

Text: Gen 14.1-24

As we return to Abram's story, we come to the next installment of the Abram-Lot trilogy as some call it.

Last week we saw how Lot and Abram separated, with Lot heading towards the rich Jordan valley and approaching the land of Sodom.

Both men were rich, but it is striking how things turn out after the separation is made. One wonders if Lot had somehow worked out a better way to co-exist with Abram how his life would have turned out.

Nonetheless, as we get into Gen 14, we will see once again God's working in Abram's life and powerful promises for the days to come.

One thing that surprised me as I read this chapter in preparation for this message is that it really is not about Lot at all. The chapter is about Abram, and his relationship with God.

I think we will read through the chapter section by section and then comment on it as we go.

I. The war of the kings (1-11)**A. The provocation: the rebellion of tributary kings (1-4)****1. The powerful eastern kings**

- a. Chedorlaomer, king of Elam (part of modern Iran, capital Susa [also prominent in Persian empire])
- b. Amraphel, king of Shinar (Babylon)
- c. Arioch, king of Ellasar [unknown]
- d. Tidal, king of Goiim [also unknown]

2. The weaker western kings

- a. Bera of Sodom
- b. Birsha of Gomorrah
- c. Shinab of Admah
- d. Shemeber of Zeboiim
- e. King of Bela [Zoar]

The western kings were under tribute, but after twelve years they rebelled and refused to pay tribute.

B. The campaign: the eastern kings attack (5-7)

1. The conquered cities are roughly north to south along the kings highway (route from Babylon to Egypt)
2. They basically encircle the valley of the Jordan, taking sites north, west, southwest, south and east of Sodom and Gomorrah

C. The last stand of Sodom (8-11)

1. The five kings allied with Sodom face the easterners
2. The location of the battle contained tar pits – the kings of Sodom & Gomorrah fled in the battle and are trapped in the pits
3. The eastern kings prevail, and take all the goods of the conquered cities

II. The fatal error of the eastern kings (12)

A. The verse is structured as a parallel to v. 11

B. They took the goods of Sodom/Gomorrah (11)

C. They also took Lot (12)

1. The implication is that Lot was not part of the military defense of the city
2. He ends up captured, with his possessions and family, presumably as slaves

D. The issue is this: Lot is Abram's nephew

1. If the eastern kings had taken just the goods, would Abram have gotten involved?
2. The fact is, Abram will defend his nephew as we will see

III. Abram acts (13-16)

A. A fugitive tells the tale (13)

B. Abram goes to war (14)

1. He has 318 trained men of war in his household (a comment on Abram's wealth, as an individual to have this many men as part of his household)
2. We will find that he has allies in the fight (24) who earn a share of the booty
3. The pursuit goes as far as Dan – a site located at the base of Mount Hermon in the north of Israel (a recent archeology site)
 - a. The name Dan is an anachronism here, wouldn't become Dan for hundreds of years after Abram
 - b. Former name of the city was Laish (see Josh 19.47, Jdg 18.29)

C. The strategy (15)

1. A night attack
2. A two pronged attack
3. Pursued the enemies beyond Damascus

D. The victory (16)

1. Abram brought back all the goods
2. And Lot
3. And all the people

IV. Abram is blessed (17-24)

A. There is a deep contrast between the king of Sodom and Melchizedek

1. King of Sodom "came out" to meet him (17); Melchizedek "brought out" provisions (18)
2. Melchizedek "blessed" Abram (19); King of Sodom said, "Give me the people" (21)

B. The focus of the chapter is Melchizedek's blessing of Abram, speaking for God (19-20)

A Blessed be Abram of God Most High [*El Elyon*]

B Possessor of heaven and earth

A' And blessed be God Most High [*El Elyon*]

B' Who has delivered your enemies into your hand

C. The distribution of the goods

Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth (20)

King of Sodom asks for the people, "you take the goods" (21)

Abram declares his oath to the Lord God Most High [*YHWH El Elyon*] (22)

I will not have you make me rich (23)

Abram reserves the spoils of his allies (24)

Conclusion:

Abram had good relations with some of his neighbours [his allies], but a clear line is marked between Abram and the king of Sodom.

On a personal level, we can take this as an example as how to get along in the world — some men we can work with, though they don't believe, others we must keep our distance from.

However, the most important part of the chapter is the relationship Abram has with God, as demonstrated by the encounter with Melchizedek and the staunch faith of Abram.

Here we must follow his example closely. May we bless the God most High and serve him all our days.