

Gen. 13:2

Now Abram was very rich in cattle, silver, and gold. 3 And he proceeded by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been formerly, between Bethel and Ai, 4 the site of the altar that he had built there at first; and there Abram invoked the Lord by name.

Gen. 13:5

Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the land could not support them staying together; for their possessions were so great that they could not remain together. 7 And there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and those of Lot's cattle.—The Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling in the land.— 8 Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herdsmen and yours, for we are kinsmen. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let us separate: if you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north.” 10 Lot looked about him and saw how well watered was the whole plain of the Jordan, all of it—this was before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—all the way to Zoar, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. 11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward.

Claus Westermann, Genesis 12-36 (Continental Commentary)

V. 10 gives the impression of something put together: “the whole verse is somewhat awkward” (A. Dillman, ad loc.). Three additions have been made: (1) The explanatory addition, “this was before [YHWH] destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah ... (2) The second comparison, “like the land of Egypt,” was added to the first, “like a garden of the Lord,” and loses by default; it has no function in the story ... (3) There follows now, in addition to the temporal, a geographical specification, “as far as Zoar ... The narrative would flow much better if v. 10 were read without the two (or three) additions.

10 Lot looked about him and saw how well watered was the whole plain of the Jordan, all of it—this was before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—all the way to Zoar, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. [NJPS]

10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the plain of the Jordan—
how well-watered was it all, before Yhwh brought ruin upon Sedom and Amora,
like Yhwh's garden, like the land of Egypt, as you come toward Tzo'ar. [Everett Fox]

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. [OJPS]

וַיִּשְׂאֵל לֹט אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת־כָּל־כַּבֵּד תְּהוֹרֵן כִּי כִלְה מִשְׁקָה
לִפְנֵי אֲשֶׁת־יְהוָה אֶת־סוּדוֹם וְאֶת־עֲמוֹרָה כְּגַן־יְהוָה כְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֵכָה זָעֵר :

Nahum Sarna (JPS Torah Commentary): **like the garden of the Lord** A veritable Eden [cf. Gen 2:10, Isa 51:3], perennially watered [Deut 11:10].

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Is. 51:3

Truly the Lord has comforted Zion,
Comforted all her ruins;
He has made her wilderness like Eden,
Her desert like the Garden of the Lord.
Gladness and joy shall abide there,
Thanksgiving and the sound of music.

Deut. 11:10

For the land that you are entering to possess:
it is not like the land of Egypt, from which
you went out,
where you sow your seed
and water it with your foot like a garden of
greens.

RASHI: Like the garden of the Lord. With regard to trees. Like the land of Egypt. With regard to seed plants.

NAHMANIDES: Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. It was irrigated by bringing water directly from the Jordan, just as was done with the river that issued from Eden “to water the garden” (2:10), or like the land of Egypt, which “had to be watered by your own labors, like a vegetable garden” (Deut. 11:10). Both places are mentioned, the garden of the Lord because it was the best of the earthly lands, and Egypt because it was well known for pasturage. [Another version of Nahmanides’ comment, differing by a single Hebrew letter, says Egypt is mentioned “as proof, because it was well known.”] The midrash that “the garden of the Lord” referred to trees and “the land of Egypt” to seed plants was intended to say that the plain of the Jordan had both great rivers to water the trees and many smaller channels to water vegetable gardens. That was why Lot chose it. Such a land is good for pasture and scarcity is something remote.

Ezek. 28:13 [about the king of Tyre]

You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your adornment:
Carnelian, chrysolite, and amethyst;
Beryl, lapis lazuli, and jasper;
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald;
And gold beautifully wrought for you,
Mined for you, prepared the day you were created.

Ezek. 31:8 [comparing Pharaoh to the king of Assyria]

Cedars in the garden of God
Could not compare with it;
Cypresses could not match its boughs,
And plane trees could not vie with its branches;
No tree in the garden of God
Was its peer in beauty.