

LIGHT LUGGAGE

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IN 1886, LEO TOLSTOY ASKED THE QUESTION, “HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?” HE ILLUSTRATED HIS QUESTION BY TELLING A STORY.

IT’S THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN BY THE NAME OF PAKHOM WHO IS GIVEN AN INCREDIBLE OFFER. HE COULD HAVE AS MUCH LAND AS HE CAN WALK AROUND IN A DAY. IN THIS CLASSIC TALE, PAKHOM STARTS OUT AT THE BREAK OF DAWN, ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN AS MUCH LAND AS POSSIBLE. HE PLACES STAKES ALONG THE WAY TO MARK THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS LAND.

THIS TASK WAS DIFFICULT, BECAUSE AS HE LOOKS FURTHER AHEAD AND NOTICES A GROVE OF TREES, A POND OR A RAVINE HE FEELS COMPELLED TO ENCIRCLE IT SO THAT IT IS INCLUDED IN HIS PROPERTY. AS THE SUN BEGAN TO SET, PAKHOM REALIZES THAT HE HAS GONE TOO FAR.

DESPERATE TO REACH THE FINISH HE PUSHES HIS BODY BEYOND ITS LIMIT, COLLAPSING AT THE FINISH LINE—DEAD. A SERVANT PICKS UP A SHOVEL AND DIGS A GRAVE LONG ENOUGH FOR PAKHOM TO LIE IN.

TOLSTOY CONCLUSION TO THE QUESTION, “HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?”...“SIX FEET FROM HIS HEAD TO HIS HEELS WAS ALL HE NEEDED.”

I HAVE NEVER BEEN GIVEN THE OFFER PAKHOM HAD AND IT’S PROBABLY A GOOD THING. SMALLER OPPORTUNITIES HAVE REVEALED THE INCLINATION OF MY HEART.

THE TOWN I GREW UP IN, WALLA WALLA, HAD A MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM. AT LEAST ONE FUTURE HALL OF FAMEER BEGAN HIS CAREER THERE—SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF OZZIE SMITH. HE PLAYED SHORT-STOP OF THE WALLA WALLA PADRES.

ONCE A YEAR, THERE WOULD BE A BROKEN BAT RACE. ALL OF THE BROKEN BATS (SEVERAL HUNDRED) HAD BEEN SAVED UP AND WERE PILED ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE FIELD. NOT ONLY WAS IT POSSIBLE TO FIND A BAT YOUR FAVORITE PLAYER USED—THEIR NUMBER WAS WRITTEN ON THE TOP OF THE BAT—SOME WERE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION AND SIMPLY NEEDED A LITTLE TAPE.

AS I LINED UP WITH THE OTHER CHILDREN TO RACE FOR THE BATS, I NUDGED MY WAY TO THE BEST STARTING POSITION. AS SOON AS THE WORD GO LEFT THE MOUTH OF PEPPERMINT PATTY—THE PADRES OWNER—I BEGAN SPRINTING TOWARD THE BATS. A FEW OF THE OLDER BOYS GOT TO THE BATS BEFORE I DID, BUT I'M NOT SURE ANY CARRIED MORE AWAY THAN ME. TILL THIS DAY, THE GARAGE AT HOME WHERE I GREW UP HAS A BARREL FILLED WITH BROKEN BATS.

BROKEN BATS, LAND, MONEY, FURNITURE, CARS, HOUSES...THE ISSUE OF MORE AND BETTER IS SOMETHING WE ALL FACE.

MY SERMON TITLE TODAY IS, "LIGHT LUGGAGE." IN PRACTICAL TERMS I WANT TO DEMONSTRATE HOW YOU AND I CAN TRAVEL THROUGH THIS LIFE HOLDING VERY LIGHTLY TO THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD, FREE FROM THE DISTRACTIONS OF EARTHLY TREASURES AND THE HOLD THEY CAN HAVE ON OUR LIVES.

LET'S CONTRAST THE DECISIONS OF TWO MEN—ABRAHAM AND LOT—TO UNCOVER BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR TRAVELING WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE. LET'S TURN IN OUR BIBLES TO GENESIS 13:1-13.

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WE NOTICE IN THE BEGINNING OF THE CHAPTER THAT ABRAHAM WAS A WEALTHY MAN. VERSE 2, "ABRAM WAS VERY RICH IN LIVESTOCK, IN SILVER, AND IN GOLD." LOT ALSO HAD BEEN BLESSED WITH MATERIAL WEALTH. HERE WE SEE ABRAHAM AND LOT ON SIMILAR FOOTING. BOTH ARE WEALTHY, BOTH HAVE SERVANTS, BOTH HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE.

VERSE 7 RECORDS THAT STRIFE BROKE OUT BETWEEN LOT'S HERDSMEN AND ABRAHAM'S HERDSMEN. I IMAGINE LOT'S HERDSMEN SETTING THEIR ALARM CLOCKS EARLY—TIPTOEING OUT OF THEIR TENTS—SO NO ONE WOULD BE AWAKENED—HUSTLING TO THE BEST GRAZING SPOT WITH SHADE TREES AND DRINKING WATER.

THE NEXT MORNING ABRAHAM'S SERVANTS SET THEIR CLOCKS EVEN EARLIER...AND SO THE CONFLICT CONTINUED. SOME MORNINGS IT WAS A FOOT RACE.

KIND OF LIKE TRYING TO GET THE BEST CAMPING SITE AT A STATE PARK ON LABOR DAY WEEKEND. OR PUSHING TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE AT 5:00 A.M. FOR BEST BUY'S DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING CHRISTMAS SALE.

FIGHTING OVER NATURAL RESOURCES WAS COMMON DURING BIBLICAL TIMES. IN GENESIS 26, WE READ ABOUT ISAAC'S SERVANTS DIGGING A WELL. HERDSMEN WHO LIVED IN THE COUNTRY GOT IN AN ARGUMENT WITH ISAAC'S SERVANTS AND RAN THEM OFF.

ISAAC'S SERVANTS DUG ANOTHER WELL AND THE SAME THING HAPPENED. A THIRD WELL WAS DUG AND FINALLY WAS UNCONTESTED. ISAAC TOLD HIS SERVANTS, "NOW THE LORD HAS MADE ROOM FOR US, AND WE SHALL BE FRUITFUL IN THE LAND." GENESIS 26:22.

ISAAC HAD LEARNED THE LESSON FROM HIS FATHER, ABRAHAM. IN ORDER FOR GOD'S CONTINUED BLESSING, THE STRIFE HAD TO STOP. FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, MORE SPACE WAS REQUIRED.

ABRAHAM MAKES A PROPOSAL TO LOT,

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"PLEASE SEPARATE FROM ME. IF YOU TAKE THE LEFT, THEN I WILL GO TO THE RIGHT; OR, IF YOU GO TO THE RIGHT, THEN I WILL GO TO THE LEFT."
GENESIS 13:9

ABRAHAM DEMONSTRATES THREE CHARACTER QUALITIES HERE THAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS TO TRAVELING WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE.

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FIRST, ABRAHAM WAS GENEROUS. HE GAVE LOT FIRST CHOICE.

ABRAHAM WAS THE SENIOR PARTNER AND HE LET HIS ASSOCIATE MAKE HIS SELECTION FIRST. THERE WAS NO DRAWING OF STRAWS, ROLLING OF DICE OR PULLING A PIECE OF PAPER OUT OF THE HAT.

ABRAHAM LIVED OUT THE PRINCIPLE HIGHLIGHTED BY PAUL IN

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PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4, "LET NOTHING BE DONE THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION OR CONCEIT, BUT IN LOWLINESS OF MIND LET EACH ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN HIMSELF. LET EACH OF YOU LOOK OUT NOT ONLY FOR HIS OWN INTERESTS. BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS."

ABRAHAM LIVED A LIFE OF GENEROSITY. LATER, WHEN LOT AND HIS FAMILY ALONG WITH THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH WERE CAPTURED BY FOREIGN KINGS, ABRAHAM CHASED THEM DOWN AND RESCUED LOT.

WHEN THE KING OF SODOM CAME OUT TO THANK ABRAHAM, NOTICE HIS RESPONSE IN GENESIS 14:21-24. THE KING SAID, “GIVE ME THE PERSONS, AND TAKE THE GOODS FOR YOURSELF.”

“BUT ABRAM SAID TO THE KING OF SODOM, ‘I HAVE RAISED MY HAND TO THE LORD, GOD MOST HIGH, THE POSSESSOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, THAT I WILL TAKE NOTHING, FROM A THREAD TO A SANDAL STRAP, AND THAT I WILL NOT TAKE ANYTHING THAT IS YOURS, LET YOU SHOULD SAY, ‘I HAVE MADE ABRAM RICH.’”

THE ANTITHESIS OF ABRAHAM’S GENEROSITY WAS LOT’S GREED. LOT WANTED THE BEST FOR HIMSELF. NOT ONLY DID HE WANT IT, BUT HE TOOK IT. VERSES 10-11 OF GENESIS 13,”AND LOT LIFTED HIS EYES AND SAW ALL THE PLAIN OF JORDAN, THAT IT WAS WELL WATERED EVERYWHERE LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD, LIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT AS YOU GO TOWARD ZOAR. THEN LOT CHOSE FOR HIMSELF ALL THE PLAIN OF JORDAN...”

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE TO FREE YOURSELF FROM THE HOLD OF THIS WORLD...TO TRAVEL WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE...IS TO BE GENEROUS WITH OTHERS. GIVING IS THE ANTIDOTE TO GREED. GREED IS THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF EVERY FALLEN HUMAN BEING.

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OUR FIRST INCLINATION IS TO LOOK OUT FOR NUMBER ONE...TO PUSH OURSELVES TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE. IN GOD’S KINGDOM, HOWEVER, IT IS THE LAST WHO WILL BE FIRST.

ARE YOU A GENEROUS PERSON? DO YOU SHARE WITH OTHERS THE BLESSINGS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU?

THERE IS A SECOND CHARACTER TRAIT OF ABRAHAM THAT HELPED HIM CARRY LIGHT LUGGAGE. ABRAHAM HAD FAITH THAT GOD'S PROVISION WAS ENOUGH.

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ABRAHAM KNEW THAT REGARDLESS OF WHICH DIRECTION LOT CHOSE—EVEN IF IT WAS THE MORE PRODUCTIVE LAND—GOD WOULD TAKE CARE OF HIS NEEDS. NOTICE WHEN ABRAHAM'S CONNECTION WITH GOD IN VERSE 4 OF GENESIS 13, "AND HE WENT ON HIS JOURNEY TO THE PLACE OF THE ALTAR WHICH HE HAD MADE THERE AT FIRST. AND THERE ABRAM CALLED ON THE NAME OF THE LORD."

ABRAHAM'S CONNECTION WITH GOD GAVE HIM CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WOULD LEAD HIM ON HIS JOURNEY. WHATEVER GOD PROVIDED WOULD BE ENOUGH.

AFTER LOT CHOSE THE BEST LAND, NOTICE HOW GOD RESPONDED TO ABRAHAM. VERSES 14-17, "AND THE LORD SAID TO ABRAM, AFTER LOT HAD SEPARATED FROM HIM: 'LIFT YOUR EYES NOW AND LOOK FROM THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE—NORTHWARD, SOUTHWARD, EASTWARD AND WESTWARD; FOR ALL THE LAND WHICH YOU SEE I GIVE TO YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS FOREVER. AND I WILL MAKE YOUR DESCENDANTS AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH, SO THAT IF A MAN COULD NUMBER THE DUST OF THE EARTH, THEN YOUR DESCENDANTS ALSO COULD BE NUMBERED. ARISE, WALK IN THE LAND THROUGH ITS LENGTH AND ITS WIDTH, FOR I GIVE IT TO YOU.'

NOTHING WAS EXCLUDED—NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST—IT WAS ALL HIS.

IN CONTRAST, THE VERY NEXT THING WE HEAR ABOUT LOT IS THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE CAPTURED BY FOREIGN KINGS.

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ABRAHAM WAS CONTENT TO “WAIT FOR THE CITY WHICH HAS FOUNDATIONS WHOSE BUILDER A MAKER IS GOD.” ON THIS EARTH, ABRAHAM LIVED IN TEMPORARY TENTS THAT WERE MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE. HE NEVER SET DOWN ROOTS HERE ON THIS EARTH. HIS FOCUS WAS ALWAYS TOWARD HIS HEAVENLY REWARD.

LOT, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS ALLURED BY THE CONVENIENCE AND EXCITEMENT OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN. ALTHOUGH THE LAND WAS DESIRABLE, WE READ THAT, “THE MEN OF SODOM WERE EXCEEDINGLY WICKED AND SINFUL AGAINST THE LORD.” GENESIS 13:13

AT FIRST LOT TRIED TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM THE VICES OF SODOM. HE ONLY,

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“PITCHED HIS TENT TOWARD SODOM.” GENESIS 13:12.

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IT WASN'T LONG, HOWEVER, UNTIL LOT “DWELT IN SODOM” GENESIS 14:12.

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FINALLY, LOT “SAT IN THE GATE OF SODOM” GENESIS 19:1 AS ONE OF ITS BUSINESS LEADERS.

ULTIMATELY, LOT'S DECISIONS WOULD DESTROY HIS FAMILY. WHEN SODOM WAS DESTROYED, LOT MANAGED TO ESCAPE WITH ONLY HIS TWO DAUGHTERS AND WIFE. LOT AND HIS FAMILY WERE PULLING ALONG HEAVY LUGGAGE. THEY WERE BOUND BY THEIR LIFE OF LUXURY AND CONVENIENCE.

NOTICE GENESIS 19:15-16, “WHEN THE MORNING DAWNED, THE ANGELS URGED LOT TO HURRY, SAYING, ‘ARISE, TAKE YOUR WIFE AND YOUR TWO DAUGHTERS WHO ARE HERE, LEST YOU BE CONSUMED IN THE PUNISHMENT OF THE CITY.’ AND WHILE HE LINGERED, THE MEN TOOK HOLD OF HIS HAND, HIS WIFE’S HAND, AND THE HANDS OF HIS TWO DAUGHTERS, THE LORD BEING MERCIFUL TO HIM, AND THEY BROUGHT HIM OUT AND SET HIM OUTSIDE THE CITY.”

THE EARTHLY PULL OF SODOM WAS SO GREAT THAT HIS WIFE DISOBEYED THE COMMAND OF THE ANGELS AND TURNED AROUND TO LOOK...INSTANTLY TURNING INTO A PILLAR OF SALT.

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THE CONTRAST BETWEEN LOT AND ABRAHAM...AN EARTHLY FOCUS VERSUS A HEAVENLY FOCUS.

WOULD I HAVE CHOSE ANY DIFFERENTLY THAN LOT? MY OWN TENDENCY IS TO BECOME DISTRACTED BUILDING UP MY KINGDOM HERE ON THIS EARTH, DESIRING MORE MATERIAL LUXURIES...SOMETHING BIGGER AND BETTER. IT’S A QUESTION I NEED TO HONESTLY FACE.

HOW IS IT WITH YOU? ARE YOU IN THE RAT RACE OF LIFE...DISSATISFIED WITH THE BLESSINGS THAT GOD HAS ALREADY GIVEN? CHASING AFTER MORE MONEY, MORE THINGS, AND MORE PLEASURE. AS LOT DISCOVERED, IT’S A TRAP AND WILL EVENTUALLY DESTROY YOU.

WHEN GOD CALLS ARE YOU WILLING TO LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND? DO YOU TRAVEL WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE. ABRAHAM DID.

HEBREWS 11:8-10, “BY FAITH ABRAHAM OBEYED WHEN HE WAS CALLED TO GO OUT TO THE PLACE WHICH HE WOULD RECEIVE AS AN

INHERITANCE. AND HE WENT OUT, NOT KNOWING WHERE HE WAS GOING. BY FAITH HE DWELT IN THE LAND OF PROMISE AS IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY, DWELLING IN TENTS WITH ISAAC AND JACOB, THE HEIRS WITH HIM OF THE SAME PROMISE, FOR HE WAITED FOR THE CITY WHICH HAS FOUNDATIONS WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKE IS GOD.”

THE FINAL KEY TO TRAVELING WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE IS FOUND IN THIS VERSE. FOCUS ON GOD’S FUTURE REWARD.

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THIS PROMISE BRINGS HOPES TO MILLIONS OF DESTITUTE HUMAN BEINGS. POVERTY, DISEASE, INJUSTICE MAY BE MY EXPERIENCE IN THIS LIFE, BUT THERE IS A HEAVEN AHEAD. A CROWN AND MANSION WILL BE MINE.

A SAILOR WAS SHIPWRECKED ON ONE OF THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS. HE WAS SEIZED BY THE NATIVES, HOISTED TO THEIR SHOULDERS, CARRIED TO THE VILLAGE, AND SET ON A RUDE THRONE.

LITTLE BY LITTLE, HE LEARNED THAT IT WAS THEIR CUSTOM ONCE EACH YEAR TO MAKE SOME MAN A KING, KING FOR A YEAR. HE LIKED IT UNTIL HE BEGAN TO WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE FORMER KINGS. SOON HE DISCOVERED THAT EVERY YEAR WHEN HIS KINGSHIP WAS ENDED, THE KING WAS BANISHED TO AN ISLAND, WHERE HE WOULD STARVE TO DEATH.

THE SAILOR DID NOT LIKE THAT, BUT HE WAS SMART AND HE WAS KING, KING FOR A YEAR. SO HE PUT HIS CARPENTERS TO WORK MAKING BOATS, HIS FARMERS TO WORK TRANSPLANTING FRUIT TREES TO THE ISLAND, FARMERS GROWING CROPS, MASONS BUILDING HOUSES.

SO WHEN HIS KINGSHIP WAS OVER, HE WAS BANISHED, NOT TO A BARREN ISLAND, BUT TO AN ISLAND OF ABUNDANCE.

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ARE YOU LAYING UP YOUR TREASURES IN HEAVEN...PREPARING FOR THE LIFE TO COME?

ABRAHAM KNEW THAT LIFE HERE IS TEMPORARY. HE WAS A PILGRIM PASSING THROUGH. HE LEARNED TO KEYS OF TRAVELING THROUGH LIFE WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE:

1. HE WAS GENEROUS
2. HE TRUSTED THAT GOD'S EARTHLY PROVISION WAS ENOUGH
3. HE LOOKED FORWARD TO A FUTURE REWARD

MY QUESTION FOR YOU TODAY...ARE YOU TRAVELING WITH LIGHT LUGGAGE?

CLOSING HYMN- GIVE ME JESUS