

## LESSON 6: SODOM AND GOMORRAH

**GENESIS 18: 1-2 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.**

The fact that Abraham bowed down to the ground when greeting the strangers seems a bit much, but this action is part of the code of conduct which was sacred in the ancient Middle East. The word hospitality is used to describe this code of conduct but that word doesn't adequately portray this code. The traveler in the Middle East was dependent on this code of conduct for his survival. The desert was an extremely harsh environment and the traveler needed access to water, food, shelter and protection. Most people lived close to a source of water so that the stranger would have to come near to them to get access to water. On the other hand, the people needed protection from strangers who would be a danger to them. This code of conduct prescribed the duties of both the host and the traveler.

**GENESIS 18:3-5 He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."**

It was the duty of the host to provide water, food, shelter and protection for the traveler. This action signified that the host was not a danger to the traveler. The acceptance of the hospitality by the traveler signified that the traveler was no danger to the host. Failure to provide water, food, shelter and protection to a traveler was considered a hostile act. Failure of the traveler to accept the hospitality of the host was also considered a hostile act.

This code of conduct was considered a sacred duty in the ancient Middle East. Nothing would anger God more than violating this code.

**GENESIS 18:16** Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way.

**GENESIS 19:1-3** The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

Lot, who was Abraham's nephew, has offered water, food, shelter, and protection to the angels. Once they have accepted his offer, it is his sacred duty to provide for them and protect them.

**GENESIS 19:4-7** But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them." Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you my brothers, to not act so wickedly. "

The men of Sodom want to rape the men who are strangers. The sacred code of conduct obligates Lot to protect these strangers.

**GENESIS 19:8** "Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."

Since Lot has given shelter to the men, he is obligated to protect them even to go to the extreme of offering his daughters to them. He does not think that these men are attracted to other men or he would not have offered his daughters.

**GENESIS 19:9 But they replied, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to see the door.**

An alien was a permanent resident of the town but who came from somewhere else. Aliens were protected by this sacred code of conduct also. The men of Sodom have violated the code of conduct in at least two different ways.

First they have planned violence against the travelers.

Second, they have planned violence against an alien in their city.