

WORLD WAR I

Genesis 14:1-16

INTRODUCTION

We continue our verse by verse study of the book of Genesis.

Boice – *“Nothing is as common to the history of the human race as war. The earliest surviving monuments, known as steles, tell of wars. In fact, the earliest of all historical records (other than the Bible), a Sumerian bas-relief from Babylon ... shows soldiers fighting in close battle order, all with shields and helmets.”*

War is an inescapable reality. Since Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden, man has been at enmity with God. And because unsaved man is at war with God, man is at war with one another.

Rev 19:11 – “I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.”

Abraham – we know that he is a worship leader, pastor, shepherd, nomad, businessman ... now he is a **warrior. He is a skilled tactician when it comes to the necessity of war.**

Abram: the follower, the faithful, the failure, the friend, ... and now ... the **fighter**

READ Gen 14:1-16

The story line of this chapter is simple; one year when Abram was in his 80's, four powerful eastern kings (area of modern day Iran/Iraq) swept through the land, destroying and plundering. They fought five local kings (centered around Jordan Valley), and took Lot as a prisoner of war. Abram pursued and defeated the five invading kings in a surprise night attack, and rescued Lot and the possessions.

Proposition: 3 Chapters in this Action Story:

- I. **The Conflict**
- II. **The Captive**
- III. **The Conqueror**

So That: We understand God's blessings on Abraham and that God blesses those who bless and those who curse, God will curse.

- we understand the abiding relevance of the book

1st Chapter in this action story ...

I. The Conflict Gen 14:1-9

Point – Chapter 14 is the only chapter in Genesis chapters 12-22 where God does not directly speak to someone → The focus is on the action

Proof – “¹And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ²that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).”

The 4 Kings of Mesopotamia are:

1. Amraphel, ruler of Shinar

- **Shinar** – Babylon is called the “land of Shinar” Dan 1:2,

2. Arioch, ruler of Ellasar, from Assur

3. Chedorlaomer, ruler of the empire of **Elam**

- **Elam** – Son of Shem
- East of Tigris and Euphrates rivers
- most Eastern country directly named in Chapter 10
- originally lived East of Mesopotamia and eventually mixed with **Madai** (10:2) son of **Japheth** (Medes) to form the Persian empire.
- Seen throughout the Old Testament and only once in the New Testament → **Acts 2:9**

4. **Tidal**, leader of the **Goiim** – Goiim becomes the Hebrew word for nations (some think could even include descendants of Japheth from Southern Europe)

These four kings combine into a superpower confederacy with Chedorlaomer at the head, that goes to war against the five kings.

The 5 Kings from the Jordan River plain rebelled against Mesopotamian rule, were:

1. **Bera** king of **Sodom**
 - In Hebrew, **Bera** means ‘son of evil’
2. **Birsha** king of **Gomorrah**
 - In Hebrew, **Birsha** means ‘son of the wicked’
3. **Shinab** king of **Admah**
4. **Shemeber** king of **Zeboiim**
5. the king of **Bela (that is, Zoar)** - **that was** renamed when Sodom was destroyed

“³**All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).**”

Valley of Siddim – literally means the valley of the “fields”

- the land was fertile at that time

“(that is, the Salt Sea)” – Moses adding an editorial comment to his original audience so that they would understand

“(that is, ...)” **14:2, 3, 7, 8** => when Moses wrote this, the land had changed from the time of Abram.

- 600-700 years in between the happenings with Abram and the time of Moses.
- What should we expect when comparing a land from two time periods several centuries apart? => Change!

It was not until the 2nd century A.D., that the salt sea came to be known as “The Dead Sea”

- It was not salty when it first began to fill up after the post-Flood topographic upheavals.

- Centuries of salt-laden tributary inflows, combined with heavy evaporation and no outlet, gradually made it salty.

“⁴Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.”

“served Chedorloamer”

- the five kings had sent tribute – produce, money, taxes - for 12 years they had paid to this confederacy that they were under **“they rebelled”**
- in the 13th year, they decided not to pay

“⁵And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,”

“Rephaim” - see throughout the Old Testament

“Ashteroth-karnaim” – Southern Syria

“and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim”

- traveling south through the central mountain range of the Transjordan (East of the Promised Land and the Jordan River)

They are basically going down what is called **“The King’s Highway”** between Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Deut 2:10-11 – “The Emim lived there formerly, a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim. ¹¹Like the Anakim, they are also regarded as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim.”

“⁶and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness.”

“Mount Seir” – eventually associated with Edom – Esau went there

Deut 2:12 – “The Horites formerly lived in Seir, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and

settled in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave to them.”

They go all the way down to “**El-paran, which is by the wilderness**”

- at the northern tip of the Red Sea in the Sinai wilderness

“⁷**Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.**”

“^{7a}**Then they turned back**”

- attacked tribes **north, east**, and then **west** of the **valley of Siddim**
- they are circling the rebels; they are guarding their rear flank

“**En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh)**” – head north from **El-paran**, west of the **Valley of Siddim**

“**all the country of the Amalekites**” – grandson of Esau → another description for the benefit of original audience of Moses

“**Hazazon-tamar**” – further north up to the western flank of the Valley of Siddim

2 Chron 20:2 – “Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi).”

- **Engedi** is now a resort town on the Western shore of the Dead Sea [I have been there, floated on the Dead Sea, and bought cosmetic products for my beloved.]

“**and also the Amorites**” – dominant tribe in Canaan at the time of Abram

- frequent Old Testament synonym for Canaan – **Gen 15:16**

The 5 Kings swept through the land.

They secured their rear.

→ Scorched earth all around the rebellion.

Brilliant Strategy →

- 1) This is part of a larger campaign to quell future rebellion

- 2) To secure their rear from attack – 5 kings were the main target

Dr. Nelson Glueck was a 20th century American rabbi, academic, and archaeologist.

He did pioneering work in biblical archaeology.

This is what he had to say about what he unearthed at these sites:

“A civilization of high achievement had flourished between the 21st and 19th centuries B.C., till it was savagely liquidated by the kings of the East. According to the Biblical statements, which have been borne out by archaeological evidence, they gutted every city and village at the end of that period from Ashtaroth-Karnaim in southern Syria through all of Trans-Jordan and the Negev to Kadesh-Barnea in Sinai ... The rebellion of the small kings of the cities on the east side of the Dead Sea ... was brutally crushed. This comparatively minor insurrection was thereupon utilized as a pretext to settle old scores and to raid and ravage with unleashed ferocity for as much booty as could possibly be won. An old order was crumbling. From southern Syria to central Sinai, their fury raged. A punitive expedition developed into an orgy of annihilation. I found that every village in their path had been plundered and left in ruins, and the countryside 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.”

“⁸And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, ⁹against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar-- four kings against five.”

“four kings against five”

- this is the showdown in the valley ... but not much of a showdown. This is a rout, a blowout.

Illustration – This is like Randy Couture (mixed martial arts champion) fighting against a boy scout.

The **Conflict**, ...

2nd Chapter in this action story ...

II. The Captive **Gen 14:9-12**

Point – Lot’s **CHOICE** led to Lot’s **COMPANY** which led to Lot’s **CAPTIVITY**.

Lot’s choice.....

A. Lot’s Choice - Gen 13:10-11 - The richness of the soil that Lot chose was met by the magnitude of the sin of the inhabitants of that land

Lot’s **choice** led to ...

B. Lot’s Company - Gen 13:12-13

Prov 2:11-15; 13:20 – “He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

Because Lot was walking by sight and not by faith, Lot, even as a believer, he was sinning and made a wrong choice.

Lot’s **choice** and **company** then led to ...

C. Lot’s Captivity

Proof – “¹⁰Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country. ¹¹Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.”

“the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits” – very important to building – **11:3** – “they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make

bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.”

The Greeks called it *Lake Asphaltites* – “The Asphalt Sea”

“¹²**And they also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.**”

Key point:

This is the reason for **Lot’s** troubles

- if he had not been **living in Sodom**, he would not have become a prisoner of war

Illustration – A child does not say, “I want to go jump in the canal.” He says, “I want to go up and see how close I can get (without falling in.)” And then he falls in and you have to fish him out ...

Application – In the same way, don’t know near sin. Flee from sin. We need to be reminded, stay far away from it. Don’t try to see how far we can stretch the boundary.

The **Conflict**, The **Captive**, ...

3rd Chapter in this action story ...

III. The Conqueror **Gen 14:13-16**

Point – Lot’s **choice which led to Lot’s captivity** is met by Abram’s **CHOICE which led to Abram’s CONSECRATION which led to Abram’s COURAGE**

A. Abram’s Choice – 13:8-9 (Sacrifice)

Abram’s **choice** led to ...

B. Abram’s Consecration – 13:14-18 (Worship)

Abram’s **choice** and **consecration** led to ...

C. Abram's Courage

“¹³Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.”

God inserts **Abram** right in the middle of **World War I**.

This is the first mention of word “**Hebrew**”

- the word Hebrew appears 33 times in the Old Testament
- reminder that Abram is a descendant of **Eber** in the line of **Shem**, (great-grandson) - reminder of the line of promise

The Hebrew word translated as “**living**” for Abram in 14:12, 13 has more of an connotation than the different Hebrew word translated as “living” in the case of Lot

- Abram's dwelling was not as permanent as Lot's
- Lot was permanently settled
- Abram had a nomadic lifestyle as part of his obedience to God

Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner were “**allies**”

- they were literally “possessors of the covenant” with **Abram**
- Abram had become a force to be reckoned with

Rom 12:18 – “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

- Abram's “**allies**” including the Amorites (synonym for Canaanites) and he helps the Sodomites
- ... process that one for a bit ...

“^{14a}And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive,”

- literally his “brother” – a spiritual brother in need

Dangers and difficulties were not in the way of duty. Abram was unselfish. Abram put his own life on line and went to rescue him.

- against monastic living
- against pacifism.

- **sacrificial response**

Abram - No root of bitterness (Heb 12:15)

1 Cor 13:5 – “[Love] does not take into account a wrong suffered”

This is not the **Abram** of Egypt, who plays the coward and risks the honor and purity of his wife to save his own skin.

This is the **Abram** of the Promised Land, courageous and commanding.

“^{14b}**he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.**”

“**Dan**” – this Dan was likely about 15-20 miles east of the southern end of Valley of Siddim/Dead Sea

- another Dan was in the middle of the Promised Land until Jgs 18 when it moved North - “from Dan to Beersheva” –

Abram was a saint ... but he was not an ignorant saint.

- He took the time away from farming and shepherding and his merchant business and all the rest to train his men to fight and defend themselves and theirs.
- He knew he lived in a land surrounded by enemies and bad people.
- He knew bad people do bad things.

“¹⁵**And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.**”

“**he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them**” – He didn’t just strategize and direct... Abram fought himself.

Strategy – Divide and Conquer

Strategy – Attack by Night

Illustration – In mountain climbing, most accidents happen on the way down, when climbers are more relaxed, tired and become careless. In the same way, the armies of the 5 kings, who were far

greater in number, were probably relaxing and enjoying their spoils of war.

Illustration – Judg 7-8 – Gideon and his 300 men defeated 135,000 Midianites with a nighttime attack.

The great competitor and great Coach Vince Lombardi once said *“If winning isn't everything, why do they keep score?”*.
(We do understand that winning isn't everything 😊)

Not only did Abram win but much more importantly, God was with him while he was fighting → **14:19-20a**

Abram realized the power of God in victory based on the Promise of God.

“¹⁶**And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.**”

James 5:19-20 – “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.”

It doesn't say it will give him his best life now or a purpose driven life. It says it “will save his soul from death.”

- that is what is at stake
- that is why Christ came to earth
- it is not about the physical war among men
- it is about the spiritual war and the enmity between man and his sin and God and His holiness

CONCLUSION