

GENESIS 14 – ABRAM RESCUES LOT AND MEETS MELCHIZEDEK

A. Abram rescues Lot from the confederacy of kings.

1. (1-10) *The rebellion of the five kings.*

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar. And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.

a. **Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked:** The people who lived in Canaan in the days of Abram were like humanity in general. There were many among them interested in conquest and domination. This confederation of kings who **rebelled** against Chedorlaomer wanted to be free from his dominion.

i. Archaeologist Nelson Glueck documented the destruction left by these kings: "I found that every village in their path had been plundered and left in ruins, and the countryside was laid waste. The population had been wiped out or led away into captivity. For hundreds of years thereafter, the entire area was like an abandoned cemetery, hideously unkempt, with all its monuments shattered and strewn in pieces on the ground" (cited in Morris).

b. **Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits:** They were fearful of **asphalt pits** in this region, and **some fell there**. The Hebrew here is a good example of how the language uses repetition to show emphasis.

i. "The Hebrew way of saying *full of bitumen pits* is: *pits, pits of bitumen*. Repetition expresses abundance, plenitude, etc." (Leupold)

What is so important about asphalt pits??? They were dangerous, plentiful and dangerous. Did I say dangerous. They could pop up rapidly, so you didn't exactly know where they were. And it was in the area that the people ran away to. They ran to danger.

2. (11-12) The four kings take Lot and all his possessions.

Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

a. **They also took Lot:** Because Lot was **Abram's brother's son**, the group of four kings involved Abram. Abram was a man of honor and a guardian of his family, so he would fight for his nephew's life and safety.

b. **And his goods:** Since Lot lived among the wicked people of Sodom, we are not surprised he was also taken captive. Uncle Abram was rich so a logical pick for a ransom.

But notice – Lot lived in Sodom. Remember he chose the good fertile plain when he and Uncle Abram separated. That included Sodom and Gormorrah. He ended up right in the middle of all this.

i. Here is an interesting quote from Spurgeon about Lot's position. "Those believers who conform to the world must expect to suffer for it." (Spurgeon)

Note too: all their provisions. Food, live stock anything required to live.

3. (13-14) Abram hears of Lot's captivity and marshals an army.

Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

a. **Abram the Hebrew:** This is the first use of the term **Hebrew** in the Bible. It was probably a reference to the fact that Abram came from beyond the Euphrates River, and had *passed over* the river to come to Canaan.

i. "The word Hebrew comes from a root that means *passed over*. The Septuagint translates it *the passenger*." (Barnhouse) I'm not exactly sure where to put both these interpretations.

b. **He armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants:** This demonstrates the great wealth of Abram. Any man who could assemble 318 servants capable of fighting must be very rich.

c. **Trained servants:** Abram was a man who walked in faith, yet he was also a prudent man. Abram kept his own personal army, and he apparently kept them trained and ready to defend his interests.

- d. **Went in pursuit as far as Dan:** Abram's army pursued the confederacy of four kings for a long distance to the north. The city of Dan is not far from the northern border of Israel.
- i. The gates of the city of **Dan** from Abram's time have been discovered by archaeologists and can be viewed at the Israeli national park at Dan.

4. (15-17) Abram leads his army to victory over the four kings.

He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.

- a. **He divided his forces against them by night:** Abram had military wisdom. Using the clever tactic of a night attack with his army split into two groups, he succeeded in rescuing Lot and recovering all the plunder (**all the goods**) seized by the partnership of the four kings.
- b. **Also brought back his brother Lot and his goods:** Unfortunately, Lot moved right back to where he was before in Sodom. He refused this warning from God and would eventually lose everything when Sodom and Gomorrah were ultimately judged (Genesis 19:24-25).

Now all this is very nice. It points out the volatility of the politics at that time and not much has changed really. But what do we get from it. I mean, what's the lessons for us.

Here we go:

- a. Politics is variable. Just ask our premier or prime minister. The situation changes, nearly daily. Alliances change, purposes change. Abram went from being a farmer to a general in a day.
- b. Face the issue at hand. Abram didn't seek to make allegiances – He got Lot back.
- c. When you live in Sodom, you get treated like everyone else there. The marauding Kings treat Lot the same as everyone else. He became property. If we choose to live in a situation we wear what comes with it. This is not speaking locationally but spiritually.
- d. Be clever when you fight. Abram did. Basically started guerrilla warfare techniques. Fighting at night wasn't done back then apparently.
- e. Win people back. Now here is a big principle. Win people back to the possibility of a relationship to God. We know Lot chose to go back to living in Sodom, but Abram gives him that opportunity to make his own decision again. Give people the chance to make their decisions.