

Giant Wars

And the Rescue of the Captives

- ¹ In the days of **Amraphel** king of Shinar, **Arioch** king of Ellasar, **Chedorlaomer** king of Elam, and **Tidal** king of Goiim,
- ² these 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).
- ³ And all these joined forces in **the Valley of Siddim** (that is, the Salt Sea).
- ⁴ **Twelve years** they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.
- ⁵ In 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,
- ⁶ and the **Horites** in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness.
- ⁷ Then 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.
- ⁸ Then 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
- ⁹ with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five.
- ¹⁰ Now 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.
- ¹¹ So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.
- ¹² **They also took Lot**, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.
- ¹³ Then 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**.
- ¹⁴ When 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**.
- ¹⁵ And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to **Hobah**, north of **Damascus**.
- ¹⁶ Then 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

Giants and Abram

Everyone has heard of **Goliath**. He was the mighty Philistine champion who defied the entire army of Israel in the valley of Elah. Everyone in Israel's army shrieked at the sound like the figure in Munch's *Scream* painting. They ran from the sight of Goliath like ants fleeing their hill just splattered by the foot of a school boy. This included King Saul. Himself a head taller than any other Israelite, it says he was

“dismayed and greatly afraid” (1 Sam 17:11) of this one person, even with an entire army behind him. This is because Goliath was 10 ft. tall. His armor alone weighed 160 lbs. His spear was three inches in diameter, and the tip weighed 15 lbs. Perhaps the most important thing about Goliath is that he was descended from a people called the Rephaim (2 Sam 21:22), who show up in our story today.

But did you know that Goliath isn't even the largest man in the Bible? Most people do not know that there *are* any other giants in the Bible. This distinction belongs to king Og of Bashan. It says that his bed/casket was 13½ ft. long and 6 ft. wide (Deut 3:11). Someone wanted it for a trophy, so they took it away to Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites where they seem to have put it on display. Bashan means “place of the serpent.” It is the region of today's Golan Heights, in the foothills of Mt. Hermon north and east of the Sea of Galilee. In fact, I believe that there is even a giant serpent mound right next to one of the oldest archeological sites in all of Israel, which is called Gilgal Refaim—Wheel of Giants.

Like the Rephaim, Og also shows up in our passage today. Or, at least he would if we were sitting in a synagogue listening to a priest read from Genesis in one particular Aramaic Targum—Pseudo-Jonathan. Genesis 14:13 says:

Then came Og, who had escaped from among the giants who died in the Flood; he had ridden upon the ark, and there was a cover over his head, and he was sustained from Noah's provisions. He had not escaped because of his own merit, but that the inhabitants of the world might see the power of the Lord and say, "Did not the giants who were there from the beginning rebel against the Lord of the world, and he wiped them out from the earth?" When these kings waged war, Og was with them. He said to himself "I will go and inform Abram concerning Lot who has been captured, so that when he comes to rescue him from the hands of the kings, he himself will be given into their hands. So he came on the eve of the day of the Passover and found him making unleavened cakes, and he told Abram the Hebrew, who was dwelling in the Vision of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and Aner. These were allies of Abram.

This strange tale contains a mixture of the actual words of Genesis (unbolded) as well as ancient legends and oral traditions that almost no one alive today knows.

There is one more addition from the Targum that I want to tell you about here. It is found in the first verse. It says, “In the days of Amraphel—he is Nimrod who ordered Abram to be thrown into the fire” (Gen 14:1 tg.Ps-Jon). I won't focus on this

very old story of Abram being cast into the fire. The Targum spoke about this back in ch. 11.¹ What I'm interested in is the identification of **Amraphel with Nimrod**.

If you remember back in **Gen 10:8**, it said that Nimrod began to be a *gibborim* (mighty man/giant) on the earth. He was the builder of Babel. He was that mighty hunter of Hercules or Ninurta fame (9). And he began to build many cities in “**the land of Shinar**” (10) including Babel. I suggested he is probably the instigator of the Tower of Babel itself. So Nimrod is in the land of Shinar, and now Amraphel is in the land of Shinar. So, naturally, Amraphel becomes Nimrod in the traditions.

The truth or non-truth of Og hitching a ride on Noah's ark or of Nimrod and Abram actually knowing each other are not important to me today. They are neither biblical nor anti-biblical things. I bring them up to put an already fascinating story into its proper context. Why would we need context that adds Nimrod and Og? It is because most commentaries, and even scholarly articles on Genesis 14, miss the point. They scratch their collective heads wondering, “**Why is this chapter even in the Bible?**” Even when they get the main point right (a point that really doesn't even come into focus until the end of the chapter), almost all of them miss the function of these early verses, those we are looking at today. But the Targum doesn't miss it at all. In fact, **its embellishments** are there in order to help the hearer understand it even better, because apparently, even they were having difficulty getting the point. And what is this point? Why is this chapter here? It comes across as plain as I know how to make it in the title of the sermon today: *Giant Wars and the Rescue of the Captives*.

Giant Wars

What we are looking at today are **three battles**. In **Gen 14:1-4** you have **Round 1** of a coalition of eastern kings vs. a coalition of western kings. In **vv. 5-12** you have **Round 2**. If you have ever heard of any of these kings or wars in your life, you are one of the chosen few. The section concludes with Abram now entering into the 3rd **battle**, where he fights the eastern kings (**13-16**).

To begin this, what I want to remind you of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a recent interview, Michael Horton was asked, “**What is the gospel?**” His answer was a little unexpected to me, but I really liked it. “**The gospel is God's promise of a Son who will crush the serpent's head, forgive the sins of his people, raise them from the**

¹ “And it was when Nimrod had cast Abram into the furnace of fire because he would not worship his idol, and the fire had no power to burn him, that Haran's heart became doubtful, saying, If Nimrod overcome, I will be on his side: but if Abram overcome, I will be on his side. And when all the people who were there saw that the fire had no power over Abram, they said in their hearts, Is not Haran the brother of Abram full of divinations and charms, and has he not uttered spells over the fire that it should not burn his brother? Immediately (min yad, out of hand) there fell fire from the high heavens and consumed him; and Haran died in the sight of Terah his father, where he was burned in the land of his nativity, in the furnace of fire which the Kasdai had made for Abram his brother” (**Gen 11:28 PJE**).

dead, and give them everlasting life, solely for the sake of his grace through Jesus Christ.”² This is exactly right, but what caught me by surprise was the mention of **Genesis 3:15**, a verse that is not often brought up in a definitional context like this.

This verse tells us that the woman would have a seed who would crush the head of the serpent. But **it says more**. It says that there would be enmity between these two seeds. **War**. This war would begin with her own children, and would continue all the way through the OT in various forms, on into the NT when Jesus would legally defeat the serpent and his seed at the cross, and finally destroy them in his Second Coming. Learning to read the Bible through the lens of this war can lead to a great awakening that can stir your soul, especially when you see its ultimate fulfillment and purpose.

Cain and Abel first demonstrate this war on a **spiritual level**, as each was spiritually descended from the two seeds—one a man of faith, the other a murderer like the devil. **Genesis 6:1-4** first showed us this war on a much more **biological level**. The sons of God, fallen Watchers, taking women and having offspring called **Nephilim**—hybrids, physically impure and unclean. But Noah was physically spotless and a man of faith, and God saved Noah while destroying the Nephilim.

We have seen how these Nephilim were **giants**, like **Nimrod** after the flood. The text says **the Nephilim were on the earth in the days before the flood and also afterward**. We see them afterward in **Numbers 13**, in a chapter where the spies of Israel were supposed to come back to Moses and give him the report so that they could enter into war and win the Promised Land.

Instead, they learned that the sons of Anak were there. Who were they? They were descended from the Nephilim (**13:33**). This same chapter also gives a list of tribes who are said to be “**all ... of great height**” (**13:32**), such that the Israelites seemed like grasshoppers in their sight. This list includes six clans (and ominous number): **Anakim, Jebusites, Canaanites, Hittites**, and—importantly for our story—**Amorites** and **Amalekites** (**28-29**). It isn’t that every single person in all of these tribes were giants or Nephilim, but rather that these people were mixing with, making treaties with, or assimilating with Nephilim. These people scared the spies of Israel senseless, except for Joshua and Caleb.

Strangely, one other feature of this story is worth mentioning this morning. There is something else gigantic here as well. In a place called **Eschol**, the spies found a **cluster of grapes** so large that Jewish tradition says eight of the twelve spies carried the cluster, one carried a pomegranate, one carried a fig, and Joshua and Caleb carried nothing, because they did not share the plan to discourage the

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=caMVMayR690

Israelites from attacking Canaan (**Num 13:23**).³ “If the grapes are this big, how big do you suppose the people that eat them are?” At any rate, all of these things are vital background for properly understanding why Genesis 14 is in the Bible.



4th-5th century Christian lamp (viewed from the top)
depicting the story of the spies carrying the cluster of grapes back to Moses

Giant Wars: Round 1

What I’m going to do in these first two Rounds of wars is **summarize the war** and then explain the meaning of many of the names and places given in the text. Know that that many of these names have other possibilities as well, but I’m going to give you meanings that help make the point of the story more pronounced, so that you can really get a feel for what is going on here.⁴

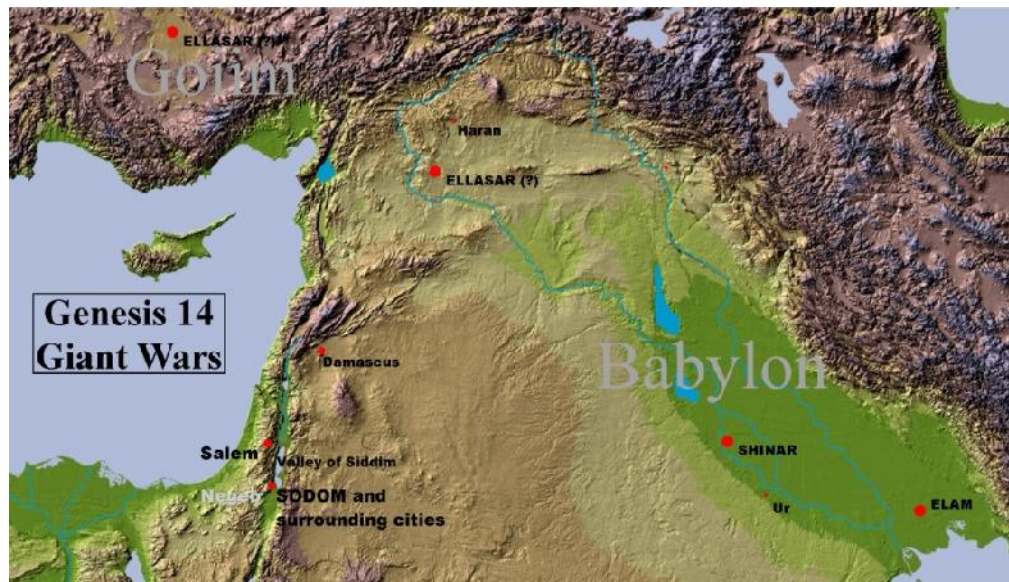
In the first war we see four kings going up against five kings. The four kings surround the **fertile crescent** from Babylon/Iraq to Galatia/Turkey. They are headed down to the land of Canaan, to the Dead Sea (**Gen 14:3**), to make war against the five local kings from the Valley of Siddim, because the five had rebelled against the apparent High King: Chedorlaomer (**Gen 14:4**), whose reach went very far indeed. In some ways, then, this is East vs. West. It is where Abram came from vs. where Abram has gone to (or, rather, where Lot has gone).

The kings of the west (**Gen 14:2**) come from the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities that will be destroyed by the LORD because of the unspeakable moral perversion taking place there. **Bera** king of Sodom is king of the

³ This reference is found in the ancient Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah 34a*. The biblical text literally says they carried the cluster “between two.” Between two what? English translations supply the word “men” after “two,” “between two men.” But the Rabbis thought it was rather between two staffs, and was so large that it took almost all of the spies to carry it to Moses.

⁴ As usual, I’m using (for the most part) Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998).

city Lot moves to. Bera means “Son of Evil.” Birsha is king of Gomorrah. His name means “Son of Wickedness.” Shinab is king of the lesser known town Admah. His name means “Hostile.”⁵ Shemeber is king of Zeboiim. His name seems to be related to heavenly beings, as it means something like “Winged Name of Great Celebrity” or “Soaring on High.” And then there is the unnamed king of Bela. Bela means “Devouring” or “Destruction.” You should be able to get a flavor from the names of what kind of gentlemen these were.



As for the eastern kings (Gen 14:1), they are a bit more diverse in meaning, but equally interesting and important. You have Amraphel king of Shinar. Shinar is another name for Babylon. The meaning of his name is not certain, though it can mean, “One Who Speaks of Dark Things.” We have seen how he was associated with Nimrod. Then there is Arioch king of Ellasar. Arioch means “Servant of the Moon God.”⁶ The Targum links it to a word meaning “tall.” Thus it says, “Arioch, who was tall like the giants...” A tall servant of the Moon God? Perhaps he was the very progeny of Nanna/Allah, a fallen Watcher?

Chedorlaomer is the star of this show. His name may refer to the Assyrian underworld god Lagamar so that his name means something like “Protector-No Mercy.”⁷ It is also probable that the ancient Arabian people knew of him, calling

⁵ His name can also mean “tooth of the father; father’s tooth.” As I mention in Giants, this is eerie in light of the fact that giants sometimes had double rows of teeth.

⁶ I recently gave a discussion on the relationship of the moon god to Ur, Haran, Abram (pre-salvation) and Islam. Allah was simply a South Arabian name for Sin or Nanna—the Moon God. See my Power Point presentation.

⁷ Bob Becking, “Lagamar,” *DDD*, 498-99.

him **Codar el Ahmar** meaning “**the Red**.”⁸ The Targum apparently sees him as the first Napoleon, for he is “**Chedorlaomer, who was short**.” Finally there is **Tidal** king of Goiim. Goiim is not actually a city, but the word means “nations.” He ruled the vast empire to the west in modern day Turkey. His name can mean “**Knowledge of Elevation**,” or, sounding like Lucifer himself, “**You Shall Be Cast Out of the Most High**” or “**You Shall Be Cast Out From Heaven**.”

All of this is very strange stuff when you look at it this way, but it fits right into the supernatural worldview that has already been presented in many places in the early parts of Genesis. It fits what we know about the spiritual darkness of the world thanks to Babel, and of what we will learn of the land of Canaan in the infamous story of Sodom and Gomorrah. **The battle pits evil against evil**. But in the end, the west is no match for the east. Sodom falls back under subjection. The Short One and his friends with dark words, giant stature, and satanic allegiances are victorious.

Giant Wars: Round 2

Round 2 now pits these victorious forces of the east against a new foe. This is a much stronger, taller, sinister foe. We do not know exactly why Chedorlaomer returned, but a year or two later, they returned to fight six peoples: The **Rephaim**, the **Zuzim**, the **Emim**, the **Horites**, the **Amalekites**, and the **Amorites**. These people’s lived in the lands east of Sodom, and so were a kind of buffer between those who fought in the first war. We’ve talked about three of these clans already this morning.

The **Amalekites** and **Amorites** are found in the list of six nations that were giant like the Nephilim (above). These Bible speaks of the great progenitor **Amalek** as “**the first of the nations**” (**Num 24:20**). The Amalekites attacked Moses in the wilderness, and from that moment on, God said he would utterly blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven (**Ex 17:14**). This war between Israel and Amalek goes into the days of **Saul and a king named Agag the Amalekite**, even to the days of **Esther and Haman the Agagite**. Just who were these people?

Possibly coming from the line of Shem (Semitic),⁹ the Arabians speak of an ancient hero they call *Imlāq*, which is their name for **Amalek**. *Imlāq* means “giant.”¹⁰ The form of the word *Imlāq* is clearly related to Amalek. Amalek can mean

⁸ Like “tooth,” this has a coincidental connection to giants who were from North to South America, not to mention Europe, often said to be red-headed.

⁹ On this lineage and the relation of Amalek and Ad (below) see **Augustin Calmet**, *Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1832), 50.

¹⁰ “In the Arabic colloquial, ‘*Imlāq* means both Amalekite and ‘giant.’” Ibid.

“vexation,” or possibly “to lick up.” These same Arabs also tell of one of Imlāq’s famous sons, a behemoth named Ad. King Adim (Ad) was,

A violent and proud prince, tall in stature. It was he who ordered the rocks cut to make the pyramids, as had been done by the ancients. In his time there lived two angels cast out of heaven, and who lived in the Aftarah well; these two angels taught magic to the Egyptians, and it is said that 'Adim, the son of El-Budchir, learned most of their sciences, after which the two angels went to Babel.¹¹

The other group is the Amorites. An Amorite is a “talker” or “slayer.” Amos says that the Amorites were “tall like cedars” (Amos 2:9). These were not Semitic people, but more like Caucasians, having blonde and red hair, blue eyes, and sometimes even elongated skulls.¹² Og the giant was an Amorite.

We have also seen the Rephaim, for Goliath was descended from the Rephaim, as were the Anakim and the sons of Anak. The word is probably related to the Hebrew word meaning “heal” (*rapha*). They are sometimes translated as the “dead,” because they reside in the scary parts of Sheol. Putting these together, *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)* says, “by virtue of their connections with the netherworld, the[y are] healers *par excellence*.”¹³ The Canaanites at Ugarit also knew them, saying that they were the original inhabitants of the land of Bashan. Their word for them occurs in parallel with a word for “divine ones.” They are also called “shadows.” When you understand that ancient Jews and Christians said that when the Nephilim died, their spirits become the demons, the name Shadow/Shade or Divine Ones or The Dead or even Healers starts to make a lot of sense for who these Rephaim were (see Job 26:5; Ps 88:11; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Isa 14:9; 26:19).

The three remaining tribes are all Rephaim according to Deuteronomy 2. They were simply given different names by different people groups. If Genesis 10

¹¹ Ahmad Ibn 'Ali al-Maqrīzī, *Description Topographique et Historique de l'Égypte* (vol. 1), trans. M. U. Bouriant, ed. Ernest Leroux (Paris: Rue Bonaparte, 1895), 89-90. The English translation is smoothed out by Google Translator.

¹² “The Egyptian monuments inform us that the Amorites of Palestine were white-skinned, blue-eyed, fair-haired, and dolicho-cephalic (long-headed), and that the race was still predominant in Judah in the age of Shishak, while traces of it are still to be met with in Palestine.” A. H. Sayce, “The White Race of Ancient Palestine,” in *Academy* vol. 34 (1888): 55. “In the sculptures of Ramses II at Abu-Simbel ‘the Shasu of Kanana’ were depicted with blue eyes, and red hair, eyebrows, and beard, and the Amaur with ‘the eyes blue, the eyebrows and beard red.’ As ‘the Shasu of Kanana’ lived a little to the south of Hebron, while the Amaur are the Amorites of the Old Testament, it was clear that a population existed in Palestine in the fourteenth century before our era which had all the characteristics of the white race.” A.H. Sayce, “The White Race of Palestine,” in *Nature* vol. 38:979 (Aug 2, 1888): 321-22. **GOING DEEPER:** As I have chronicled in *Giants* (pp. 222-23 and notes 22-23) and the book in Galatians, we can trace the emergence of these people somewhere east of the Caspian Sea. Curiously, a recent report came out saying that they now know that blue eyes originated in a genetic mutation somewhere near the Black Sea. <http://themindunleashed.org/2014/02/blue-eyes-originated-10000-years-ago-black-sea-region.html>

¹³ H. Rouillard, “Rephaim,” ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 699.

with Nimrod and all the others is about the taking **possession** of the nations, this chapter in Deuteronomy is about the **dispossession** of the nations, or at least the nations around Canaan. The descendants of Lot called the **Ammonites** (not Amorites) killed all the Rephaim in their territory. They called these Rephaim “**Zamzummin**” (onomatopoeia), meaning “**Buzzing Ones**” or “**High Standing.**” These are the same as the **Zuzim** here. Deuteronomy says they were “**a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim**” (see **Deut 2:19-21**).

The **Emim** were also “**regarded as Rephaim**” and as “**a people as great, numerous, and tall.**” They were killed by different descendants of Lot called the **Moabites**. “Emim” means “**Terrors**” or “**Horrors**” or “**Terrible Giants.**”

The last group are the **Horites** (**Gen 14:6**). These Rephaim formerly lived in the land that **Esau** would one day rule, the land of Seir, named after (apparently) a very hairy giant. Many strange creatures in both Jewish tradition and the Bible are said to have come out of Seir, including animal hybrids (see **Jasher 4:18; 36:32; 61:15**; cf. **1 En 7:5; Jub 5:2**)¹⁴ and lion-like men called Ariels (**2 Sam 23:20**).¹⁵ Horites mean “**trogloodytes**” or “**cave-dwellers**”) which is where many giants throughout the world were said to dwell. Just think of **Beowulf**.¹⁶ Thus, the Edomites, descended from Esau, dispossessed them in **Deuteronomy 2:12**.



¹⁴ “And their judges and rulers went to the daughters of men and took their wives by force from their husbands according to their choice,¹⁴ and the sons of men in those days took from the cattle of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and taught the mixture of animals of one species with the other, in order therewith to provoke the Lord; and God saw the whole earth and it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon earth, all men and all animals” (**Jasher 4:18**). “And those animals, from their middle downward, were in the shape of the children of men, and from their middle upward, some had the likeness of bears, and some the likeness of the keephas, with tails behind them from between their shoulders reaching down to the earth, like the tails of the ducheepath, and these animals came and mounted and rode upon these asses, and led them away, and they went away unto this day” (**Jasher 36:32**). A man named Zepho went after the creature, and, finding him in a cave, saw that “from the middle upward it resembled a man, and from the middle downward it resembled an animal” (**Jasher 61:15**). Giants “began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish (**1 Enoch 7:5**).

¹⁵ In researching his *Nephilim Chronicles*, Brian Godawa says “If these ariels were mere warriors, then the feat accomplished by Benaiah in slaying them would be the only one in the entire passage that was banal and without significance. These ariels were something more than men, something supernatural.” Brian Godawa. *When Giants Were Upon the Earth* (Kindle Locations 5771-5774). Embedded Pictures Publishing.

¹⁶ Also see **Jasher 61:15** (above).

This is all incredibly strange stuff. Yet, except for some of the specific legendary stories (as we have seen with Nimrod and Abram and Og), it is all right there in your Bible. These are the things they never told you about in Sunday School, but probably should have. Imagine a Sunday School class like this! Maybe kids would start wanting to go to Sunday School more than they do the movies. But there is **much more here than simply entertainment**. This second war of Genesis 14 serves a much greater purpose than just conveying some now lost war in Canaan. What would that be?

I believe this is here for a couple of important reasons. **First**, it sets up peoples that will later come up in the Bible, peoples that God commands Israel to put “the ban” upon. **The Ban** is a war term. It is Israel’s version of *jihad*—Holy War. For example, the Bible says, “**When the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them**” (**Deut 7:2**). Or, “**You shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded**” (**Deut 20:7**). “Devote to complete destruction” is the word *charam*. It is the same root word as Mt. Hermon, the place where 1 Enoch reports that the beginnings of the giants first came to be, when the sons of God descended on this mountain to commit their unspeakable crimes against humanity, and where Abram chases after Lot in the final war.

Ever wonder why God would command something so brutal? Many have lost their faith over this very question. The answer is that it is always these giant tribes or those who have allied themselves in one way or another with them that are put under the ban. *But no one else*. Not only did God not command Israel to destroy the Moabites, Ammonites, or Edomites, he actually told them they were **not even allowed to touch them!** There is something unspeakable going on with these ancient peoples, something that it seems every nation on earth eventually had to deal with as they were continually cast out of new lands and forced to flee even to the very ends of the world.¹⁷

Second, it begins to show the war of **Genesis 3:15** is starting to rear its ugly head. Here we have even the mighty kings of the east going to war against the giants. Some of these kings may themselves be related to them. But it was promised that Eve’s children would war with Satan’s, and I do not see how this is confined in

¹⁷ I understand that most ANE peoples have something similar to The Ban. The language of utterly destroying is stock in the literature. This topic is certainly more involved than I’m making it to be here. However, I do believe this is a vital starting point for trying to get our hands around what is going on in this difficult subject.

the physical realm only to God's people. Even American Indians tell their stories of this great, truly, First World War.

But our war between "Little" Chedorlaomer and the giants is here specifically for the sake of highlighting, of truly helping you stand back and gasp at the third war, the one that finds Abram now entering. The First Napoleon was able to defeat tribe after tribe of giants! This man, with his tall, satanic, and truly dark help is the irresistible force. He is invincible! No one can stand up to him.

In the course of this second battle, we learn that **Sodom and Gomorrah are also engaged** (**Gen 14:8-9**). They probably enlisted these giants who were their geographical buffer, to come to their aid against this tyrannical despot from Iraq. If they won, they figured, they could have their pure, unadulterated freedom to do any debauched thing a man could dream up. Which, of course, after Abram comes to their aid, they do anyway. That kind of freedom sounds much too familiar to another that echoes throughout our own land today. We want freedom! Freedom to sin. Anyone who takes that away from me is evil. But in this war, the giants have fallen (**Gen 14:5-8**).

Now it is Sodom's turn. It says, "**The Valley of Siddom 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**" (**10**). These are **tar pits**, like the kind you see in La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles, right next to the L.A. County Museum of Art. My guess is that the text is saying that The Little General backed the armies of Sodom up so that they were forced into the pits to suffer the same fate as the **Woolley Mammoth's** in the L.A. tar pits. Curiously, these pits seem to have been destroyed when God destroyed the place with fire from heaven, for it says it "was full" of bitumen pits, but apparently not anymore. Whatever the case, when Sodom falls next, all his provisions go with him (**11**).

And Lot was also taken captive (**12**).

Lot, the son of Abram's brother, was dwelling in Sodom. He and all his possessions, went away into captivity under the godless (or should I rather say very religious, but evil) lords of the east. Lot had chosen his lot in the previous chapter, when he saw with his eyes the bounty and beauty of the Jordan Valley. He had chosen to live in the cities. He had chosen to live with rebellious men. Now, he finds himself **a captive to the servant of the Moon God** and the invincible Little Despot. They begin the trip north, through the ranges of Mt. Hermon. Lot is being led away. There is no hope. All is fading to darkness.

Round 3

But someone escaped. A lone runner ran like Pheidippides running from Marathon to Athens. Perhaps when he got Abram the Hebrew—who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite (Gen 14:13), he passed out and died of exhaustion? Allow me another moment on Mamre. We can see here that Mamre is an Amorite himself. He is obviously very powerful. He has two brothers: Eshcol and of Aner. “Mamre” means “Seeing from the Vision.” “Eshcol” means “A Cluster of Grapes.” Do you remember those gargantuan grapes the spies found? They found them in the Valley of Eshcol.

It is pretty clear who these men are, so why is Abram hanging out with them? Well, if the land is filled with giants, perhaps he is trying his best just to stay alive! He is befriending them, even as God held out his hand to Og, having Moses ask them to pass through unharmed (though God also hardened his heart). He has to befriend someone, because he is not powerful enough to fight them all by himself. Or is he? Well, no, not by himself. But Abram is *not by himself*.

From here, the story tells us that Abram responds quickly and forcefully. This is a very different reaction, a very different Abram from the one portrayed in Egypt. Rather than passive and lying, he is aggressive and focused.

He takes a very modest army of 318 men (14:14),¹⁸ all born in his house. He enlists no outside help! There are no giants in his army. He may have made peace with them, but he is not making an alliance with them. But 318 men is not very many. It is quite similar to Gideon’s war, where he began with 22,000 strong, but the Angel of the LORD whittled him down to 300 (Jdg 7:6-8) to prove to the world that he is the Lord of Hosts. It reminds me of the story of the 300 Greeks who went up against 150,000 Persians in the famous Battle of Thermopylae. Hopelessly outnumbered, these brave warriors held off all the hordes of Persia in a narrow pass called the Hot Gates for three days. When, on the eve of battle, he was told that the Persian arches were so numerous that their volley of arrows would block out the sun, Dienekes the Spartan just laughed and said, “Good. Then we’ll have our battle in the shade.”

It almost seems like Abram is acting like Dienekes now. It seems to me, given what we have just seen with Chedorlaomer, that the odds for Abram are about the same as that of Sparta. Yet, the very next words say that they “went in pursuit as far as Dan.” The location here is important. This is in the foothills of Mt. Hermon many miles north of the Sea of Galilee (Gen 14:14). Abram was obviously a good

¹⁸ 318 is the numerical value of Eliezer (Gen 15:1), but this seems to be only coincidental. This number simply reflects history without any kind of added symbolism.

commander, for he “divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus” (15), all the way around Mt. Hermon. What was the result of this strategy?

Somehow, miraculously, “He brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people” (16). Indeed, it was miraculous. For as Melchizedek says in the next section, “Blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand” (Gen 14:20). And you see, this is the point of the story. In prefacing this last war with these previous two, which themselves each escalate in terms of glory for the kings of the east, Abram is seen all the more victorious. His victory is truly amazing. Chedoloamar could defeat Sodom and Gomorrah. He could defeat the giants of the Levant. But he could not defeat 318 men who came after Lot.

Rescuing the Captives

And why not? The answer is that someone else was fighting for Abram. God Most High delivered Abram and all of his kin. In an amazing way that we will see more next week, this all points us forward to something beyond Abram. For the Bible is the story of a Great War, and it’s outcome is good news. Did you know that the term for “gospel” is actually a military term? It was used to report back to the king that his army was victorious! The Gospel is the story of Christ gaining victory over the seed of the devil. There is no more pure way of telling that story in the OT than with giants, for they are, quite literally (at least in the first generation), offspring of angels, the seed of Satan.

This is the war that the LORD predicted in the Garden. This is the war that they instigated on Mt. Hermon. This is the war that resumes in Nimrod’s rebellion. This is the war that escalates to the whole world in Genesis 14. This is the war that will consume forty years in a wilderness for Israel, the entire military career or Joshua, much of the book of Judges, leading up to the kings: Saul and Goliath, David and his mighty men. It is a war that will go all the way to the very last pages of the NT, when Haman the Agagite is hung on gallows built 75 feet high, for a giant—whom he thought was going to be Mordecai, which means “Little Man.”

It is fascinating that the dictionary I’ve been using throughout this sermon to give the names of these people concludes its entry on Mordecai by saying, “A picture of the humanity of Jesus while acting as our kinsman Redeemer.” Indeed, could anything be more true? He came into this world with nothing, leaving behind all the glory he had in heaven. He came as one who was nothing to look at, nothing that we should desire him. Just an ordinary, Jewish man. Little in human eyes.

But this man also happened to be God in the flesh. He **took up the reins** of the war in the desert, when Satan tempted him and offered him the kingdoms of the world. He **took up the reins** in his life, when he cast out demon after demon with nothing but a word. He **took up the reins** on the cross, when he laid down his life for sinners, long held in bondage and captivity to the devil. But as he did this, he simultaneously “**disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him**” (Col 2:15). He proclaimed his victory to them (1 Pet 3:19) and “**has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him**” (1 Pet 3:22). This is all the language of war.

Notice again that language used of Lot. He was a **captive**. He was a **prisoner**. He and all his family with them. But he was delivered out of the hand of the evil king, the one who had taken him captive, by his kinsman redeemer—his uncle Abram. Do you remember the way the KJV famously puts the Psalm, “**Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them**” (Ps 68:18 KJV).

Curiously, the Psalm also says, “**The Lord said, ‘I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea’**” (Ps 68:22). Our story in Genesis 14 reflects this exact idea, as do the wars with Joshua, and others throughout the OT. This is because the OT is repeating the same basic story. But the Psalm predicts that one day, Messiah will bring them back from Bashan, from the pit of hell itself.

Thus says the Apostle Paul, “**When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.**” (“In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”) (Eph 4:8-10).

Peter says something similar. “**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits (*pneuma*) [demons] in prison (*phulaké*)... [but he] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him**” (1 Pet 3:18-19, 22).

John in Revelation is similar also. “**After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!**

She has become a dwelling place (*phulaké*) for demons (*daimonion*), a haunt for every unclean spirit (*pneuma*), a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast ... Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues” (Rev 18:1-2, 4).

This is the war. And “Christ [whom God] raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [is] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph 1:20-21). And “through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10). This is my proclamation of good news to you today from *The Giant Wars and the Rescue of the Captives*.

“Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:24-26). Amen.