

The Story of Lot (part 2 of 2): The Destruction of Sodom

Description: The messengers arrive in Sodom, Prophet Lot tries to protect them from the evildoers, and God's punishment happens.

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Prophet Lot continued to suffer due to the wicked ways and unnatural behaviour of the people around him, yet he patiently continued to deliver his message. He called the people to give up their wicked ways and obey the One God, worshipping Him alone. However, the townspeople continued to mock and belittle Lot, and even taunted him by challenging him to bring God's torment upon them.

"Bring God's torment upon us if you are one of the truthful." (Quran 29:29)

Lot was overwhelmed with despair and beseeched God to grant him victory over these people, who committed great crimes and behaved unnaturally.

At the time of Lot's invocation, the messengers (angels) were with Prophet Abraham so they informed him of their mission to Lot and his people. They said,

"And when Our messengers [i.e., angels] came to Abraham with the good tidings, they said, "Indeed, we will destroy the people of that [i.e., Lot's] city. Indeed, its people have been wrongdoers." (Quran 29:31)

Abraham was afraid, his nephew Lot was in the town of Sodom and it was about to be destroyed. He said to the angels **"but Lot is there!"** They replied,

"We know better who is there, we will verily save him (Lot) and his family, except his wife, she will be of those who remain behind (i.e. she will be destroyed)." (Quran 29: 32)

Renowned Islamic scholar, Imam Ibn Katheer narrates that, as the messengers approached the towns of Sodom they met Lot's daughter at the nearby river. She was astounded at their beauty and feared for them. She advised them to wait at the river for Prophet Lot, rather than enter the town without his protection. When Lot heard of the strangers, he felt distressed and wondered how he could convince them to bypass the towns of Sodom and continue on their travels. He tried to make them understand the nature of the townspeople but only succeeded in convincing the messengers to wait for nightfall before entering the town.

Prophet Lot managed to escort the messengers to the safety of his home; however, Lot's wife slipped out the back door and quickly told the people that two beautiful men were guests in Lot's home. The word quickly spread and soon people were outside Lot's

house, knocking on his door, demanding to see the guests. Lot became even more distressed when he realised his wife was responsible for the crowd at his door and he pleaded with the mob to disband and to fear the punishment of God. He repeatedly appealed to them to seek sexual gratification in a lawful way.

"O my people! Here are my daughters (i.e. the daughters of my nation); they are purer for you (if you marry them lawfully). So fear God and degrade me not as regards my guests! Is there not among you a single right-minded man?" (Quran 11:78)

The story of Lot, in both the Bible and the Quran hold remarkable similarities. However, Islam completely rejects the notion that Prophet Lot would offer his own daughters to the town's people. The scholars of Islam explain that when Lot used the word "daughters" he meant the women of Sodom. He was demanding that the men of Sodom seek sexual fulfilment in lawful marriages.

In his book *Stories of the Prophets*, Ibn Katheer states that the town's people broke down the door and rushed inside Lot's house, surrounding the messengers. Lot was powerless before them yet he continued to plead and remind them of the evil of their ways. The town's people jeered and mocked him saying, **"Surely you know that we have neither any desire nor in need of your daughters, and indeed you know well what we want!" (Quran 11:79)**. The messengers reassured Lot by saying **"surely we are messengers from your Lord." (Quran 11:81)** On hearing these words the towns people were afraid and started to disperse, leaving Lot and his family alone with the messengers (angels).

The messengers allayed the fears of Prophet Lot and instructed him to gather his family and leave the town of Sodom that night. Lot walked at the rear of his family to assure no one looked back on the towns of Sodom. Lot's wife remained behind and was afflicted by the punishment along with the wrong doers and wicked townspeople. The Quran describes the punishment as an awful cry that turned the town upside down and rained stones of baked clay. **(Quran 15:73-74)**

The punishment came at sunrise, and God said,

"So We saved him and his family, all, except an old woman (his wife) among those who remained behind. Then afterward We destroyed the others. And We rained on them a rain (of torment). And how evil was the rain of those who had been warned. Verily, in this is indeed a sign, yet most of them are not believers." (Quran 26:170-174)

Thus, the pages were closed on the people of Lot. Their names were erased from historical memory. The punishment that God promised, and Prophet Lot warned about, happened, for surely God keeps His promises. He promises severe punishment for the wrongdoers and Paradise is the reward of the righteous. Lot and his family walked into the sunrise and Quran mentions them no more.

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