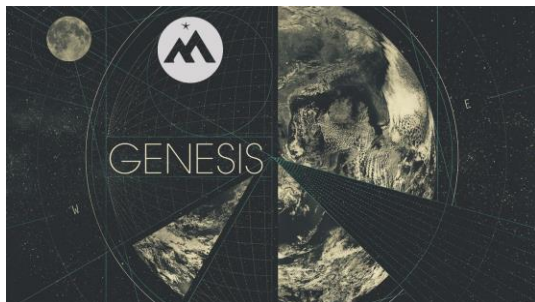




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GENESIS: A TIME TO FIGHT

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¹In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ²these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).

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

⁵In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim ⁹with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five.

¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country.

¹¹So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹²They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

¹³Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus.

¹⁶Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

Genesis 14:1–16 (ESV)

Bera, the king of Sodom, and Birsha, the king of Gomorrah Neither name is known. However, this may be a wordplay: Bera (*bera'* in Hebrew) and Birsha (*birsha'* in Hebrew) appear to play on the Hebrew words for “evil” (*ra'ah*) and “wicked” (*rasha'*)¹

The number 318 is the sum of the 12 prime numbers from 7 to 47, so the number may have symbolic meaning.²

This report of Kedorlaomer’s victories was not appropriated by the author for solely antiquarian interests. The wilderness Israelites traverse the route from Kadesh to Moab once conquered by these eastern kings (Num 20:22; 21:4, 10–13; Deut 1:46–2:8); the ancient peoples who fell to Kedorlaomer were later supplanted by Israel (Josh 12:4; 13:12) or Israel’s relatives. The Edomites displaced the Horites (36:20–21, 29–30; Deut 2:12, 22), and Lot’s children, the Moabites and Ammonites, supplanted the Emmites (Deut 2:11) and the Zamzuzites (= Zuzites; Deut 2:20), respectively. If Father Abraham could defeat the invincible Kedorlaomer, the Israelites could take courage facing enemies in their own day.³

Abram’s meeting the two kings, Sodom and Salem, in the “Valley of the King” (v. 17) follows the war of the kings. Two contrasts occur in this section: first, the king of Sodom’s welcome to Abram contrasts the beneficent action taken by the king of Salem, Melchizedek (vv. 17–20); second, the selfish request of the king of Sodom contrasts the unselfish response of Abram (vv. 21–24). The king of Sodom “came out” (*yāṣā*) to meet Abram (v. 17), but Melchizedek “brought out” (*yāṣā*) food (v. 18) and offered a blessing (vv. 19–20). The first word spoken by the king of Salem is “blessed” (*bārûk*), but Sodom’s king first says “give me” (v. 21). Here, the passage also shows the second contrast; whereas the king of Sodom bargains for a portion of the booty, Abram takes none of it for himself, providing a tenth for Melchizedek (v. 20) and the share belonging to his allies.⁴

¹⁷After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).

¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

²¹And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.” ²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I 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.”

Genesis 14:17–24 (ESV)

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- ¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [*Faithlife Study Bible*](#) (Ge 14:2). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- ² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [*Faithlife Study Bible*](#) (Ge 14:14). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- ³ Mathews, K. A. (2005). [*Genesis 11:27–50:26*](#) (Vol. 1B, p. 144). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- ⁴ Mathews, K. A. (2005). [*Genesis 11:27–50:26*](#) (Vol. 1B, pp. 145–146). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.