

GENESIS

Chapter 14

Abram Rescues Lot

In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, 2 these kings 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). 3 And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. 7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar. 8 Then 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 they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim 9 with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. 10 Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. 11 So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. 12 They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way. 13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks[a] of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. 14 When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. 16 Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

14:1-7 Four invading kings were met by a coalition of five kings from the region that Lot had chosen for himself. That Mesopotamians had invaded the region is recorded by the ruler of Mari, Yakhdun-Lim, who describes a military campaign to Syrian, Lebanon and the Mediterranean coast during the 19th century B.C. (TLSB)

14:1 None of these kings can be identified with certainty.

Amraphel king of Shinar. Not the great Babylonian king Hammurapi, as once thought. (CSB)

East of the Tigris River. (TLSB)

Goiim. The Hebrew word means “Gentile nations” and may be a common noun here (as in Isa 9:1). (CSB)

14:2 *made war* – Five kings in the region of the Salt Sea had been vassals of Chedorlaomer (v. 4). Their rebellion incurred swift punishment from the four invading kings of Mesopotamia. At this time, Mesopotamia controlled the region that would become Israel. (TLSB)

kings – Hebrew term can describe everything from a warlord/chieftain to an emperor. (TLSB)

*Sodom...Gomorra*h – Remains of ancient cities have been discovered near the southeastern end of the Salt Sea, though it is not clear whether any of these ruins are ancient Sodom and Gomorra. (TLSB)

14:3 *Salt Sea*. The Dead Sea, whose water contains a 25 percent concentration of chloride and bromide salts, making it the densest large body of water on earth. (CSB)

14:4 *rebelled* – Refused to pay the tribute owed. (TLSB)

14:5-7 Kings from the east dispersed the border tribes that served as the Jordan River Valley’s first line of defense. (TLSB)

14:5 Since the five kings of the lower Jordan River Valley had come under Cherdoriaomer’s lordship. (TLSB)

14:6 *Horites*. Formerly thought to be cave dwellers (the Hebrew word *hor* means “cave”), they are now known to have been the Hurrians, a non-Semitic people widely dispersed throughout the ancient Near East. (CSB)

14:7 *En Mishpat*. Another name for Kadesh, it means “spring of judgment/justice.” It is called Meribah Kadesh, “quarreling/litigation at Kadesh,” in Dt 32:51 (see Nu 27:14). (CSB)

Kadesh. Located in the southwest Negev, it was later called Kadesh Barnea (see Nu 32:8). (CSB)

Amalekites. A tribal people living in the Negev and in the Sinai peninsula. (CSB)

14:10 *bitumen pits*. Lumps of asphalt are often seen even today floating in the southern end of the Dead Sea. (CSB)

Pits of asphalt or tar. The Salt Sea is known for having chunks of asphalt floating in it; in Roman times Josephus called it “Asphaltites Lacus.” (TLSB)

hill country. The Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth (about 1,300 feet below sea level), is flanked by hills on both sides. (CSB)

Highlands in the region of Moab, east of the Salt Sea. (TLSB)

14:11 *enemy* – Translators’ term to indicate the four invading kings who plundered Sodom and Gomorra. (CSB)

possessions – Movable property and goods, particularly cattle.

Food. (TLSB)

14:12 *Lot ... was dwelling in Sodom*. He moved into the town and was living among its wicked people (see 2Pe 2:8). Though Lot was “righteous,” he was now in danger of imitating the “filthy lives of lawless men” (2Pe 2:7). (CSB)

Lot had separated himself from Abram, choosing what seemed to be the better portion. The invaders abducted Lot and took other captives as spoils of war. (TLSB)

14:13 *Hebrew.* Abram, the father of the Hebrew people, is the first Biblical character to be called a Hebrew (see “Eber” in note on 10:21). Usually an ethnic term in the Bible, it was normally used by non-Israelites in a disparaging sense (see, e.g., 39:17). Outside the Bible, people known as the Habiru/Apiru (a word probably related to Hebrew) are referred to as a propertyless, dependent, immigrant (foreign) social class rather than as a specific ethnic group. Negative descriptions of them are given in the Amarna letters (clay tablets found in Egypt). (CSB)

Hbr *‘ibri*. Abram is the first biblical figure to be so designated (cf 39:14, 17; 40:15; 43:32; Ex 1:15; 2:11). The word could derive from Eber, of whose lineage was Abram and may be related to the verb meaning “to pass over or through,” perhaps referring to migration and nomadic life. It is a matter of debate whether the word is connected with the wandering, nomadic people known as Habiru. (TLSB)

Mamre. A town was named after him (see 13:18 and note). (CSB)

ALLIED – From the Hebrew *berith*, “covenant”; those confederated with Abram. The fact that they received a portion of the spoils (v. 24) indicates that they were faithful in their alliance. (TLSB)

14:14 *318 trained men born in his household.* A clear indication of Abram’s great wealth. The Hebrew for “trained men” is found only here in the Bible. A related word used elsewhere in very ancient texts means “armed retainers.” (CSB)

Hbr term used only here in the OT. We may consider the men a testimony to the wealth God had given Abram. *318*. Such a low number of men against perhaps much greater odds emphasizes that the victory is God’s, not man’s. (TLSB)

Dan. This well-known city in the north was not given the name “Dan” until the days of the judges (see Jdg 18:29). The designation here is thus an editorial updating subsequent to Moses’ time. (CSB)

Northern city of Dan received its name much later than Moses’ era, indicating here a scribal updating for later readers who would no longer have called the city by its earlier name, Laish. (TLSB)

14:15 A night attack, during which the forces were divided, was a tactic later employed also by Gideon in Judges 7:16. Such a stratagem has the element of surprise and confusion. Multiple forces attack from various direction under the cover of darkness. (TLSB)

14:1–16 The land of Canaan is torn by marauding invaders, who sweep up Lot in their conquest. But God in His grace provides deliverance. As God rescued Lot through Abram and his 318 well-trained men, so He watches over and cares for us. He sent a Redeemer to rescue us. When your enemies surround you, revealing just how weak your faith is and how great your sins are, call on the Lord and come quickly to the Lord’s Supper, for He sets His Table before you in the presence of your enemies and gives you the victory in Christ. • Dear Lord, You rescued us from sin, death, and the power of the devil when You baptized us in Jesus. By the Gospel of Your Son, pluck us daily from the hands of our enemies, that we may overcome them and finally win the victory. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)

Abram Blessed by Melchizedek

17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) **19** And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **20** and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. **21** And the king of Sodom said to Abram,

“Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.” 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ 24 I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.”

14:17 *King’s Valley.* Near Jerusalem, probably to the east (see 2Sa 18:18). (CSB)

Apparently near Jerusalem; mentioned again only in 2Sm 18:18. (TLSB)

14:18 *Melchizedek king of Salem ... priest.* See Heb 7:1. In ancient times, particularly in non-Israelite circles, kingly and priestly duties were often performed by the same individual. “Melchizedek” means “My king is righteousness” or “king of righteousness” (see Heb 7:2). “Salem” is a shortened form of “Jerusalem” (see Ps 76:2) and is related to the Hebrew word for “peace” (see Heb 7:2). The name of Adoni-Zedek, another king of Jerusalem (see Jos 10:1), is very similar to that of Melchizedek and means “My lord is righteousness” or “lord of righteousness.” (CSB)

Name means “the king of righteousness” or “my king is righteousness.” Receiving a tithe from Abram, the priest was a “type of the eternal and universal priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:20-7:19). “Most High” is used elsewhere, particularly in the psalms (e.g., Ps. 7:17; 9:2; 18:13; 46:4). It indicates that He is above all others, the one and only true God. The Early Church Fathers and Luther associated Melchizedek with Shem, the son of Noah (AE 2:381-83). Whether or not this association is correct, the “priest of God Most High” certainly continued in the righteousness preached by Noah (2 Peter 2:5)) and would have learned of the promise through the faithful testimony and worship of those who had come before (see Luther pp 3-5). (TLSB)

He was a worshiper of the true religion of Jehovah handed down from the time of the flood. This passage brings us the only information the OT gives us about him. This would be no more than a fascinating incident from the life of Abram if it were not for some significant light the NT sheds on it. For one thing, we learn there that Melchizedek is an OT picture or type of Jesus. (PBC)

The Epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes a second truth about Melchizedek which is basic to Christianity. Through-out the centuries of the OT God instructed his Israelite people to approach him through mediators known as priests, from the tribe of Levi, Abraham’s great grandson. These Levitical priests daily brought blood sacrifices which symbolized the seriousness of sin and which pointed to God’s only remedy for sin. But here, at his return from battle with eastern kings, Levi’s great-grandfather paid a tithe to a priest who had descended from another line. Here is our assurance that all of the religious ceremonies and regulations of the OT – including centuries of blood sacrifices – could not really reconcile a guilty sinner to God. A better priest than a sinful Levite, and a better sacrifice than an animal victim were needed. Jesus is therefore called a “priest in the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6; 7:11-17. (PBC)

bread and wine. An ordinary meal (see Jdg 19:19), in no way related to the NT ordinance of communion. Melchizedek offered the food and drink as a show of friendship and hospitality. (CSB)

14:19 *God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.* The titles “most high,” “lord of heaven” and “creator of earth” were frequently applied to the chief Canaanite deity in ancient times. Terminology and location (Jerusalem was in central Canaan) thus indicate that Melchizedek was probably a Canaanite king-priest. But Abram, by identifying Melchizedek’s “God Most High” with “the LORD” (see v. 22), bore testimony to the one true God, whom Melchizedek had come to know. (CSB)

blessed – God called Abram with the promise and blessed him (12:2). Here, through His priest, the Most High (v. 18) does as God said and blessed Abram again. (TLSB)

Possessor of heaven and earth – Possessor, Hebrew qoneth; commonly used to describe a purchase of property, and thereby, ownership. (TLSB)

14:20 *blessed be God* – God is blessed when people confess Him as the One who gives blessing. (TLSB)

Abram gave him a tenth of everything. Although Melchizedek’s view of God was no doubt deficient, and perhaps even corrupted, Abram’s response to his blessing seems to indicate that he recognized that Melchizedek served the same God as he (see v. 18). So Abram took the occasion to offer him a tithe of his spoils for God Most High. A tenth was the king’s share (see 1Sa 8:15, 17). Melchizedek is later spoken of as a type or prefiguration of Jesus, our “great high priest” (Heb 4:14), whose priesthood is therefore “in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron” (Heb 7:11; see Ps 110:4). (CSB)

Hbr does not include “Abram” but simply says that “he” gave him a tithe. Cf Heb 7:2, 4 to understand that it was Abram who gave the tithe to Melchizedek. (TLSB)

14:22 *I have lifted my hand.* A standard oath-taking practice in ancient times (see Dt 32:40; Rev 10:5–6). (CSB)

To lift up or raise the hand is to swear or make an oath. (TLSB)

14:23 *I would not take.* Cf. 2Ki 5:16. Abram refused to let himself become obligated to anyone but the Lord. Had he done so, this Canaanite king might later have claimed the right of kingship over Abram. (CSB)

Though the offer was generous, Abram displayed none of the avarice that often drives people and desired no profit from the venture. The credit belonged only to God. (TLSB)

14:24 *Aner...Eshcol...Mamre* – Allies who accompanied Abram and his men. We are told how many troops this added to the 318 that Abram mustered against the invader. (TLSB)

14:17–24 The Lord fulfills His promise to bless Abram, doing so through the ministry of Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, who presents him with a feast. The Lord’s blessings come through His gifts, His means, His ministers. The Lord confirmed this ultimately by sending His Son, who gave the eternal sacrifice, once for all, of His body and His blood on the cross. He continues to bless us, even setting a feast before us as He gives His body and His blood in bread and wine. • Lord, bless us daily to live in Your pleasure, which is ours for the sake of Jesus, our great High Priest. Amen. (TLSB)