

From Sodom and Gomorrah to Hell

1. Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked cities thought to be located at the southern end of what is now the Dead Sea. Their terrible story is told in Genesis 18 and 19. Rampant homosexuality and other sins led to their destruction.
2. Lot and his two daughters, with the help of God's angels, fled the cities of the plain and instead of going to live with righteous Uncle Abraham, began living in a cave. As the Bible describes it, the two daughters got their father drunk and became pregnant by him. The two nations, Ammon and Moab, that arose from this incestuous arrangement were some of the most troublesome to Israel down through the years (Genesis 19:30-38).
3. Chemosh (the "god" of the Moabites) and Molech or Moloch (the "god" of the Ammonites) required the offering of children by "passing them through the fire as a fulfillment of a pledge to Molech". The fire was actually built inside the hollow metal god to make him red hot. The notion was that if the child was burned by this process, he must be cursed by the "god" and if not he was blessed.
4. In later years, possibly during the times of Solomon, a temple and an altar to Molech, the "god" of Lot's descendants, were set up in the valley of the sons of Hinnom (possibly an earlier Canaanite name) to the west and south of Jerusalem. Sons and daughters of Israelites were offered on this altar. Joshua 15:18 and 18:16; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:30-32; 19:1-10; 32:35; Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:31; 18:10; 2 Kin. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; Ps. 106:37, 38; Isaiah 57:5; Ezek. 16:20, 21; Mic. 6:7.
5. In Josiah's day, in an attempt to turn Judah back to the worship of the true God, Yahweh, Josiah desecrated this altar and temple by burning human bones on it and tearing it down. (2 King 23:10) It then became a place for garbage and rubbish. God further told Jeremiah to call it a valley of slaughter where many Jews were killed in the final conquest of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 19:10-13).
6. The name of the valley in Hebrew was ge-ben-hinnom--valley of the children of Hinnom--which was later shortened to Gehenna (Hebrew) or Ge'ena (Greek).
7. As the major trash dump for the city of Jerusalem it later became a place of rats, scavenger birds, and perpetual burning and thus a symbol for "hell" (compare Jude 7).
8. Thus the "fire and brimstone" that fell on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah led to the "symbol" of "hell" which was the perpetually burning garbage dump outside Jerusalem located on the site of the old "temple" erected by someone in Old Testament times to the worship of the pagan "gods" worshiped by the nations descended from Lot and his daughters after their escape from those wicked cities.

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