

The Book of Genesis

Verses 14:13-24

Oct 28, 2018

Last week, we studied about how the 5 southern kingdoms who were vassals of the 4 Mesopotamian kingdoms (principally Kedorlaomer) rebelled after 12 years and went to war. The 5 southern kingdoms lost and in the process Sodom and Gomorrah were looted and some of the residents taken away. Among the captives was Abram's nephew Lot. Everything he owned was also carried off as part of the loot. This brings us up to today's scriptures.

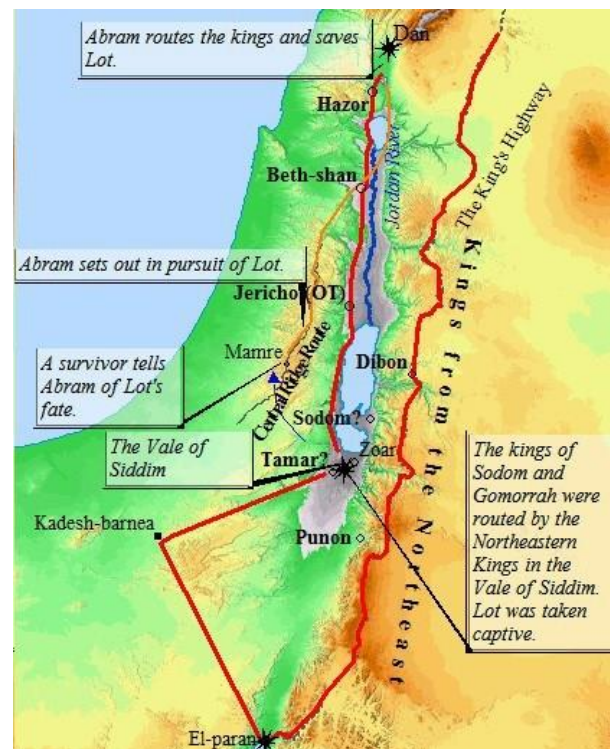
Genesis 14:13-14 – ¹³ *But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.*

¹⁴ *When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan.*

One of Lot's men was able to escape capture. Once he did, he headed straight for Abram to tell him what had happened. These verses illustrate the great wealth of Abram. Any man who could assemble 318 men (whether family and/or servants we're not told) into his own private army and then train them to fight must be quite wealthy. It also showed how prudent that Abram was since he had the forethought to train these men in case they needed to defend his interests.

Questions for thought

- What would what most people have done if they were in Abram's place and their nephew was captured by a large army? What would you do in this situation?
- Would Lot have been captured if he had not been living within the city of Sodom?



- How do you decide whether or not to intercede when family or friends are suffering from the consequences of their actions like occurred with Lot?

Abram's little "army" then pursued the army of the four kings for a long distance north all the way to Dan which is not far from the northern border of Israel. One account reports this distance to be approximately 125 miles! Assuming the average distance that could be traveled in a day is 20 miles, they would be pursuing them 6 or 7 days before Abram's band could catch up with them!

Genesis 14:15-16 – ¹⁵ *There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.* ¹⁶ *Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.*

Abram used the clever tactic of attacking at night when the enemy forces' guard would be down and to use the dark for cover. He also split his forces into two groups which would help to confuse the enemy in the dark and make it appear that Abram's forces were much larger than they actually were. It worked as Abram was victorious and Kedorlaomer's army fled. Not only that, but Abram's army then chased them for another 50 miles north!

Of course, it is highly doubtful a small private army like this could have defeated the combined forces of four kings without the assistance of God Almighty! It's stories like these that we need to remember whenever we're faced with insurmountable odds in our own lives.

Genesis 14:17-20a – ¹⁷ *After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).*

¹⁸ *And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine.* ¹⁹ *Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:*

*"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.*

²⁰ *And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies for you."*

Enter Melchizedek. We really know very little about him because there's just not much written about him. One unusual thing that is mentioned about him was that he was both a king and a priest. This is often a poor combination, mixing religious and civic authority, but Melchizedek was apparently a notable exception.

Melchizedek blesses Abram. This demonstrates the example we should follow in our lives. Bless others and most importantly bless God and recognize those things He does in our lives. We, humans, often have a tendency to claim the victory when God does miraculous things in our lives. But, we must identify those things in our lives where God has interceded for us. Recognize them and give God the glory for them.

Questions for thought

- Can you think of another king who was also a high priest?
- What other parallels are there between Melchizedek and Jesus Christ other than they were both kings and high priests?
- Have you had instances in your life where God has interceded for you? Have you recognized this and given Him the glory for it?

Genesis 14:20b-21 – *Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.*

²¹ *The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”*

Next up is the king of Sodom. He doesn’t mention a thing about God even after the conspicuous display between Abram and Melchizedek and the obvious glory being given to God. Instead, he makes a magnanimous offer to Abram that he can keep the goods, just give back the people.

Genesis 14:22-24 – ²² *Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’ ²⁴ I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”*

After the battle and recovery of the pilfered goods, Abram gave 10% of it to Melchizedek as an offering to God. However, he refused to keep one red cent for himself. It wasn’t just a “nah, I’m okay.” He swore it with an oath that he wouldn’t take it! How many of us would have done the same? Would you do the same?

I would venture to say that none of us would have completely refused the compensation. After all, the pursuit of Kedorlaomer’s army and the battle that ensued would surely have had a significant cost not only monetarily but also in the loss of the lives of some, if not many, of his men.

It would have been understandable from a human perspective for Abram to at least take for himself an amount that would compensate for the accumulated costs and/or his losses but he didn’t. He only asked for a share of the booty for his allies and the food that his men had already eaten.

Questions for thought

- Have you ever done or given “something for nothing” in your service to God? What are some ways in which we can honor God similarly?
- What are some things in our lives that bring us benefit but that also might damage or diminish other’s perception of how God provides for us?
- How important is it that we demonstrate to others how God cares for and provides for us? Can you think of a time when you did (or did not) publicly draw a line in the sand and place your faith in God for others to see? If so, what was the result?
- What is the difference in trusting God to provide and working to provide our needs?