

## **“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” – Sodom, Sex, and Hatred of the Other**

The Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah is obviously a key text in any discussion of Bible and Homosexuality. It's a shared story, not just of all the religious traditions, Samaritan, Jewish, Christian, who canonize collections of biblical texts as their Scripture, but it's also retold and referred to frequently in the Qur'an and so forms an important narrative for Muslims, as well. From the name Sodom, we get the words sodomy and sodomite which have been used for centuries to defame and debase same sex love and eroticism. It's not the only biblical text used against us LGBT folks, but probably because it's a gripping disaster story, with the added frisson of divine retribution for unspeakable evil, it looms large in the imagination much more readily than the Levitical proscriptions, the sinner lists in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, and the Gentile parody in Romans 1.

However, unlike those passages, the Sodom and Gomorrah story is in many ways far easier to deal with. With Leviticus, the discussion is around the meaning of the Hebrew, what is being proscribed and why.<sup>1</sup> With the New Testament texts, for the sinner lists so much hinges on the meaning of *arsenokoitai*, a word that appears for the first time ever in the Pauline corpus. What did Paul mean by it in 1 Corinthians and did it always have a “homosexual” referent or did that meaning develop over time? Likewise with Romans, what does Paul intend here and, more specifically, does he refer at all to female homoeroticism? Augustine didn't think so and neither did Christians before him. Indeed, the “lesbian” interpretation was only developing in Augustine's time<sup>2</sup> and only later became the dominant reading (Alison 2004).

When it comes to Sodom and Gomorrah, however, an interpreter really doesn't have to engage in such textual archaeology or historical semantic enquiry. While Sodom and Gomorrah became THE homophobic ideo-story in Christianity, and following the Christian lead, in Islam as well, that did not happen in Judaism. The sages and rabbis never read Sodom and Gomorrah as a story of divine punishment of homosexuality. For them the central issue was hatred and abuse of the outsider, the stranger, and the refusal of hospitality, as a symptom of a cruel, avaricious society, in which the poor and outsiders are routinely abused. The abuse is intended to drive them away, keep them away, because the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did not want to share their wealth with others at all. Stories of Sodomite cruelty and greed abound in Midrash and Talmud. What you don't find are stories of homosexual excess.

Additionally, the Hebrew Scriptures contain another story, almost identical to that of Sodom. Judges concludes with the narrative of the outrage at Gibeah and its aftermath, a story which reads almost as a parallel to Genesis, except that the travelers weren't angels but fellow Israelites. The story doesn't end with fire from heaven but with the pack rape and murder of a woman, resulting in a genocidal civil

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<sup>1</sup> I would also add for consideration, how do these Leviticus passages relate, or not, to similar proscriptions in the Zoroastrian Zend Avesta (Vendidad, Fargard 8:26–32)?

<sup>2</sup> The lesbian reading was pioneered by John Chrysostom.

war. Compared to Sodom and Gomorrah, Gibeah has received very little attention by Jews or Christians over the centuries. Nevertheless, reading Gibeah's story, and its reception, alongside the story of Sodom and Gomorrah serves as a useful corrective for any homophobic flights of fancy.

A caveat; reading the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, following the Jewish lead, as a story of social injustice and hatred of outsiders does not mean that ancient Jews and Samaritans would have approved of same sex eroticism and relationships. I don't think they did, and they certainly wouldn't have approved of anal sex between men; they weren't alone in that thinking in the ancient Middle East either. Instead, reading Sodom with the Jewish perspective simply removes this story as a buttress of homophobia, something which it should never have been at all. Reading this way denaturalizes the homophobic reading we've been taught to see as inherent in the story. Reading with the Jewish perspective also enables us to see that the earliest Christian texts share that perspective; the Christian invention of the homophobic reading is a later development not present in the first generations. Following the Jewish lead has additional advantages, too, in that this reading opens up to us, in this time of border walls, stop the boats, and xenophobia, new moral perspectives on treatment of outsiders, and the poor. It also provides new opportunities for moral considerations of rape, attempted in Sodom but mortally successful in Gibeah.

In what follows, I will examine the Sodom story as one highlighting the virtue of hospitality and I will read it in parallel with the Gibeah account. My focus will be the turning point of the story, the mobbing assault on Lot's house, and what that means in how we understand Sodom and Gomorrah. I will highlight some issues of sex, sexuality and rape in the ancient Middle East and contrast the events at Sodom with those at Gibeah to show how rape functions in both stories. I've also been asked to address Jude 6–7 so following my discussion of the Sodom narrative, I will examine ancient textual references to Sodom, and Gibeah, to locate the Jude passage in its time. Crucial in this exercise is identifying a trajectory in some ancient texts that link the story of Sodom with the story of the Watchers/fallen angels in 1 Enoch and Jubilees, echoed faintly in Genesis 6, as examples of sexual transgression crossing the human/angelic boundary, to warn against exogamy and idolatry/apostasy. I would suggest that Jude likewise uses Sodom and the Watchers to warn against outsiders, presumably bearers of variant Christian teaching, so as to sustain community cohesion and fidelity.

### **SODOM AND GIBEAH — STRANGERS NOT WELCOME HERE**

I begin with a clarification. I was invited to discuss the Sodom passage, identified in the invitation as Genesis 19 alone. However the story of Sodom and Gomorrah's fall begins in Genesis 18, it is not restricted to Genesis 19. Genesis 18 and 19 form part of the Torah portion (parshah), Vayera (Gen 18:1–22:24), in the weekly cycle of synagogue readings. Furthermore, all the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah are part of the broader Abraham/Sarah saga (Gen 12 – 25:11), a saga of new beginnings, of the Israelites, and of their neighbors in Arabia, Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Abraham is father of both Israelites and Arabs (plus a host of other nations by his later wife Keturah), and forefather to the

Edomites, while Sarah is mother of the Israelites and likewise foremother to the Edomites. For Israel especially, Abraham and Sarah are a kind of Adam and Eve. Parshah Vayera is a critical culminating point of the Abraham/Saga, opening with a visitation of the LORD to Abraham at Mamre and the Annunciation of Isaac's birth to Sarah. That then leads to the LORD's announcement to Abraham that Sodom is to be destroyed and Abraham bargaining with the LORD to spare Sodom and its sister cities. Vayera then recounts the events at Sodom before moving on to the birth of Isaac, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, to culminate in the binding of Isaac on Mt Moriah. As well as Isaac's birth Vayera also tells, how following the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, Lot's daughters, thinking they and their father are alone in the world, take action by getting their father drunk and then having sex with him to become pregnant with their sons, Moab and Ben Ammi (Ammon). Generations of Jewish and Christian commentators have embarrassedly acknowledged that by virtue of Ruth (Moab) and Naamah (Ammon), Lot's daughters are the foremothers of the Messiah, that by raping their father they initiate the line of the Messiah, that out of the burning of Sodom comes the line of the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> Isaac's conception and birth then complete this triptych of Messianic origins. So Vayera is a supremely significant portion of both Genesis and the Abraham/Sarah saga (if not the entire narrative of the Hebrew Bible as a whole), of which the Sodom story is an integral part too, it's not a stand-alone story at all.

When we read Genesis 18 and 19 as a single narrative, as generations of rabbis have, the issue of hospitality is immediately foregrounded because it opens with the account of Abraham's hospitality to his heavenly visitors at Mamre. Abraham is presented here as a paragon of hospitality. He goes out of his way to cater lavishly to his guests. Jewish tradition also highlights that Abraham is recovering from his circumcision, the account of which concludes Genesis 17. But this does not deter him in his reception of strangers. The tradition stresses that, at Mamre. Abraham models the centrality of the virtue of hospitality for the godly, with these events at Mamre showing that by welcoming strangers, a person also welcomes the divine.<sup>4</sup>

As Abraham's guests depart, the story then shifts focus to Sodom and Gomorrah. The LORD reveals to Abraham that Sodom and Gomorrah are under investigation for their evil and if they prove to be as evil as suspected, they will be destroyed. Extraordinarily, Abraham challenges this divine intent, pleading and bargaining with the LORD to spare the cities. Once the LORD agrees to Abraham's plea to spare the cities, even if only ten just men are found there, the narrative then shifts to the gates of Sodom, where we meet Lot, Abraham's nephew. While three came to Mamre, only two come to Sodom, identified specifically as angels, the LORD is not with them. Lot greets the visitors and invites them to stay at his house. At first they refuse, but relent after he presses his invitation on

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<sup>3</sup> Describing Lot's daughters as raping their father means taking the story on face value; that's the only way to describe the event. It also serves as an ironic (and messianic?) reversal of what nearly happened to them when the mob besieged Lot's house. I will address the rape motif in greater detail below.

<sup>4</sup> Jewish tradition also draws another ethical conclusion from the events at Mamre. By appearing to Abraham after his circumcision, the LORD models the virtue of visiting the sick.

them. We aren't told why they are at first reluctant and it's not clear why Lot is so determined that they stay with him. But given the centrality of hospitality in the narrative so far, the intent could be to demonstrate that, like his uncle, Lot values the practice of hospitality and will go out of his way, too, to welcome guests to his home (it's not clear from the text that Lot knows the angelic identity of these travelers). It's also possible that he might be concerned for the wellbeing of wayfarers left to fend for themselves in the streets of Sodom, but that can only be inferred by hindsight as the story progresses.

At this point now I will turn to the Gibeah narrative in Judges 19. The central characters here are a Levite from Ephraim and his concubine, originally from Bethlehem. They separate after an argument and she returns to her father's house. The Levite, accompanied by his servant, then goes to Bethlehem to her father's house, where he and the concubine reconcile. He then spends several days feasting and drinking with the woman's father, before finally setting off on his journey home, accompanied by the concubine and the servant. As night approaches they arrive at Jebus/Jerusalem and the servant suggests that they stop there for the night but the Levite refuses saying "We will not turn aside into a city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel; but we will continue on to Gibeah" (Judg 19:12). In light of the ensuing events, the Levite's reason for not stopping at Jebus is ironic indeed. I draw your attention here to that question of insiders versus outsiders/foreigners. I will argue that this insider/outsider, Israelite/foreigner dynamic is key to understanding the aftermath of the events at Gibeah. The Judges narrative makes explicit tensions implicit in the Sodom narrative, a point I will develop further when I discuss the meanings of rape in both narratives below. Eventually the Levite and his party arrive at Gibeah and seat themselves in the square waiting for someone to offer hospitality. No one does so until an old man, who "was from the hill country of Ephraim, and... residing in Gibeah" (Judg 19:16), comes in from the field. The text then states that the people of Gibeah are Benjaminites, highlighting both the old man's difference with respect to the Gibeah community, and that he is from the same country as the Levite. In Genesis too, Lot is likewise not native to Sodom but an outsider, Abraham's nephew who journeyed with him to Canaan. Unlike the Sodom story however, by highlighting the old man's difference from his neighbors, the text demonstrates that the Benjaminite townsfolk of Gibeah are not particularly welcoming to travelling strangers. That impression is confirmed when the old man offers hospitality to the Levite and his company, who accept his offer and accompany him to his house. There the Levite and the old man feast and drink together.

Thus far in both stories the issue of hospitality is clearly foregrounded. The Sodom events immediately follow on from Abraham's lavish hospitality to his divine guests. At the gates of Sodom, the reader is presented with Lot's welcome and offer of hospitality to the arriving angels. With the Gibeah story, we see the Levite treated lavishly by the concubine's father, they feast and drink together for days. On the journey home, the Levite refuses to stop at Jebus for fear of how Jebusites might treat a travelling Israelite. Ironically, in Gibeah, the locals – Benjaminite Israelites – ignore him, but he receives lavish hospitality from a fellow Ephraimite Israelite resident in the town.

In both stories, the hospitality is rudely disrupted. In Sodom, “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” (Gen 19: 4–5). In Gibeah, “the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door” (Judg 19: 22). In both stories the mob makes the same demand, with the same language, which the RSV translation has sustained.

"Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." (Gen 19:5 RSV)

"Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." (Judg 19:22 RSV)

This incident, this demand, is the hinge point in both stories. How one understands the demand, the response by both Lot and the old man, and what follows, helps determine the understanding of both stories. The key word here is ‘know’, *wěnnēdē‘ā* (*wěnnēdā‘ennū* in Judges) from the Hebrew root *yā‘*. For, the homophobic reading of the Sodom and Gomorrah story the crucial question is, what do the men of Sodom want when they besiege Lot's house demanding he bring out his guests. What do they mean when they say they want to know his guests? The word ‘know’ can mean having sex with someone but in his pioneering study, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (1955), Derrick Sherwin Bailey observed that

in the Old Testament, excluding the present text and its undoubted derivative Judg. xix. 22, it is only used ten times (without qualification) to denote coition. In combination with *mishkabh* (sic), which signifies in this context the act of lying, *yadha`* (sic) occurs in five further places (Bailey, 1955: 2–3).

Consequently, the word need not here have a sexual meaning at all. The same question applies in Gibeah<sup>5</sup>. The word ‘know’ in these circumstances is ambiguous; given the mob setting in both stories it would have a sinister, threatening intent even without a sexual connotation. What happens next seals the fate of Sodom and Gibeah in both stories and in their reception. In Sodom, Lot goes out to the mob and pleads with them to desist. To appease them, he offers his daughters “who have not known (*yād‘ū*) a man” (Gen 19: 8). Lot's use of ‘know’ in this context clearly has a sexual connotation; he's saying his daughters are virgins. In Gibeah, the old man also goes out to confront the mob pleading with them to desist. Like Lot, he also offers his daughter, likewise a virgin, in place of the Levite. The old man uses the word ‘virgin’ (*bē‘tūlā*) rather than the phrase ‘not known a man’ which, read beside Genesis 19, underscores the sexual meanings of ‘know’ in both stories. However, along with his daughter, the Levite

<sup>5</sup> This question of the meaning of "know" is crucial also in translation. The LXX renders the word as "be with" (*sungenometha*) in Genesis and "know" (*gnomen*) in Judges, the former having a sexual meaning, the latter not. The Vulgate, on the other hand, uses "know" (*cognoscamus*) and "abuse" (*abutamur*), respectively. The Jerusalem Bible renders both as "abuse" while the NIV renders both as "have sex with." The NEB renders both as "have intercourse with." The NRSV translates as "know" in Genesis but as "have intercourse with" in Judges.

offers the concubine as well! The story then continues that the mob refused to listen to him so “the man” grabbed “his concubine” and brought her out to them, “and they knew her (*wayyēdē’û*), and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go” (Judg 19:25 RSV). Once again the word ‘know’ appears and there can be no doubt of the sexual meaning. We are told that the concubine was pack raped by the mob through the night. We learn then that, after crawling to the old man’s house she dies. The Levite finds her dead at the doorstep as he leaves the next morning.

In Sodom, things go very differently. In response to Lot’s entreaties, the Sodomites declare:

“Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge!<sup>6</sup> Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door. (Gen 19:9 RSV)

At this point the angels intervene, pulling Lot back into the house and striking the mob blind. However one might read the Sodomites’ intent here, the scene outside Lot’s house is one of imminent violence. If their intent is sexual, they have not come to invite the angels to an orgy. The consent of the angels is not under consideration for the Sodomites. Likewise, the consent of his daughters was not an issue for Lot when he offered them to the mob. To read the story sexually it can only be read as a case of attempted rape. If Lot’s guests had not been angels with power, they would have been pack raped, possibly together with Lot. Likewise by offering his daughters in place of his guests, Lot was offering them up to be pack raped in the angels’ stead.<sup>7</sup> The events at Gibeah, the concubine’s fate, show just what would have happened if the Sodomites had had their way.

It’s also been generally understood that, by their response, the Sodomites rejected Lot’s offer of his daughters. This interpretation has sealed their fate in the story’s homophobic reception as being addicted to same sex eroticism, rejecting women in their hunger for sex with males. This reading eventually leads to the Christian invention of the word, and concept, of sodomy in the High Middle Ages. In contrast, the men of Gibeah, while rejecting the old man’s offer, accept the concubine when she’s pushed out to them and cease both their attack on the house and their demands for the Levite. The story of Gibeah hasn’t figured in the homophobic imagination at all, and because they accepted a woman instead of a man. It adds a further complexity to the Gibeah story making it much less amenable for homophobic purposes in contrast to both the apparent Sodomite stubborn persistence in perversity, and the spectacular nature of their demise. However, to destabilize the “obvious” understanding of the Sodomite response to Lot, I want to share a perspective from Jewish tradition which took a completely opposite position on what the Sodomites said to Lot. No minor figure either, I turn to the great 11<sup>th</sup> century French rabbi, Rashi (Shlomo Yitzchaki/Salomon de Troyes). In his commentary on Genesis, he reads the Sodomite reply as commanding Lot to lead the women out to them and not merely to stand back. In this reading, the mob accepted Lot’s offer of his daughters, but

<sup>6</sup> Note that the Sodomites here highlight Lot’s outsider status.

<sup>7</sup> There are some Jewish and Muslim readings, however, which suggest that Lot offered his daughters as hostages, to guarantee the bona fides of his guests and thus secure their welfare.

with a cruel twist. Rashi says, “Concerning that which [Lot] said to them regarding the daughters, they said to him ‘Stand back’ – a gentle expression” (Rashi, 1949: 168). For Rashi, this gentleness is made clear by contrast to the harshness of the subsequent Sodomite rebuke of Lot for interceding on his guests’ behalf. Rashi observes that “Stand back” can also mean step aside, which, if it is a “gentle expression,” connotes acceptance of Lot’s daughters, but without relinquishing the demand for his guests. In contrast to Christian and Muslim traditions, Jewish tradition has never been kind to Lot, and the sages never missed an opportunity to criticise him. Rashi is no different and condemns Lot for offering his daughters. Rashi’s point is that not only does Lot engage in typical Sodomite behaviour by offering his daughters, but Lot’s action was foolish and ill-considered because the Sodomites accepted his offer without being deterred from their original intent.<sup>8</sup>

Whether the mob rejected or accepted Lot’s offer, the angelic intervention brings the crisis to an end. Events move rapidly, with the angels revealing to Lot that they have been sent to destroy the Cities of the Plain and telling him to leave the city. Come morning, the angels lead (compel?) Lot and his family out of the city. There follows the familiar events of fire and sulphur falling from the heavens, Lot’s wife looking back and being turned to salt, as the cities are destroyed, overturned by the LORD. The Sodom narrative concludes with the rape of Lot by his daughters and conception and birth of their sons, Moab and Ben Ammi.

In Gibeah, the aftermath is quite different but no less destructive. The next morning, the Levite finds the concubine slumped outside the house. He tells her to get up but she is dead so, getting no response, he puts her on his donkey and returns home to Ephraim (19:27–28). On his return "he cut her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel" (19:29). This is a summons to the tribes of Israel to gather to hear his case so he can get retribution. The narrative continues in Judges 20–21 with what follows from this summons. The Israelites assemble and hear the Levite's case. His version is markedly different from the events in the story itself: “I came to Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. The lords of Gibeah rose up against me, and surrounded the house at night. They intended to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she died” (Judg 20:4–5). According to the Levite, the men of Gibeah sought to kill him, not rape him. He also omits his part in handing the concubine over to them. When they hear his account, the assembly reacts with outrage and angrily decides in the Levite’s favor, demanding the men of Gibeah be handed over for punishment. However, the Benjaminites support their compatriots in Gibeah and refuse the demand, which leads to civil war erupting between Benjamin and the rest of Israel. The Benjaminites win the first two battles (even though the LORD promised victory to Israel via an oracle) but are defeated in the third (thus vindicating the LORD's promise). Most of the Benjaminites are wiped out in the conflict with only six hundred men surviving. Then, in Judges 21, aghast that the tribe of Benjamin might die out, the Israelites seek to redress this near genocide. There is a problem, however. In their anger at the events in

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<sup>8</sup> Rashi is not alone in this reading, the point is also made in the 10<sup>th</sup> century Midrash *Tanna debe Eliyahu* (Carden, 2004: 103–104).

Gibeah, the Israelites have sworn not to give their daughters to Benjaminites. However, for the tribe of Benjamin to continue, the 600 male survivors must have female partners to bear children. Conveniently, it is determined that because one town, Jabesh Gilead, had stayed out of the war, the Benjaminite men can take wives from its citizens. So the Israelites attack the town, putting all the residents to the sword. However they spare four hundred virgins who are then given to the surviving Benjaminites. That is still not enough and the remaining two hundred Benjaminite men are allowed to abduct the requisite number of women from amongst the daughters of Israel when they dance during the annual festival at Shiloh. Thus, through massacre, abduction and rape, the tribe of Benjamin is preserved.

Thus, both stories culminate with the destruction of cities and genocide; in Genesis, Sodom and its fellow cities obliterated directly by divine means<sup>9</sup>, in Judges, Gibeah and most of Benjamin, along with the hapless Jabesh Gilead, by warfare. In both stories, however, there are survivors; Lot and his daughters in Genesis, six hundred Benjaminite men in Judges. Both stories conclude with rape as a means to ensure continuance of a community. In Genesis, Lot is raped by his daughters who conceive and give birth to sons, the progenitors of the peoples of Moab and Ammon. In Judges, six hundred women are abducted to ensure the survival of the tribe of Benjamin. Thus the horror of the concubine's fate is in no way redressed by the conclusion of the Judges story. In the Genesis story, however, there is an interesting reversal of the rape image if we read the story with the understanding that Lot's daughters are the only ones truly in peril. Only angelic intervention saves them from the concubine's fate. In both stories women are the victims, subject to the power of men. However, Genesis 19 in its conclusion reverses this pattern. Lot's daughters rape their father, taking their own agency to ensure community continuity. Not only do they act but they speak too. When women speak and act in the Hebrew Scriptures it's a time to take notice. In contrast, the concubine never speaks, nor does any woman in the story of Gibeah. And while the concubine takes agency at the start of the narrative, leaving the Levite to return to her father, whatever agency she has is taken from her as the story unfolds. When we last see her she is a dismembered corpse after being betrayed by the Levite to be pack raped through the night. In Genesis, the oppressive order of Sodom and Gomorrah is overthrown. In Judges, despite mass murder and pack rape, nothing has changed. The narrative plaintively concludes "In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judg 21:25).

### **RAPE IN SODOM AND GIBEAH**

In both stories, rape and hospitality are the dominant motifs, the two forming a contrasting dyad. Rape marks the crucial turning point for both narratives. It's necessary now to explore just what rape means in the world of these narratives, and the ancient Middle Eastern world from which they came. How male rape functions in that ancient world and the cultural meanings of anal sex and the sexual penetration of males will help us address these questions:

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<sup>9</sup> In Judges 19–21, the LORD only plays a minor role, that of an oracle giving battle advice to the Israelites.

What is the threat of rape meant to communicate to the angels and the Levite, and how do Lot and the old man of Ephraim interpret the actions of the mobs?

Why are women considered preferable objects of rape?

Why, in Gibeah, is the offer of two women refused, and the offer of one woman accepted?

And what evil in Sodom and Gibeah is being expressed by way of rape that leads to genocidal divine intervention in the former case and genocidal civil war in the latter. "Exactly what is the offence that the Levite feels ought to be avenged?" (Stone, 1995: 93).

What follows is examined in greater detail in my book; this is a more abbreviated account. And a word of warning, I will be dealing frankly with sex, especially anal sex, and rape.

The biblical world is one in which women are very much subordinated to men, a pattern consistent with Mediterranean cultures. The literature indicates that, in these cultures, female subordination is crucial for male Honour. As Stone points out, "a man's Honour. . . rests in part on his ability to control the women associated with his household" (Stone, 1995: 95). Blok, in his study of adultery, cuckoldry and Honour, argues that, in Mediterranean cultures, successful "claims on a woman entail domination of other men, both from the point of view of the husband. . . and of the adulterer" (Blok, 1981: 431). A man's Honour is determined not only by the subordination of his wife but also by the control of her body and his success in maintaining exclusive sexual use of her body. The pursuit of adultery with another man's wife can therefore be a strategy to diminish that man's Honour and status.

Carol Delaney uses the term, monogenesis, to describe the cultural understanding, she found in her observations of Anatolian village life, that "it is men who give life, women merely give birth" (Delaney, 1987: 39). Procreation is understood in terms of seed and soil; the "male role is to plant the seed; the female role is to transform and bring it forth" (Delaney, 1987: 38). Women are, thus, fields that must be fenced in and possessed by men. This male ownership means that

(i)f the boundary of what is his has been penetrated or broken by someone else, he is put in the position of a woman and is therefore shamed. . . Since the seed carries the essential identity of a man, it leaves an indelible imprint which no amount of washing can erase. A woman who has sexual relations with any man other than her husband becomes physically polluted, and, through her, her husband's Honour is stained (Delaney, 1987: 40, 42).

Despite the Anatolian provenance of her work, Delaney points out that images of monogenesis run through the sacred texts of all three Middle Eastern monotheistic religions and forms the basis of

Aristotelian biology as well. For Galen, too, while he "held that male as well as the female contributed substance. . . male substance was still held to be generative and formative" (Delaney, 1987: 46).<sup>10</sup>

In such monogenetic thinking, phallocentrism is the defining mechanism of gender, and central to constructions of male sexuality. Under this phallocentric construction, to be a male is to penetrate others – women, eunuchs, and other men. Normative maleness, masculinity is defined by penetrating others not by whom one penetrates; for a male to be penetrated signifies forfeiture of masculinity and male status. Thus, Dover points out that, in ancient Athens, "the male who breaks the rules of legitimate eros," by allowing himself to be penetrated, "detaches himself from the ranks of male citizenry and classifies himself with women and foreigners" (Dover, 1978: 103). Note here the association with foreigners, especially; the penetrated male became an outsider, an alien, under the masculine hierarchy of penetration.

Greenberg's survey of male same sex eroticism in the ancient Middle East clearly exposes the power dynamics inherent in the penetration of males. Ancient Babylonian dream divination texts treat anal sex between men as a power relationship by which the dreaming penetrator is either advanced or diminished according to the status of the men he penetrates. "To penetrate someone of high social status... anally is favourable; to be involved with one's slave, unfavourable" (1988: 127). In ancient Egypt, Greenberg points out that all the texts "show the active role in anal sex between men to be one of aggression against an enemy, in which a man can take pride. The passive role, considered feminine, was regarded as shameful" (1988: 132). It's clear from Greenberg's survey that in the ancient Mediterranean world, sexually penetrating other males carried no stigma for the penetrator. Furthermore, male-male anal sex was understood as a form of aggression by which the penetrated male was feminized by the penetrator. Thus the male, penetrated by other men, is stigmatized or, to use our parlance, is "the queer." However, the male, who penetrates, is not so stigmatized; he is definitely not "the queer" but manly and "straight." Greenberg concludes his survey by pointing out that, outside "of a cult context, adult male, effeminate homosexuality was generally scorned as incompatible with the comportment expected of male citizens" (Greenberg, 1988: 183). Significantly for my argument, he also notes that male rape was employed as a form of punishment (Greenberg, 1988: 181, see also Dover, 1978: 105–6).

This pattern has continued in much of the (Moslem) Middle East. Schmitt states

. . .the most normal thing is fucking boys. For the man, the buggerer, it is perfectly normal, if he is married and a father. For the boy it is best to do it for extra-sexual benefits. . . But he must stop at about the age of 16. The longer he continues. . . the worse for his reputation. A man should not allow others to bugger him. Otherwise he loses his name, his Honour. . . (Schmitt, 1992: 7).

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<sup>10</sup> It is also through Aristotle and the Bible that monogenesis still operates as a sub-text in Western culture.

There is no shame for a male to bugger other men; his sexuality is not suspect. But for the man who is buggered it is different. Sofer quotes an Arab informant from East Jerusalem:

I was never fucked, and I will never let anyone fuck me. . . Men who let themselves get fucked are not men. They have lost their respect. . . I know of another man, whose father was fucked before getting married. When the son first heard of it, he immediately cut off contact with his. . . 60-year-old father. . . We naturally never talked about the subject in his presence, but in conversations he was sometimes referred to as Ibn al manyak i.e., son of the fucked one (Sofer, 1992: 119).

In some Middle Eastern societies, men who are fucked become a third gender associated with women (Wikan, 1977) or become transgendered such that they are almost equivalent to women (Jannsen, 1992).<sup>11</sup>

To understand how rape functions in these stories, it's important to understand that rape is not a simple expression of desire. Instead rape must be recognized as an act of (sexual) violence, grounded in issues of power, and sometimes anger (Groth et al, 1977: 1242). As an expression of power, rape of women by men is a tool for "the subjugation of women" (Higgins and Silver, 1991: 1) to male needs and male privilege (Reeves, 1989: 98). But rape of women is also a means by which men struggle for power over each other. Women can be fields where men plant their seed but women can also be bloodied fields of male contest and subjugation. We saw this most recently in Syria and Iraq with Daesh fighters subjecting Yazidi women to rape and sexual slavery.

However women do not need to be the surrogates in these male struggles. Men also rape other men. This fact is already implicit in what Delaney and Blok have highlighted about perceptions of adultery in Mediterranean cultures that, by being cuckolded, a man is sexually contaminated and bested by the other man through the wife's adulterous body. Studies of male rape have been conducted mainly in Western societies but these studies show that male rapists are primarily heterosexual men (McMullen, 1990: 118). In many cases, the perception that a man is gay/queer makes him a target of rape (McMullen, 1990: 49). Both anecdotally, and in my own experience, much anti-queer violence likewise contains an element of sexual aggression. Even if the target is heterosexual, because many male rapists set out to bring about ejaculation on the part of their victim, the effect of rape on heterosexual men leads them to doubt their sexuality (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984: 578, Groth and Burgess, 1980: 808–9, Kaufman et al, 1980: 223). In Western society, then, male rape seems to reinforce the heterosexuality of the rapist while casting that of the victim in doubt. It echoes that older phallogocentric hierarchy of penetration construction of sexuality rather than the current, Western orientation-based one. It could even be argued that male rape is another context where Western society allows male heterosexuality to include (violent, terrorizing) sexual expression with other

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<sup>11</sup> For a similar pattern of sexuality outside the Mediterranean, but Mediterranean influenced, see Lancaster [1988] on the *cochones* of Nicaragua.

males. Male rape, thus functions as a reinforcing tool of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick identifies as homosexual panic, the psycho-social process of homophobic enforcement that underpins compulsory heterosexuality. As a psycho-social process, homosexual panic ensures that

Not only must homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be the objects of "random" homophobic violence, but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual. . . . So-called "homosexual panic" is the most private, psychologized form in which many. . . western men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail (Sedgwick, 1985: 88–9).

There are two results of this double bind “first, the acute *manipulability*, through the fear of one's own “homosexuality,” of acculturated men; and second, a reservoir of potential for *violence* caused by the self-ignorance that this regime constitutively enforces” (Sedgwick, 1994: 186).

Sedgwick is describing the way the modern Western construction of sexuality based on orientation i.e. focused on the gendered subject-object of desire, enforces itself. But this process also exists to sustain the phallogentric construction of sexuality. Sofer reports the following experience of an Egyptian Israeli Jew with a Palestinian Arab man he picked up in Tel-Aviv

. . . he was going to fuck me. . . but he could not keep a hard-on. . . after a while I got tired and I wanted to stop the whole thing. He could not come while fucking me. He directed me to suck him off, but still he did not come. I then decided to put a finger in his ass hole, and he came almost immediately. He was very insulted and angry. . . Then I apologised. I said I didn't intend to do that, that it was a stupid thing to do, also telling him how masculine and manly he was. Telling him how much I enjoyed being fucked by such a real man. That I prefer to go with Arab men, like him, because they were good fuckers and real men. His anger then tempered (Sofer, 1992: 110–1).

Despite the context of male homoeroticism, I read this report as an incidence of homosexual panic with a very real potential for homophobic violence. It will help us understand the meaning of (male) rape in the Sodom and Gibeah narratives.

Sedgwick points out that homosexual panic works in Western society because all men must form relationships with each other, which can then be subject to suspicion (Sedgwick, 1994: 186). But in a society where heterosexual men are allowed certain sexual activities with other males those affinities are just as fraught with homosexual panic. In these situations it revolves around guarding the anus (and the mouth) of the man who fucks, the penetrator. Homophobic violence arises from social regimes of homosexual panic because of the desperate need to identify someone else as the queer. I made the point earlier that in a world where only the man who is fucked is queer then the queer is identified by fucking him. But if that man doesn't want to be fucked then the final resort is to rape him. The action alone is sufficient to define the queer. Consent on the part of the man being fucked would actually detract from this dynamic because the act of rape puts the rapist clearly in full control of the whole process.

Schmitt remarks of Middle Eastern society that "(i)t is the right of men to penetrate and their duty to lie on top" and that "(s)odomisation of one's slaves or of a Christian is not only sanctioned by public opinion, but by some jurists as well" (Schmitt, 1992: 3). It is also clear in reading Sofer's accounts of inter-ethnic male-male sex in modern Israel, that it is the Jewish men who are penetrated by Arab men in these accounts and not the reverse. We have seen above how in ancient Athens a male citizen who was penetrated by other men was demoted to an outsider/foreigner status. Similarly, male prostitutes were normally foreigners in ancient Athens. Male rape could even be employed to signify the victory over foreign enemies in war (Dover, 1978: 105). There would appear, therefore, to be a Mediterranean tradition of associating receptive anal intercourse with male foreigners.

In Genesis 19 the reader is forewarned that Sodom and Gomorrah are evil but not about the nature of the evil. It is not until the men of Sodom besiege Lot's house that we get an inkling of Sodomite evil. The evil is not homosexuality but abuse of strangers. Dover points out that in ancient Athens "anal penetration is treated neither as an expression of nor as a response to. . . beauty, but as an aggressive act demonstrating the superiority of the active to the passive partner" (Dover, 1978: 104). I would argue that the same attitude appears here. Thus, as the angels definitely weren't consenting, it is wrong to read the Sodomites' demand as anything else but attempted abuse of outsiders. The threatened rape of the angels is an attempt to inscribe them and all outsiders as queer and therefore not real men. In this sexual economy, it is not surprising then that Lot offers his daughters in place of his guests. The laws of hospitality demand that Lot protect the male Honour (heterosexuality) of his guests. In this world it is better that women be raped than men because rape of men takes away their heterosexuality. Nonetheless, in so offering his daughters, Lot shows himself as subscribing to the same sort of ideology as the men of Sodom. Thus, he plays the insider in addressing the mob as brothers but, to cover all options, he offers them his own daughters in lieu of his guests. However, I would suggest that if Lot's guests had women of their own then they, as female outsiders, would have been more than suitable, with or without his daughters. As the householder patriarch, his daughters are his to dispose of as he wishes, even more other women in his charge. Without such other women, however, his daughters will suffice. As we see from the Jewish sages, offering one's daughters to a rampaging mob is a typically Sodomite thing to do. Ironically,<sup>12</sup> however, by doing so he arouses the Sodomites' ire and they determine to treat him worse than his guests, because he has identified himself with the interests of outsiders and not those of fellow Sodomite insiders.

Raping outsiders inscribes them as queer, not men, and reinforces the notion of the queer as outsider. Thus, the tensions of homosexual panic amongst the men of Sodom are relieved in a way that confirms their own heterosexuality (Honour). In the words of Sofer's Egyptian Israeli Jewish informant, through rape of outsiders the Sodomites are declaring that Sodomite men are "masculine and manly... good fuckers and real men" (1992: 110–1) unlike those worthless, faggot foreigners.

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<sup>12</sup> Especially if we follow Rashi and Tana debe Eliyahu that the Sodomites accepted Lot's daughters.

Rather than reading the attempted rape of the angels as an instance of homosexual violence, therefore, I believe it should be more accurately read as an instance of xenophobic, and homophobic, violence. It is a symptom not of a homosexual or bisexual regime in Sodom but rather of the patriarchal and compulsorily heterosexual system structured on the hierarchy of penetration.

In Judges 19–21, the process is similar but with some interesting differences. While the reader is not forewarned about any evil in Gibeah, once the Levite arrives there it becomes clear that this is not a hospitable town. The Levite only receives hospitality from a resident hailing from the Levite's own country. It is because of this, I believe, that the narrative only requires some men to besiege the old man's house. The reader has already discovered that Gibeah is an unfriendly town. The other differences highlight the complicity of the old man and the Levite in what happens. Thus, the old man is like Lot in that he offers women in place of his guest. However, here he offers both his daughter and the concubine to the mob. As the patriarch-householder then all the women under his roof, both resident and transient, are his to dispose of. Also like Lot, he addresses the mob as brothers, asserting an insider status.<sup>13</sup> As with Lot, in offering the women the old man is confirmed as no better than his fellow townsfolk, but here, the rejection of the old man's offer confirms his insider status in Gibeah. Consequently, it's the Levite who throws the concubine to the mob to be pack raped in his place. To the mob, the Levite is clearly an outsider; the concubine is his woman, sharing his outsider status. She is, therefore, a suitable substitute while the old man's daughter is not. The rape of the concubine serves to show, more clearly, that the intent of the mob is not homo/sexual. The concubine serves the mob's intentions just as well as the Levite (also demonstrating the blurred boundaries between homophobia and misogyny). As far as the mob is concerned, the concubine belongs to the Levite and so, putting it bluntly, the Levite is made queer by the rape of his woman. It is for that reason that the old man's offer is initially rejected by the mob. His daughter belongs to him and not to the Levite, and so cannot serve as a substitute.

Hubris caught up with the Sodomites in that Lot's guests were angels and thus agents of divine judgement. Hubris catches up with the townsmen of Gibeah in that their intended victim is a fellow Israelite. This attack on a fellow Israelite is what inspires the angry reaction of the assembly of Israel. If a Jebusite or other non-Israelite had reported the same events, I doubt that there would have been the same outrage. In other words, the men of Gibeah are treating fellow Israelites like foreigners. Rape here signifies a breach of ethnic solidarity. It is only fitting, therefore, that as the men of Gibeah rush into rape, Israel rushes into civil war.<sup>14</sup>

To conclude this section then, the rape of travelers, outsiders, in Sodom is an act of violence intended to demean them and de-man them, to publicly make them queer for all to behold. Its purpose

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<sup>13</sup> As a fellow Israelite, at the very least.

<sup>14</sup> These events of the rape of the concubine and the Israelite civil war parallel the events of Joshua 22: 10–34, the near civil war between the Israelites in the Promised Land of the Cisjordan and the two and a half tribes of the Transjordan. In this account the central concern is ethnic solidarity, who is Israel and who is not, triggered by suspected idolatry or apostasy from the cultic order.

is obvious, to warn foreigners to stay away. It's a bright flashing sign to say FOREIGNERS ARE NOT WELCOME HERE. Reading this as an act of uncontrolled homosexual desire, as so many generations of Christians have, really misses the point. That point is made exquisitely clear by the 14<sup>th</sup> century Spanish rabbi, Yitzchak Arama. In his Torah commentary he says:

Their (the Sodomites) main concern was their unwillingness to share their wealth. Their / 'chet', criminal act, as distinct from their wickedness 'raah', namely the raping of strangers was incidental and not basic to their character. We can then understand Ezekiel, who proclaimed that the sin of Sodom was that they would not help the poor and destitute. . . Ezeqiel (sic) does not bother to mention that sin (rape of strangers), since it was not endemic to their character, and could have been atoned for (Arama, 1986: 147).

### **SODOM, AND GIBEAH, IN SECOND TEMPLE TIMES**

Arama's point underscores a key understanding of scripture in Rabbinic Judaism. The central revelation is the Torah of Moses, the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures are understood as commentary on Torah. Hence, subsequent commentary is guided or informed by this original scriptural commentary. As the other part of my brief is to address the reference to Sodom in the Epistle of Jude, I must locate Jude in that sea of scripture/commentary of the Second Temple era from which Christianity was born. In this section, I will address references to Sodom, and one to Gibeah, in Jewish and Christian scriptures, and in what I term para-biblical scriptures, the world of the Pseudepigrapha, texts mostly preserved by Christians. I don't intend to discuss every reference to Sodom in detail. Most of them are general and none of these general references give any specific indication of Sodom's evil. For most of these references, Sodom is an example of desolation, a place destroyed by the LORD for sin or a warning example to Israel of not doing right in the eyes of the LORD. In the Latter Prophets (e.g. Isaiah 3:9, Jeremiah 49:18, Lamentations 4:6<sup>15</sup>, Amos 4:11, Hosea 11:8, and also Deuteronomy 29:22–23), Sodom is frequently used as a point of comparison for Israel's own sins and to warn of its own eventual destruction. We see this in Christian prophecy, too. In Revelation 11:8, the seer refers to Jerusalem as Sodom because there the "Lord was crucified" and there the beast kills the two witnesses who prophecy with divine authority at the end time. Sodom is the archetypal place where evil oppresses the good.

However, my discussion will survey a range of texts that identify or at least suggest the evil for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. On the one hand, texts such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Wisdom, Sirach, 3 Maccabees, and Luke encourage a view that the cities of the plain were proud or oppressive and/or inhospitable to strangers. I will begin my survey with those. I will then turn to Jubilees (16:5–9, 20:5–6) and multiple passages in Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, which specifically link sex to the evil of Sodom. Some of these passages also link Sodom with the story,

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<sup>15</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations is included in the Writings/Kethubim and not the Prophets. Christian Bibles, however, include Lamentations in their Prophetic corpus, immediately following Jeremiah.

found in Genesis 6, Jubilees 5, and 1 Enoch 6–11,<sup>16</sup> of the angels/Watchers who come to earth to mate with human women, thus generating the Giants. The depredations of the Giants and the ensuing oppression, and corruption, of humans bring on the Deluge. Interestingly, Sirach and 3 Maccabees similarly link Sodom with the Flood and the Giants but without sexual connotations. In the Christian New Testament, however, with Jude and 2 Peter we find clear associations of sex and Sodom's sin, as in Jubilees and the Testaments, and likewise linked to the Flood, the Watchers, and the Giants. Jude even quotes 1 Enoch. When we examine the pseudepigraphal literature it becomes clear that the main concern is idolatry and exogamy. Specifically the Sodomites and the Watchers exemplify the consequences of crossing the boundaries of the human and angelic. In both cases catastrophe ensues. For Israel, exogamy or intermarriage with Gentiles is a similar crossing of boundaries that leads to Israel abandoning the Torah, the Mosaic covenant, to fall into idolatry, thus leading to catastrophe – invasion, occupation, deportation, and exile. In 2 Peter and Jude the same sort of warning is made to the Christian audiences, this time, to warn against false prophets and teachers, who spread division, and lead believers to abandon eternal life in Christ.

I begin my survey with the texts identifying the sins of Sodom as greed, arrogance, abuse of the poor and outsider, or highlight the virtue of hospitality. In Isaiah 1:9, Jerusalem is reassured that, unlike Sodom and Gomorrah, the LORD will preserve a remnant from Zion. In verse 10, the rulers of Jerusalem are addressed as rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah, at the opening of a long polemic condemning the official cult and calling the rulers back to justice. This justice is described in verse 17 as to "seek justice, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." Verses 21–23 contain a further denunciation of the evil of Zion specifically for murder, theft, bribery and ignoring the plight of the widow and orphan. The linkage of Sodom with these sins of Zion indicates most strongly that, in Isaiah, Sodom and Gomorrah are understood as places of oppressive power where the rights of the poor and weak are trampled on or, at best, ignored. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel similarly compare Jerusalem to Sodom for the injustice that rules in both. However, both deploy the metaphor of adultery to underline but also give a sexual quality to Zion's infidelity to the LORD and his Torah. Jeremiah 23:14 condemns the false prophets of Jerusalem saying that they "commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers so that no one turns from wickedness." As a result both prophets and people have become like Sodom and Gomorrah. Adultery is a strong poetic metaphor for unfaithfulness to the LORD, through strengthening the hands of evildoers and thus abandoning the Law. The false prophets do not decry but encourage this apostasy. However, Jeremiah 22:11–17 provides a more concrete picture of Jerusalem's evil and wickedness. These verses are addressed to Shallum, King Josiah's son, and condemn Shallum's unrighteousness – he has withheld wages from workers (22:13), he is dishonest, he is guilty of shedding innocent blood, and of general oppression

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Enoch, Jubilees and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs are regarded as pseudepigraphal; however 1 Enoch and Jubilees are included as canonical in the Ethiopian Bible of both the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches and the Beta Israel Ethiopian Jews.

and violence (22:17). In contrast, his father Josiah practiced justice and righteousness and “judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well” (22:15–16). It’s clear then that the question of injustice and abuse of the poor is paramount in Jeremiah’s condemnation. The false prophets are targeted as active collaborators in the injustices perpetrated by Shallun and other members of the ruling classes, by which Jerusalem, which should be a beacon of the LORD's justice, has been transformed into a Sodom. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel 16 also uses the metaphor of adultery; Jerusalem is an adulterous wife, flagrant in her adultery. But Jerusalem is then compared unfavorably to both Samaria and Sodom in verses 16:46–58. As Yitzchak Arama pointed out, Ezekiel’s comparison of Jerusalem with Sodom clearly identifies sins of social injustice as paramount:

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it (Ezekiel 16:49–50).

Here again we get an image of a rich and powerful society/class that oppresses the poor. Wealth has made them proud such that they do not try to hide their crimes.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Ezekiel goes on to declare in verse 51 that Jerusalem has made Sodom and Samaria both look righteous. In the concluding verses of this passage, the LORD even promises to restore both Sodom and Samaria so as to reveal fully Jerusalem's evil to the world.

Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and 3 Maccabees aren’t included in Hebrew or Protestant Bibles but they are canonical in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, and I turn to them next. Wisdom of Solomon contains two references to Sodom. In Wisdom chapter 10, an account of Wisdom as Savior and of Her saving acts in history, the text relates how Wisdom saved Lot. While he is not named, he is described as a righteous man while the residents of the “Five Cities” are described as “ungodly” (*asebōn*) people who “passed Wisdom by” and “were hindered from recognizing the good”. Thus their land is left a “continuing waste” as “evidence of their wickedness (*ponērias*)” (Wis 10:6–8). This word translated by wickedness, *ponērias*, also has meanings of knavery, general vice, and cowardice. According to Liddell-Scott-Jones (1940: 1447), Thucydides uses it in The Peloponnesian War (8.47.2) to portray Athenian democracy as a form of mob rule. Certainly the siege of Lot's house in Genesis 19 is a strong example of such mass mob rule. There is nothing specifically sexual conveyed in this passage. Wisdom’s second reference to Sodom occurs in chapter 19, a retelling of the Exodus from Egypt. Verses 13–17, compare the Egyptians to Sodom, on the grounds of their shared inhospitality and abuse of strangers. Egypt and Sodom share “bitter hatred of strangers” (19:13). The Sodomites refuse

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<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Josephus, writing in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE said of the Sodomites: “Now about this time the Sodomites, overweeningly proud of their numbers and the extent of their wealth, showed themselves insolent to men and impious to the Divinity, inasmuch that they no more remembered the benefits that they had received from him, hated foreigners (*misoxenoi*) and declined all intercourse with others (*kai tas pros allous homilias ektrepesthai*)” [*Antiquities* I:194]. Of the attack on the angels, he says “on seeing these young men of remarkably fair appearance whom Lot had taken under his roof, were bent only on violence and outrage to their youthful beauty” [*Antiquities* I:200]. Wealth, greed, impiety, hatred of outsiders, and violence are the key elements of their crimes and the cause of their destruction.

to receive strangers (19:14) or, if admitted to Sodom, strangers are received with hostility (19:15). However, the Egyptians are worse than the Sodomites because they “made slaves of guests who were their benefactors” (19:14). Joseph, through his wise stewardship, saw Egypt safely through the exigencies of famine and because of Joseph, the Israelites, the family of Jacob, settle in Egypt. The Egyptians “first received them with festal celebrations” but “afterward afflicted with terrible sufferings those who had already shared the same rights” (19:16). By doing so they showed themselves worse than the Sodomites because, while the Sodomites sinned by abusing strangers, they at least made no pretense of hating outsiders. Verse 17 even compares the ninth plague of Egypt—darkness—with the blindness the angels inflicted on the men of Sodom. For the author of Wisdom, then, there is clearly no association of sexual sin with Sodom, instead, like Egypt of the Exodus, Sodom is a place of injustice and oppression. Nevertheless, the Egyptians were worse than Sodom because they abandoned the practice of hospitality, turning on the strangers, the Israelites, whom they initially made welcome and who, through Joseph, had been their benefactors.<sup>18</sup>

Like Wisdom of Solomon, the brief references to Sodom in Sirach and 3 Maccabees contain no sexual element, but, unlike Wisdom, the issue of pride, not hospitality, is key. Both texts say the cities are destroyed for their pride and arrogance (*hyperēphanian*). The texts are significant too because like Jubilees, the Testaments, 2 Peter and Jude, both Sirach and 3 Maccabees link the destruction of Sodom with the destruction of the giants and the Flood but without the sexual overtones we find in the former. Sirach refers to Sodom in 16:1–23, listing examples from the past of the deity’s determination to punish wrongdoing. Sodom and the giants are paired in this list as explicit examples of disobedience, the giants “who revolted in their might” and “the neighbors of Lot... on account of their arrogance (*hyperēphanian*)” (Sir 16:7–8). Similarly in 3 Maccabees chapter 2, the high priest, Simon, prays for the deity’s aid against Ptolemy Philopator. He gives examples of past divine intervention to destroy those who commit injustice (*adikian*). These examples include the “giants who

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<sup>18</sup> This analogy of Sodom and Egypt is also found in the later Samaritan text, the *Memar Marqah*, a life of Moses. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is invoked at the very beginning, describing Moses’ call at the burning bush. Moses is described as discoursing with an angel and this event is compared to earlier angelic visitations including the incident of Abraham and the three at Mamre and the two visitors of Lot in Sodom [MM I§1]. Later in Book I, a celebratory poem extols Moses and Aaron by comparing them to the angels who went to Sodom

How excellent to see them enter Egypt like the two angels who entered Sodom!

The two angels entered Sodom at eventide, sent to open the storehouse of wrath upon all the inhabitants therein.

Moses and Aaron entered Egypt at eventide, sent to open the storehouse of judgement therein.

The angels were sent to destroy Sodom. Moses and Aaron were sent to destroy Egypt.

The angels ate unleavened bread in Sodom. Moses and Aaron celebrated the feast of unleavened bread in Egypt.

The angels burnt the young in the deep. Moses and Aaron smote Pishon, tributary of Eden.

The angels drove Lot out in the morning. Moses and Aaron led the Israelites out before morning [MM I§3].

This remarkable poem is an even stronger comparison of Sodom and Egypt than the one in Wisdom 19. The events at Sodom, in the *Memar Marqah*, almost foreshadow the events of the first Passover.

trusted in their strength and boldness” and “the people of Sodom who acted arrogantly” (*hyperēphanian*) and were notorious for their vices (*kakiais*) (3 Macc 2:4–5). In neither Sirach nor 3 Maccabees, do these stories exemplify sexual misconduct.

This image of Sodom as a paragon or byword of inhospitality also appears in chapter 10 of Luke's gospel.<sup>19</sup> The periscope presents Jesus sending seventy disciples off on a campaign of preaching and healing. They are to carry "no purse, no bag, no sandals" (10:4) but must be completely reliant on the hospitality offered them on their way. Whatever house they enter they must extend peace to all within and if they are welcomed they must remain "in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide" (10:7). The image of the hospitable house shifts to that of the hospitable town in verse 8. Jesus charges the disciples that if they are welcomed by a town they are to "eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (10:9). But if the disciples come to a town where they aren't welcomed they are to say instead "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." Jesus then continues, "I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town" (10:10–12). In Luke, healing and the preaching of the kingdom are only offered in return for hospitality. The disciples must test the commitment to hospitality of the townsfolk. Those towns that do not offer hospitality are not only ineligible to receive the gifts of the kingdom, they have shown themselves to be like Sodom. Indeed these towns are worse. Sodom did not welcome strangers, but these towns denied the emissaries of the coming kingdom of god. Without hospitality, the kingdom cannot come. This Lucan pericope relies on Sodom as the archetype of inhospitality for its force.

I will now turn to the texts that clearly link sex with the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jubilees and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. As I said earlier, some passages in these two texts link Sodom and Gomorrah with the Flood, specifically with the account of the fallen angels, the Watchers, who come down to earth and take human women as wives, becoming the progenitors of the Giants. These events lead to the corruption of the earth and its inhabitants and thus to the world destroying Flood. Genesis 6 provides a stub or minimalist account of the broader story. The “sons of God” take wives from the daughters of men from which unions came “the heroes of old, warriors of renown” (Gen 6:4). While the passage states that violence and corruption increase on the earth it's not clearly stated why. The Jubilees version is similarly brief but more consistent. Here, explicitly, angels take human wives, the giants are their offspring. As a result “(w)ickedness increased on the earth” all living beings having “corrupted their way and their prescribed course” (Jub 5:2). This universal corruption stirs the deity to send the Flood to cleanse the earth of this corruption. Before the Flood,

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 10 contains an almost identical periscope, except that, for Matthew, Sodom is more representative of general iniquity, thus, by comparison, highlighting even more Luke's stress on hospitality. In the Matthean version, however, Sodom represents the epitome of general evildoers who will still fare better in the final reckoning than those who reject the message of the kingdom. Matthew uses Sodom again as the epitome of evildoers in a second and similar pericope [Matt, 11:20–24]. In neither of these periscopes does Sodom have any sexual associations.

the deity sends his sword to completely annihilate the giants in a separate extermination, while the angels are bound in the depths of the earth after witnessing the extirpation of their children. The longest account is in 1 Enoch 6–11. Here, clearly angelic heavenly beings, the Watchers, are consumed with desire for human women and descend from the heavenly realm to earth to have sex with them. The giants are born from these unions, and they proceed to oppress humanity and all the earth with their violence. At the same time, the Watchers corrupt humanity, teaching them forbidden knowledge, so that they abandon justice and give way to “godlessness and violence” (1 Enoch 9:1). As in Jubilees, the giants are extirpated, being driven to war amongst themselves by the archangel Gabriel, the Watchers are imprisoned in the depths, while the Flood is sent to cleanse the earth of all corruption. Unlike Jubilees, however, 1 Enoch makes no mention of Sodom and Gomorrah in its account of the Watchers and the Flood nor anywhere else in the book.

As a retelling of Genesis, Jubilees briefly relates the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 16. They are destroyed because “they were savage and very sinful, (that) they would defile themselves, commit sexual sins in their flesh, and do what was impure on the earth” (Jub 16:5). Then follows this warning “The Lord will execute judgement in the places where people commit the same sort of impure actions as Sodom – just like the judgement on Sodom” (Jub 16:6). The text continues with the delivery of Lot. He is rescued only because of his kinship with Abraham (Jub 16:6) but then he and his daughters “committed a sin on the earth which had not occurred on the earth from the time of Adam until his time because the man lay with his daughters” (Jub 16:7). This never before seen father daughter incest completes the picture of Sodom as a place of sexual chaos and immorality; incest is highlighted here as an epitome of that chaos.

The second association of Sodom and Gomorrah with the giants appears in Jubilees 20:5–6 as part of Abraham’s final testament to all his sons and grandsons. Here sexual impurity and uncleanness are linked to Sodom’s destruction and the Flood, as Abraham urges his sons to stay faithful to the covenant with the LORD and not succumb to idolatry and exogamy. Abraham begins his speech saying that they should “keep the way of the Lord... and do what is just and right on the earth; that they should circumcise their sons in the covenant which He had made with them” and keep themselves from “all uncleanness and sexual impurity” (Jub 20: 3). He then links sexual immorality with exogamy stating “any woman or girl among you commits a sexual offence, burn her in fire; they are not to commit sexual offences (by) following their eyes and their hearts so that they take wives for themselves from the Canaanite women, because the descendants of Canaan will be uprooted from the earth” (Jub 20: 4). Abraham then invokes both Sodom and the giants as a warning “He told them about the punishment of the giants and the punishment of Sodom – how they were condemned because of their wickedness; because of the sexual impurity, uncleanness, and corruption among themselves they died in their sexual impurity” (Jub 20: 5). So they must keep themselves “from all sexual impurity and uncleanness, and from all the contamination of sin” otherwise they “will be

accursed like Sodom, and all who remain of you like the people of Gomorrah” (Jub 20: 6). Then follows an exhortation against idolatry:

love the God of heaven and hold fast to all His commandments. Do not follow their idols, and their uncleanness. Do not make for yourselves gods that are molten images or statues because they are something empty and have no spirit in them. For they are made by hands, and all who trust in them all, trust in nothing at all. Rather, worship the most high God and bow to him continually (Jub 20: 7–9).

Reading these verses alongside the accounts of both the giants and the Flood in Jubilees 5, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Jubilees 16, Abraham's admonitions warn that Israel's way is to adhere to the covenant with the Most High. Sexual immorality leads to inter-marriage with Gentiles. Inter-marriage with Gentiles is itself a form of sexual immorality, the one leads to the other. By not adhering to the covenant, Israel's way, both these forms of sexual immorality lead to the full corruption of Israel's "prescribed course", the complete abandonment of the covenant through idolatry. In the days of the Flood generation, the angels departed from their prescribed course by taking human women as wives. The attempted rape of the angels in Sodom is a departure in reverse from the human prescribed course through humans attempting sex with angelic beings. That is not to say that same sex desire might not here be implicitly understood to be a sin of Sodom. If so, however, it is neither exclusively nor explicitly associated with the Cities of the Plain but is simply part of a more general climate of sexual immorality that both represents and results in the corruption of the prescribed human course, causing the destruction of Sodom, and the corruption of Lot. In this way, Sodom and Gomorrah, like the Flood and the giants, stand as the cautionary metaphor warning against the twin and related evils of idolatry, sexual immorality, and exogamy, not same sex desire.

These themes of idolatry and exogamy are crucial for understanding the four references to Sodom and Gomorrah in Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (T12P). Unsurprisingly, T12P likewise associates Sodom with sexual immorality, and in the Testament of Naphtali links Sodom with the Watchers of 1 Enoch to underline the point. Unlike Jubilees, T12P also includes an explicit condemnation of one form of same sex desire, specifically pederasty (*paidophthoroi*) (T. Levi 17:11). It stands out in comparison to these Sodom passages, however, because the verse does not associate pederasty (or same sex desire) with Sodom and Gomorrah (or with the Watchers and the Flood). In discussing the Sodom passages in T12P, I will argue, therefore, that associating same sex desire as the presenting issue here misses the point. Linked with the Watchers, Sodom and Gomorrah highlight, as in Jubilees, the twin concerns of exogamy, inter-marriage with Gentiles, and idolatry. In the times of the Flood and in Sodom and Gomorrah, there was a departure from the prescribed course of the angelic and the human resulting in catastrophe. So will it be for Israel too, if Israel abandons the Law, its prescribed course, through exogamy and idolatry. The crossing of angelic human boundaries, the prescribed courses of what is human and angelic, is a metaphor for this exogamy.

The Testaments portray the sons of Jacob giving their final words to their children. These speeches are a combination of exhortation, warning, and predictions of Israel's future. In particular, they exhort their children to hold to the Law and remain faithful to the Lord. But the children are also told that they will fail to do so and the consequences of this failure. Kee says that the Law in T12P is “. . . a virtual synonym for wisdom. . . universal in its application. . . and... equated with natural law” (Kee, 1983: 780).) He also points out that sexual promiscuity is the “grossest” sin in the Testaments and that women are portrayed there as “inherently evil” always enticing men into sin (1985: 779). In Testament of Reuben, women actively entice and encourage the Watchers to their fall

Accordingly, my children, flee from sexual promiscuity, and order your wives and your daughters not to adorn their heads and appearances so as to deceive men's minds. For every woman who schemes in these ways is destined for eternal punishment. For thus it was they charmed the Watchers, who were before the Flood. As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their minds. Then they were transformed into human males. . . (T.Reu. 5:4–6).

Two of the T12P Sodom references, explicitly link sexual immorality with exogamy, intermarriage with and becoming like the Gentiles, and abandonment of the Law. Thus in Testament of Levi, we read "You teach the Lord's commands out of greed for gain; married women you profane; you have intercourse with whores and adulteresses" (T.Levi 14:6). Even worse, "You take gentile women for your wives (purifying them with an unlawful purification) and your sexual relations will become like Sodom and Gomorrah (in ungodliness)" (T.Levi 14:6). Here, marriage to Gentile women is a 'sodomy'<sup>20</sup> and follows on directly from abandoning the Law through impiety and sexual immorality. Promiscuity is the central issue, too, in the Testament of Benjamin. In chapter 8, the patriarch exhorts his children to "flee evil-doing, envy, and hatred of brothers, and cling to goodness and love" (T.Benj. 8:1). Then follows this advice "(h)e that has a pure mind in love, does not look after a woman with a view to fornication (porneian); for he has no defilement in his heart, because the Spirit of God rests upon him " (T.Benj. 8:2). But then in chapter 9 comes this warning "you will be sexually promiscuous like the promiscuity of the Sodomites (*porneusetē gar porneian Sodomōn*) and will perish, with few exceptions. You shall resume your actions with loose women" (T.Benj. 9:1). This passage could possibly refer to the events at Gibeah because it continues "the kingdom of the Lord will not be among you, for he will take it away forthwith" (T.Benj. 9:1).

Charles argues that the reference to the kingdom being taken away refers to the rise of David replacing Saul and his line (Charles T12P, 1908: 210). Bailey then reads the whole verse as a prediction of the outrage at Gibeah making it responsible for the loss of the monarchy to Benjamin

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<sup>20</sup> I use this word cautiously. The word sodomy, *sodomia* in Latin, was invented in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century CE by the reforming monk, Peter Damian, in his treatise, *Book of Gomorrah*, a call for reform of the Church and its clergy. For Peter Damian, *sodomia* referred to all male-male sexual activity. Prior to his semantic move, anal sex, especially between men, was termed sinning as the Sodomites. All other male-male sexual activity was considered sinful but not Sodomitic. See Carden 165 – 68, 17 –180; see also Jordan, 1997.

(Saul) in favor of Judah (David) (Bailey, 1955: 19). If that is the case, then, as the men of Gibeah rape the concubine, what links the Benjaminites with Sodom is the violence and lack of restraint, the lawless mob nature of the promiscuity (*porneia*), not same sex desire itself.<sup>21</sup> It's also worth noting that the reference to "loose women" here may infer that the concubine herself is responsible for the events at Gibeah, an inference consistent with misogynistic philosophy of T12P.<sup>22</sup> One more feature of this warning is that Benjamin introduces it with "(f)rom the words of Enoch the Righteous" (T.Benj. 9:1). As I said earlier, 1 Enoch makes no mention of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor of Benjamin, and certainly not of Gibeah. Is the citing of Enoch meant to invoke the (lawless?) days of the Watchers, Giants, and the Flood in association with Sodom? The rest of chapter 9, a summary account of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ, provides no answer. A Christian hand has been at work here and in the following 2 chapters as well. So while the Testaments are Jewish in origin, predating the Christian era, this chapter has been interpolated and changed so we don't really know what followed in the Jewish text.

The remaining two T12P Sodom references, in the Testaments of Asher and Naphtali, don't highlight sexual immorality. Instead, apostasy and idolatry are the main issues of concern. As mentioned earlier, one of these references, a long passage in the Testament of Naphtali, links Sodom with the Watchers, the Flood, and Enoch as well. In the Testament of Asher, the patriarch warns his children against "becoming like Sodom" which "perished for not recognizing the Lord's angels" (T.Ash. 7:1). Abandoning the Law seems to be the issue here because he continues "I know that you will sin and be delivered into the hands of your enemies; your land shall be made desolate and your sanctuary wholly polluted" (T.Ash. 7: 2). But the only act identified in the passage is not recognizing the Lord's angels. Turning to the final reference, the lengthy passage in the Testament of Naphtali (T.Naph. 3:1–4:2), we discover what this not recognizing angels might mean. The passage opens with an exhortation to adhere to the Law and not turn to idolatry. Abandoning the Law by embracing idolatry is abandoning Israel's order. Naphtali puts this in cosmic terms:

Sun, moon and stars do not alter their order (*taxin*); thus you should not alter the Law of God by the disorder (*ataxia*) of your actions. The gentiles, because they wandered astray and forsook the Lord, have changed the order (*taxin*), and have devoted themselves to stones and sticks, patterning themselves after wandering spirits. But you, my children, shall not be like that (T.Naph. 3:2–3).

Israel's order is the Law and its relationship with God. If the luminaries and stars don't change their order, neither should Israel. The Gentiles abandoned the Lord and changed their order (of piety?),

<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Testament of Naphtali 4:1 warns against this "lawlessness (*anomian*) of Sodom " [T.Naph. 4:1], see below.

<sup>22</sup> Only one ancient text, Pseudo Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, links Sodom with Gibeah in its retelling of Judges 19–21. Pseudo Philo also explicitly states that the concubine's fate is a punishment for her sinning sexually with Gentiles. I discuss this text below.

devoting themselves to stones and sticks, idolatry. In so doing they followed the wandering spirits, the Watchers. The passage continues

in all the products of his workmanship discern the Lord who made all things, so that you do not become like Sodom, which departed from the order of nature (*enēllaxe taxin physeōs*). Likewise the Watchers departed from nature's order (*enēllaxan taxin physeōs*); the Lord pronounced a curse on them at the Flood. On their account he ordered that the earth be without dweller or produce (T.Naph. 3:4–5).

Both Sodom and the Watchers are likened for having gone against/departed from the order of nature, the Watchers being consequently cursed by the deity. I would argue that the issue here is again that of crossing the boundaries of the human and the angelic or semi/divine. The Watchers married human women, departing from their natural angelic order to become human, and were condemned. Changing their nature this way was a violent rupture and consequently violence spread across the earth resulting in its destruction. The men of Sodom desired Lot's guests, angels, and in acting on those desires they deliberately departed from their natural human order too, by their violence they rebelled against it in fact, and perished. The Gentiles are like both because they abandoned the Lord and turned to idolatry. They have gone astray like the Watchers did. The passage concludes citing Enoch (c.f. Testament of Benjamin) and warning once more against the lawlessness of Sodom to predict Israel's fate:

I say these things, my children, because I have read in the writing of holy Enoch that you also will stray from the Lord, living in accord with every wickedness of the gentiles and committing every lawlessness (anomial) of Sodom. The Lord will impose captivity upon you; you shall serve your enemies there. . . (T.Naph. 4: 1–2).

For Israel, the Law and the associated relationship with the deity are its nature. But Israel will abandon the Law and its Lord to live just like the Gentiles, epitomized by Sodom, in lawlessness and idolatry. For that they will be punished by destruction, exile, and captivity.

In T12P, the references to Sodom associate sexual promiscuity, intermarriage with the gentiles, and idolatry. All of these acts change the order of Israel's nature, the Law, by making Israel like the Gentiles who changed their way to become lost in idolatry. Even worse for Israel, abandoning the Law, abandoning its God leads to destruction. Israel acts like Sodom by pursuing sexual immorality and exogamy. Sodom also gave in to sexual immorality not recognizing the Lord's angels, thus breaching the natural order leading to destruction. The Sodomites are paired with the Watchers as supreme examples of those who change their order, violently transgressing the natural boundaries, and perish as a result. The transgression lies in crossing the boundaries of the human and the angelic, which becomes the metaphor for abandonment of the Law, idolatry and intermarriage with the gentiles. Abandonment of the Law, in fact, derives from and results in porneia, sexual immorality, giving rise to both exogamy and idolatry, all facilitating each other. Alteration of nature leads to catastrophe such as was sent on the flood generation, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and upon the Israelites themselves by the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and consequent deportations

(T.Naph. 4:1–2). There is a symmetry between Sodom and the Watchers that makes sense in terms of crossing human and angelic boundaries in a way that reading Sodom as a site of same sex desire does not. Eron states that “the overriding concern of T. 12 Patr is to admonish its audience to remain faithful to God and loyal to God’s ways. . . . Sexual desire, porneia, was seen as one of the powerful forces that draw men away from God” (Eron, 1990: 37). T12P is a misogynistic text addressed to an audience of men. The story of the Watchers is one of angelic beings and women, however in Sodom the reverse occurs – angelic beings and men. As a parallel to the Watchers story, Sodom portrays human males steeped in lawlessness (*anomian*) and porneia such that they are blind to the angelic nature of Lot’s visitors. In so doing their fates are sealed and the cities are destroyed. In the gendered and misogynous world of T12P, the story of the Watchers serves as a warning to men of the dangers of not controlling their wives and daughters (c.f. T.Reu. 5:4–6) and allowing them to surrender to porneia. Similarly, the story of Sodom serves as a warning of the dangers for men of surrendering to porneia, of not controlling themselves, the result of abandoning the Law.

Questions of idolatry and exogamy are also key to Pseudo Philo’s retelling of Judges 19–21 in the *Biblical Antiquities (Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum)*. Unlike Sirach, 3 Maccabees, Jubilees, and T12P, however, Pseudo Philo makes no mention of the Watchers or the Flood events at all.<sup>23</sup> Pseudo Philo’s version clearly links Sodom with Gibeah but changes the story in ways to highlight issues of hospitality and violence as well. So when the Levite comes to the town he has already sought and been denied hospitality elsewhere in Benjaminite territory (Ps-Phil: 45:1). The old man is himself a Levite not just someone from Ephraim. When he first encounters the Levite he says:

You do not know the wickedness (*maliciam*) of those who dwell in this city. And who persuaded you to enter here? Get out of here in a hurry and enter my house where I dwell, and stay there today; and the Lord will shut up their heart before us as he shut up the Sodomites before Lot (*et Dominus concludet cor eorum ante nos, sicut conclusit Sodomitas ante conspectum Loth*) (Ps-Phil: 45:2).

The townsfolk are thus likened to the Sodomites at the start of Pseudo Philo’s account. When the townsmen attack the old man’s house they demand all the Levite’s party with threats of violence but without any sexual inferences. The old man pleads on behalf of his guests but does not offer his daughter or the concubine. Instead he invokes a common Israelite status with the townsmen. However they rebuke the old man for doing so. They call him an outsider, thus denying any ethnic solidarity with him. They then break into the house and drive out the Levite and the concubine. The Levite is released, but the mob keeps the concubine and rapes her, resulting in her death (Ps-Phil: 45:3). At this point exogamy and sexual immorality are foregrounded in the concubine’s rape murder. The Deity allowed it “because she had transgressed against her man once when she committed sin with the Amalekites... the LORD God delivered her into the hands of sinners” (Ps-Phil: 45:3). At no stage,

<sup>23</sup> Pseudo Philo’s history simply restricts itself to the Genesis 6 account and relates nothing of the Watchers or the giants and their role in bringing on the Flood.

however, do the townsmen show any sexual interest in the Levite. The crime is portrayed as an act of mob violence with no specifically sexual motivation. In Pseudo Philo's account of the civil war, idolatry then becomes the main issue. Pseudo Philo reads Judges 17 as a tale of Israelite idolatry. The civil war thus becomes a divine punishment for Israel not acting to prevent or punish this idolatry. Pseudo Philo's reference to Sodom clearly draws on the biblical tradition, the sins of Sodom according to the Latter Prophets and Wisdom of Solomon. While Pseudo Philo is not interested in the Watchers and the Flood, as Jubilees and T12P are, Sodom is linked with Gibeah to underscore the issues of exogamy and idolatry, as well as hatred of outsiders.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, I don't think that, in all these references to Sodom and Gomorrah, homosexuality is specifically condemned or employed as a metaphor for abandonment of the Law, idolatry and intermarriage with the Gentiles. I have no doubt that male same sex relations were considered to be a form of illicit sexual desire in Second Temple Judaism and subsequently in early Christianity. However, I would not base my argument on references to Sodom and Gomorrah in the parabiblical literature of the period unless those references are clearly associated with same sex love and desire. For an example of a text that does make this explicit link, we need only turn to the writings of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. He makes frequent references to the events of Genesis 18–19 throughout his writings and specifically identifies Sodom's sin as same sex desire. In his treatise, *On Abraham*, he describes the degeneration of the Sodomite men through same sex desire, prompting the Deity to intervene and destroy the cities of the plain to prevent the spread of this corruption to the rest of humanity:

in their mad lust for women... they (violated) the marriages of their neighbors... also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature which the active partner shares with the passive; and so when they tried to beget children they were discovered to be incapable of any but a sterile seed. Yet the discovery availed them not so much stronger was the force of the lust (*epithumias*) which mastered them. Then, as little by little they accustomed those who were by nature to submit to play the part of women, they saddled them with the formidable curse of a female disease. For not only did they emasculate their bodies by luxury and voluptuousness but they worked a further degeneration in their souls and, as far as in them lay, were corrupting the whole of mankind... God, moved by pity for mankind whose Savior and Lover He was... abominated and extinguished this unnatural and forbidden intercourse, and those who lusted for such He cast forth and chastised with punishments... startling and extraordinary, newly created for this purpose. He bade the air grow suddenly overclouded and pour forth a great rain, but fire not of water. . . . And when the flame had utterly consumed all that was visible and above ground it penetrated right

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<sup>24</sup> Josephus likewise changes his account of the events at Gibeah but his changes play down the similarities to Sodom, and issues of hospitality denied, turning the story into one of unrequited marital love and unrestrained heterosexual desire [*Antiquities* V:136–175].

down into the earth itself, destroying its inherent life-power and reducing it to complete sterility (*Ab.* 135–40).

Nowhere in *On Abraham* or elsewhere in his writings, does Philo associate Sodom and Gomorrah with the Flood, the Watchers, the giants, or Enoch (nor does he refer to Gibeah). Nor do Sodom and Gomorrah epitomize for him injustice and hatred of outsiders. Nor does he use sexual immorality in Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning against intermarriage with Gentiles. He stands alone at the turn of the era in his explicitly homophobic interpretation of Genesis 18–19. One could even say he pioneers it.

## **SODOM AND THE WATCHERS IN 2 PETER AND JUDE—A PATTERN OF ANGELS**

Having surveyed the ancient literature I can now turn to the Sodom reference in Jude’s epistle. Like Sirach, 3 Maccabees, Jubilees and T12P, Jude pairs Sodom with the fallen angels/Watchers. However, Jude is not the only New Testament epistle to reference Sodom with these fallen angels. The same pairing is found in 2 Peter. It has long been recognized that these two texts are inter-related, and a variety of hypotheses have been proposed to explain this inter-relationship. I won’t be addressing those issues but will solely address the use of Sodom and Watcher references in both. Both texts likewise use these references as part of a longer polemic warning against false teachers who are disrupting their Christian communities, threatening to lead the faithful astray. So, as in Jubilees and T12P, the issue of community cohesion and faithfulness is paramount and contrasted with the lawless licentiousness of Sodom and the fallen angels. Sexual references in these polemics echo both the concerns of keeping to the community’s order found in those texts, plus they associate the false teachers with sexual immorality, in the same way as found in the Latter Prophets, to denigrate and condemn them (c.f. Jer 23:14 above). Like the false prophets, these false teachers are already condemned by God together with those who follow them. The fallen angels, the Flood generation, and the Sodomites serve primarily as examples of divine punishment of the lawless and ungodly.

To begin with 2 Peter, the chapter begins by comparing the false teachers to the false prophets of old (2 Peter 2:1). Like those false prophets, the false teachers will lead many astray, many will follow them in their “licentious ways (*aselgeiais*)” (2 Peter 2:2). And like the false prophets, the false teachers are condemned, a condemnation pronounced long ago (2 Peter 2:3). The text then cites the fallen angels and Sodom as examples of divine punishment pronounced and fulfilled in the past. In both instances, a remnant is saved, Noah and Lot, as an example of divine faithfulness to believers. Thus in verses 4–5, God did not spare the angels but bound them in darkness to await the final judgment. God did not spare the ancient antediluvian world — “a world of the ungodly (*asebōn*)” — but only saved Noah, a “herald of righteousness (*dikaioynēs*),” together with his family. Then in verses 6–8, God burned Sodom and Gomorrah as an example to the “ungodly” (*asebein*) but rescued Lot “a righteous (*dikaiōn*) man greatly distressed by the licentiousness (*aselgeia*) of the lawless (*athesmōn*)” (2Pe 2:7). The text restates this for emphasis saying that Lot “was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds (*anomois*

*ergois*)” (2Pe 2:8). Both Lot and Noah are said to show how the Lord will rescue “the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment” (2Pe 2:9). As the text continues it becomes clear that these unrighteous “who indulge their flesh in depraved lust (*epithymia miasmou*), and who despise authority (*kyriotetos kataphronountas*)” (2Pe 2:10) are the false teachers themselves. This verse shifts the polemic into a harangue, attacking and denigrating the false teachers (2Pe 2:10–22). They are accused of slandering the angels/glorious ones. They are irrational, insatiable for sin, prone to adultery (2Pe 2:14) and “licentious desires of the flesh” (2Pe 2:18). They are greedy and bombastic in their stupidity, slaves of corruption. Above all, they are under judgement for destruction as are all those who follow them. What is striking about 2 Peter is the restraint in referring to both Sodom and the Flood generation. In both instances there is the contrast of the righteousness of those saved, Lot and Noah, to the ungodliness of the condemned. However, the sexual, and other, vituperation is reserved for the false teachers. Of course, the Sodomites, the Flood generation, and the fallen angels, anticipate the false teachers by their ungodliness, the Sodomites also share licentiousness with these false teachers. It could even be said that all the sins of the teachers are shared by these ancient examples too but their main role is exemplary, testimonial. Not of sexual offence, they testify instead to the divine punishment that comes to all who turn away from God, and is coming to these false teachers, and all those who follow them.<sup>25</sup>

Like 2 Peter, Jude also links Sodom with the Watchers (Jude 5–7). However Jude uses both in a highly sophisticated argument linking Sodom, the Watchers and other ancient examples from the Torah to warn the community against “certain intruders” (literally certain men *tines anthropoi*) who threaten their destruction. Generally understood to be false teachers, Jude’s intruders are those “who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly (*asebeis*) persons who pervert (*metatithentes*) the grace of our God into licentiousness (*aselgeian*) and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). These false teachers are condemned for destruction, and all those who follow them will share in that destruction. This destruction is prefigured in two triads of ancient examples (Jude 5–7, 11). The first triad groups the unfaithful Israelites who perished in the wilderness during the years of the Exodus,<sup>26</sup> the Watchers/fallen angels, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 5–7). When we examine these examples a pattern emerges. With the Israelites no specific exodus events are identified here, but, as is made plain in the second triad below, it’s the events of Numbers 16 and 25 that the author has in mind here. With the fallen angels, they did not keep their position but left their “proper dwelling” (*idion oikētērion*), for which they are now bound in deepest darkness until the day of judgement (Jude 6 c.f. 1 Enoch 9:4–5, 11–13). The Sodomites, in their turn, and in the same way as these (*homoion tropon toutois*), practiced “sexual immorality (*ekporneusasai*)” and pursued “other flesh” *sarkos heteras* (a term the NRSV translates as “unnatural lust”). These three examples bring together the same themes seen in

<sup>25</sup> I would suggest that, for the author of 2 Peter, whatever the sexual evil of the Sodomites is understood to be, it will accord with the doctrines and (sexual) practices of those false teachers whom this letter is determined to condemn.

<sup>26</sup> The inclusion of the unfaithful Israelites of the Exodus echoes the twinning of Egypt and Sodom in Wisdom of Solomon 19.

Jubilees and T12P (and inferred in Pseudo Philo) of idolatry, rebellion against the Law, sexual immorality/exogamy, with the Watchers and the Sodomites serving as examples of ensuing ultimate catastrophe. The Sodomites are also said to sin “in the same manner” as these, most likely the fallen angels, or perhaps both the angels and the Israelites. If the former, it reinforces the themes found in T12P of crossing over the angelic/human barrier, changing the course/order, perpetrated by the Watchers and the Sodomites. A specific “homosexual” reference here makes little sense if the Sodomites sin in the same way as the fallen angels.<sup>27</sup> If the Sodomites sin in the same way as both the fallen angels and the Israelites, a specifically “homosexual” reference makes no sense at all. Instead, the Sodomites practice sexual immorality like the Israelites with the Moabite women in Numbers 25, and even worse they dare cross the angelic/human order pursuing other, angelic, flesh.

The next triad of the ungodly, in verse 11, repeats and reinforces the themes of the first triad. Two of the examples mentioned, Korah and Balaam, refer to the Exodus, while the other, Cain, is from primeval history. Korah clearly represents rebellion (Numbers 16), while Balaam was commissioned by Balak to curse the Israelites and prevent their occupation of the land. However, Watson points out that at the turn of the era, it was a Jewish belief that “Balaam persuaded Balak to lure Israel into sexual sin and idolatry” (Watson, 2014:61), i.e. the very specific events of sex (exogamy) with Moabite women and idolatry recounted in Numbers 25. Turning to Cain, Watson points out that at the turn of the era, too, it was a belief in Jewish tradition that he not only murdered his brother, but subsequently deliberately taught others to sin (Watson, 2014:61). In 1 Enoch, the Watchers, the fallen angels, are the ones who teach humans to sin, so Cain serves as a counterpart to them. Korah and his co-conspirators rebelled against the sacerdotal order established by the Law. They demanded the same rights as Aaron and the priestly order. In other words, they attempted to change their course, their order, desiring something not rightly theirs. Consequently they were consumed by fire from heaven just as happened to the Cities of the Plain, while the rebels who followed them were swallowed by the earth, which opened beneath their feet and cast them down to Sheol. In Rabbinic tradition, not only were the Cities of the Plain consumed by fire but the earth itself turned over and cast the cities and their inhabitants into the underworld (Carden. 2004: 51). Hence, Korah references not just rebellion in Jude’s second triad, but serves as a counterpart to Sodom and Gomorrah. The Sodomites were rebels too against God. Like the fallen angels before them, they rebelled against the angelic/human order, violently seeking that which was not theirs. They were punished in the same way as Korah and his followers. But Korah and the Sodomites are linked not just by their demise. According to Margaret Barker (2003), the Temple priests were understood to liturgically have angelic status, the Temple service instantiating on earth what was in heaven. Most especially, the

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<sup>27</sup> Thus Bauckham: “As the angels fell because of their lust for women, so the Sodomites desired sexual relations with angels. The reference is to the incident in Gen 19:4–11. ἕτερος σαρκος, ‘strange flesh,’ cannot, as many commentators and most translations assume, refer to homosexual practice, in which the flesh is not ‘different’ (ἕτερος); it must mean the flesh of angels. The sin of the Sodomites (not, strictly, of the other towns) reached its zenith in this most extravagant of sexual aberrations, which would have transgressed the order of creation as shockingly as the fallen angels did.” [1983: 54]

high priest had this angelic status par excellence, even a quasi-divine status, in the liturgical sacerdotal order. Korah is then just like the Sodomites, attacking, demanding equal access to the angelic (the Aaronic order of priests) just as the Sodomites violently demanded access to the angels lodging with Lot, putting themselves on the same level as these heavenly beings.

So this second triad not only forms a parallel to the first, deploying the very same themes, but relies on the angelic/human dichotomy to both connect the examples in each triad and connect the two triads to each other, and thus underline Jude's argument. Jude then goes on to not only cite Enoch, as in the Testaments of Benjamin and Naphtali, but to quote directly from 1 Enoch (Jude 14–15 quoting 1 Enoch 1:9), to warn of the coming divine judgement. So Jude's argument not only draws on the associations of the Watchers and Sodom with idolatry, sexual immorality and exogamy, but is clearly drawing on and developing the associations and themes found specifically in T12P, including Enoch's warning prophecies. At the same time, Jude draws on much older literary tropes found in the Latter Prophets using sexual immorality as a metaphor for apostasy and idolatry. Furthermore, Jude relies on the angelic to link all these ancient examples.<sup>28</sup> The pertinence of the angelic to Jude's argument becomes clearer if we recall that the early Christians understood themselves to be priests in a Temple, serving at an altar, from which the priests of the old Temple "have no right to eat" (Heb 13:10); the Christian community are a priesthood who "continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb 13: 15). As priests then, Christians form an order of angels, an order to which these certain others, the intruders of Jude 4, do not belong and by their behavior and their teachings threaten to destroy (as happened with Korah, the Sodomites, and the Watchers<sup>29</sup>). So, by referring to Sodom and Gomorrah, it is not Jude's purpose to warn against or condemn homosexuality at all. Like 2 Peter, Jude's purpose is to alert and warn against, but also to condemn, in the most emphatic way, the false teachers, whose activities and teachings can only disrupt, divide, corrupt, and lead the angelic Christian community into apostasy and divine condemnation.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In Christianity, Sodom and Gomorrah have long represented the evils of same sex love and desire. The divine destruction of the cities is understood as primary evidence for divine loathing of homosexuality. In contrast, however, Rabbinic Judaism understood Sodom and Gomorrah as archetypes for injustice, cruelty and hatred of outsiders. This understanding was informed by representations of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Latter Prophets as centres of injustice and oppression. Outside of the Hebrew Bible, this same understanding of Sodom and Gomorrah is found in many other ancient texts,

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<sup>28</sup> Balaam's story too involves an encounter with an angel.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps too, they are likened to the human women in T.Reu. 5:4–6 who actively seduced the Watchers to fall.

<sup>30</sup> And as with 2 Peter, I would suggest that whatever the sexual evil of the Sodomites is understood to be in Jude, it will accord with the doctrines and (sexual) practices of those false teachers whom this letter is determined to condemn.

Jewish and Christian, many of which, like Luke's gospel, make Sodom and Gomorrah the archetype of inhospitality to outsiders.

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 is paralleled by Judges 19, the outrage at Gibeah. Both stories tell how outsiders were given shelter and hospitality by a non-native resident. In both stories, the hospitable household is attacked by the male townsfolk demanding sexual access to the travelers. In Sodom, the travelers are angels who use their power to save the household and bring an end to the violence. The cities are then destroyed by God. In Gibeah, the male traveler casts his concubine to the mob who then pack rape her to death in place of the Levite. In Gibeah, all the protagonists are Israelites and there is no divine intervention. Instead the story concludes with a genocidal civil war among the Israelites. With Gibeah, because a woman is raped to death, the story has played no part in homophobic ideology. Nonetheless, the Gibeah story clearly demonstrates that the events of Genesis 19 are a tale of attempted rape of male outsiders and so should not be read as a tale of same sex love and desire. Instead, rape is a hostile act intended to humiliate, debase, de-man (if not murder) the angelic travelers. When contextualized culturally, anal sex between men is understood as an act of aggression in which the penetrator not only asserts power over the penetrated but marks them as queer, not men, and an alien to the male polity. Consequently, the attempted rape of the Levite the Israelite Benjaminites of Gibeah is a breach of ethnic solidarity. By attempting to rape the Levite, the men of Gibeah treat him as an outsider or foreigner, not a fellow Israelite, hence the ensuing civil war.

While most ancient texts consistently portray Sodom and Gomorrah as evil centres of injustice and oppression, some associate sexual immorality with Sodom and Gomorrah. At the same time these texts link Sodom and Gomorrah with the fall of the angels, the Watchers, through sex with human women breaching the barrier between human and angelic, as recounted in both Jubilees 5 and 1 Enoch 6–11. Linking the two stories enables the writers to use them as exemplars of the evils of sexual immorality understood as exogamy, intermarriage with Gentiles, leading to idolatry, apostasy, and abandoning the Law of Moses. Homosexuality is not the issue here. Two New Testament texts, 2 Peter and Jude, stand in that textual trajectory. In 2 Peter, the link is used to attack false teachers who threaten the unity of the Christian community. The main concern of 2 Peter is the threat of these false teachers, not homosexuality. As in 2 Peter, Jude uses the linkage of Sodom and the Watchers in the same way as Jubilees and T12P, however Jude uses in a complex and sophisticated literary pattern linking two key narratives of Israelite rebellion in Numbers with Sodom and Gomorrah, the Watchers and the Flood, and Cain to warn against certain individuals who would lead the Christian community into apostasy. Jude cites Sodom not as a warning against homosexuality but, like the Watchers, as an example of breaching the angelic human hierarchical order, a breach that results in destruction. All of Jude's examples are linked together by the angel connections, central to all being the fall of the Watchers. The angelic connections relate to the angelic nature of priesthood in the old Temple on Zion, and of the new order of priests that is the Christian community serving the new spiritual Temple established by the Christ events.

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