

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 14

This chapter gives an account of a war that was waged, and a battle fought between four kings on one side, and five on the other, and of the occasion and issue of it, who were the first kings, and this the first battle the Scriptures speak of, (⁽⁰¹⁴¹⁾Genesis 14:1-11); Lot and his goods being taken and carried off, with those of Sodom, by the conquerors, Abram hearing of it armed his men, and pursued after them, and overtook and overcame them, and rescued Lot and his goods, with others, and returned, (⁽⁰¹⁴²⁾Genesis 14:12-16); when he was met by the kings of Sodom and Salem, who congratulated him on his victory, (⁽⁰¹⁴⁷⁾Genesis 14:17-19); and what passed between him, and those great personages, is related, (⁽⁰¹⁴³⁾Genesis 14:20-24).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass, in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, etc.]* Or Babylon, as Onkelos, where Nimrod began his kingdom, (⁽⁰¹⁰⁸⁾Genesis 10:8-10). This was Nimrod himself, as the Jewish writers generally says; ^{f945} though more likely Ninyas the son of Ninus and Semiramis, and grandson of Nimrod; or rather some petty prince or deputy governor of Shinar, under the king of Babylon; since, though named first, he was not the principal in this war, but fought under the king of Elam, and as an ally and auxiliary of his; and it may be the kingdom of Babylon was not as yet of any great extent and power, and that all those stories told of Ninus, Semiramis, and Ninyas, are mere fables; and indeed we hear nothing in Scripture of this kingdom, and the kings of it, from this time, until the times of Merodach Baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon, in the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah; nor of the Assyrian kingdom, and the kings of it, until Pul king of Assyria, in the times of Menahem king of Israel; wherefore it is greatly to be questioned, whether those kingdoms rose to any considerable height until these times: though some think that Shinar here does not intend Shinar in Chaldea or Babylon, which was too far distant from Abram, but Shinar in Mesopotamia, a large city at the foot of a mountain, three days distant from Mansil, which is now, in Arabic, called Singjar, and by Ptolemy, Singara ^{f946}

Arioch king of Ellasar; or Telassar, according to the Targum of Jonathan, a place in Mesopotamia, inhabited by the children of Eden, (²³⁷¹²Isaiah 37:12); and Stephanus ^{f947} makes mention of a city in Coelesyria, upon the borders of Arabia, called Ellas, of which this prince may be thought to be the governor; or rather he was king of a people called Elesari, whose country is placed by Ptolemy ^{f948} in Arabia; and could Ninyas be thought to be Amraphel, this king would bid fair to be Ariaeus a king of Arabia, or a son of his of the same name, that was a confederate of Ninus, as Diodorus Siculus ^{f949} relates out of Ctesias. Next follows,

Chedorlaomer king of Elam; or the Elamites, as the Vulgate Latin version, the Persians, (see ⁴⁰⁰Acts 1:9). This led Diodorus ^{f950} to say, that the war Moses speaks of is what the Persians waged against the Sodomites. This seems to have been the most powerful prince at this time, to whom the five kings of Sodom, etc. had been subject for twelve years, but now had rebelled, and to subdue them again he came forth, with three other kings his allies, (see ⁴¹⁴Genesis 14:4,5); but if Elam is the same with Persia, as it often signifies, or with Elymais, a part of Persia, that kingdom could not be at this time so large and potent as it has been since; or Chedorlaomer would not have stood in need of the assistance of other princes against such petty kings as those of Sodom, etc. Nor does it seem credible that he should come out of Persia, and pass through so great a part of the world as the countries of Assyria, Chaldea, Mesopotamia, Syria, and part of Arabia and of Canaan, to bring five such small towns or cities into subjection to him, as he must, as Sir Walter Raleigh ^{f951} observes; nor could the trifle of goods, as they may be comparatively called, he carried off, be an equivalent to the expense he must be at in so long a march. It is more probable, therefore, that this was the name of some place near to the land of Canaan, built by some of the posterity of Elam, the son of Shem, and called after the name of their ancestor; or it may be a colony of the Elamites in those parts, of which this prince was their head and chief:

and Tidal king of nations; that is, either of other nations distinct from those before mentioned, so Aben Ezra; or else, as he also observes, the name of a province; or as Jarchi and Ben Melech, the name of a place called Goim, because there were gathered together many out of various nations and places, and they set a man to reign over them, whose name was Tidal; just as one of the Galilees in later times was called Galilee of the nations, for a like reason. Sir Walter Raleigh ^{f952} conjectures, that as there were many petty kingdoms joining to Phoenicia and Palestine, as

Palmyrene, Batanea, Laodicene, Apamene, Chalcidice, Cassiotis and Celibonitis, these might be gathered together under this man. According to Eupolemus^{f953}, an Heathen writer, these several princes were Armenians that fought with the Phoenicians, and overcame them, by whom Lot was carried captive. Josephus^{f954} indeed, accommodating himself to the Greek historians, and in favour of them, says that the Assyrians at this time were masters of Asia, and led out an army under four generals, and made the kings of Sodom, etc. tributary to them; and they rebelling against them, made another expedition upon them under these four kings as their generals, and conquered them: but it seems not likely that the Assyrian monarchy was so large at this time; or if it was, these live petty kings of the plain of Jordan, who had not so much ground as our Middlesex, as Sir Walter Raleigh^{f955} observes, and perhaps not a quarter of the people in it, would never have dared to have engaged with so powerful an adversary.

Ver. 2. [*That these*] *made war with Bera king of Sodom*, etc.] A city in the plain of Jordan, which with the four following made the Pentapolis, or five cities of the plain. Strabo^{f956} says, in this place formerly were thirteen cities, the metropolis of which was Sodom, and which yet had remaining a compass of sixty furlongs; according to Dr. Lightfoot^{f957}, it should be placed in the southern extremity of the lake Asphaltites, whereas it is usually set in the maps in the northern bounds of it:

and with Birsha king of Gomorrah; another city in the plain of Jordan, called by Solinus^{f958} Gomorrum:

Shinab king of Admah; a third city situated in the same plain:

and Semeber king of Zeboiim; a fourth city of the plain, which seems to have its name from the pleasantness of its situation:

and the king of Bela, which is Zoar; so it was afterwards called by Lot, being a little city, (^{<0130>}Genesis 19:20,22); but before, Bela; the name of its king is not mentioned, being a person of no great note and importance, and his city small.

Ver. 3. *All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim*, etc.] Or “of fields”, or “ploughed lands”^{f959}, a fruitful vale abounding with corn; or of gardens or paradises, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, being full of gardens and orchards, and was as the garden of the Lord, even as Eden, (see ^{<0130>}Genesis 13:10); though Aben Ezra thinks it had its name from the slime or bitumen, of which there was great plenty in it, (see ^{<0140>}Genesis

14:10). Now the above five kings, as they all dwelt in the plain, they entered into a confederacy, met together, and joined their forces in this vale, to oppose the four kings that were come to make war with them, as being an advantageous place, as they judged, perhaps on more accounts than one; and here they stayed to receive the enemy, and give him battle, (see ^{<0148>}Genesis 14:8);

which is the salt sea; afterwards so called, not at this time, for then it would not have been fit for armies to be drawn up in battle array in it; but it was so called in the times of Moses, and after this fine vale was turned into a bituminous lake, and had its name from the saltness of the waters of the lake, or from the city Melach, or city of salt, which was near it, (^{<0150>}Joshua 15:62).

Ver. 4. *Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer*, etc.] King of Elam, who was of the race of Shem, and so the prophecy of Noah began to be fulfilled, that Canaan should be servant to Shem, (^{<0026>}Genesis 9:26); for the kings of Sodom, etc. and their subjects, were of the race of Ham in the line of Canaan, who had by violence seized on that part of the earth which was allotted to the sons of Shem, and therefore Chedorlaomer being a descendant of his claimed his right, and made them tributary to him, which they were for the space of twelve years:

and in the thirteenth year they rebelled; refused homage to Chedorlaomer and to pay tribute to him.

Ver. 5. *And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer*, etc.] Not in the fourteenth year of their rebellion against him, as Jarchi, but from their becoming vassals to him:

and the kings that [were] with him; those kings before mentioned:

and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim; which were in their way to Sodom, etc. and very probably were confederates with the five kings; the Targum, and so the Septuagint, render the word “giants”, as it is in (^{<0011>}Deuteronomy 2:11); but they were one of the nations or tribes of the Canaanites, (^{<0150>}Genesis 15:20); and had their name either from the Hebrew word **apr**, which signifies to be healthful and robust, as those people might be, or from Rephas, the Remphan of Stephen, (^{<0026>}Acts 7:43); called Chiun, (^{<0150>}Amos 5:26); and with Cronus or Ham the father of Canaan, as Bishop Cumberland ^{f960} observes; and these dwelt in Ashteroth

Karnaim, which was a place in Bashan, (~~(**R04**)~~Deuteronomy 1:4); it is about six miles, as Eusebius ^{f961} says, from Adraa or Edrei, and in the Apocrypha:

“Then Maccabeus marched forth to Carnion, and to the temple of Atargatis, and there he slew five and twenty thousand persons.” (2 Maccabees 12:26)

mention is made of a place called Carnion, where was a temple of Atergates, a Phoenician deity, as Ashteroth or Astarte, was; and this city here had its first name from Astarte the wife of Cronus or Ham, and whose name may be preserved in Carnaim, as Bishop Cumberland thinks; though as Astarte is said by Sanchoniatho ^{f962} to put on her head the mark of her sovereignty, a bull’s head, that is, with its horns, this might be another of her names retained in this city; and it is certain that she was a Phoenician goddess, called the goddess of the Zidonians, (~~(**R105**)~~1 Kings 11:5); and Sanchoniatho relates ^{f963}, that the Phoenicians say, that Astarte is she, who among the Greeks is called Aphrodite or Venus; and Astarte is called by Lucian ^{f964} the Phoenician Venus, and by Cicero ^{f965} the Syrian Venus; and if she was the same with Diana or the moon, as some think, she might have the name of Carnaim from its two horns, as the word signifies: our English poet ^{f966} seems to have this in his thoughts, when he speaks of Astoreth as the goddess of the Phoenicians: however the inhabitants of this place who belonged to the Canaanites were first attacked by the four kings and routed, though not utterly destroyed, because we hear of them afterwards, as well as they that follow:

and the Zuzims in Ham; or Hemtha, as Onkelos and Jonathan render it, a place so called from Ham the father of Canaan, and was somewhere in the land of Canaan or near it, and near the former place; for it can hardly be thought the land of Egypt, sometimes called the land of Ham, is meant; these Zuzim are supposed by Jarchi to the same with the Zamzummim in (~~(**R20**)~~Deuteronomy 2:20); the word is by Onkelos and Jonathan rendered strong and mighty ones, as also by the Septuagint, mighty nations:

and the Enims in Shaveh Kiriathaim: a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakim, and were accounted giants as they, and who in later times were by the Moabites called Emim, (~~(**R20**)~~Deuteronomy 2:10,11); and therefore Moses gives them the same name here, which they had from the dread and terror they injected into men, and so the word in all the three Targums is rendered terrible ones; and these dwelt in Kiriathaim, a city in

the tribe of Reuben, taken from Sihon, king of the Amorites, and which seems to be situated in a plain, (see ^{<6639>}Joshua 13:19).

Ver. 6. *And the Horites in their Mount Seir*, etc.] Or the Horim who dwelt in Mount Seir, so called from Seir the Horite, who continued here till they were drove out by the sons of Esau or Edom, from whom their country was afterwards called Edom or Idumea, (see ^{<6630>}Genesis 36:20-30) (^{<6622>}Deuteronomy 2:12,22);

unto Elparan, which [is] by the wilderness; so far these Horites inhabited, and the four kings smote all they met with unto this place, which was either the plain or oak of Paran, near a wilderness of the same name; the wilderness of Arabia, through which the Israelites travelled forty years, in their way to Canaan.

Ver. 7. *And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh*, etc.] Pursuing their victories as far as Elparan by the wilderness, they had passed by the country of the Amalekites; wherefore they “returned”, or came back to fall upon them, and they came to a place called Enmishpat, or the “fountain of judgment”; which was not its future name, as Jarchi thinks, because there Moses and Aaron were to be judged concerning the business of that fountain, even the waters of Meribah, with which agrees the Targum of Jonathan;

“and they returned and came to the place where the judgment of Moses the prophet was determined by the fountain of the waters of contention:”

but it seems to have been the ancient name of the place, and by which it was called at this time, as Kadesh was the name of it at the time of Moses writing this; and therefore he adds,

which [is] Kadesh; that is, which is now called Kadesh, because there the Lord was sanctified, when the rock at that place was smitten, and waters gushed out: it was a city on the uttermost border of the land of Edom, (^{<6626>}Numbers 20:1,12,13,16), and seems formerly to have been a place where causes were heard and judgment passed; and so Onkelos paraphrases it,

“to the plain of the division or decision of judgment;”

which, as Jarchi himself interprets it,

“is a place where the men of the province gathered together for all judgment;”

or for hearing all causes and determining them:

and smote all the country of the Amalekites; which, according to Josephus^{f967}, reached from Pelusium in Egypt to the Red sea; they inhabited Arabia Petraea, for he^{f968} says, the inhabitants of Gobolitis and Petra are called Amalekites; which name is generally supposed to have been given them here by way of anticipation, since the commonly received opinion is, that they were the descendants of Amalek, a grandson of Esau, who was not born when this war was waged, (see ^{<0132>}Genesis 36:12); but the Mahometan writers derive the pedigree of Amalek, from whom these people had their name, from Noah in the line of Ham, and make him to be some generations older than Abram, which with them stands thus, Noah, Ham, Aram, Uz, Ad, Amalek^{f969}; and they speak of the Amalekites as dwelling in the country about Mecca, from whence they were driven by the Jorhamites^{f970}: and indeed it seems more probable that the Amalekites were of the posterity of Ham, since Chedorlaomer, a descendant of Shem, falls upon them, and smites them; and they being confederates with the Canaanites, and are with the Amorites, Philistines, and other Canaanitish nations, always mentioned, seem to be a more ancient nation than what could proceed from Amalek the son of Eliphaz, since Amalek is said to be the first of the nations, (^{<0201>}Numbers 24:20); nor does there ever appear to be any harmony and friendship between them and the Edomites, as it might be thought there would, if they were a branch of Esau’s family; nor did they give them any assistance, when destroyed by Saul, so that they seem rather to be a tribe of the Canaanitish nations; and they are, by Philo^{f971} the Jew, expressly called Phoenicians:

and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar; the same with the Emorites, (see ^{<0106>}Genesis 10:16); another tribe or nation of the Canaanites descended from Amor or Emor, a son of Canaan: the place of their habitation has its name of Hazezontamar from the multitude of palm trees which grew there: for Tamar signifies a palm tree, and Hazon is from חָזַק “to cut”; and this part of the name seems to be taken from the cutting of the top, crown, or head of the palm tree, for the sake of a liquor which has a more luscious sweetness than honey; and is of the consistence of a thin syrup, as Dr. Shaw^{f972} relates; the head of the palm tree being cut off, the top of the trunk is scooped into the shape of a basin, as he says, where the

sap in ascending lodges itself at the rate of three or four quarts a day during the first week or fortnight, after which the quantity daily diminishes; and at the end of six weeks or two months the juices are entirely consumed, and the tree becomes dry, and serves only for timber or, firewood. This place is the same with Engedi, (^{<44B>}2 Chronicles 20:2); and so the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan here translate it, “in Engedi”; and which place Pliny^{f973} says was famous for groves of palm trees; it was a city near the Dead sea, (see ^{<367B>}Ezekiel 47:8-10); and Josephus says^{f974} it was situated by the lake Asphaltites, that is, the place where Sodom and Gomorrah stood; and he adds, that it was three hundred furlongs distant from Jerusalem, where were the best palm trees and balsam: so that now the four kings had got pretty near Sodom; wherefore it follows,

Ver. 8. *And there went out the king of Sodom*, etc.] With his armed men to meet the four kings, and give them battle, being so near him, and in so much danger from them, that if they could not stand their ground, they might flee to the mountains, and not perish in the city:

and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the King of Zeboim; whose names are before given, (^{<014B>}Genesis 14:2):

and the king of Bela, the same [is] Zoar: as in (^{<014B>}Genesis 14:2):

and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim; where the five Canaanitish kings met, of which (see ^{<014B>}Genesis 14:3); and fought the four kings that were come forth against them, and whose names are repeated, and are as follow:

Ver. 9. *With Chedorlaomer king of Elam*, etc.] Who is here mentioned first, being the principal in the war, and against whom the kings of Sodom, etc. had rebelled:

and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; who were his allies, confederates, and auxiliaries:

four kings with five; those four last mentioned, with the other five before spoken of, that is, they fought with them; or rather four kings against five, as the Vulgate Latin and Tigurine versions, and some others.

Ver. 10. *And the vale of Siddim [was full of] slimepits*, etc.] Or “wells” or “fountains of slime” or bitumen^{f975}; a liquid of a pitchy nature, cast out of fountains, and which was used for a cement in buildings; such fountains

were near Babylon, (see Gill on “^{<-0110B>}Genesis 11:3”); so that this place was naturally prepared for what it was designed to be, a bituminous lake; and hence, when turned into one, it was called the lake Asphaltites, from this slime or bitumen, called by the Greeks “asphaltos”. Brocardus ^{f976} says, these pits or wells of bitumen are at this day on the shore of the lake, each of them having pyramids erect, which he saw with his own eyes; and such pits casting out bitumen, as fountains do water, have been found in other countries, as in Greece ^{f977}. Now this vale being full of such pits, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah chose it to fight in, and here drew up in a line of battle, hoping that the enemy, being ignorant of them, would fall into them and perish, and their ranks be broke and fall into confusion; but as it often is, that the pit men dig and contrive for others they fall into themselves, so it was in this case:

and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled: the battle going hard against them, and they not able to stand before their enemies:

and fell there, or “into them” ^{f978}; the slimepits, or fountains of bitumen, into which they precipitately fell, and many perished; or of their own accord they threw themselves into them for their own safety, as some think; though the sense may be this, that there was a great slaughter of them made there, as the word is frequently used, (see ^{<-0040>}1 Samuel 4:10); this is to be understood not of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah; for it is certain that they were preserved alive, at least the king of Sodom, for we hear of him afterwards, (^{<-0147>}Genesis 14:17,21); but of their soldiers:

and they that remained fled to the mountain: or mountains hard by, where Lot after went when Sodom was destroyed, (^{<-0150>}Genesis 19:30); hither such fled that escaped the sword of the enemy, or perished not in the slimepits, judging it more safe to be there, than to be in their cities, which would fall into the hands of their enemies, and be plundered by them, and where they would be in danger of losing their lives.

Ver. 11. *And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah,* etc.] They entered these cities and pillaged them, and carried off everything valuable in them, that was portable or could be driven, as their cattle, etc. they did not burn these cities, nor take possession of them, and leave garrisons in them, which shows them to be petty princes that came for plunder, and to get an equivalent for nonpayment of tribute to one of them:

and all their victuals, and went away; all the meat and drink they could light of, with which they refreshed their troops, and then departed.

Ver. 12. *And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son*, etc.] The son of Haran, his elder brother, who was now, as the Jews say ^{f979}, fifty years of age:

who dwelt in Sodom, or near it, in the country adjacent to it, (see ^{<A132>}Genesis 13:12); and so being a neighbour of the men of Sodom, and a sojourner among them, he partakes of their punishment; and this was a just correction of him for choosing to dwell among such a people: and they took

his goods, and departed; as him and his family, so all his substance, his cattle, wealth, and riches of every sort, and went off with it: Eupolemus ^{f980}, an Heathen writer, makes mention of this circumstance in his relation of this war, and says, that the Armenians, as he calls the four kings, baring conquered the Phoenicians, carried away captive the brother's son of Abram.

Ver. 13. *And there came one that escaped*, etc.] Both the sword of the enemy and the slimepits; either one of the inhabitants of Sodom, who had an acquaintance with Lot and a friendship for him, and knew his relation to Abram; or one of Lot's family, that might escape being taken and carried captive: for not Michael the prince, so called, because when the angels fell they would have drawn him with them, but God delivered him, and therefore his name was called **j y l p**, or "one that escaped", as the Jews ^{f981} say; nor Og, that escaped the waters of the flood, as they also say ^{f982}, and now from this war, and was the only one left of the Rephaim, or giants, whom Amraphel slew, which they gather from (^{<A131>}Deuteronomy 3:11); who they suppose came with the following message to Abram with an ill design, that he might go out to war with the kings, and be slain, and then he thought to marry his wife; but these are idle fancies, what is first suggested is right.

And told Abram the Hebrew; that there had been a battle of four kings with five, that the latter were beaten, among whom were the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah; and that Lot, his kinsman, who dwelt in or near Sodom, was carried captive, with all his goods. Abram is called the Hebrew, either from his passing over or coming beyond the river Euphrates, from Chaldea into Canaan; with which the Septuagint version agrees, rendering it the

“passer over”; and so Jarchi says he is called, because he came beyond the river: or rather from his having lived beyond it, as such as dwelt there were called; for it can hardly be thought that he should peculiarly have this name from that single action of his passing the river, which multitudes did besides him: but rather, why should he not be called Ibri, the word here used, from the place of his birth? For, according to the Talmudists^{f983}, Ur of the Chaldees was called *ary[z arby]*, “little Ibra”; though it is more generally thought he had this name from his being a descendant of Eber, and who was not only of his sons’ sons, and spoke the same language, but professed the same religion, and which was continued in his posterity, who to the latest ages were called Hebrews, and sometimes Eber, (^{<0021>}Numbers 24:24); and which is the opinion of many Jewish writers^{f984}, and seems most probable:

for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite; (see ^{<0138>}Genesis 13:18); it was about forty miles from Sodom, but from it to Dan, whither he pursued the four kings, and where he overtook, fought, and smote them, is by some computed one hundred and twenty four miles^{f985}: this Mamre, from whom the plain or grove of oaks were called, was the

brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; who are particularly mentioned, because of their concern in the following expedition:

and these [were] confederate with Abram; or “[were] masters” or “authors of a covenant”^{f986} with him; they had entered into a league to defend one another, their persons and properties, from the insults of invaders and tyrants, or thieves and robbers: and it may be lawful to form such leagues with irreligious persons on such accounts, where there is no prohibition from God, as there was none as yet, though there afterwards was one; and the Israelites, were forbid to make covenants with the Canaanites, but that was after they were drove out of the land for their sins, (^{<0020>}Deuteronomy 7:1,2); besides, it is not improbable that these men were religious men, and worshipped the same God with Abram, for such there were among the Canaanitish princes, of which Melchizedek, after spoken of, is an instance; and as yet the sin of the Amorites was not full, of which tribe or nation these men were.

Ver. 14. *And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive*, etc.] That is, his brother’s son Lot, as in (^{<0142>}Genesis 14:12); which was contrary to the law of nations; since Lot was only a sojourner, and not an

inhabitant n Sodom, and therefore had no concern in the quarrel between the kings, and this justified Abram's taking up arms on his behalf:

he armed his trained [servants]; such as were trained up by him in religious exercises, (see ^{<0189>}Genesis 18:19); in the affairs and business of civil life, in the care of flocks and herds, and particularly in the art of war; which was both lawful and necessary, for the preservation of his family and substance from oppressors:

born in his own house; of his servants, and so were his property, and at his disposal and command; their number was

three hundred and eighteen, a large number for servants, and which showed how great a man Abram was, what possessions he must have to employ so many, and yet but a small number for an army, to go forth with against four kings who had conquered five; though how many his confederates brought with them is not certain:

and pursued [them] unto Dan; the Jerusalem Targum is, to Dan of Caesarea, meaning Caesarea of Philippi, as in the times of Christ and his apostles it was called; which at first had the name of Leshem, or Lais, and was not called Dan until the times of the judges, (^{<0782>}Judges 18:29); wherefore, if the same place is intended here, it is so called not only by anticipation, but by a spirit of prophecy; since it had not the name of Dan even in the times of Moses, the writer of this history, unless it may be thought to be inserted by Samuel or some other inspired writer, after Moses; though there is no need to suppose either of these, seeing there might be a town or city of this name in those parts at this time, or however one of the springs of Jordan might be so called, from whence the river had its name as early, (^{<0131>}Genesis 13:11); and so Josephus ^{f987} expressly says, speaking of this expedition, that Abram fell upon them at Dan, for so, adds he, the other fountain of Jordan is called.

Ver. 15. *And he divided himself against them, he and his servants by night,* etc.] Together with his confederates; and very probably their whole three was divided into four parts, under their four leaders; and this might be done in order to attack the four kings and their soldiers, who might be in four separate bodies; or to fall upon their camp in the four quarters of it, and to make a show of a greater army, thereby to intimidate the enemy: Abram seems to have understood the art of war, and the use of stratagems in it; and, as it might be night before he could come up to them, he took

the advantage of that, and fell upon them unawares, when some were asleep in their beds, and others drunk, as Josephus^{f988} relates; and who also says, it was on the fifth night after Abram had knowledge of what had happened at Sodom:

and smote them, and pursued them unto Hoba, which [is] on the left hand of Damascus; a famous city in Syria; it was in later times the metropolis of that country, (²⁰⁷⁸Isaiah 7:8); and was most delightfully situated in a vale, (see Gill on “²⁴⁹²⁵Jeremiah 49:25”); according to Josephus^{f989} it was built by Uz, the son of Aram and grandson of Shem, and some say^{f990} by Shem himself, and that it is to this day called Sem in the Saracene language, and lay between Palestine and Coelesyria; on the left hand of this city, or on the north of it, as all the Targums paraphrase it, lay a place called Hoba, and is completed to be eighty miles from Dan, from whence he pursued them hither, after he had discomfited them there.

Ver. 16. *And he brought back all the goods,* etc.] Taken from Sodom and Gomorrah, (⁰¹⁴¹¹Genesis 14:11);

and also brought again his brother Lot; his brother’s son, (⁰¹⁴¹²Genesis 14:12), for whose sake chiefly he engaged in this enterprise: and his goods; money, cattle, etc.

and the women also, and the people; not only that belonged to Lot, but to Sodom and Gomorrah, who had been taken and carried captive; these were all rescued and brought back by Abram, (see ⁰¹⁴¹²Genesis 14:21);

Ver. 17. *And the king of Sodom went out to meet him,* etc.] While Abram was in pursuit of the four kings, the king of Sodom came down from the mountain whither he and those that escaped with him fled, and came to Sodom: and from hence he went out, not alone, but accompanied with his retinue, to meet Abram:

after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that [were] with him; to congratulate him upon the victory he had obtained over them; and this meeting was

at the valley of Shaveh; a most plain and even valley, as the word signifies, clear of trees and everything that obstructs sight or passage, as Jarchi observes, and so a proper place to have an interview in:

which [is] the king's dale; some say King Melchizedek's, but one should rather think it was the king of Sodom's; the Targum of Jonathan calls it the place of the king's exercise, where he had his diversions in riding, walking, etc. it can hardly be that in (^{<ORIS>}2 Samuel 18:18); though some are of this opinion, being near to Jerusalem, which they suppose to be the same with Salem in (^{<O148>}Genesis 14:18).

Ver. 18. *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine,* etc.] Both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem say, this is Shem the son of Noah, and which is the sense of the Jewish writers in general, and of many Christian ones; but, though it is highly probable he was living at this time, yet it is not easy to account for it why his name should be changed, or that he should reign in a country in the possession of his brother's son; or that he should meet Abram, and congratulate him on the slaughter of one of his own descendants, as Chedorlaomer was; and especially it cannot be said of him that he was without father or mother, or that those were not known, since Shem's parentage and pedigree are famous enough; some have thought him to be more than a mere man, even the Son of God himself, but he is manifestly distinguished from him in (^{<S00B>}Hebrews 7:3); he seems to be what Josephus^{f991} says he was, a Canaanitish prince, a pious and religious man, eminently raised up by God, and whose genealogy was kept a secret, that he might be in this as in other things a type of Christ; but that he should be Canaan himself, as Dr. Clayton^{f992} thinks, a brother of Metsir, or Mizraim, the second son of Ham, being by Sanchoniatho called Sedec, is not likely, since he was cursed by Noah. Salem, of which he was king, is by the above Targums said to be Jerusalem, and which is the opinion of many writers, Jewish and Christian, and of which opinion I myself was formerly, (see Gill on "^{<S00E>}Hebrews 7:1"); Jerusalem being plainly called Salem, (^{<O90E>}Psalms 76:2), but it seems clear from hence that it must be near to Sodom, and lay in the way between Damascus and Sodom; whereas Jerusalem was in a contrary situation, and lay nearly forty miles from Sodom; for Josephus says^{f993}, the lake Asphaltites, where Sodom once stood, was three hundred furlongs from Jerusalem, which is about thirty eight miles; and Jerom relates^{f994}, that Salem was a town near Scythopolis, which was so called in his times, and where was showed the palace of Melchizedek, which, by the largeness of the ruins, appeared to have been very magnificent, and takes it to be the same place with Shalem in (^{<OEBIS>}Genesis 33:18); and Salim, near to which John was baptizing, (^{<OEBIS>}John 3:23): this great man "brought forth bread and wine"; not as a

priest for an offering, but as a munificent king, to refresh Abram and his weary troops, and which the king of Sodom could not do, because the victuals of that place were carried off by the four kings, (⁰¹⁴¹Genesis 14:11); and as Abram had the land of Canaan by promise, and now had made conquest in it over the invaders of it, Melchizedek, sensible of his right unto it, brings forth the best fruits of it, and, as Dr. Lightfoot observes ^{f995}, tenders them to him as “livery and seisin” of it: in this Melchizedek was a type of Christ, who comforts and refreshes his hungry and weary people with himself, the bread of life, and with the wine of his love, as well as his name and title agree with him, who is a righteous King and Prince of Peace, (²²¹⁵Jeremiah 23:5 ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 9:6):

and he [was] the priest of the most high God; a priest as well as a king, as in many countries princes were both ^{f996}; and in this he was a type of Christ in his kingly and priestly offices, who is a priest upon the throne, both king and priest, (³⁰¹³Zechariah 6:13). Melchizedek was a priest not of any of the Phoenician deities, but of the true and living God, who is above all gods, dwells in the highest heaven, and is the most High over all the earth; by him was he called to this office and invested with it, and he ministered to him in it.

Ver. 19. *And he blessed him*, etc.] Melchizedek blessed Abram, which was one part of his office as a priest, to wish and pray for a blessing on others, (see ⁰⁴¹³Numbers 6:23), etc. and herein typified Christ, who really blesses or confers blessings on all his people, even spiritual blessings, such as redemption, remission of sins, and justifying righteousness, adoption, and eternal life:

and said, blessed [be] Abram of the most high God; that is, may he be blessed by him who is the most high God, with all kind of blessings, both temporal and spiritual; or he declares him to be blessed of him, as he undoubtedly was, or foretells that he would be, as was certainly his case: and another epithet of God is added, which abundantly shows he was able to bless him, since he is the

possessor of heaven and earth; is the Maker of both, and has a right to dispose of all things in them, both heavenly and earthly.

Ver. 20. *And blessed be the most high God*, etc.] Let his name be praised, and thanks be given to him for all mercies temporal and spiritual, since all flow from him, and particularly for the mercies Abram and others through

him were now made partakers of; for whoever were the instruments, God was the efficient cause, and to him all the glory was to be given:

which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand; the four kings, who are called Abram's enemies, because the enemies of God and of true religion, and because they had been injurious to a relation of his; and especially they may be so called, if their intention was, as, say the Jewish writers^{f997} to slay him, beginning first with Lot: and those four kings, according to them, signify the four monarchies, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman^{f998} who in their turns distressed his posterity, but in the latter day shall fall into their hands, as those did into Abram's, and fall by them:

and he gave him tithes of all; not Melchizedek to Abram, but Abram to Melchizedek, as appears from (~~sc004~~ Hebrews 7:4); and these tithes were given not out of the goods that were recovered, for they were restored to the proprietors of them, but out of the spoils that were taken from the enemy, as is evident from the same place referred to; and these were given both as a return for the respect shown him by Melchizedek, and by way of thankfulness to God for the victory, whose priest he was; otherwise, as a king, he stood in no need of such a present; nor was it for his maintenance as a priest, or what Abram was obliged unto, but was a voluntary action, and not out of his own substance, but out of the spoils of the enemy, and to testify his gratitude to God: this was imitated by the Heathens in later times; so the Tarentines, having got a victory over the Peucetians, sent the tenth (of the spoil) to Delphos^{f999}: the Jews^{f1000} say Abraham was the first in the world that began to offer tithes; but they are mistaken, when they say in the same place, that he took all the tithes of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of Lot his brother's son, and gave them to Shem the son of Noah. Eupolemus^{f1001} makes mention of this interview between Abram and Melchizedek by name; he says, Abram was hospitably entertained in the holy city Argarizin, which is by interpretation the mountain of the most High (but seems to be the Mount Gerizzim) and that he received gifts from Melchizedek, the priest of God, who reigned there.

Ver. 21. *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram*, etc.] After the conversation between him and Melchizedek was over:

give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself; meaning by "persons" or "souls", as in the original, his own subjects that had been taken and carried away by the four kings, and were now brought back by Abram; and

by “the goods”, those of his own and his subjects, which their conquerors had spoiled them of, but were now recovered, and which he was very willing Abram should have as his right, according to the laws of war, and as a reward of his labours; and very modestly asks for the other, which he did not deny but he might claim as the fruits of his victory: and this also shows, that the king of Sodom, though a Heathen prince, and perhaps a wicked man, yet had more regard to the persons of his subjects than to his own or their goods: the word for “goods” includes all the substance and possession of a man, gold, silver, cattle, and all movables ^{f1002}.

Ver. 22. *And Abram said to the king of Sodom*, etc.] In reply to his request:

I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord; which was both a gesture of praying and of swearing, and both may be intended here; when he set out on his expedition, it is very probable he prayed to God for success, and swore that if he prospered him, that he would receive no profit or advantage from it to himself; or now in the presence of Melchizedek he lift up his hands and swore that he would take none of the goods he had recovered to his own line; and in this form of praying or swearing, he makes use of the same epithets of God Melchizedek had just used:

the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth: having his heart struck with those just and glorious representations of God, and awed with a sense of such a glorious Being, and being forward to learn and retain everything that tended to make for the glory of God.

Ver. 23. *That I will not [take] from a thread even to a shoelatchet*, etc.] That is, from a thread used in sewing garments to, a shoelatchet, or the string which fastens the shoes to the foot, the least belonging to that; or from the hair lace of the head, to the shoelatchet of the foot; that is, he would take nothing of his from head to foot: the meaning is, that he would not take that which was of the least value and importance that could be conceived of, and which is more clearly expressed by what follows:

and that I will not take anything that [is] thine; the least thing that belonged to him, or to any of his subjects, for this reason:

lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich; lest he should upbraid him with it afterwards, and say, that all his riches were owing to him; whereas God had promised to bless him, and make him rich and great, as he had begun to do, and still would more and more; and in whom his

trusted, and to whom he was desirous all the glory of his greatness and riches should be ascribed.

Ver. 24. *Save only that which the young men have eaten*, etc.] His three hundred and eighteen trained servants, and those of his confederates, who having recovered the victuals taken away from the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, had eaten of it for their refreshment, as it was but just and right they should:

and the portion of the men which went with me; the part in the spoil which belonged unto them by the laws of war; wherefore, though he abridged himself of rights and privileges that belonged unto him, which he might do, and thereby showed his great generosity, and that it was not covetousness but kindness that moved him to do what he did; yet he did not take upon him to abridge the rights and privileges of others, which would have been injurious to them: the men he means were Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; his confederates, who went with him in the pursuit of the enemy, and were assisting to him in recovering the men and goods they had carried away: and as it was but justice they should have their share in the spoils, therefore he says,

let them take their portion; in the goods recovered, and in the spoils taken. Eupolemus^{f1003}, the Heathen writer above quoted, relates this affair thus, that

“Abram being assisted by his servants became master of those who had captivated others, and carried captive the wives and children of the soldiers; and when ambassadors came to him to ransom them with money, he would not suffer the conquered to be insulted, but taking food for the young men, returned the captives freely.”