

Gen. 18:1 The LORD appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. ² Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, ³ he said, “My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. ⁵ And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on—seeing that you have come your servant’s way.” They replied, “Do as you have said.”

...

Gen. 18:16 The men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Abraham walking with them to see them off. ¹⁷ Now the LORD had said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him? ¹⁹ For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is just and right, in order that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.” ²⁰ Then the LORD said, “The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave! ²¹ I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note.”

Gen. 18:22 The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³ Abraham came forward and said, “Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? ... ³² And he said, “Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?” And He answered, “I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten.”

Gen. 18:33 When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

Jon Levenson, “Genesis,” *Jewish Study Bible*

18.1–19.38: The conception of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom. Chapters 18 and 19 display a chiasmic structure (ABB’A’): **18.1–15** is the annunciation of Isaac’s conception (A); **18.16–33** is the announcement of Sodom’s destruction (B); **19.1–29** reports the destruction of Sodom (B’); and **19.30–38** reports Moab’s and Ammon’s conception (A’). In the process, Abraham emerges again as a heroic figure, one who deeply reveres God yet politely demands justice from Him. Lot is once again (as in ch 13) a foil for Abraham—self-interested, passive, and, finally, victimized.

Nahum Sarna, *Genesis (JPS Torah Commentary)*

22. This seemingly intrusive note is really connected with verse 16. Here it makes for a slight pause in the narrative, as though to insinuate the idea of Abraham briefly struggling with himself as to whether he should plead the cause of Sodom or, like Noah before him, remain indifferent to the fate of his fellow beings.

אֲבֹרְכָם עִוְנוֹ עִוְנוֹ עִוְנוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה^a

22 וַיְהוּהוּ ... אַבְרָהָם תִּיּוֹסוֹפִי^{a-a}

E. A. Speiser, *Genesis (Anchor Bible)*

Y’hweh paused in front of Abraham. So the original text. But the passage is listed among the rare instances of Masoretic interference known as *Tiqqūnē sōfērīm* “scribal corrections,” whereby the text was changed to “Abraham paused before Y’hweh,” for deferential reasons. The change is already witnessed in LXX.

MASORAH: While Abraham remained standing before the LORD. This is one of the 18 biblical phrases that are a “correction of the scribes.”

RASHI: While Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Abraham had not gone to stand before Him; rather, it was the Holy One who had come to Abraham to say what He said in vv. 20–21. So our phrase really should be, “while the Lord remained standing before Abraham.” The text as it stands is a “correction of the scribes,” that is, it was reversed by the Sages.

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E. J. Revell, "Scribal Emendations" (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*)

This title refers to a tradition that the Hebrew text of the Bible has been changed in a number of passages. The two earliest sources (ca. 400 C.E.), both midrashic, are the Mek. of R. Ishmael, which lists eleven cases, and Sipre, which lists seven. Later midrashic and masoretic sources list more cases. The masorah states that such change has occurred in eighteen cases, but the lists vary somewhat in composition, so that altogether some two dozen cases are mentioned. In many manuscripts the masorah parva marks each case as "one of the eighteen cases of emendation," but this is not done in the Aleppo or the Leningrad Codex. The changes are said to have been made to avoid language which might seem disrespectful to God.

In most cases, the change suggested involves only a single letter representing a pronoun, as in Ps 106:20, where "They exchanged their glory (*kbwdm*) for the likeness of an ox that eats grass" is said to have read originally "my glory" (*kbwdy*). A similar change is suggested in Jer 2:11. In a few cases, a more extensive change is suggested, as in Gen 18:22, where "Abraham was still standing before God" is said to have read originally "God was still standing before Abraham." In the majority of cases (as in these two), the Greek translation does not reflect the text said to have been original. This also appears to be the case with the Habbakkuk commentary from Qumran (1QpHab) for the case in Hab 1:12.

In a few cases the Greek translation may reflect the original text, as in 1 Sam 3:13, where the received Hebrew text reads "His sons brought a curse on themselves" (mqllym lhm), and the Greek reads "His sons spoke evil of God." This passage, however, exemplifies the considerable problem of evaluating this tradition. The standard Hebrew text is considered problematic, because the verb in the case is elsewhere used with a direct object (not the preposition l-, as here), and means simply to "curse." The same problem occurs with the text which the tradition gives as the original: "cursed him" (mqllym lw). Moreover, in the context, the pronoun "him" must refer to Eli, so no disrespect to God would have been involved. There is also a problem if, as many modern critics argue, the original text read "cursed God" (mqllym 'lhm), as is suggested by the LXX. The cursing of God, which is forbidden in Exod 22:27 and Lev 24:15, would be excellent justification for the punishment of the house of Eli with which the passage is concerned. However, if the original text did have this reading, the received text is much more likely to have arisen through the accidental omission of 'alep from 'lhm than from a deliberate change. Such considerations lead some scholars to argue that the tradition of "emendation" is merely a form of midrashic interpretation, intended to supply a reason for an apparent illogicality in the text.

On the other hand, there is no good reason to suggest that such changes could not have been made, especially if they were made at an early period, as the evidence of the Greek translation suggests. Only 3 verses in the Torah are affected: Gen 18:22 is not included in the early lists, whereas Num 11:15 and 12:12 are included (in Num 12:12 'mw and bsrw are counted separately) ... The many anomalies in wording, spelling, and vowel pointing which have been carefully preserved in the text show that any suggestion that "the scribes" ever made a systematic attempt to "normalize" some feature of the text is untenable. See also BIBLE, EUPHEMISM AND DYSPEMISM IN THE.

Num. 11:15 If You would deal thus with me, kill me rather, I beg You, and let me see no more of my wretchedness!" [Tiq Soph pro בְּרַעַתְךָ]

Num. 12:12 Let her not be as one dead, who emerges from his mother's womb with half his flesh eaten away." [Tiq Soph pro אִמּוֹ et בְּשָׂרוֹ]

IBN EZRA: The men went on from there to Sodom. This interrupts what "the LORD said" starting in v. 20, just as "and he walked ahead" interrupts what Samuel says to Saul in 1 Sam. 9:29. **While Abraham remained standing before the LORD.** See 19:27. There is no need to invoke a "correction of the scribes" here.

Gen. 19:27 Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the LORD.

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