

in verse 10, "And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well-watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." Lot chose this plain of Jordan, leaving Abram in the hill country. To anyone visiting Palestine today this story would be quite fantastic. The hill country in the region of Bethel and Ai has many small towns and much excellent pasture land, while the region of the Jordan Valley is mostly barren wilderness. Lot's choice would be quite inconceivable today. The same situation existed in the time of the later Israelite kingdom, or in fact almost any time after Joshua's day. Eduard Meyer, the noted German historian, contrasted the Jordan Valley with the Nile Valley in 1298 in the following words: "Absolutely barren lay also the Jordan Valley south of Beth-shan and Pella, burning hot between the mountain walls on both sides, through which it cut its broad and deep way. . . . Here the attempt was never made to utilize the soil and to make it productive by systematic irrigation, as was done in the Nile Valley under essentially the same conditions."

It is only in the present century that new evidence has come to light. In 1926 an American expedition into the Jordan Valley found a number of previously unrecognized tells, on which the pottery showed that there had been occupation till about the time of Abraham and none since. In the following years many more were found. The only way that all these towns in the Jordan Valley *could have* supported themselves in the Jordan Valley was by utilizing the water of the Jordan river for irrigation. When this was done the fertile land would produce great crops. It would seem that after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah many of the irrigation ditches were left untended and became stagnant pools, fertile sources of malaria, so that the depopulation produced by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was increased by the effects of malaria. By the time of Joshua