

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Operation Lot”

Genesis 14:1-24

2002

Introduction

In Genesis 14, we are introduced to the first war ever recorded in Scripture – a war between a confederation of 4 kings of the east and 5 kings of the south.

On the surface, this incident is merely an international power struggle to ensure economic supremacy by the control of a crucial trade route. But behind it all is a foreshadowing of the Greatest Rescue Mission Of All Time!!

I The Players

A. The kings of the East [Verse 1]

1. Amraphel, king of Shinar

Shinar = “A plain in ancient Babylonia” (modern day Iraq)

Gen 10:10 “The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar.”

2. Arioch, king of Ellasar

3. Kedorlaomer, king of Elam

Kedorlaomer = “An early Persian king” (in modern day Iran and western Pakistan)

Elam was founded by one of the sons of Shem – Gen 10:22

4. Tidal, king of Goiim

Goiim = “The nations”

B. The kings of the South [Verse 2-3]

1. Bera, king of Sodom

2. Birsha, king of Gomorrah

3. Shinab, king of Admah

Admah = “A place near the Dead Sea”

Gen 10:18-19 “Later the Canaanite clans scattered and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.”

4. Shemeber, king of Zeboiim

Zeboiim = “A place in Palestine”

5. King of Bela (Zoar)

Zoar = “Small”

A small town east of the Jordan where Lot and his two daughters fled for refuge before the judgment of God against Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen 19:18-22

II The Conflict

A. The Southern kings had been subjugated for 12 years [Verse 4]

1. They **rebelled** in the 13th year

So after 12 years as vassals of the four eastern kings, the five southern kings attempted to throw off their shackles.

Ezek 17:14-15 “But the king rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Will he break the treaty and yet escape?”

B. The Eastern kings launched a punishing **assault** [Verse 5-7]

The eastern kings could not allow such rebellion to go unpunished. The economic results of ignoring the insurrection would have been economically devastating. The territory included the “Way of the Kings”, which was a strategic commercial land bridge. Whoever controlled this land bridge maintained a monopoly on international trade.

1. They **defeated** everyone who opposed them

The territory mentioned here is quite extensive, covering from the north and west of the Sea of Galilee, down the Jordan Valley, all the way south to the Red Sea.

They were an enemy that seemed invincible, relentless, unstoppable, striking fear into every heart as they steam rolled over every opposing military force.

a. The Rephaites, Zuzites, Emites, Horites, Amalekites, and Amorites

Rephaites = “Giants”

It is from this group, later in Israel's history, that Goliath and his 4 brothers came (2 Sam 21:16-17), whom David decapitated with his own sword.

These were men eight to ten feet tall, a mighty race who was greatly feared by the people around them. Yet the invading kings swept even these giants before them.

Zuzites = “Another tribe of giants in Palestine”

Deut 2:21 “They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites.”

Emites = “Another tribe of Canaanite giants”

Deut 2:10-11 “(The Emites used to live there--a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. 11 Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emites.”

Amalekites =

The Amalekites would be a thorn in the side of Israel for generations to come.

C. The Southern kings drew up battle lines [Verse 8-9]

In spite of the overwhelming odds, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, with their allies, decided that possible defeat was better than guaranteed slavery. So they dug in for all-out battle in the valley of Siddim.

1. In the valley of Siddim, which was full of tar pits

In fact, to this day clumps of tar and asphalt wash up on the southern shores of the Dead Sea. The five southern kings felt that these pits would be a natural defense.

III The Outcome

A. The Southern kings were **routed** [Verse 10]

1. Some fell into tar pits

These open pits of asphalt would be covered over by the desert sand as the wind blew across them and they would appear like the surrounding ground. Anyone who was unfortunate enough to fall into one of these tar pits would be forever entombed.

2. The rest fled to the hills

B. Lot and his possessions were **carried** off [Verse 11-12]

What a commentary on the poor decision of Lot in chapter 13. Lot had chosen to act on the basis of economic self-interest and had disregarded the covenant God had made with Abram (12:1-3). But all that Lot had gained by taking advantage of Abram and rejecting the promises of God was lost in an instant.

Jer 2:17 “Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way?”

IV The Rescue

A. Abram was **informed** of Lot’s capture [Verse 13]

Evidently, one of Lot’s servants managed to slip through enemy lines and find his way to Abram and tells him the whole miserable story!!

There were at least four good reasons for Abram to ignore Lot’s dilemma:

1. “Lot got himself into this mess, let him get himself out.”
2. “Lot took advantage of me! He dishonored me! Let him save himself!”
3. “Even if I wanted to save Lot, it would be a suicide mission against such an army!”

Prov 17:17 “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

B. Abram went in **pursuit** of Lot’s captors [Verse 14]

Abram was a man of faith but he was also a prudent man:

1. He divided his men and attacked at night [Verse 15]

The march of Abram and his tiny band is one of the most remarkable forced marches in history. They traveled the whole length of the Jordan River and launched a counter attack as the enemy indulged in a time of carousing and reveling in celebration of their victory.

2. He routed them and pursued them as far as Hobah (250 miles – north of Damascus) Amazing!! Abram faced a vast, unstoppable military force of giants with only 318 men. But with God, that was all he needed!

Here's the lesson: Zech 4:6 "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty."

1. It's a lesson that God taught Abram here in this passage.
2. It's a lesson that God taught Moses when God used him to deliver His people from Egypt.
3. It's a lesson that God taught Joshua and the people of Israel when they advanced into the Promised Land – a land filled with giants!
4. It's a lesson that God taught Gideon when he faced the vast army of the Midianites and Amalakites with only 300 men – (Judges 7).

Application: You're problems are always smaller than God!!

Ps 34:19 "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all."

C. Abram **recovered** what had been lost [Verse 16]

1. Lot and his possessions
2. The women and the other people

Everything was recovered: the possessions, the people, and the prodigal -- Lot. Unfortunately, Lot fails to respond to this spiritual crisis in his life. Instead of turning from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah and returning to God, he heads home to the city of Sodom. In Genesis 19, we find that Lot, for a 2nd time, will lose everything he has as God judges the wickedness of these sinful cities.

Application: The power of God to recover what Satan had taken

Rom 5:6, 8 "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly ... But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Gal 1:3-5 "[He] gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age ..."

Col 1:13-14 "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

V The Reception

A. The king of Sodom came out to **meet** Abram [Verse 17]

Abram had fought his great battle, not on behalf of the king of Sodom, but for the sake of Lot and his family. Nevertheless, his victory also benefited the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. So a special welcoming committee was appointed, headed by the king himself, to confer upon Abram the usual reward for a conquering hero. His reception must have been the ancient version of a New York City ticker tape parade!

Application:

There are few temptations as powerful, yet subtle, as praise!

Prov 27:21 “The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives.”

How do you handle praise from men?

B. Melchizedek, king of Salem also met him [Verse 18-20a]

Who was Melchizedek?

1. Some suggest that he is Seth, Noah’s son, who, according to biblical chronologists, could have still been alive at this time.
2. Some think it may have been Job.
3. Others think it may have been an angel of God.

What we do know from the Word:

1. His name, Melchizedek, means, “King of righteousness”
2. He was the **king of Salem** or “Peace”. Salem is the original **Jerusalem**.
3. He was a priest of God
4. According to Hebrews 7:3, he was “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.”

Because of this passage, many think that Melchizedek was a Christophany (an OT appearance of Jesus Christ).

Geographical point of interest:

It is worth noting that Melchizedek met Abram in the valley right outside the little village of Salem, which would later be renamed Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.

This same valley, in Abram’s day known as the "King's Valley," was none other than the Kidron Valley. It was in this same valley where centuries later a greater Melchizedek would sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as He prepared to surrender His life to rescue us.

Heb 5:6-10 “And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”

1. He brought bread and wine

This may be a foreshadowing of the symbols Jesus used during the Last Supper – the bread and wine representing his body and blood, which He willingly offered up to the Father for the price of our redemption.

2. He was **priest** of Most High God

Ps 110:4 “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

3. He pronounced blessings:

Blessed = Barak = “The conferring of divine benefit”

a. He blessed **Abram** by God Most High

God Most High = 'elyown = “High and lofty; the Supreme One”

Ps 115:15 “May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

1. “Creator of heaven and earth”

His first ministry to Abram was to remind him of the power of the God he served.

He undoubtedly warned Abram of the subtle trap awaiting him in the offer of Sodom's wealth, and then perhaps he said, "Abram, your God made it all and He owns it all! He holds all its wealth in his hands. There is nothing that He cannot give you. This is the God to whom you belong."

b. He blessed **God** Most High

1. Who delivered your enemies into your hand

His reminded Abram that the victory was God's, and that his success was the result of God's blessing.

Ps 33:16-19 “No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.”

Ps 44:3 “It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them.”

C. The king of Sodom's request: **[Verse 21]**

1. Give me the people, but keep the goods for yourself

The king of Sodom simply asked for the return of his people, but the goods and riches he gratefully offered to Abram. The wealth of Sodom was all to be Abram's!

VI The Response

A. Abram gave a **tenth** of everything to Melchizedek **[Verse 20b]**

Tenth = Ma` aser = “A tithe”

Gen 28:20-22 “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

The tithe is not a debt paid to God. Rather, it is a tangible acknowledgment that everything we have belongs to God.

In the Old Testament, the tithe was an obligation before God.

In the New Testament, the requirement -- the duty -- the obligation -- of tithing has been swallowed up in the privilege and joy of being a faithful steward of God's resources. My understanding of the Bible when it comes to tithing is that 10% is the bare bones minimum.

Application: The wise and faithful servant of God will heed the words of God

Matt 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Mal 3:8-11 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse-the whole nation of you- because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

B. Abram **refused** the king of Sodom's offer: [Verse 22-23]

By all rights the spoils belonged to Abram. In a way it was poetic justice. Lot had chosen Sodom for its promise of material blessings, but in doing so had selfishly dishonored Abram. And now God was giving it back to Abram to whom it should have belonged in the first place. How tempting this must have been for Abram. Yet ...

1. He accepted nothing belonging to him

a. Not even a thread or the thong of a sandal

Abram was jealous for the glory of God.

Is 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."

Evidently, Abram had made a vow to **God Most High** - a phrase he uses after hearing Melchizedek use this particular title for God.

2. He refused to be indebted to him

a. "I made Abram rich."

Dan 5:17 "Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means."

C. Abram **accepted** only the share that belonged: [Verse 24]

1. To the men who went with him

2. To Aner, Eshcol and Mamre

Although God led Abram to refuse any reward for his efforts, he did not force his personal convictions on his allies. They were entitled to the spoil.

Application: Do not judge others when it comes to disputable matters
 Prov 3:27 “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.”
 Rom 14:5-6 “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”

Conclusion

Genesis 14 provides us with a beautiful foreshadowing of the Greatest Rescue Mission Of All Time – the salvation of God accomplished through the cross of Christ.

Lot chose to go his own way. He sought his own interests over Abram’s and over God’s. As a result of his self-seeking, he had to face the consequences of his sin. Rather experiencing peace and prosperity he suffered loss, shame and slavery.

At the point where Lot was able to do nothing to correct his errors or to free himself from bondage, Abram, at great personal risk, won the victory and won his release. Saving Lot was the sole reason for Abram’s daring rescue. In spite of Lot’s disregard for Abram, Abram rescued him from the consequences of his own sin.

1. Like Lot, we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).
2. Like Lot, we have all like sheep gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way (Is 53:6).

The good news is that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to rescue us from our sins. He took upon Himself the consequences and penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

Have you trusted in Him? Will you acknowledge your willfulness and waywardness and your need to be released from the bondage of sin? God’s rescue mission has succeeded, and its benefits are free for all who believe that salvation is in Christ alone.

John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

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