

The Story of Lot

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God sent all the Prophets to their people with one message, to worship God alone and not to associate anything or anyone with Him. However, God sent Prophet Muhammad to all of humankind. Although his message was the same, he came with a new law, one to cover all people, in all places, at all times, even into a distant future continuing to the Day of Judgement. The revelation of different chapters of Quran was often in response to a particular event or experiences of the Prophet and his followers. The stories in the Quran teach lessons, provide the historical background of humankind, and demonstrate the nature of God. The story of Prophet Lot is one that is particularly pertinent in the 21st century.

In many cities across the world, it is unsafe to walk down the streets, even in daylight. Murder is rife, identities stolen, and drugs abound. Nowadays most children in high school have already encountered drug users and sellers. Alcohol is freely available at corner stores, even though it is responsible for the break up of families, domestic violence and the corrosion of society. Paedophilia is rampant, as is child pornography and human trafficking. Degenerate lifestyles are accepted and even thought of as normal. This description paints a picture of a scary,

out of control world, but is it really so different from the time of Prophet Lot?

The people of Lot lived in a society very similar to our own. It was corrupt, the people had no shame, criminals and criminal activity abounded, and those passing through the town of Sodom risked robbery and physical abuse. The overall atmosphere of the town was not one of a cohesive society. The people of Lot were without morals, without standards and without shame. The homosexuality that abounded did not exist in a vacuum, it was part of a lifestyle that not only allowed, but also encouraged vice and corruption. It was to this town that God sent Prophet Lot; his message was to worship God alone. However, embedded in worship are the desire and the willingness to obey God's commandments? The people of Sodom were content with their corrupt ways and had no desire to curb them. Lot became an annoyance and his words were ignored.

Prophet Lot called the people to give up their criminal activities and indecent behaviour but they refused to listen. Lot confronted his people and admonished them. He pointed out their corruption, their criminal activities and their unnatural sexual behaviour.

“Will you not fear God and obey Him? Verily! I am a trustworthy Messenger to you. So fear God and obey me. No reward do I ask of you for it (my Message) my reward is only from the Lord of all that exists.” (Quran 26:161-164)

In the last 20 or 30 years, it has become common to talk of homosexuality as a natural way of life, however according to God's law and in all three heavenly religions, (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) this is not acceptable. The new idea that homosexuality is somehow genetically determined is also rejected by Islam. Quran clearly states that the people of Sodom were the first to practice this sexual aberration.

“Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds [i.e., peoples]? Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people.”

The people of Sodom had reached such a level of degradation they no longer had any shame. They would commit their unnatural acts in public or in private. Satan was amongst them, and as is his way, he made their actions appear fair and wholesome. When Lot insisted they change their evil ways, they wanted to drive him out of town, as if by calling to purity, he was the one committing a great sin. The people of Sodom said to Lot, **“If you cease not, O Lot! Verily, you will be one of those who are driven out!” (Quran 26:167)** Lot openly expressed his anger and fury at the evil deeds and unnatural acts and called on God to save him and his family from the evil of the people of Sodom.

In another part of the world, Prophet Abraham, the uncle of Prophet Lot, received three guests. Known for his generosity, Prophet Abraham roasted a calf but to his dismay, the guests refused to eat. This was very unusual. Travellers are usually hungry and the fact that these guests refused his generosity made Prophet Abraham very uneasy. The guests saw his uneasiness and tried to put his fears to rest. They said, **“Do not be afraid!” (Quran 15:53)** His fears allayed, Prophet Abraham asked his guests what business had brought them to his town. They replied, **“We have been sent to a people who are criminals, disbelievers, polytheists, sinners”.** (Quran 15:58)

The people of Sodom had become corrupt, believing their evil ways were acceptable. Unfortunately, in the 21st century we have become so accustomed to evil and ignorance we are no longer able to respond in the correct manner. We make excuses and try to justify evil behaviour but the fact is, when people continuously, and openly disrespect and disobey God we should be outraged. The angels took their leave from Prophet Abraham and made their way to the city of Sodom, in search of Prophet Lot and his family.

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

“Bring God’s torment upon us if you are one of the truthful.”
(Quran 29:29)

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

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

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

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

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

Renowned Islamic scholar, Imam Ibn Katheer narrates that, as the messengers approached the towns of Sodom they met Lot’s daughter at the nearby river. She was astounded at their beauty and feared for them. She advised them to wait at the river for Prophet Lot, rather than enter the town without his protection. When Lot heard of the strangers, he felt distressed and wondered

how he could convince them to bypass the towns of Sodom and continue on their travels. He tried to make them understand the nature of the townspeople but only succeeded in convincing the messengers to wait for nightfall before entering the town.

Prophet Lot managed to escort the messengers to the safety of his home; however, Lot's wife slipped out the back door and quickly told the people that two beautiful men were guests in Lot's home. The word quickly spread and soon people were outside Lot's house, knocking on his door, demanding to see the guests. Lot became even more distressed when he realised his wife was responsible for the crowd at his door and he pleaded with the mob to disband and to fear the punishment of God. He repeatedly appealed to them to seek sexual gratification in a lawful way.

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

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

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

words the towns people were afraid and started to disperse, leaving Lot and his family alone with the messengers (angels).

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

The punishment came at sunrise, and God said,

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

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