

A Retrospective of Genesis 14

Taken from Lesson #146 in the **Basic Exegesis Series** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#))

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I knew a lot about many chapters of Genesis because of having been taught them by R. B. Thieme, Jr. and others, but I had no real background in this particular chapter. I think it would behoove us to take one last look at the entire chapter, and see just how many doctrines and seeds of doctrine are found within it.

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Scripture	Commentary
<p>Gen.14:1–2 At that time four kings—King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim—went to war against five kings—King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).</p>	<p>At this point, we introduce what appears to be the world’s first world war. Chedorlaomer of the east (where Iraq is today) had conquered various portions of the west, which included Sodom and Gomorrah.</p> <p>Being under the control of another country will be taught at the 4th stage of national discipline (or the 4th cycle of discipline). These stages of national discipline are fundamental to understanding the history of Israel.</p>

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<p>Gen.14:3 The five kings joined forces and met in the valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea).</p>	<p>This sort of imperialism was common in the ancient world. A greater power would control a smaller nation, and exact tribute from them on a regular basis. Military posts would be set up within the nation to keep order and to collect tribute for the conquering nation. Generally speaking, in exchange, there would be a modicum of protection from other world powers. What came out of such arrangements is the suzerain-vassal treaties, which parallel, in many ways, the covenants of God with man (which treaties have been alluded to, but not yet taught).</p>
<p>Gen.14:4 For 12 years they had been subject to Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.</p>	<p>For 12 years, these western nations paid tribute to Chedorlaomer—for 12 years they were in the 4th stage of national discipline. In the 13th year, this western coalition rebelled against him. Consequently, Chedorlaomer gathered up his allies and they went to put this rebellion down.</p>
<p>Gen.14:5–7 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and his allies came and defeated the Rephaim at Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim at Ham, the Emim at Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in the hill country of Seir, going as far as El Paran on the edge of the desert. On their way back, they came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who were living at Hazazon Tamar.</p>	<p>The army of the eastern alliance is quite powerful, and they do not come west simply to quell this little revolt. Along the way, they defeated the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim and the Horites. So, with this great alliance, they also brought other nations into their fold. Because this is the 4th stage of national discipline, we can assume that many of these nations had become quite depraved.</p> <p>Not many people appreciate ancient history, but this chapter will reveal the power of the Word of God in the soul of one man, Abram. Abram is changing world history at this point in time. This eastern alliance is about to establish the greatest world empire at this time, and Abram will change all of that. One believer with doctrine in his soul can change world history (David will do the same in the latter half of 2Sam. 10). Interestingly enough, the Bible is quite subtle in these matters. You will never read, “And by these actions, Abram changed the course of world history.” I suspect that 99% of those who have read or studied this chapter do not realize that this is a world-changing event.</p>

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Gen.14:8–9 Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and prepared for battle in the valley of Siddim. They fought against King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar-four kings against five.

The eastern alliance then pulls off a surprise attack against the very western coalition which is waiting for them. They would have been expected to come around the Dead Sea, either from the north going south, or at the tip of the Dead Sea, from the east moving west. This eastern alliance comes at them from the southwest.

The western coalition obviously had no G2 force working, so they were unprepared. Surprise is one of the greatest tactical weapons in war, and this eastern alliance managed to come at the western coalition from a different direction, throwing them off their game.

Gen.14:10 The valley of Siddim was full of tar pits. As the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell because of the tar pits, but the other kings fled to the hills.

This general area, where the men of the western coalition live, had the unusual feature of tar pits, which could have been used by the western coalition to their own advantage. Key to any ground war is terrain, knowledge of the terrain, and the exploitation of that knowledge (which is a key component of Taliban resistance in Afghanistan). We are on the home turf of the western coalition, and they are beaten, in part, because of the very land that they live on. What should have been used to their advantage played a part in their own defeat.

The army that the west organized was cowardly and poorly trained, and, when they faced-off the well-trained army from the east, they fell apart, scattering. The very own tar pits that they lived around all of their lives, that they could have used to their own advantage, they fell into themselves and they ran from the eastern alliance.

What is the problem with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? They are a degenerate people, which will be borne out by subsequent chapters. You cannot properly organize and train a degenerate people into a strong fighting force.

Key to any war is training and preparation; knowledge of terrain, the element of surprise, and information (provided by a G2 force). The eastern alliance used all of these factors of war to their own advantage. The degenerate troops of the western coalition had no advantage because of who they were and what they were.

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<p>Gen.14:11 So the four kings took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as all their food, and left.</p>	<p>The degeneracy of the western coalition results in them going from the 4th stage of national discipline to the 5th stage, where they are removed from their own land.</p> <p>These stages of national discipline will be fundamental to the history of Israel. And found both in Lev. 26 and throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles.</p>
<p>Gen.14:12 They also took Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions since he was living in Sodom.</p>	<p>There is blessing by association and cursing by association. Lot chose to associate with these cities in the west, despite their degeneracy (which will become apparent a few chapters from now). Therefore, Lot suffers in this association. He is taken by the eastern coalition along with all of his possessions.</p> <p>Who does not suffer loss? Abram and the people that associate with him. This eastern alliance came across these western lands conquering people after people, but they don't touch Abram and they don't touch Abram's allies. Blessing by association.</p> <p>What we are not told here, but becomes clear in v. 16 is, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities had been taken into slavery. By analogy, these men and women now found themselves in the slave market of sin. They had nothing by which they could buy their freedom (all their things had been taken), and they were destined to remain in slavery for the remainder of their lives.</p>

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<p>Gen.14:13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew what had happened. He was living next to the oak trees belonging to Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner. (These men were Abram's allies.)</p>	<p>God is a part of all this, although He is not mentioned for the first half of this chapter; and He allows one man to escape to tell Abram what was going on.</p> <p>Just as Lot had alliances with a pretty flaky group of people, Abram has alliances with some noble people, who had likely become believers in Abram's God.</p> <p>The people of Sodom and Gomorrah enjoyed few benefits by their association with Lot (and vice versa). These people that Abram knows are blessed in their association with Abram and they appear to be people of great character. You may have heard the expression <i>water seeks its own level</i>.</p> <p>The one who escaped knew who to go to for deliverance—Abram, a man of God. Somehow, this man knew who to go to, whether this was based upon Abram's reputation or he learned this from Lot. In any case, God's man is the man for the crisis.</p>
<p>Gen.14:14–15 When Abram heard that his nephew had been captured, he armed his 318 trained men, born in his own household, and they pursued the four kings all the way to Dan. He split up his men to attack them at night. He defeated them, pursuing them all the way to Hobah, which is north of Damascus.</p>	<p>Abram has a ridiculously small army, yet he follows out this huge professional army, which is weighed down with goods and slaves. Abram waits for the right time, and commits his troops to a nighttime surprise attack.</p> <p>We know that Abram waits for the right time, studying this opposing army. Abram pulls off a surprise attack at night, and he attacks his enemies from several directions (his troops were split up). Strategy and tactics.</p> <p>This tiny army sends the huge eastern alliance running. We have no idea as to many of the particulars, but it seems fairly obvious that the eastern army had no idea as to the actual size of Abram's army.</p> <p>The book of Genesis is a book of seeds; later in Lev. 26:8 and Deut. 32:30 (and elsewhere), God promises that a small army will be able to defeat a large one, as long as God is with the small army.</p>

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<p>Gen.14:16–17 Abram [lit., <i>he</i>] brought back everything they had, including women and soldiers [literally, <i>people</i>]. He also brought back his relative Lot and his possessions. After Abram came back from defeating Chedorlaomer and his allies, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Shaveh Valley (that is, the King's Valley).</p>	<p>Because God is with Abram, he defeats this great army with a tiny company, and brings back with him all of the people and possessions taken by the Chedorlaomer and his allies.</p> <p>Now note the parallel, because of the plan of Abram and because a righteous man (Lot) was among the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, they were removed from the slave market. These people were destined to be slaves for the rest of their lives. There was nothing that they could do about it.</p> <p>The analogy is, of course, that we find ourselves in the slave market of sin. There is nothing which we have by which we can purchase our freedom from the slave market. It is the plan of God the Father executed by the Righteous One Who walks among us, which plan rescues us from this slave market.</p> <p>The King of Sodom comes out to meet Abram. This all takes place near Jerusalem.</p>
<p>Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)</p>	<p>Seemingly out of nowhere comes Melchizedek, the King of Salem (Jerusalem), who is a priest of Abram's God. As we have studied, Melchizedek is a type of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>You will note that nothing is said of Salem being attacked either. Again, this is the power of the Word of God. This eastern alliance came to put down a rebellion, and, along the way, they defeated several other peoples. Notice who is missed in all of this conflict—the people of Salem. Right in the midst of a world war, the people of Salem have peace.</p> <p>This is the picture of the mature believer; in the midst of a crisis, he has peace in his soul.</p>

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<p>Gen 14:19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor [or, Redeemer, Purchaser] of heaven and earth;</p>	<p>Melchizedek calls for the blessing of Abram by God the Most High, and then refers to God as Possessor <i>by Redemption</i> of heaven and earth, which is a seed of one of the great doctrines of the Word of God: Jesus Christ, the Great Redeemer. This also logically leads us to notion of the slave market of sin, which just so happens to be one of the themes of this chapter. The wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah find themselves in the slave market, destined for a lifetime of slavery, and yet, God overrules this because of the plan of Abram and their association with Lot.</p>
<p>Gen 14:20 and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of everything.</p>	<p>We are told very little about Melchizedek. However, Abram gives him a tenth of everything, which indicates that Abram recognizes the legitimacy and preeminence of Melchizedek's priesthood. I suggested that Melchizedek possessed or knew the Word of God to that point in time and gave it to Abram (whether in written or spoken form). This would be the first 10 or 11 chapters of the Bible.</p> <p>It was obvious that Abram and Melchizedek worshiped the same God; but there is more going on here than that simple recognition of that fact, based upon Abram's tithe to Melchizedek.</p>
<p>Gen 14:21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, but take the goods for yourself."</p>	<p>The king of Sodom is a different matter. He demands to have his people back, but acknowledges that Abram can keep the spoils of war (which is commonly understood throughout world history, but not currently in the United States).</p>
<p>Gen 14:22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I had lifted my hand to Y^ehowah, God Most High, Possessor [or, Redeemer, Purchaser; Creator] of heaven and earth,</p>	<p>Abram reveals that he took a vow before Jehovah God, the Most High, the Redeemer of heaven and earth. You will note that Abram's vocabulary is in synch with Melchizedek's—they both speak of God in the same way; they both understand God in the same way.</p>

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Gen 14:23 [I vowed] that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, so that no one will say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

Abram had a duty to rescue Lot and this sense of duty was pure, unadulterated by a lust for things, which would be a part of Abram's victory. Abram vowed to God that he would take nothing from this war, apart from Lot and his family.

Gen 14:24 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."

You will note that Abram does not hold his allies to the same standard that he lives by in his own vow. They entered the war because they are allies of Abram. They deserved to take a share of the spoils of war.

There are so many seeds of doctrines in this chapter: the 4th and 5th stages of national discipline; blessing by association, cursing by association; the power of God when He is behind an army; strategy and tactics in war; warfare; the importance of having God on your side in war; redemption, the slave market of sin, the priesthood, typology, vocabulary, and personal integrity. All of these topics are found in this one great chapter of Genesis, a chapter many people read or skim over in about 5 minutes, if that.