

Gomorrah

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Gomor'rah (Heb. *Amorah'*, אַמּוֹרָה prob. *submersion*; Sept. ἡ or τὰ Γόμορρά, N.T. "Gomorrha"), one of the four cities in or near the vale of Siddine (Ge 10:19; Ge 13:10), apparently overwhelmed by the destruction which caused the Dead, Sea (Ge 19:24,28). B.C. 2061. SEE *SIDDIM*. Its king, Birsha, was one of those that joined battle with the forces of Chedorlaomer, and in the rout Lot's family became involved until rescued by Abrahams (Ge 14:2,8-11). B.C. cir. 2080. The allusions in Scripture to the "cities of the plain" appear to indicate that they stood close together (Ge 13:10; Ge 14:8-11), and that they lay near the southern extremity of the present lake, for Abraham, one going to the brow of the mountain near Hebron, "looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the plain" (Ge 19:28), and this he could not have done had they been situated further north. The battle between the eastern kings and the people of the plain took place "in the vale of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea" (Ge 14:3). The phrase, however, is not quite decisive as to the precise position; for, as Reland observes (*Palaest.* page 254), it is not stated that the five cities stood in the vale of Siddim, although this perhaps may be inferred, and seems to be implied in the name of Gomorrah. This city appears to have been next in importance to Sodom, as it is always mentioned second, and often these two of the four cities alone are named, as types of impiety and

wickedness (Ge 18:20; Ro 9:29). What that atrocity was may be gathered from Ge 19:4-8. Their miserable fate is held up as a warning to the children of Israel (De 29:23); as a precedent for the destruction of Babylon (Isa 13:19, and Jer 50:40), of Edom (Jer 49:18), of Moab. (Zep 2:9), and evens of Israel (Am 4:11). By Peter in the N.T., and by Jude (2Pe 2:6; Jude 1:4-7), it is made "an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly," or "deny Christ." Similarly, their wickedness rings as a proverb throughout the, prophecies (see De 32:32; Isa 1:9-10; Jer 23:14). Jerusalem herself is there unequivocally called Sodom, and her people" Gomorrah, for their enormities; just in the same way that the corruptions of the Church of Rolme have caused her to be called Babylon. On the other hand, according to the N.T., there is a sin which exceeds even that of Sodom and Gomorrba, that, namely, of which Tyre and Sidon, Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, were guilty when they "repented not," in spite of "the mighty works" which they had witnessese (Mt 10:15); and Mark has ranged under the same category all those who would not receive the preaching of the apostles (Mr 6:11). SEE *SODOM*. To turn to their geographical position, one passage of Scripture seems expressly to assert that the vale of Siddim had become the "salt," or dead, "sea" (Ge 14:3), called elsewhere to the "sea of the plain" (Jos 12:3); the expression, however, occurs antecedently to their overthrow. Josephus (Ant. 1, 9) says that the late Asphaltites, or Dead Sea, was formed out of what used to be the valley where Sodom stood; but elsewhere he declares that the territory of Sodom was not submerged in the lake (War, 4:8, 4), but still existed parched and burnt up, as is the appearance of that region still; and certainly nothing in Scripture would lead to the idea that they were destroyed by submersion (though they may, have been submerged afterwards when destroyed), for their destruction

is expressly attributed to the brimstone and fire rained upon them from heaven ([Ge 19:24](#); see also [De 29:22](#), and [Zep 2:9](#); also Peter and Jude before cited). St. Jerome, in the *Onomasticon*, merely says of Sodom, "civitas impiorum divino igne consuntepta juxta mare mortuum" (s.v. Σόδομα, Sodof man; comp. s.v. Γομμόρᾳ, Gommora). The whole subject is ably handled by Cellarius (ap. Ugol. *Thesaur.* 7:739-78), though it is not always necessary to agree with his conclusions. Among modern travelers, Dr. Robinson shows that the Jordan could not have ever flowed into the gulf of Akabah; on the contrary, that the rivers of the desert themselves flow northwards into the Dead Sea. *SEE ARABAH.* This added to the configuration and deep depression of the valley, serves in his opinion to prove that there must have always been a lake there, into, which the Jordan flowed; though he admits it to have been of far less extent than it now is, and even the whole southern; part of it to have been added subsequently to the overthrow of the four cities, which stood, according to him, at the original south end of it, Zoar probably being situated is the mouth of wady Kerab, as it opens upon the isthmus of the peninsula. In the same plain, he remarks, were slime-pits, or wells of bitumen ([Ge 14:10](#)); "salt-pits" also ([Zep 2:9](#)); while the enlargement of the lake he considers to have been caused by some convulsion or catastrophe of nature connected with the miraculous destruction of the cities — volcanic agency, that of earthquakes, and the like (*Bibl. Res.* 2:187-192, 2d ed.). He might, have adduced the great earthquake at Lisbon as a case in point. The great difference of level between the bottoms of the northern and southern ends of the lake, the former 1300, the latter only 13 feet below the surface, singularly confirms the above view (Stanley, *S. & P.* page 287 2d ed.). Pilgrims of Palestine formerly saw, or fancied that they saw, ruins of towns at the

bottom of the sea, not far from the shore (see Maundrell, Early Travellers, page 1454). — Smith, s.v.; Kitto, s.v. M. de Saulcy is confident he has discovered the remains of Gomorrah in certain ruins which he reports in a valley by the name of Gumrar, on the N.W. shore of the Dead Sea, just north of Ain sel-Feshkah (Dead Sea, 2:49); but Van de Veldea makes light of this account (Narrative, 2:115 sq.), which, indeed, lacks confirmation, especially as it is, generally believed that the sites of these cities are all buried under the southern shallows of the lake. SEE [**DEAD SEA**](#).