

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 12:10-13:18

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

Genesis 12:10-13

(BKW) – “The rapidity of the narration between Abraham’s journeying in 12:9 and his leaving in 12:10 gives the impression that he walked right through and out of the Promised Land.”

(NAC) – Mathews suggests that “there is no hint of divine disapproval of the patriarchs or any objection to their leaving Canaan.” Egypt was the logical place to go, as the Nile had made Egypt fruitful along with the agricultural advancement of irrigation. It is apparent that Abraham had no intention of staying in Egypt long-term. The Hebrew word used in verse 10 is גֹּר (gur). Which can be translated *sojourn* implying a temporary stay.

(PTW) – “Going to Egypt was the natural thing to do. Those in Canaan and especially the Negev did this regularly because the Nile always guaranteed food.”

(CAL) – Calvin suggests that the sentence “Abram went down to Egypt to live there *for a while*” serves to show Abram’s trust in God, because it reveals Abram’s intent to come back to the promised land after the famine is over.

(KUR) – While approaching the Pharaoh, we read the first recorded words of Abram in scripture, “unfortunately it is one of deception and self-preservation.”

(SOG) – “While true that Sarai was his half-sister, he asks her to suppress the most important part of his relationship with her, their marriage, for one and only one purpose, namely to save his own life. And not only that, but he plans to use her beauty in order to be “treated well.” She is beautiful and he expects that she will be desired by the powerful men of Egypt. As her “brother” he will be in a position to negotiate her marriage proposal since that was the role of brothers in the ancient Near East...[Pharaoh] thinks Abram is her

brother, so Pharaoh enriches Abram, including giving him male and female servants. Among the latter was likely Hagar, the woman who would later become his concubine and give birth to Ishmael.”

(NAC) – “The genius of the ruse was its half-truth. Abram could claim the truth—“she really is my sister”—since they had the same father, and at the same time he avoids reference to her as wife. But the folly of Abram’s plan was its consequences. Although he would save his life, he jeopardized his future by placing at risk Sarai, the mother of the promised son...That Abram’s fears were probably well founded may be seen in David’s abduction of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah.”

(PTW) – “Abram was playing off the well-known custom of fratriarchy, as Nahum Sarna explained: “Where there is no father, the brother assumes legal guardianship of his sister, particularly with respect to obligations and responsibilities in arranging marriage on her behalf. Therefore, whoever wished to take Sarai to wife would have to negotiate with her ‘brother’

(SOG) – Abram “puts the promise of descendants at risk. If she has a child with Pharaoh, then that would compromise her status as the matriarch. In this way, Abram demonstrates that he is acting out of fear, lacking confidence in God’s ability to take care of him and protect him. He interprets the famine as God’s inability or unwillingness to take care of him.”

(KUR) – “Unlike in Gen 20 where it is expressly stated that Abimelech was not guilty of sexual congress with the matriarch (he did not “come near” Sarai, 20:4), here, in Gen 12, the text is silent about what (might have) happened.”

(BKW) – Bruce Waltke suggests that Abram’s purpose was “not necessarily selling Sarah’s honor to save his own skin but perhaps deceitfully stalling for time to exploit suitors without actually giving her away.” In either case, Abram’s “philosophy is “better defiled than dead.””

Genesis 12:14-13:1

(BKW) – While there are some who suggest that Sarah could have had sexual intercourse while in the courts of Pharaoh, Bruce Waltke suggests the phrase “was taken” “does not necessarily entail sexual intercourse; to signify intercourse the text might have included “and violated her” (see Gen 34:2) or “and lay with her” (see Gen 38:2).”

(NAC) – “As for the gifts offered Abram, the language of bridal gift does not occur, but compensation may have been the motivation for the gifts, not merely favor toward Abram. The animals and human servants listed are typically associated with wealthy persons.”

(BKW) – “Possessions of the rare animal [namely camels which were given by Pharaoh to Abram] signaled wealth and status. At the rear of the caravan, the wealthy and dignified

members of the family rode high upon their camels looking gratefully over all their blessings that stretched out in front of them.”

(PTW) – “The camels had just been introduced as domesticated animals and were a rarity. They were prestige symbols, for show by the very rich, not for utility. And Abram now had several in his stable. So faithless, deceitful Abram was inundated with luxurious things, while his beloved spent frantic days and sleepless nights in Pharaoh’s harem.”

(NAC) – ““Diseases” translates the Hebrew for plagues (נִּגְעִים), which is the same word describing the ten plagues against Pharaoh. The term refers to skin disease in Mosaic legislation, and the verbal form describes the leprous judgment by the Lord against Uzziah.”

(PTW) – “The word translated “plagues” often refers to skin diseases. So possibly the Egyptian court suffered from something akin to a plague of boils.

(CAL) – Calvin suggests that the diseases given to Pharaoh and his house were done as a way of keeping Sarah from being forced into sexual intercourse with Pharaoh.

(PTW) – Pharaoh’s concluding remark is only four Hebrew words, “Here...wife...take...go.”

(KUR) – It is ironic that Abram was supposed to be the agent of blessing to all other nations but because of his deceitful actions, he actually became a curse to Pharaoh.

(PTW) – “If we wonder why Pharaoh did not punish them but rather sent them off with their new riches, it is because Pharaoh was still suffering the effects of the plagues. He never again wanted to be on the receiving end of the power behind Abram. Significantly, those new riches were no blessing to Abram. The ill-gotten gain caused huge trouble in the following years, first in the strife with Lot’s herdsman, and then through a young Egyptian woman named Hagar, who was likely one of the maidservants given to Abram by Pharaoh.” In this way, Abram prefigures Israel who would one day also plunder the Egyptians on their way to the Promised Land after God struck Egypt with plagues.

(KUR) – To summarize chapter 12, “we see here the divine promises of land, seed, and blessing given to Abram. And as soon as the promise is offered, Abram proceeds to act without faith in it. He takes Lot along, disbelieving the promise of the seed. He absconds from Canaan to Egypt, dismissing the promise of the land. And he manages to get the royal house of Egypt afflicted with plagues, disregarding the promise that he would be a blessing to the nations. All because of his lack of faith.”

Genesis 13:2-7

(PTW) – Abram “returned to the altar where he first called on the name of the Lord.”

(KUR) – “The altars signify Abraham’s return to faith and his proclamation of claiming the land in the name of God.” Abram is returning back to the spot where he should have never left.

(NAC) – “Abram retraced his steps from the Negev to Bethel and Ai where he again worshiped the Lord, presumably at or near the altar he first erected there. Twice the narrative states that his return trip mirrored his earlier travels. That Abram should take such care indicated his desire to recover his experience with God; the fact that the old altar remained suggests the permanency of the promises. The patriarch’s newfound wealth did not distract him from his worship of the Lord; his generosity toward Lot and his later confession of trust in the Lord’s provision may reflect Abram’s renewed faith as a consequence of the Egyptian sojourn.”

(BKW) – The altar here “has significance on both the story and discourse levels. The physical symbol is a reminder to Abraham of God’s promises and Abraham’s earlier faith. The narrator’s comment on this image suggests to the reader that Abraham has returned to a position of faith, the place where the reader should also dwell.”

Genesis 13:8-13

(PTW) – The wealth plundered from Egypt would become the stumbling block before Lot and Abram’s relationship.

(SOG) – In the disagreement with Lot, “this situation provided yet another test of Abram’s faith...The significance of Abram’s approach to this issue is that he is not grasping for the fulfillment of the promise. He is not showing any sign of self-protection or manipulation.”

(NAC) – “Abram’s rhetorical question in v.9, “Is not the whole land before you?” appears disingenuous since the land was largely held by Canaanites. The question, however, reflects Abram’s early confidence in the Lord’s promise of possession. Abram spoke proleptically as if the land were his to distribute to whomever he chose.”

(PTW) – Traditionally it has been thought this interaction between Lot and Abram took place at Ramath Hazor, “about five miles northeast of Bethel and the highest spot in central Israel, well over three thousand feet.”

(NAC) – “The direction “toward the east” in v.11 renews the motif of expulsion in the accounts of the garden, Cain-Abel, and the Tower of Babel.”

(PTW) – “His journey east was a dark echo of the way Cain had departed. Genesis 19 will reveal that Lot would eventually dwell outside the border of Canaan in the hill country on the eastern side of the Jordan...Lot was the kind of man who would certainly choose Heaven over Hell if given the choice, but not Heaven over earth.”

(NAC) – “Verse 10 expresses the chief irony of the lead story; the lush land Lot chooses will be consumed by fire. The “plain of the Jordan” is likened to the well-watered “garden of God” and “like the land of Egypt,” whose beauty attracted Lot but also distracted him from the wickedness that lurked there.”

(KUR) – “Lot lifted up his eyes but saw only “all the valley” that was “well-watered.” Lot walked by sight: he lifted up his eyes and saw...Each time Lot is said to be enthused with the fertile areas of the valley of Jordan—so much so, that he settles there—the narrator makes a cutting comment about the wickedness and fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. “Wicked/evil” also describes the deeds of those who were blotted out in the flood, but “great sinners” is unique for this text and, needless to say, ominous in tone...One settles in the land Yahweh owns and in which Yahweh dwells; the other settles in the land of the wicked and sinful.”

(SOG) – The readers of this story would know this region (i.e. Sodom & Gomorrah) as a salt plain incapable of growing vegetation, not as a well-watered area that would sustain life.”

(BKW) – “The narrator ensures that his audience understands Lot’s poor choice by identifying this land with the cities that are so evil that they incur God’s fiery judgment.”

Genesis 13:14-18

(NAC) – “The Lord instructs the patriarch to “lift up your eyes” so as to see the vista of the whole land that will someday belong to his descendants. The magnimity of God’s grant involves all the land that the patriarch can see, all that he can walk, and all the progeny that he could ever count.”

(BKW) – “Abraham’s walking about the land symbolizes his legal acquisition of it. Kings asserted their right to rule their territory by symbolically tracing out its boundaries.”

(CAL) – “Seeing that the Lord promised the land to the seed of Abram, we perceive the admirable design of God in the departure of Lot. He had assigned the land to Abram alone; if Lot had remained with him, the children of both would have been mixed together. The cause of their dissention was indeed culpable; but the Lord, according to his infinite wisdom, turned it to good, so that the posterity of Lot would possess no part of the inheritance.”

(PTW) – In reference to God promising Abram that his offspring would be like the dust of the ground, “later in 15:5 God would promise that Abram’s offspring would be as numerous as the stars. So, whether he looked down as he traversed the land by day or whether he looked up at the stars at night, he was reminded that he and his barren wife would become a great nation.”

(PTW) – “A look at Abram and Lot side by side is instructive. Lot chose the things that are seen and found them corrupting. Abram looked and saw through the eyes of faith the things that are unseen, and he found great assurance and peace.”

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