

Lessons from Torah – 20

Genesis 13

More Than Meets the Eye

1. This account follows a pattern common in the Bible
 - a. A verse or chapter or even a whole book is made up of repeated words, phrases or ideas
 - b. These words or phrases make a pattern that starts at both ends and meets in the middle
 - c. It is called a “chiasm” after the Greek letter “chi” (X)
2. The structure serves many purposes
 - a. It makes the text easier to memorize
 - b. The structure helps us remember the details
 - c. It also helps us focus on the main point – a single passage may teach many lessons but there will usually be one idea that is primary
 - d. This keeps us from getting distracted by details
 - e. It gives clarity where the text seems to ramble
3. Most proverbs and many psalms follow this pattern
 - a. A short example is Mark 2:27
 - b. A longer example is Amos 5:4-6a
 - c. A whole chapter may follow this pattern (Genesis 13)
 - d. A whole book may follow this pattern (Song of Songs)
4. To recognize the structure, look for repeated words or phrases:
 - a. 13:1-4 . . . 14-18 – an extended pattern
 - i. “Abram went up” . . . “Get up and walk”
 - ii. “he journeyed” . . . “So Abram moved”
 - iii. “he pitched his tents” . . . “he lived”
 - iv. “his first altar” . . . “he built an altar”
 - b. 13:5-6 – “Lot had flocks and herds” . . . 15-16 – “I will give you the land and descendants (an even greater measure of wealth in that culture)
 - c. 13:7 – “Quarrels broke out” . . . 13:14 – “Lot departed”
 - d. 13:8 – “(Canaanites and Perizzites)” [whose wickedness would lead to the land being given to the Israelites] . . . 13:13 “(Sodom was wicked)” – both statements break the flow of the story and point to the future
 - e. 13:9 – “Separate yourself from me” . . . 13:12 – “So the relatives separated from each other”
 - f. 13:10 - “Lot looked up and saw . . . 13:11 Lot chose for himself and traveled”
 - g. The center of the whole chapter interrupts the flow of verse 10 – “that it looked like a well-watered garden **(this was before God obliterated Sodom and Gomorrah)**, like the garden of the LORD”
 - h. This ominous note reminds us that though Sodom looked prosperous, because of the evil Lot was not “looking” for or “seeing” anything beyond its riches
5. Although there are many lessons in this chapter, we must be sure not to miss the most important lesson:
 - a. The climax is Lot’s choosing by what his eyes saw, and not being sensitive to the moral climate (“now the people of Sodom were very wicked rebels against the LORD”, which is why God would “obliterate” them)
 - b. Abram’s character is revealed as he worships God both at the beginning (13:4) and end (13:18) of the story
 - c. God blesses Abram’s devotion by preserving him in the present and guaranteeing a blessed future that unlike Sodom will remain forever
 - d. The story ends with Abram building an altar – expressing his devotion to and trust in God even when it looks like he let Lot take advantage of him
6. Are these lessons verified by the rest of Scripture?
 - a. Regarding how to make wise decisions
 - i. 1 Samuel 16:7
 - ii. Psalm 7:9
 - iii. Jeremiah 11:20
 - iv. John 7:24, 8:15-16
 - v. Revelation 2:23
 - b. Regarding keeping our eyes on the things God treasures and not on the things this world values
 - i. John 17:14
 - ii. Colossians 3:1-4
 - iii. James 1:27, 4:4
 - iv. 1 John 2:15-15
 - c. The example of Abram
 - i. John 8:39, 56
 - ii. Galatians 3:6-7
 - iii. Hebrews 11:8-10, 13:14