



## Why Did God Turn Lot's Wife into a Pillar of Salt?

In its most basic form this answer is pretty straight-forward, Lot and his family had been told not to look back or they would be swept away.

“And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.” (Ge 19:17 ESV)

So having lead Lot, his wife, and his two daughters, by the hand, out of Sodom, one of the angels told them to flee, to run for their life, to not stay or delay, and to not look back, lest they be consumed, lest they be swept away. She looked back, thus she was consumed, in this case “she looked back” and “she became a pillar of salt.”

But, the question in class was really getting at a deeper question. Why salt, why not consumed by fire, or some other horrific form of death. Why did God cause her to become “a pillar of salt”? Of course we can never be sure, but there are some threads worth pulling.

First, let's look at the use of salt in the Bible. The Hebrew word is used 28 times in the Old Testament. This is the second use of the word in the Old Testament, the first being Genesis 14:3 in a reference to the “salt” or the dead sea. Most of the uses of salt in the Old Testament are references to the salt sea.

The next mention of salt is Leviticus 2:13, and this was my immediate thought in class. There we read:

“You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.” (Le 2:13 ESV)

Here and other verses like (Eze 43:24): “23 When you have finished purifying it, you shall offer a bull from the herd without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. 24 You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall sprinkle salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD.” (Eze 43:23-24 ESV) salt was placed on the grain and burnt offerings. In these verses, it seems that salt is connected with offerings, pointing possibly to the judgment of God. My answer in class was that quite possibly Lot's wife being turned to salt is highlighting that she bore the judgment of God as typified in the sacrificial system.

In judges 9:45 we read this in reference to salt:

“And Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed the people who were in it, and he razed the city and sowed it with salt.” (Jud 9:45 ESV)

Again, I would say, if there is a connection it seems to be around the idea of judgment. Here Abimelech after he killed the people of the city, destroyed the city, and then sowed the whole area with salt. Again, this seems to point to judgment. The land was salted making it unusable, again quite possibly pointing to judgment.

But salt is also used in the scriptures in a positive sense. For example, in II Kings 2:19-22, God healed a spring of water after salt was cast into the Spring:

“19 ¶ Now the men of the city said to Elisha, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." 20 He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor

miscarriage shall come from it." 22 So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke." (2Ki 2:19-22 ESV)

Also, the most famous use of salt in the Bible is a positive one:

““You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.” (Mt 5:13 ESV)

In the ancient world salt was a valuable commodity, that was required for preserving meat, in fact for life. As best I can tell, Lot’s wife being turned into a pillar of salt is a picture of God’s judgment that we see repeated in the Mosaic sacrificial system.