a paste of flour and water, and wrought it into broad cakes about the thickness of a finger, and put them in a hot place on the ground, heated on purpose by fire, and covered them with ashes and coals, and turned them several times until they were enough, and that these cakes were savoury and good to eat: some of the Arabians, he says: have in their tents stones or copper plates, made on purpose to bake them, and gives^{f1118} an instance of a woman they met with in a country lying between Mesopotamia and Media, making such cakes for them in the same manner.

Ver. 7. *And Abraham ran unto the herd*, etc.] While Sarah and her maids were kneading the dough and making the cakes:

and fetched a calf tender and good; a fine fat calf, which was reckoned very delicious food, and much in use with the ancients^{f1119} and generally made a part in any grand entertainment, and was accounted fit for a king, (see ~~1033~~ 1 Samuel 28:24,25 ~~4153~~ Luke 15:23):

and gave [it] unto a young man: one of his servants, to kill and dress as soon as possible; Jarchi says this was Ishmael, whom he trained up to such service:

and he hasted to dress it; the young man made all the haste he could to get it ready, according to the orders of Abraham.

Ver. 8. *And he took butter and milk*, etc.] Jarchi says, it was the fat of the milk gathered from the top of it, he means cream, and is different both from butter and from milk: this was either Abraham himself, who took and brought these, as Sarah or her maidens might bring the cakes when baked; or else Abraham's young man, since it follows:

and the calf which he had dressed; either the whole of it, or some principal parts of it, reckoned the finest and choicest; though by what follows it seems to be Abraham himself, who may be said to dress the calf, it being done by his orders:

and set [it] before them; a table being placed under the tree, he set, or ordered to be set, all those provisions before the three men, to feed upon, the cakes and butter, the milk and fatted calf:

and he stood by them under the tree; not only to bid them welcome, but to minister to them; nor will this seem strange, or that the above several things were chiefly done by Abraham and Sarah, when it is observed that the greatest personages in the eastern countries, in early times, used to perform such services, and still do to this day, as a late traveller^{f1120} informs us:

“it is here (says he) no disgrace for persons of the highest character to busy themselves in what we should reckon menial employments; the greatest prince assists in the most laborious actions of husbandry; neither is he ashamed to fetch a lamb from his herd and kill it, while the princess his wife is impatient till she has prepared

her fire and her kettle to seethe and dress it: the custom that still continues of walking either barefoot or with slippers requires the ancient compliment of bringing water upon the arrival of a stranger to wash his feet; and who is the person that presents himself first to do this office, and to give the “mar habbeh”, or welcome, but the master of the family himself? who always distinguishes himself by being the most officious; and, after his entertainment is prepared, accounts it a breach of respect to sit down with his guests, but stands up all the time and serves them.”

All which serves greatly to illustrate this passage; and the same learned author observes, that in this manner we find Achilles and Patroclus employed, as described by Homer^{f1121}, in providing an entertainment:

and they did eat; or seemed to eat, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi; though as they assumed bodies so animated as to be capable of talking and walking, why not of eating and drinking? and there must have been a consumption of food some way or other, or Abraham would have known they had not eaten: we read of angels’ food, (^{<01265>}Psalm 78:25); our English poet had a notion of angels eating, and represents Eve providing a repast for the angel, which he owns to be no ungrateful food^{f1122}.

Ver. 9. *And they said unto him, where [is] Sarah thy wife?* etc.] One of them put the question; and so the Septuagint version renders it, “and he said unto him”, the principal of them, whom Abraham at first addressed and called him “my Lord”, and was no other than the Son of God in an human form; and various things in the context show him to be a divine Person, particularly his promise of return next year, and Sarah should have a son: and the question here put by him was not out of ignorance, for he who knew the name of Abraham’s wife, knew where she was; but this was asked in order to lead on to say something more concerning her, and that, hearing her name, she might draw nearer and listen to what was said of her:

and he said, behold, in the tent; for in those times they dwelt in tents, and this was either the tent common to the family, or rather was Sarah’s own tent, (^{<01267>}Genesis 24:67); Sarah was where she should be, in her own apartment, attending to the business of her family, and answered to the description the apostle gives of a good housewife, a keeper at home, (^{<01115>}Titus 2:5);

Ver. 10. *And he said*, etc.] The same that put the question, Jehovah himself, as appears by what follows:

I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; not by a personal appearance as now, but by the fulfilment of his promise which he had before given to Abraham, that he should have a son by Sarah, and now renews it; and this would be about the same time in the next year, perhaps at the spring of the year, which may be called “a time of life”, when all things revive, which in the winter season seem to be dead; a fit emblem this of the case and condition of Abraham and Sarah, both as they now were, and afterwards would be; for, though their bodies were as it were dead and unfit for generation, yet nature would revive in them again: unless it be understood of the whole time of the conception, quickening, and birth of an infant, at the usual time a woman goes with child, which is nine months, when the infant is a perfect living child. All the Targums paraphrase it,

“in which ye shall be alive,”

safe and well, and so most of the Jewish commentators; as if it was a promise to Abraham and Sarah, that they should live to see the promise made good next given; but this seems not so agreeable as either of the former, (see ^{¶1116}2 Kings 4:16):

and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son; it was by degrees that this was made known to Abraham; first he was told he should have a son, but it was not said by whom he should have it; some years after that he is informed he should have a son by Sarah, but not when; but now it is revealed to him, that he should have one by her the next year;

and Sarah heard [it] in the tent door, which [was] behind him; or, “and it was behind him”^{¶1123}; that is, the tent door was at the back of the person speaking; Sarah, hearing her name mentioned, got to the tent door to listen to what might be further said; and the place where she was, was behind the speaker, who stood between her and Abraham, with whom he was conversing; Abraham was before high, and Sarah behind him, so that he could not see her when she laughed, and yet he knew she did; and for the sake of that, this circumstance is remarked: both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase the clause,

“and Ishmael stood behind it,”

the tent door; and the former adds, and hearkened to what the angel said.

Ver. 11. *Now Abraham and Sarah [were] old, [and] well stricken in age,* etc.] The one being ninety nine years of age, and the other eighty nine; and which is observed to make it the more surprising that they should have a son at such an age; and what follows still makes it more so:

[and] it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women; her monthly visitors had left her, so that she was unfit for conception, and there could be no hope of it in a natural way; though the philosopher^{f1124} intimates, that there are some, that it is possible, may conceive without them.

Ver. 12. *Therefore Sarah laughed within herself,* etc.] Not for joy of a son, and as pleased with it, believing so it would be; but as disbelieving it, and perhaps deriding it, and confuting it with a laugh, which, though it did not appear in her countenance, was secretly in her heart:

saying, not with her mouth, but in her mind,

after I am waxed old, being almost ninety years of age,

shall I have pleasure? in conception, or rather in having a son, and in suckling and nursing him, and bringing him up; for in bearing and bringing forth is sorrow:

and my Lord being old also; which increased the difficulty and her unbelief: the Apostle Peter seems to have respect to this in (^{AMB}1 Peter 3:6).

Ver. 13. *And the Lord said unto Abraham,* etc.] This discovers who the person was that had been conversing with Abraham, that he was a divine Person, as appears by his name “Jehovah”, as well as by his knowledge of Sarah’s behaviour; he did not turn himself to her, that it might be more manifest that it was not upon the sight of her he judged she laughed, but from his own omniscience; and he chose rather to speak to her husband than to her, appearing as a stranger, and that he might reprove her:

wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? suggesting there was no reason for it, and signifying his displeasure and indignation at it.

Ver. 14. *Is anything too hard for the Lord?* etc.] Whose power is infinite; or “too wonderful”^{f1125}, so wonderful and beyond all belief, that it can never be thought it will be done by him; and why then should it be thought incredible or impossible that Sarah should have a child, though she is old?

Or, is “anything hidden from the Lord”^{f1126}? Nothing can be, not Sarah’s laughter.

At the time appointed will I return to thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son; which words are repeated not merely for the confirmation of Abraham’s faith, which staggered not, but to remove Sarah’s unbelief, and to encourage her faith in the divine promise.

Ver. 15. *Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not*, etc.] Some render the words, “Sarah lied”^{f1127}; and indeed it was no other than a lie, to say she did not laugh when she did; which she might be tempted to say in her confusion, partly because the back of the speaker was to her, and he could not see her, and partly because it was inward, and very little at least discoverable in her countenance:

for she was afraid; of the reproof of her husband; and of the charge of ill manners to a stranger; and especially as she had reason to believe that it was the Lord himself that had spoken these words, and therefore could gladly have excused herself, and wiped off the reproach:

and he said, nay, but thou didst laugh; it is not true what thou sayest, for thou didst certainly laugh; this he knew, being the omniscient God, notwithstanding, as he appeared as a man, his back was to her, and though her laughter was more internal than external.

Ver. 16. *And the men rose up from thence*, etc.] From their seats at Abraham’s table under the tree, all three of them:

and looked toward Sodom; set their faces and steered their course that way, by which it appeared they intended to go thither: the Targum of Jonathan says, that he that brought the news to Sarah went up, to the highest heavens, and two of them looked toward Sodom; but it seems most likely, that, when the two went on their way to Sodom, the third stayed with Abraham:

and Abraham went with them, to bring them on the way; which was another piece of civility to strangers used in those early times, as well as in later ones, (⁴⁰⁸Acts 20:38 21:5).

Ver. 17. *And the Lord said*, etc.] Either unto Abraham himself, so leading on to what he was about to make known to him; and without supposing this it will be difficult to account for Abraham’s intercession for Sodom

upon this: or to the two angels with him; not as consulting them whether he should or no do what he next suggests, but to give to them Abraham's just character, and the reasons of his using him in such a friendly manner: or it may be, to the other divine Persons, the Father and Spirit, one with the Son of God, and always present with him:

shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? which he was about to do, namely, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: the Jewish writers ^{f1128} observe, that these cities were given in the grant of the whole land to Abraham, and therefore it was right to acquaint him with it first: but other and better reasons are given in the next words; Abraham was a friend of the Lord, and he had showed himself friendly to him, not only now, but heretofore, and therefore will treat him as his friend, by imparting his secrets to him.

Ver. 18. *Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation,* etc.] Which was fulfilled in the nation of Israel, so called, not so much for the largeness of the place they dwelt in, and the number of its inhabitants, as for the law of God that was given them, and the worship of God kept up among them; on account of which there was no nation so great, (^{<RDB>}Deuteronomy 4:8);

and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him; in his seed, the Messiah, in whom some of all nations are blessed with all spiritual blessings. Now, since God had promised, and would do such great things for him and his, he judged it right and proper not to hide from him what he was about to do at Sodom, and the rather, as he had a near relation that dwelt there.

Ver. 19. *For I know him,* etc.] Not only by his omniscience, but with a special knowledge, such as is accompanied with peculiar love and affection; and so Jarchi says, it is expressive of love. God loved Abraham, he was a peculiar favourite of his, and therefore he would reveal his secrets to him, (see ^{<RDB>}Amos 3:2,7); and he knew not only who he was, but what he was, a holy good man, made so by his own grace, and what he would do by the assistance of that grace, and particularly what follows:

that he will command his children, and his household after him; to serve and worship the Lord: not his own children only, but his servants also, all in his family; lay his injunctions on them, use his authority with them, give

them all needful instructions, and take such methods with them as would tend to propagate and preserve the true religion after his death:

and they shall keep the way of the Lord; which he has prescribed to men, and directed them to walk in, even everything respecting instituted worship then revealed, and particularly,

to do justice and judgment; to attend to all the laws, statutes, and judgments of God; to do that which is just and right between man and man; not as a justifying righteousness, by which Abraham himself was not justified before God; but to show their regard to the will of God, in gratitude for favours received from him, and to glorify him, as well as for the good of their fellow creatures:

that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him: not only on Abraham personally, but upon his posterity, they walking in the ways of the Lord, according to his command and direction: the word “that” here rather signifies, as Vatablus rightly observes, the consequence than the cause, what would follow upon these things, rather than as procured by them; these being the way in which God designed to bestow them, though not for them.

Ver. 20. *And the Lord said*, etc.] The Targum of Jonathan adds, to the ministering angels, the two angels that were with him in the likeness of men; or to Abraham, at least in his hearing, by which he understood that Sodom and other cities were about to be destroyed for their sins:

because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great; either of Lot in it, whose righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and cried to heaven against them; or of the inhabitants that were oppressed by others, either in their bodies, being forced to submit to their unnatural usage of them, or in their estates, of which they wronged them; particularly the cry of the poor among them, whom they suffered to starve, though there were fulness of bread in the midst of them, (see ²⁵⁶⁰Ezekiel 16:49,50); the Jews ^{f1129} say, they appointed false judges, who oppressed all strangers that came to Sodom, and made a law, that whoever relieved a poor person should be burnt with fire: or the cry of their sins, which were many and great, and openly and impudently committed; the cry of which came into the ears of the Lord of hosts, and called for vengeance. Those two cities, which perhaps were the greatest and the most remarkable for their sins, are put for all the five cities of the plain, called Pentapolis.

And because their sin is very grievous; attended with very aggravated circumstances, they enjoyed great plenty of good things; and were not to be bore with, being so exceeding sinful, and so publicly and audaciously committed, especially that sin so frequent among them, which has its name from Sodom, (see ^{<0133>}Genesis 13:13).

Ver. 21. *I will go down now*, etc.] The Son of God in an human form now with Abraham, who proposes to go from the place where he was, which perhaps was on higher ground, to the plain in which Sodom and Gomorrah stood; and whither it seems certain he did go down, after he had done talking with Abraham, (see ^{<0124>}Genesis 19:24):

and see whether they have done altogether; committed all the sins, and in such manner, and with such circumstances as reported; or, “have made a full end”^{f1130}, have tilled up the measure of their iniquities, and so are ripe for ruin:

according to the cry of it which is come unto me; this is spoken after the manner of men; for otherwise God saw all their wickedness, and knew full well the nature and circumstances of it, and how general it was; but this method he proposes to take, to show the justice of his proceedings, and to instruct judges, and set an example to them, not to condemn any without thoroughly examining their cause:

and if not, I will know: the reason of this cry, and what is proper to be done. The note of Aben Ezra is,

“if they have so done (according to the cry) I will make a consumption among them (so he takes the sense of the word^{f1131} we render “altogether”); but if not, “I will know”, I will have mercy on them.”

Ver. 22. *And the men turned their faces from thence*, etc.] From the place to which Abraham brought them on; these were only two of them, for the third continued with Abraham:

and went towards Sodom; and are the two angels said to come thither at evening, (^{<0125>}Genesis 19:1):

but Abraham stood yet before the Lord; before the third person, whom Abraham now began to know more clearly; he stood before him with all reverence and humility, to hear what he had further to say to him, as well

as to say something to him himself; he stood “yet”, he continued to stand after the departure of the two angels that were gone to Sodom. Onkelos and Jonathan paraphrase it,

“he ministered in prayer before the Lord.”

Ver. 23. *And Abraham drew near*, etc.] To the Lord; he approached nearer to him, to have more close and intimate conversation with him on the subject of the destruction of Sodom, which he perceived, by what had been said, was like to be; he drew nigh to God in prayer; so the Targum of Jonathan,

“and Abraham prayed and said;”

he drew nigh with faith and freedom, and an holy boldness and confidence, and yet with great reverence of the divine Majesty, and in all humility, under a deep sense of his own meanness and unworthiness:

and said, wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? having in his mind righteous Lot, who dwelt in Sodom, whom he knew to be a just man, though he had departed from him, and was dwelling in such a wicked place; and he might charitably hope there were more in so large a city and in the parts adjacent, at least that were not so flagitious and abominably wicked as the greater part were, and who, in comparison of them, were sober and moral people.

Ver. 24. *Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city*, etc.] Within the Pentapolis, which consisted of five cities; and so ten righteous persons are supposed to be in each, as Jarchi observes, agreeably to the Targum of Jonathan;

“perhaps there may be fifty righteous persons in the city who pray before thee, ten for every city, answerable to the five cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar:”

wilt thou also destroy, and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that [are] therein? here Abraham becomes an advocate and intercessor for all the inhabitants of the place, even the wicked, that they might not be destroyed, but spared and be delivered from impending ruin, for the sake of the fifty righteous among them; before he seemed only concerned for the righteous, lest they should perish with the rest, and that some method might be found out and taken to distinguish them from them; but here he

expresses himself in favour of the wicked also, that they might be spared, provided such a number of righteous ones was found among them.

Ver. 25. *That be far from thee to do after this manner*, etc.] He represents it as a thing unbecoming the divine Majesty, and contrary to the nature and perfections of God,

to slay the righteous with the wicked; which is true of eternal punishment, but not of temporal calamities, in which the righteous are often involved with the wicked, though not for the same reasons, and under the same considerations, and for the same ends:

and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; the one suffer as the other; that he judged was not agreeable to his divine Majesty; nor are they treated without any difference; what befalls the righteous is not for their sins, nor considered as a punishment for them, nor intended for their hurt, but for their good, as the issue of them proves; but it is the reverse with the wicked:

shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? meaning the Lord, to whom he drew nigh, and was praying to, and pleading with, even the Son of God in human form, who, as he made the world, was the Governor of it and Judge in it; and indeed, as Mediator, has all judgment committed to him, and is appointed to be Judge of quick and dead at the last day, and who does all things that are just and equitable in Providence now; for there is no unrighteousness in him, nor in any of ways and works, and who will judge righteous judgment hereafter. Though by “right” Abraham seems to mean, not strict rigorous justice, but a mixture of mercy with justice, even moderation and clemency; for such are used by earthly judges, with whom it is a maxim, “*summum jus summa injuria*” (i.e. extreme law, extreme injustice); and therefore Abraham argues, surely the supreme Judge of all the earth will show mercy, and in the midst of deserved wrath remember it, and not deal according to the rules of inexorable and inflexible justice; and to this sense the answer of the Lord inclines.

Ver. 26. *If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city*, etc.] Sodom is particularly mentioned because Lot dwelt there, and being the metropolis, and the city of greatest note, as Jarchi observes, it is put for the rest; and the sense is, if fifty righteous persons could be found in all the five cities, mercy should be shown them:

then will I spare all the place for their sakes; not Sodom only, but the whole country, of which Sodom was the chief; the Lord takes up and agrees to the number Abraham pitched upon, and grants the request he makes.

Ver. 27. *And Abraham answered and said*, etc.] In a very humble and modest manner, encouraged by the answer given him:

behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord; suggesting that it was bold and daring in him, and was what he was unfit for and unworthy of; or, “I have begun to speak”^{f1132}; and since he had, he intimates, it would be a favour, and what he was undeserving of, might he be permitted to proceed; or, “I am desirous to speak”^{f1133}; it is a pleasure to me, as well as an honour done me, to be permitted to speak unto the Lord, though I deserve it not,

which [am but] dust and ashes; whose original was out of the dust, and to which he would return, and was now a frail, feeble, mortal creature, mean and despicable, unworthy to speak to God; the disproportion between the speaker and the person spoken to was infinite; wherefore the most profound humility and self-abasement are necessary in a creature’s approach to the divine Being.

Ver. 28. *Peradventure there should lack five of the fifty righteous*, etc.] Or there should be but forty five; for Abraham perceived, by the Lord’s answer, that there were not fifty righteous persons in the place:

wilt thou destroy all the city for [lack of] five? Abraham proceeds gradually in his requests, and does not ask too much at once, lest he should not succeed:

and he said, if I find there forty and five, I will not destroy [it]; that is, forty five righteous persons.

Ver. 29. *And he spake [unto him] yet again, and said*, etc.] Being encouraged by such a gracious answer:

Peradventure there shall be forty found there; forty righteous persons; and, from preceding passages, it must be supplied,

“wilt thou destroy and not spare the place for their sakes?”

and he said, I will not do [it] for forty's sake; but spare them for their sake.

Ver. 30. *And he said unto him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak,* etc.] He feared, through his importunity, he should be wearisome to him and incur his displeasure; this being often the case among men, especially when inferiors are soliciting their superiors, and, not content with one favour, are pressing for more:

Peradventure there shall thirty be found there; the abatement is larger than before; he only made an abatement of five at a time, now ten at once, and so he proceeds;

and he said, I will not do [it], if I find thirty there; not destroy the place for their sake.

Ver. 31. *And he said, behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord,* etc.] (See Gill on “¹⁸²⁷Genesis 18:27”):

Peradventure there shall be twenty found there; wouldest thou destroy it, such a number being in it; or, wouldest thou spare it for their sakes?

and he said, I will not destroy [it] for twenty's sake; if there were no more in it, I would spare it for their sake.

Ver. 32. *And he said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once,* etc.] This should be the last request he should make on this account, and therefore he desired he might be heard without any marks of his displeasure;

Peradventure ten shall be found there: how would the place be dealt with then? would it be consumed or not?

and he said, I will not destroy [it] for ten's sake; though no more righteous persons were found in it. Some of the Jewish writers say ^{f1134}, he ended at ten, because he supposed there were ten righteous persons in Lot's family, Lot and his wife, and their four daughters, and their four husbands; but they forgot that two of Lot's daughters were unmarried, and how many he had married is not known; ten they say make a congregation, and wherever there are ten righteous persons, a place is saved for their sakes.

Ver. 33. *And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham,* etc.] It is great and wonderful condescension for God to commune with a creature; it is an act of sovereignty how long he will continue to do so; communion with him always is not to be expected in this life; he communes for a while, and then leaves off and goes his way, (see ~~2448~~ Jeremiah 14:8); the Son of God in an human form, as soon as he had done talking with Abraham, perhaps disappeared to him, and went his way to Sodom, for there we find him in the next chapter:

and Abraham returned unto his place; to his tent in the plains of Mamre, waiting to observe or hear what would be the issue and event of things respecting Sodom and Gomorrah.