

Lot's Wife



by

L. Steven Cheairs, Ph.D.

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This booklet is dedicated to the LORD, the One who provides for the needs of His people.

Lot's Wife

In the early pages of the Bible we are introduced to a man named Abraham, the great man of faith. Abraham, the son of Terah, had two brothers (Nahor and Haron). Haron had a son named Lot. When Abraham left Ur both Terah and Lot went with him. Sarah (Abraham's wife) also left Ur and journeyed with him. At this point in time, Abraham was known as Abram and Sarah was called Sarai. This group of travelers moved to the city of Haran (the original plan had been to move to the land of Canaan). While at Haran, Terah died. Terah was two hundred and five years old when he died.

In Haran the LORD tells Abram to leave his country, relatives, and his father's house. Abram is told to go to the land that God would show to him. Abram, Sarai, Lot, and all their possessions (along with servants) left Haran and set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrive at Canaan the LORD told Abram that his descendants would be given this land. The group stayed in Canaan for a time but later moved on to Egypt because of a famine in the land of Canaan.

Later when this group left Egypt they were very wealthy (due to the Pharaoh's attraction to Sarai, whom Abram passed off as his sister). Both Abram and Lot left Egypt

wealthy men. Their flocks and herds were so great that when combined they could not share the same pastures. There was also strife between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. In order to prevent this strife from growing to the point where it affected the relationship of Abram and Lot it was decided that the two herds and men would separate. Lot chose the rich lands of the valley of the Jordan River. Lot moved to the city of Sodom, east of Abram. Abram went to Hebron, where he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre.

"Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD." A number of years after Abram and Lot had separated, three angels came and presented themselves to Abram. One of the angels was the "angel of the LORD"; i.e. the pre-incarnate form of Jesus. At the end of this visit "the angel of the LORD" tells Abram that the two angels with him are going to Sodom to see if the people are as wicked as the outcry has proclaimed (an outcry that had ascended into heaven, to the throne of God). The two angels depart while "the angel of the LORD" stays with Abram and Sarai, whom the angel renames Abraham and Sarah. Abraham bartered with the LORD on the quantity of righteous people required to spare the two cities. Finally, the number of ten righteous people is agreed upon.

Lot was setting in the gate of the city of Sodom in the evening, when the angels came into the city. Lot invited the angels to his home, they declined (preferring the city square). He urged them strongly to come to his home to spend the night. Lot offered to prepare a feast for them. They accepted the offer, and followed him to his home.

Before they lay down to sleep (after they had consumed the evening meal), the men of the city surrounded the house. There were both young and old men, men of every rank and level of the city. They wanted Lot to send the men (angels) out to have homosexual relations with them. Lot tried to talk the men of the city of Sodom out of this act. Lot even offered his own two virgin daughters to these men. They ordered Lot to stand aside and accused him of judging them (how often I have found this to be the response of the wicked: It is a quite common event when you are speaking the truth to the unrighteous, when they feel the condemnation by the Holy Spirit, they yell: you are judging me). The angels then reached out of the house and pulled Lot back inside. Next, all the people outside of the house were blinded.

One of the angels then tells Lot to gather those of his household and informs him that the city is to be destroyed. His daughters' fiancées thought Lot was jesting when he warned them. They refused to leave the

city. When morning came, the angels urged Lot to leave the city, "saying, 'Up, take your wife and your daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city'." Lot hesitated. Then like Abraham with "the angel of the LORD", Lot tried to strike a bargain with the angels. Lot suggested that a near-by city be spared since the mountains were to far away. The angels granted this request. Lot and his family fled the city, to the near-by town of Zoar. Later after the destruction of the valley floor, Lot and his daughters went to the mountains as originally instructed.

"The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar." The angel who had sent Lot to Zoar had said that he could do nothing until Lot reached Zoar. Then upon Lot arriving at Zoar "the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew out of the ground." So much for the theory of some scholars that oil and sulfur deposits below the land ignited, causing an explosion. This fire came from the LORD, right out of heaven, not from the earth below the city. Beside, both oil and sulfur are fuels. For an explosion one needs a fuel and an oxidizer, not two fuels. Just as silly are the more recent claims that they were destroyed by a natural earthquake. No, it was fire from heaven: I can read.

Now we are at the verse, which is the topic of this booklet. "But his, wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt." In verse 17 we read that the angel had told Lot "... Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, lest you be swept away." Then Lot struck the bargain to go to the city of Zoar instead of the mountains. Lot's wife, who had left with him, lingered behind him. She went along for the exercise, but her heart was not in the trip. She really did not believe that the destruction would overtake her. Whether it was that she just did not believe that the message was to be taken literally or that she really only had a mental assent to God's order, is not defined. The angel had warned that no action would occur until Lot reached the town, she should have been by his side.

The reason that I am drawn to this verse is that other miracles in the Old Testament always have a New Testament meaning or some message at a much deeper level. For example:

1. The crossing of the sea during the Exodus is a picture of water baptism. The water is a symbol of death. The pre-nation of Israel people entered the sea; there they died or ceased to exist. Out of this sea came a new nation.

Likewise, water baptism denotes the old self being put away with the acknowledgment of one as being a sinner and a new person being born (born again, i.e. a new creation in Christ).

2. The water from the rock, which Moses struck, in the desert is another example. The desert is a symbol of the world (a dry world in need of the Spirit of God). The rock is the rock of ages, i.e. Jesus. We ask this Rock (Jesus) for water (the Holy Spirit) and He provides us a river. This river is for us, all our companions, and anyone who wants it.

3. The plague of snakes in the wilderness, with the pole and the copper serpent that Moses had erected in the midst of the camp is one more example. This is a picture of the crucifixion. The pole is the cross, the copper serpent is the Christ with all the worlds sin upon Him, and the snake bitten people who were healed when looking at the pole with the copper serpent were the people of earth, who are forgiven of their sin (snake bit) when they look to the Messiah on the cross.

4. Abraham offering Isaac as the sacrifice is a picture of the Father of heaven offering His son on an altar (the cross) in order to pay the price required by sin.

5. Noah's boat ride is a picture of the Spirit (symbolized as water) lifting God's people above the troubles and judgment, to safety and protection.

6. The ten plagues of Egypt during the pre-Exodus days in Egypt were designed to show that the false gods of Egypt were inferior to the one true God. Egypt's gods were impotent and powerless when faced by the real God of creation.

There are dozens upon dozens of other examples that I could have cited. The point is that these miracles were not just arbitrary use of some holy magic, they were interventions by God to provide some lesson to show what He planned to do in His major undertaking of the redemption of mankind.

Back in the early eighties I was studying the symbolism of the tabernacle. I looked at each element of the tabernacle as a symbol to be decoded. When I studied the pillars I came to the above passage of Lot's wife. But as I worked out the meanings of these symbols this passage was a problem. A pillar is used as the symbol of a mature person of God. Not to mention that salt is used to represent the state of the people of God (Jesus called His followers the salt of the earth). Therefore, I could not understand why Lot's wife would be turned into a

pillar of salt. Why not a heap of dung? This is the God of creation; He can pull off a miracle any way He wants? He does not have to use natural processes as the liberal scholars often try to mold the acts of God into (He can use natural processes, but He can go beyond these processes as well). The symbol of pillar of salt is 180 degrees out of phase with the way God normally performs miracles. I don't doubt for a moment that He could turn someone into a lump of salt, but I don't see why He would. Our LORD is not some mount Olympus god who performs senseless or needless acts of magic. However, it is true that He is the very force of creation; He provides laws and order. He is the expression of creation and in His four faces we see expressed the four forces of nature (for in Him all things are held together).

God's patterns are very intricate, complex, and beautiful. God wouldn't punish a woman's disobedience in such a way as to confuse His greater patterns (He punished Moses for messing up the pattern of asking the rock for water). The utter depth of meaning in the Bible is such that I think there is more here. As it turned out, like most Americans I tend to study using an English translation. When I used a Hebrew text (without vowel points) it was clear as to what the problem was, a mistranslation. This was not a problem, which occurred when the Hebrew was translated to English, but when the vowels were added to the Hebrew.

Remember, it was the original Hebrew and Greek which were inspired by God, not the later grammatical or translation changes made to make the passages easier to read. Good righteous men made these changes, but they were just men. Neither Greek nor Hebrew used punctuation. The chapter, verse, and sentence structures were added later (many years later). With Hebrew there were no vowels or spaces between the words. A priest was taught how to read these Bible passages from his childhood. Try it for yourself in the text below, this sample is only missing the spaces:

thelordrainedonsodomandgomorra
hbrimstoneandfirefromthelordout
ofheavenandheoverthrewthoseciti
esandallthevalleyandalltheinhabit
antsofthecitiesandwhatgrewoutoft
heground

Now lets try to read it without vowels as well:

thlrdrndnsdmndgmrrhbrmstnndfr
frmthlrdutfhvndhvrthrwthsctsnd
llthvlyndllthnhbtntsfthctsndwhtg
rwtffthgrnd

A little hard to read? Well this is how the Old Testament of the Bible originally looked (of course with Hebrew words and letters).

When I read the pillar of salt passage in the Hebrew an interesting fact was observed. To see this discovery we must look at the key words found in the passage.

There are ten Hebrew words, which are translated as pillar in the English Bible. And one more in the Greek. The word which is describing the pillar cloud in the Exodus (which led the nation of Israel from Egypt) is the same word used to describe the pillars of the tabernacle and later the temple. This is the word "ammud". It's Greek equivalent is "stulos".

However, the word seen in Genesis 19:26 referring to Lot's wife is the Hebrew word "netsib". This word is defined as a pillar, perfect, garrison, or post. The New American Standard translates this word as five different English words. It is seen once as deputy, four times as garrison, five times as garrisons, once as officers, and only once as pillar. The word "netsib" is derived from the root word "natsab", which means to take one's stand or just a stand.

What we see from the word "netsib" is that Lot's wife was falling behind Lot, then she stopped and refused to proceed. There were probably angry words being exchanged. Lot and his daughters proceeded by faith, she refused to accept the warning of the angels (she probably said that they were just men and not angels sent from God, as most of us would do). We know that this word is used to speak of a garrison (other words could have been used for just standing or for pillar). The connotation is a military stand. Lot's wife literally quit walking and refused to move, even if force were used to move her. She did not believe. She refused to continue on. Lot and his daughters proceeded without her, for their own safety, because they had faith and the righteous live by faith.

Now let us look at the word used for salt, it is a very interesting word. The Hebrew word used in this passage (and often elsewhere in the Old Testament) is the word "melach". If you look in your Young's, Strong's, or New American Exhaustive Concordance, you will observe eight listings for various forms of this word. For example, "melechah" is derived from the word "melach" and means saltiness or bareness. Another word is "mallach" (also a derivation of "melach"); it means mariner (sailor). Then there is the verb form, which means salt, plus noun and verb listing for the Aramaic words for salt. There are two more words listed in the

concordance, a noun and verb form of the word "malach". The noun means "a rag". The verb means "to tear away" or "to vanish". Has a light gone on in your head yet? Well I will continue and make it clearer. An example of the verb "malach" is found in a passage in the book of Isaiah, chapter 51, verse 6. This passage states, "Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment" This passage is a prophecy of the end of the world. Would it make sense if it were translated such as to say that the sky will turn to salt? In the original Hebrew both "melach" (salt) and "malach" (vanish) would be mlch. Only the vowel "a" or "e" determines which word is to be used. The reason that these two words are so close in form is because salt vanishes when dissolved in water.

As stated above, the ancient Hebrew language up until about the sixth century was written using only consonants. The vowel and word breaks were supplied from the memory of the reader. Therefore, when Aaron read through the hand written scrolls produced by Moses, from memory he had to decide which vowels to add to the words. In most cases this wasn't a problem, since the context of the passage made it obvious which would be used. Also, priests were intensely trained as to the meaning of each passage. But, there were a number of periods between the time of Moses and the time when

vowel points were added to the text by scribes (around two thousand years later) in which the nation of Israel fell into idolatry. During these periods Bible reading fell off and departure in passage meaning or the substitution of an "e" for an "a" could have easily happened.

In the eighteenth year of king Josiah, Shaphan was sent to the house of the LORD. He was sent to tell Hilkiah the high priest to count the money brought into the house of the LORD, in order that it might be used to repair the temple. Hilkiah, the high priest, informed Shaphan, the scribe, that he found the book of Law in the house of the LORD. The book was returned to the king, when it was read he repented and revival came to the land. This passage clearly shows that for a substantial period of time the book of Law (Genesis included) were out of the hands of even the High Priests.

Also, during the time of the Babylonian exile the nation was separated from the book of the Law of Moses. Ezra the scribe brought the book to the square in front of the Water Gate, after the return of the first exiles to Jerusalem. The book was read by Ezra to the people from early morning until midday. Again we see a revival occur in the land. The point, we have two clear-cut periods when the Law was separated from the nation. Not to mention that during the early centuries of the

Christian and both the Jew and the Christian were continually persecuted. Many members of each body were killed. All this in the period before vowel points were added to the text.

In this original text only mlch would have appeared. Either a vowel of "a" or "e" would have been added when the passage was read. The choice of which vowel would have been made from the memory of the reader or by examination of the context in the passage. Only a slight pronunciation difference by the reader would tell the listeners, who were hearing the book of Genesis read, if the word salt or vanish was contained in the text. The knowledge of how to pronounce this word in the passage had to be handed down for over two thousand years during tumultuous periods.

If we assume the vowel "a" was used then the passage would read as: But his wife, from behind him, looked back; she refusing to proceed she vanished. This reading fits the action of the passage better than her turning to a pillar of salt. It doesn't disrupt the harmony of the symbols of the Bible.

But you say, Dr. Cheairs this is all very interesting but you have no proof that this is what occurred. Then I reply, Lot's wife is only mentioned twice in the Scripture.

She is spoke of in Genesis and once in the New Testament. In that passage Jesus is telling His disciples the signs of His Second Coming. He begins by telling them that the days to come His followers will long to see Him. He reveals that He will return as a flash of lightning. This time we are told will be as it was in the time of Noah. People will go about everyday life without expecting the end to come, but then the end will come.

Next Jesus adds, it will be like the time of Lot, when Sodom was destroyed by fire from heaven. Then Jesus reminds us of Lot's wife, "Remember Lot's wife, Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."

Jesus first reminds us of Lot's wife, then He tells of an unsaved and a saved being together. One will vanish and the other will be left. Jesus does not tell us one will be turned into a pillar of salt, but one will vanish. It appears that Jesus felt Lot's wife had disappeared. During the time Jesus walked the earth, vowels had not yet been added to the Hebrew text.

The context of this passage is that of Jesus explaining the condition of His return. First we are told it will be like the time of Noah, people carrying on everyday lives, not expecting the end. Then Jesus switches to Lot's wife, another story of judgement. In both cases the unrighteous were destroyed, i.e. removed from the earth. In both cases the unrighteous did not expect this would occur. In both cases God protected His people from this destruction. This is how it will be when Jesus returns, judgement for the unrighteous and protection for the righteous.

Let me show you another example. Also in the book of Genesis, when Jacob (Israel) is about to die he blessed each of Joseph's sons and has Joseph promise that he will not be buried in Egypt, but buried back in his homeland. Jacob asks for Joseph to promise this, "And he said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed {in worship} at the head of the bed." This passage is from the New American Standard translation of the Old Testament. The King James says much the same, "And he said, Swear unto me. And he swear unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head." However when we read the same account later in the book of Hebrews we find a difference: "By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, {leaning} on the top of his staff." And the King James

says the same thing, "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." Here in the book of Hebrews Paul used the Greek word "rhabdos" for staff. The word means staff or a rod. But, back in Genesis our modern Hebrew text (that is to say manuscripts with the vowels) use the Hebrew word "mittah". This word means a place of reclining and is therefore translated as bed.

The question is did Jacob lean on the head of the bed or the top of his staff. Paul says that it was the staff, but our Hebrew word "mittah" says it was the bed. Just out of curiosity what is the Hebrew word for staff? This word is "mattah". Again we see the same consonants (mtth) for both words. Only one of the two vowels had to change to make a staff into a bed or vice versa.

However, we know Paul is correct since 1) vowels were not yet added to the Hebrew in Paul's time, 2) at the time of Jacob there were no beds with headboards (they used a mat or thick quilt on the floor), and 3) the staff was the symbol of authority in a patriarchal society. One leaned upon the staff when oaths were made or received. Remember how the English opened the continent of Africa in the 1800s; it was when a tribal leader gave his staff to the explorer Dr. Livingstone. It was by carrying this staff, which was the symbol of rulership for that

society that Dr. Livingstone was able to move freely in Africa. The staff had the same meaning in the patriarchal society of Jacob.

And we find in the New International Translation of the Old Testament that the Genesis chapter 47, verse 31 passage has been corrected: "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. {Or <Israel bowed down at the head of his bed>} However, the translators hedged a bit, still keeping the incorrect translation in parenthesis.

Therefore, I think I have proved my point. Lot's wife was not turned into a pillar of salt. This false translation was made after a period of intense persecution of both the Jew and the Christian, a persecution where all the major leaders of each group were killed by the powers of Rome. This was done at a time when the Church was being Romanized (made pagan by absorbing the Greek and Roman myth). Lot's wife was not turned into a pillar of salt. She stopped, turned around, refused to proceed, and vanished. Most likely she was vaporized like a filthy rag in a furnace by the heavenly fire which destroyed the valley below. Note: Scripture says sin is to be burned up as a filthy rag, and the word rag just happens to be the noun form of the verb which mean vanish.

Some other works of Dr. Cheairs.



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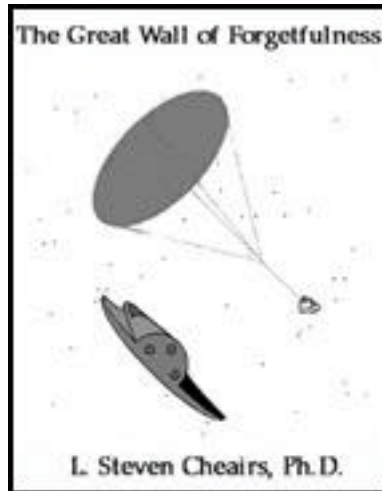
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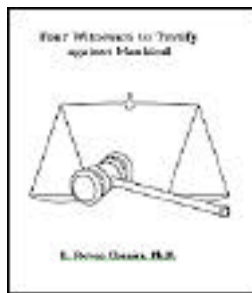
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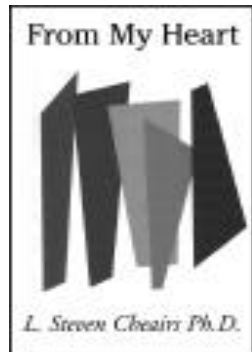
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A full set of descriptions of these books and the game can be found on the site. Also a full basic Bible study course is located there.

In the booklet Lot's Wife, Dr. L. Steven Cheairs a knowledgeable physicist /engineer and biblical scholar shows using the Bible itself that Lot's wife did not get turned into a pillar of salt, but she stopped, refused to proceed and vanished. And to him who has wisdom this booklet is a key in understanding of the reaping of the righteous at the end of the age.

L. Steven Cheairs has a B.S. in Physics/Mathematics, M.S. and Ph.D. in engineering. Dr. Cheairs is the author of the companion books "The Right Hand of Creation" and "Forces and Faces." Dr. Cheairs spent 12 years as a microelectronics engineer and another 14 years as a software engineer. Dr. Cheairs current resides in New Mexico.

