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Genesis 14

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Genesis 14.

Topics.

- Chedorlaomer with four kings, war against the king of Sodom and three kings.
- Chedorlaomer defeats Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim and the Horites.
- Chedorlaomer turns back and defeats the Amalekites and the Amorites.
- The king of Sodom and four kings go against Chedorlaomer and three kings.
- Chedorlaomer takes Lot and all who were dwelling in Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Abram hears that Lot and the people were taken captive and rescues them.
- The king of Sodom and Melchizedek king of Salem go out to meet Abram.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: the focus of chapter thirteen was firstly, upon Abram, Sarai and Lot leaving Egypt and travelling toward the Negeb where his tent had been at the beginning, and secondly upon the separation of Lot and Abraham with Lot choosing all the Jordan valley and Abram settling in the land of Canaan. Thirdly upon God's promise to make Abram's offspring as the dust of the earth.

GENESIS 14:1-3

Chedorlaomer, Four Kings, War, the King of Sodom, three Kings.

- **Genesis 14:1-3:** In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ²these 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). ³And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).

In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar the following four kings joined forces:

1. Amraphel king of Shinar.
2. Arioch king of Ellasar.
3. Chedorlaomer king of Elam.
4. Tidal king of Goiim.

And made war with the following five kings:

1. Bera king of Sodom.
2. Birsha king of Gomorrah.
3. Shinab king of Admah.

4. Shemeber king of Zeboiim.

5. Bela king of Zoar).

These kings and their armies went to war in the Valley of Siddim this war is spoken of in, verse eight to twelve.

The valley of Siddim that is, the Salt Sea: (v3) means that sometime later it was overwhelmed with water and became a salt sea and so was called a salt sea (i.e. what is now the Dead Sea).

The Battle of the Vale of Siddim: is also often called, "the War of Nine Kings" or "the Slaughter of Chedorlaomer," it refers to a war recorded in (Gen. 14:1-17) that occurred in the days of Abram and Lot. The Vale of Siddim was the battleground for the cities of the Jordan River plain revolting against Mesopotamian rule, during the days of Lot. The vale of Siddim was a river valley where this Battle of Siddim occurred between four Mesopotamian armies and five cities of the Jordan plain. Prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Elamite King Chedorlaomer had subdued the tribes and cities surrounding the Jordan River plain. After thirteen years, five kings of the cities of the Jordan plain revolted against Chedorlaomer's rule. The revolt started with their refusal to pay tribute to King Chedorlaomer. In response, Chedorlaomer and three other northern kings started a campaign against King Bera of Sodom, and the four other southern kings with him. (Gen. 14:1-7). The invading and dominant confederacy consists of four kings with Chedorlaomer being the head and commander-in-chief of these united forces. This war is the first war that we read of in the Scriptures. The cause of the war was the revolt of the five kings from under the oppressive government of Chedorlaomer. The invaded five cities of the five kings were close to each other in the plain of Jordan, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. Though Chedorlaomer was the most powerful and dominant head of those aligned with him at this time Amraphel is mentioned first, this is probably because he was the king of Shinar and as such the successor of Nimrod and the sovereign of the most ancient kingdoms and for this reason most likely occupies the first place in the list.

The story: the king of Sodom and the four kings of the adjoining cities after having been tributaries and subject for twelve years to the rule of Chedorlaomer the king of Elam combine to throw off his twelve years of oppressive rule over them. Chedorlaomer with the aid of three allies rises up to subdue their rebellion, invades their territories and defeats them in battle.

NOTE: the use of the title kings may not mean that they were all kings in the truest sense, but that they were recognised as the head ruler or governor of the city.

GENESIS 14:4-6

Chedorlaomer defeats Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim and the Horites.

- **Genesis 14:4-6:** Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. ⁵In 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, ⁶and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness.

We are not given greater detail of the story, for twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, meaning for twelve years the five kings mentioned in verse two paid an annual tax so that Chedorlaomer would not send his raiding party into their villages, towns and cities to plunder them. In the thirteenth year after having had enough of Chedorlaomer's oppressive rule over them they rebelled (meaning they refused to pay the demanded tax).

In the fourteenth year: (v5-7) after some time and preparation, Chedorlaomer, with his allies (the kings previously mentioned in verse one) makes himself ready to subdue the five revolting kingdoms. As he marched forward toward Sodom and Gomorrah to subdue the revolt he and the kings with him invaded and plundered the countries that stretch along the whole side of the Jordan and parts south and west of the Salt Sea enriching themselves with the spoil. Following are the four nations they raided:

1. **The Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim:** (v5) the Rephaim are described as an Amorite tribe of great strength and stature (Amos. 2:9). This is because they were a fierce tall (i.e., gigantic) and a warlike race of people. Genesis shows that they were one of the nations or tribes of the Canaanites. (Gen. 15:18-20). In many Scriptures the word Rephaim is translated giants because of their great stature. (Deut. 2:11). They are found:

- In Bashan on the other side of the Jordan River where Moses conquered them (Josh. 13:12).
- In Mount Ephraim (Josh. 17:15).
- On the western side of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8) (Josh. 18:16) (2 Sam. 5:18) (2 Sam. 5:22).
- Among the Philistines (2 Sam. 21:16) (2 Sam. 21:18).

They were conquered in Peraea by the Amorites, a branch of the Canaanite family; and by the Ammonites and Moabites, descendants of Lot. From this wide dispersion of them it may safely be concluded that they belonged to the earlier settlers in the land of Canaan.

2. **The Zuzim in Ham:** (v5) called Zamzummim in (Deut. 2:20), where they are identified with the Rephaim, but an inferior branch. They were dispossessed by the Ammonites. The site of their town Ham is unknown, but suspected to be somewhere in the land of Canaan east of the lower part of the Dead Sea.

3. **The Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim:** (v5) is in the plain of Kiriathaim. They were a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim and like the Anakim they were also counted as Rephaim (i.e., giants), but the Moabites called them Emim. (Deut. 2:10-11). The city lay on the east of the Salt Sea and was given to the tribe of Reuben (Num. 32:37), but upon the decay of the Israelites on the east of Jordan it was, re-occupied by the Moabites (Jer. 48:1) who had taken it from the Emim.

4. **The Horites:** (v6) dwelt in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. The Horites were perhaps a Shemite tribe and original inhabitants of Mount Seir where they dwelt in caves. These caves are still to be seen in Petra and other places nearby. The entire region of Mount Seir stretches between the Salt Sea and the Elanitic Gulf.

GENESIS 14:7

Chedorlaomer Defeats the Amalekites and the Amorites.

- **Genesis 14:7:** 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.

Chedorlaomer did not go back by the same route, but turned to travel towards the north-west with the ultimate intention of subduing the five defiant kings. On his march toward them he defeated En-mishpat (also called Kadesh because it was here the rock at that place was struck and

water flowed out). The city is between Mount Hor and the Salt Sea (the site is now called Ain el-Welbch). After this victory Chedorlaomer continued on toward Sodom and conquered all the country of the Amalekites and the Amorites dwelling in Hazazon-tamar the ancient name of a town on the west coast of the Dead Sea.

GENESIS 14:8-9

The King of Sodom, four Kings, Chedorlaomer and three Kings.

- **Genesis 14:8-9:** 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 ⁹with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five.

The king of Sodom and the four kings with him hear that Chedorlaomer and his armies were marching toward them so Sodom and the four kings go out to the Valley of Siddim to battle against Chedorlaomer and the three kings with him.

GENESIS 14:10-12

Chedorlaomer takes Lot and all Dwelling in Sodom and Gomorrah.

- **Genesis 14:10-12:** Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits (slimepits in KJV), and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. ¹¹So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹²They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

Bitumen pits: (slimepits in KJV) (v10) comes from the Hebrew word (*chemar*) it literally means bitumen (as rising to the surface), and to boil up or to ferment (with scum). It refers to a tar pit, or more accurately an asphalt pit or asphalt lake, it is the result of a type of petroleum seep where subterranean bitumen leaks to the surface, creating a large area of natural asphalt. This happens because, after the material reaches the surface, its lighter components vaporize, leaving only the thick asphalt. These tar pits can trap animals because the asphalt that seeps up from underground forms a bitumen pit so thick that even the largest of animals cannot free themselves before they die of starvation.

The valley of Siddim and Bitumen pits: (v10) the valley is thought to have been located on the southern end of the Dead Sea where modern bitumen (asphalt, slime pits) deposits have been found. This valley was chosen by the five Mesopotamian kings for the place of battle against the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Bitumen pits and Chedorlaomer: (v10) Chedorlaomer the king of Elam and those with him have conquered and plundered a very large number of kingdoms which means they were masters of battle. It is almost certain that Chedorlaomer very cleverly draw the king of Sodom and those with him to the valley of Siddim because of the bitumen pits (slimepits in KJV) knowing that as the soldiers of Sodom and Gomorah fled from his armies many would fall into the pits and perish.

GENESIS 14:13-16

Abram Rescues Lot and the People that were Taken Captive.

- **Genesis 14:13-16:** Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amo-rite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies (confederate in KJV) of Abram. ¹⁴When 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. ¹⁵And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

These were allies (confederate in KJV) with Abram: (v13) Abram was dwelling by the oaks of Mamre, near Hebron which was not far from the scene of war. It was by the consent of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and Aner who were allies of Abram. (Gen. 14:13) that he was able to occupy Mamre. It is almost certain that Mamre and his brothers Eshkol and Aner entered into a league with Abram for each other's mutual defence against common enemies since Abram had three hundred and eighteen highly trained men of war and was himself a skillful warrior.

Abram's only war: (v14-16) here Abram takes up the role of a military commander and warrior, this is the only war we ever read of that Abram is engaged in. It is important to note that he is not motivated by ambition or the lust for power or greed or to gain control over other kingdoms and thereby increase his riches and wealth as Chedorlaomer and the three kings with him were, but was motivated by charity, because of his love and compassion toward Lot and his family in their distress.

Abram the Hebrew: (v13) this is the first appearance of the name "Abram the Hebrew," in Scripture, it is most likely how he was known among the inhabitants of Canaan and used here to separate him from the Canaanites. The word Hebrew comes from the Hebrew word (*`Ibriy*) it literally means an Eberite (i.e. Hebrew) or descendant of Eber. It also comes from the Hebrew word (*`abar*) which can mean:

- To cross over to a region on the opposite side (especially of the Jordan).
- The immigrant from beyond the Euphrates.
- Or used as a nickname stemming from Eber who in like manner had crossed the Tigris River.

Abram the Hebrew was, no doubt, the usual cultural title of Abram among the Canaanites. It is not a national name at this time since there was no nation then, but a personal nickname that carries the idea, "The man from the other side," or "the man that had come across the water." Just as captains of ships bore the title, "the man from beyond the sea," likewise Abram being a foreigner was known simply as, "the man from the other side," or "the man from across the water," (of the Jordan River, or the great river Euphrates) to the long-settled inhabitants of the country. Some commentators feel that the title, "Abram the Hebrew," stems from:

- 1 His great and godly predecessor Eber, because Abram was the first to restore the memory and the work of Eber, and kept up the same language and spread the same true faith. Though there are five other ancestors between Abram and Eber they were men of less note and therefore he is believed by some to be named "Abram the Hebrew," from Eber.
- 2 Others feel he is named, "Abram the Hebrew," from the sons of Heber who are distinctly mentioned in the table of nations among the descendants of Shem.

Whichever of these Abram got the title, Abram the Hebrew from (most likely a combination of them all) the introduction of the name here shows that there were already other Hebrews in the land besides Abram and though they would not be a widespread race the title Hebrew was at this time a known cultural name amongst the people at this time.

Abram attacks his enemies: (v13-16) Abram divides his men into divisions and attacks Chedorlaomer during the night. This was a common tactic in war between Arab chiefs. When a small party plans to attack a greater enemy, it was a common tactic to wait until nightfall when the enemy was sleeping and then rush upon them from different directions.

Soldiers from all directions would run through the camp knocking down the tent poles and thereby throw the enemy into fear dread confusion and panic and in this way quickly defeat the enemy since they were trapped under the canvas of their tents and struck with fear and panic. Abram not only had a great victory, but also rescued his kinsman Lot with the women and the people and their possessions,

GENESIS 14:17-20

The King of Sodom and Melchizedek King of Salem meet Abram.

- **Genesis 14:17-20:** 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). ¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

The valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's valley): (v17) the valley of Shaveh means the valley of the plain it is a plain and level valley, clear of trees and everything that obstructs such areas. It is on the northern side of Jerusalem, probably where the Kedron valley widens out. The name the King's Valley may have been given to it for the following reasons: -

- It was the place that victorious Abram met with Melchizedek King of Salem and the king of Sodom.
- It was on this level ground that the kings of Judah at various times assembled to battle.

The king of Sodom went out to meet him: (v17) it is possible the king of Sodom and those with him escaped from Chedorlaomer and the three kings, but more likely he was in the mountains when the four kings invaded Lot's camp.

Abram gave Melchizedek the tenth of everything: (Gen. 14:17-20) some use this to support the doctrine that New Testament Christians are commanded to pay ten percent of their income to the church they belong to regardless of how much they are financially struggling. But in this story Abram is giving a tenth of the riches and possessions of king Chedorlaomer and the three kings with him (enemies of Sodom) who he has just defeated to save Lot. The riches of these four kings would have been enormous after defeating so many nations. Large armies such as these would harness horses together to pull wagons full of treasures that they plundered from the cities they raided. The point is that Abram is giving from abundance of riches and not from struggle and need. If Melchizedek is to be used as an example for tithing today then it could be said that Christians should tithe once in a lifetime since this battle and tithe was not an everyday event and only tithe when they have had some outstanding victory or received an abundance of someone else's goods since there is no mention of Abram paying tithes after or before this event. Added to this Abram was tithing his enemy's riches this tithe did not come out of his own personal wealth. To use this story to motivate Christians today to pay a tithe of ten-percent every week of everything they earn to the church they attend is not only forcing more into to the story of Abram and Melchizedek than is actually there, but is also doing the Scriptures a great injustice and is a perfect example of using the Scriptures to suit one's own agenda for financial gain and reward. For further information concerning tithing, see the title:

- Tithing (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Melchizedek: comes from the Hebrew word (*Malkiy-Tsedeq*) it literally means king of right and justice and king, royal.

Shalem: comes from the Hebrew word (*Shalem*) and (*shalam*) it means peaceful and complete (literal or figurative). It especially means friendly just, perfect and to be safe (in mind, body or estate). Figuratively it means to make complete and by implication to make amends and to give again, to make good, to repay, to reward, to be at perfect peace, to prosper and to restore and make restitution. It was also an early name of Jerusalem

It is interesting to notice: Melchizedek came out to Abram with bread and wine, fitting refreshments for the fatigued followers of Abram and Christ establishes bread and wine as the memorials of his body and blood, which are true meat and drink to the heart and mind of the faithful.

Melchizedek: (Melchisedek) (Gen. 14:18-20) came out of Judah and was without beginning or end (probably meaning no one knew his genealogy). He was a king of righteousness, peace and the priest and king of Salem which is identified with Jerusalem. He believed in the name of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, was a monotheist and worshipped the same God as Abram. The claims of the Old Testament priesthood were based on genealogy of which Melchizedek's is not recorded (i.e., he had no beginning and no end), while Christ's was in his power of an endless life. The ideal ruler of the Hebrew nation would be one who was both priest and king and live forever. Melchizedek went out to meet Abram after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him in the Vale of Siddim, he presented Abram with bread and wine, and blessed him in the name of God Most High possessor of heaven and earth and Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoil of his enemies. The Hebrew word for "God Most High" in this instance carries the same meaning as the following expressions:

- God Almighty (Gen. 17:1).
- The Everlasting God (Gen. 21:33).
- God the God of Israel (Gen. 33:20).
- The God of Bethel (Gen. 35:7).

The title, "God Most High" is the oldest Semitic designation for God. Melchizedek was a monotheist worshipper who Abram recognised as a priest. He appears the next time in (Psalm 110:4). This psalm is of special interest because Jesus referred to it (Matt. 22:41) (Mark 13:35) (Luke 20:41) and it is regarded as one of the Messianic Psalms. The ideal ruler of the Hebrew nation would be one who combined in his person the role of both Priest and King. The author of the letter to the Hebrews uses Melchizedek (Heb. chapters 5-7) in his great argument where he shows that Jesus Christ as the final and perfect Son and Priest of God (Heb. 1:2-10, 18) the author cites (Psalm 110:4) indicating that Jesus priesthood is of a different order from the Levitical priesthood. Jesus priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek being a king and a priest. The author of Hebrews looking back upon the history of his people comes to the conclusion that the Levitical priesthood proved to be a failure in that it was incapable of securing victory over sin and full communion with God and so he cites (Psalm 110) to show that the ideal priest must belong to the order of Melchizedek. To the writer of Hebrews, Christ was the fulfilment of this prophecy, for he came out of Judah, a tribe with no connection with the Levitical priesthood. While the claims of the old priesthood were based on genealogy, Christ's were displayed in his power of an endless life, thus the claim of Jesus to be the real fulfilment of the psalmist's prophecy rested upon the fact of his resurrection and the proof that his life was indestructible. The psalmist had declared that the ideal High Priest would be forever and only one whose life could not be destroyed by death could be said to answer to the psalmist ideal, a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Abram tells the King of Sodom, "He will Not Take anything of His."

- **Genesis 14:21-24:** And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." ²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴I 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."

King of Sodom was so grateful that Abram had set his people free and delivered them back, he was willing to give all the possessions to Abram as a reward, but Abram refused to take anything for himself because he did not want anyone to be able to say that the king of Sodom made him rich so he only took what was rightly due to those who had bravely fought alongside of him and risked their own lives to win this great victory and set Abrams kinsmen free.

The LORD, God most High, possessor of heaven and earth: (v22) Abram gives to God the same titles that Melchizedek had just now used in verse nineteen, showing that Melchizedek worshipped the same God as Abram, the God of the first chapter of Genesis and of Adam, Noah and Abram.

I have lifted my hand to the LORD: (v22) lifting up hands to the LORD is a gesture of praying, of praise and worship and of swearing. Lifting up holy hands and making an oath before God is a serious matter with Abram as it should be with every believer. When Abram heard that Lot had been captured it appears that he with uplifted hands made a solemn oath before God that he would not take the riches and property of Sodom or their enemies. Perhaps he said to the LORD (as many do when facing a crisis) something like this, "O LORD, if you give me victory over Chedorlaomer and the kings with him, and keep Lot and his family safe, I will take nothing for a reward." Now his prayer has been answered and he is offered abundant wealth and riches, he tells the king of Sodom that he has sworn to the LORD that he would not take even a thread of a sandal or anything that is the kings so that the king would never be able to boast that he made him rich (v22-23).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.