THE PENTATEUCH PART I: GENESIS  
LESSON 8: Genesis 12:11-14:24  
The Story of Abraham Continues: from Abram's Egyptian Misadventure  
to The First International Conflict

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Lord,  
We marvel at Abraham's faith, but we also understand that he was not a perfect man and that he had the occasion to sin and to bring himself to disgrace like all men.  His life is not only a lesson to all of us of the necessity of the obedience of faith, but also that You can take ordinary men and women and through them You can work extraordinary acts that will impact all of salvation history.  We cannot see our individual roles in Your plan for mankind's redemption and salvation, but we know that as New Covenant believers we all have role in Your plan to carry the Gospel of salvation to the four corners of the earth.  We submit ourselves, Lord, to bringing the descendants of Noah into the one family in Christ before the door of salvation closes in the final judgment on the earth and the peoples of every clan, language, country and nation.  Lead us now, our Advocate, in the study of Abraham, the father of the family that will bear the "promised seed."  We pray in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  Amen.

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*In this, his [Abram's] going forth by divine command from the land, from his kin and from the house of his father, it is clear that all the sons of his promise, among whom are we also, must imitate him.  We go forth from our land when we renounce the pleasures of the flesh; from our kin when, in the measure possible for humans, we make an effort to rid ourselves of all the vices with which we are born.  We go forth from the house of our father when, for love of the heavenly life, we want to leave the world itself with its head, the devil.  All of us, in fact, because of the first disobedience, are born into the world as sons of the devil.  But through the grace of regeneration, all those who belong to the seed of Abraham are made sons of God, because our Father who is in heaven says to us, that is, to his Church, "Hear, O daughter, consider, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house."*  
The Venerable Bede, *On Genesis, 3*

In the opening verses of Genesis chapter 12, God promised Abram if he left his homeland for a land God had chosen for him that God would make him a great nation, that He would make Abram's *shem* (name) famous in his descendants, and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him.  Through Abram's faithful obedience to God, the three promises became a three-fold Abrahamic covenant (Gen chapters 15-22).  The concept of a god entering into a covenant relationship with men is absolutely unique to Yahweh's relationship with His people.

**Genesis 12:10-20: Abram and Sarai in Egypt**  
12:10*There was a famine in the country, and Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a time, since the famine in the country was severe.* 11*When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'Look, I know you are a beautiful woman.* 12*When the Egyptians see you they will say, "This is his wife," and they will kill me but leave you alive.* 13*Therefore, please tell them you are my sister, so that they may treat me well because of you and spare my life out of regard for you.'* 14*When Abram arrived in Egypt the Egyptians did indeed see that the woman was very beautiful.* 15*When Pharaoh's officials saw her they sang her praises to Pharaoh and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's household.* 16*And Abram was very well treated because of her and received flocks, oxen, donkeys, men and women slaves, she-donkeys and camels.* 17*But Yahweh inflicted severe plagues on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai.* 18*So Pharaoh summoned Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me?* 19*Why did you not tell me she was your wife?  Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her to be my wife?  Now, here is your wife.  Take her and go!'* 20*And Pharaoh gave his people orders about him' they sent him on his way with his wife and all his possessions.*

**Genesis 12:10a:***There was a famine in the country, and Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a time, since the famine in the country was severe.*

Egypt was the bread-basket of the ancient world.  Even when famine ravaged other areas of the Near East, the rich soil of Egypt, annually renewed by the Nile floods, kept the Nile River Valley fertile and productive.  The Bible mentions several periods of famine in Canaan and the surrounding region ([Gen 26:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v1); [47:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis47.htm#v13); [Rt 1:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ruth/ruth1.htm#v1); [2 Sam 21:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel21.htm#v1); [24:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel24.htm#v13); [1 Kgs 8:37](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1kings/1kings8.htm#v37); [18:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1kings/1kings18.htm#v2); [2 Kgs 6:25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings6.htm#v25); [8:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings8.htm#v1); [25:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings25.htm#v3); etc.)

**Question:** Why did Abram tell Sarai to say she was his sister and not his wife?    
**Answer:** Great and powerful men, or their representatives, abducted beautiful women and added them to their harems ([Genesis 6:1-2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v1)).  If the desired woman was already married, an inconvenient husband was often killed.

**Question:** But what else did Abram's fear indicate?  
**Answer:** Abram's fear of personal suffering also indicated a lack of trust in God to preserve his life and keep the promises made to him.  Abram believed in God, but trusting in God and His promises was something Abraham had to learn through the experiences of his faith journey.

**Question:** Abraham was one of the greatest of the Old Testament saints, and he yet failed to trust God when confronted with the possibility of physical suffering.  What great New Testament saint also experienced such a crisis, not a crisis of faith but a crisis of trusting God's plan for his life and fear of suffering?  
**Answer:** Saint Peter, on the night of Jesus' arrest, failed to trust God and denied Jesus three times.  But after enduring the pain of his disgrace Peter turned back to the Lord and in the final trial of his trust and faith he gave up his life for his Savior, following his Master to the cross and into a blessed eternity, as prophesied by Jesus in [John 21:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john21.htm#v10)  (*Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol*. *1, Euseibus: Church History, XXV.5-8; XXXII.1-2*).

**Question:** What is the lesson for us in the test both these great men experienced?  
**Answer:** Even when we fail, God is always ready to forgive us when we repent and turn back to Him.  Both Abraham and Peter turned back to God and He used both men in a mighty way to bring about the salvation of mankind.  Abraham became the physical father of the children of Israel, the Old Covenant Church and Peter became the spiritual father of the new Israel, the New Covenant Universal/Catholic Church of Jesus the Messiah.

**Question:** Was Abram's cowardliness in claiming Sarai as his wife ever repeated?  See [Gen 20:1-18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v1).  
**Answer:** Yes.  For the same reason that Abram (who was then called "Abraham") was fearful that Pharaoh might take his beautiful wife, he was fearful that King Abimelech of Gerar might kill him to possess Sarai (then called "Sarah).

**Question:** What did Abraham tell Abimelech concerning his relationship to Sarah?  See [Gen 20:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v12).  
**Answer:** He told Abimelech that she was his half sister.

Both the Egyptian Pharaoh and King Abimelech were honorable men.  They returned Abram's wife as soon as they learned the truth.  Some scholars have suggested that Sarai wasn't Abram's sister by blood but a "sister" through a kinship covenant.  Kinship covenants expanded the family through adoption. In Upper Mesopotamia, in the area of Haran from which Abram migrated, a man's family, as a condition of the marriage covenant, might adopt the bride of a son as a legal daughter'making the bride her husband's sister-wife.  Such adoptions gave the woman greater social status and protection in the event that her husband died.  However, Abram/Abraham's statement to Abimelech appears to refute this interpretation.  He told Abimelech that Sarah was his father's daughter by a different wife ([Gen 20:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v12)).  Such intra-family marriages were not prohibited at this time.  Yahweh will not prohibit brother-sister or half-sister marriage until [Leviticus 18:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus18.htm#v9).

**Question:** Why did God intervene to restore Sarai to Abram?  What did God do to Pharaoh?  
**Answer:** God's plan for the preservation of the "promised seed" through Sarai had to be protected ([Gen 17:19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis17.htm#v19)).  God inflicted severe plagues on Pharaoh and his household.

**Question:** What did Abram receive from Pharaoh that increased his wealth?  What gift was received that would eventually bring discord and sorrow?  See [Gen 12:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v16), [20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis16.htm#v20); [13:1-2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v1); [15:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis15.htm#v3)  
**Answer:** Abram became rich in livestock, silver, and gold.  Sarai kept the Egyptian girl who had been given to her as a slave, Hagar ([Gen 16:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis16.htm#v1)).

Note: it is interesting that the list of animals in [Genesis 12:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v16) records that the male donkeys were separated from the she-donkeys.  This is an accurate description of the way such animals would be arranged in a caravan'male donkeys are very aggressive when female donkeys are in estrus; therefore, the males and females had to be separated.  Donkeys were classified as unclean animals but they were also very valuable.  According to the commands of the Sinai Covenant, all firstborn male animals belonged to Yahweh; however, firstborn male donkeys were the only animals that were to be redeemed by offering a lamb or kind in its place ([Ex 13:11-13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus13.htm#v11); [Num 18:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers18.htm#v15)).

**Question:** Why did God allow Abram to profit from his cowardliness?  
**Answer:** God does not approve of profiting from sins; however, the sin was also Pharaoh's for coveting what wasn't his and treating a woman as property.  It was right and just that he should pay a penalty for his offense, but Abram was allowed to profit from this experience only because Abram's and Sarai's release from Egypt was to be duplicated by a greater event in salvation history.

There are three parallel episodes in Genesis concern the peril of a bride of the Patriarchs Abraham and Isaac.  In each case she is the woman who will bear a child that will continue the line of the "promised seed":

Episode #1: Sarah's abduction by Pharaoh ([Gen 12:10-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v10))

Episode #2: Sarah's abduction by King Abimelech of Gerar ([Gen 20:1-18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v1))

Episode #3: Rebekah's thwarted abduction by King Abimelech ([Gen 26:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v1), [7-17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v7))

Each story has 5 elements:

1. A migration ([Gen 12:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v10); [20:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v1); [26:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v1))
2. An abduction or threatened abduction ([Gen 12:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v15); [20:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v2); [26:8-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v8))
3. God's intervention ([Gen 12:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v17); [20:3-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v3); [26:2-5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v2))
4. A deliverance ([Gen 12:19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v19); [20:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v14); [26:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v11))
5. A conclusion ([Gen 12:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v20); [20:15-18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis20.htm#v15); [26:12-14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v12))

These three episodes point to a fourth more significant event in salvation history: the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt.

**Question:** Compare and contrast the abduction of Abram's bride and her rescue from Pharaoh's harem and Israel's enslavement in Egypt and Israel's rescue.  
**Answer:** Abram and Sarai's experience in escaping Egypt in [Genesis 12:17-13:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v17) parallels Israel's experience in escaping Egypt in [Exodus 11:1-12:38](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus11.htm#v1).  One Pharaoh possessed Abram/Abraham's bride Sarai/Sarah, and another Pharaoh possessed God's Bride Israel, who would one day bring forth the promised Redeemer-Messiah.

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| **Abraham and Sarah's Sojourn in and Redemption from Egypt**  ([Gen 12:10-13:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v10)) | **Israel's Sojourn in and Redemption from Egypt**  ([Gen 42:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis42.htm#v5); [Exodus 1:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus1.htm#v11), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus1.htm#v16); [11:1-12:38](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus11.htm#v1)) |
| [Gen 12:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v10): *There was a famine in the country, and Abram went down to Egypt* | [Gen 42:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis42.htm#v5): *Thus the sons of Israel were among the other people who came to get supplies, there being famine in Canaan* |
| Gen 12:12: *they will kill me but leave you alive* | [Ex 1:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus1.htm#v16): *If it is a boy, kill him; if a girl, let her live* |
| [Gen 12:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v15): *the woman was taken into Pharaoh's household* | [Ex 1:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus1.htm#v11): *they put taskmasters over the Israelites to wear them down by forced labor* |
| [Gen 12:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v17): *Yahweh inflicted severe plagues on Pharaoh and his household* | [Ex 11:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus11.htm#v1): *Yahweh then said to Moses, 'I shall inflict one more plague on Pharaoh and Egypt* |
| [Gen 12:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v18): *Pharaoh summoned Abram and said* | [Ex 12:31a](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v31): *Pharaoh summoned Moses and said* |
| [Gen 12:19b](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v19): *Take her and go!* | [Ex 12:32](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v32): *And take your flocks and herds as you have asked, and go!* |
| [Gen 12:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis12.htm#v20): *Pharaoh gave his people orders about him; they send him on his way with his wife and all his possessions* | [Ex 12:33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v33): *The Egyptians urged the people on and hurried them out of the country...* |
| [Gen 13:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v1): *From Egypt Abram returned to the Negeb with his wife and all he possessed* | [Ex 12:37](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v37): *The Israelites left Rameses for Succoth [..].* |
| [Gen 13:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v1): *and Lot with him* | [Ex 12:38](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v38): *A mixed crowd of people went with them* |
| [Gen 13:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis13.htm#v2): *Abram was very rich with livestock, silver, and gold* | [Ex 12:35](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v35), [38](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm#v38): *The Israelites did as Moses had told them and asked the Egyptians for silver and golden jewelry and clothing.   [..]. ... and flocks and herds, quantities of livestock.* |
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Unlike the condemnation of the Canaanites, Sacred Scripture does not condemn the Egyptians as a wicked people.  A man or woman who was a third generation descendant of an Egyptian could be admitted to the Sinai Covenant (Dt 23:7-8/ 8-9; Is 19:25).

Chapter 13: Abram and Lot

*Let your eyes be fixed ahead, your gaze be straight before you.  Let the path you tread be level and all your ways be firm.  Turn neither to right nor to left, keep your foot clear of evil.*  
Proverbs 4:25-27

The events of the narrative from Genesis 13:1-18 can be arranged in a chiastic pattern, identifying the focus of the narrative on Abram's offer of the land to Lot versus God's offer of the land to Abram:

A. Abram praying at God's altar at Bethel with Lot (13:3-7)   
      B. Abram's generous offer of the land to Lot (13:8-9)  
             C. Lot chooses the land to the east  
      B. God's generous offer of the land to Abram (13:14-17)  
<>A. Abram praying at God's altar at Hebron alone (13:18)

**Please read Genesis 13:1-9: Abraham's Relationship with Lot**  
13:1*From Egypt Abram returned to the Negeb with his wife and all he possessed, and Lot with him.* 2*Abram was very rich in livestock, silver and gold.* 3*By stages he went from the Negeb to Bethel, where he had first pitched his tent, between Bethel and Ai,* 4*at the place where he had formerly erected the altar.  There Abram invoked the name of Yahweh.* 5*Lot, who was travelling with Abram, had flocks and cattle of his own, and tents too.* 6*The land was not sufficient to accommodate them both at once, for they had too many possessions to be able to live together.* 7*Dispute broke out between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and those of Lot.  (The Canaanites and Perizzites were living in the country at the time.)* 8*Accordingly Abram said to Lot, 'We do not want discord between us or between my herdsmen and yours, for we are insmen [brothers].* 9*Is not the whole land open before you?  Go in the opposite direction to me: if you take the left, I will go right; if you take the right, I will go left.'* Brackets indicated literal translation.

**Question:** Why does the inspired writer include the detail that when Abram returned to Canaan he traveled to the Negeb and then to Bethel (Gen 13:3)?  See Gen 12:8-9 and 13:3-4.  
**Answer:** Abram returned from Egypt to Canaan and traveled from the south (*negeb*) to the north, reaching Bethel where he had built an altar to Yahweh, retracing in reverse his second and third journeys in Genesis 12:8-9.

**Question:** What did Abram do at Bethel that repeated what he did before leaving for Egypt?  Where is this action repeated earlier in Genesis and to whom does the statement connect Abram in salvation history? Compare Gen 4:26, 12:8 and 13:4.  
**Answer:** In Genesis 4:26 Scripture records that it was in the time of Seth and his son Enosh that men first began to "invoke the name of Yahweh" in worship'returning to the destiny for which man had been created in Eden'to fellowship with God as liturgical beings.  The next time Scripture mentions the concept of invoking the name of Yahweh in the liturgy of worship is in Genesis 12:8 when Abram built an altar and called upon God at Bethel, an action which was repeated in 13:4.

Abram, like Seth, the son of Adam, was chosen by God to father the line of the "promised seed" through his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob/Israel.  The inspired writer has not only connected Abraham to Noah in the sense of a "new beginning" but also to Seth, in whom God's plan for man's redemption moved forward in a new beginning after the death of Abel and the banishment of Cain.  Abram's act of worship in 13:4 can also be interpreted as a re-consecration of the holy land God promised him after his return from the unholy ground of Egypt.

**Genesis 13:7-9:** 7*Dispute broke out between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and those of Lot.  (The Canaanites and Perizzites were living in the country at the time.)* 8*Accordingly Abram said to Lot, 'We do not want discord between us or between my herdsmen and yours, for we are insmen [brothers].* 9*Is not the whole land open before you?  Go in the opposite direction to me: if you take the left, I will go right; if you take the right, I will go left.'* Brackets indicated literal translation.

The word translated "kinsmen" is literally "brothers" in the Hebrew text.  In Hebrew a "brother" is a sibling, a half-sibling, a step-sibling, anyone related by blood, or by adoption, or by nationality and ethnicity, or by covenant.  The term is used in the same Hebrew context in the New Testament; hence, Mark 3:31 mentions Jesus' brothers and sisters, meaning kinsmen who are cousins and/or  step-siblings (see CCC 500), and in Acts 2:29 St. Peter calls the crowd of Jews "brothers" (*Interlinear Bible,* page 29).  Also see Genesis 14:14 where the word "brother" is also used for Abram's relationship to Lot.

**Question:** What was the dispute that broke out between Abram and his nephew Lot?  
**Answer:** Both men had large herds of animals.  Their herdsmen were probably fighting over water and grazing rights.

**Question:** What was Abram's solution to the problem and what was Lot's decision?  
**Answer:** Abram told Lot that in order to avoid violence among their herdsmen they should separate.  Abram generously allowed Lot to choose his own territory.

**Question:** What is ironic about Abram's offer?  
**Answer:** Abram was offering Lot the inheritance God promised him in the land of Canaan if Lot chose to go to the west.

**Genesis 13:10-18: Lot Separates from Abram**  
13:10*Looking round, Lot saw all the Jordan plain, irrigated everywhere'this was before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah'like the garden of Yahweh or the land of Egypt, as far as Zoar.* 11*So Lot chose all the Jordan plain for himself and moved off eastwards.* 12*Thus they parted company: Abram settled in the land of Canaan; Lot settled among the cities of the plain, pitching his tents on the outskirts of Sodom.* 13*Now the people of Sodom were vicious and great sinners against Yahweh.* 14*Yahweh said to Abram after Lot had parted company from him, 'Look all round from where you are, to north and south, to east and west,* 15*for all the land within sight I shall give to you and your descendants for ever.* 16*I shall make your descendants like the dust on the ground; when people succeed in counting the specks of dust on the ground, then they will be able to count your descendants too!* 17*On your feet!  Travel the length and breadth of the country, for I mean to give it to you.'* 18*So Abram moved his tent and went to settle at the Oak of Mamre, at Hebron, and there he built an altar to Yahweh.*

**Genesis 13:10-11:** 13:10*Looking round, Lot saw all the Jordan plain, irrigated everywhere'this was before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah'like the garden of Yahweh or the land of Egypt, as far as Zoar.* 11*So Lot chose all the Jordan plain for himself and moved off eastwards.* The "Zoar" mentioned here is probably not the city of Zoar (also called Bela) near Sodom (Gen 14:3) but may be Zoan, and important city located in the fertile Delta of Egypt (known as Avaris), since the valley is being compared to the lushness of the Egyptian Delta.  If the text is referring to the city of Zoar that was located near Sodom, it will be the city Lot flees to after Sodom is destroyed (Gen 19:22-23).

If Abram and Lot were standing on the highest elevation near Bethel, which is 2,886 feet above sea level or 880 meters (according to Waltke, page 223),  Lot would have had a good view of the Jordan River Valley to the southeast and the various steams that irrigated the land like the Nile irrigated the lush Delta of Northern Egypt.  Unlike the Egyptian Delta and the Jordan River Valley, the central ridge where Bethel and Hebron were located was watered only by seasonal rains and the providence of God (Dt 11:10-12).([1](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "end1))

**Question:** What was Lot's choice and what did his choice suggest?  
**Answer:** For a chieftain whose wealth was in livestock, the valley was a better choice.

Lot decided to move to the east to occupy the fertile plain of the Jordan River Valley which extended south to within the borders of the wealthy city of Sodom.

**Genesis 13:12-13:** 12*Thus they parted company: Abram settled in the land of Canaan; Lot settled among the cities of the plain, pitching his tents on the outskirts of Sodom.* 13*Now the people of Sodom were vicious and great sinners against Yahweh.*

**Question:** How does Scripture characterize the people of Sodom?  
**Answer:** Vicious sinners who rejected the Noahide Covenant.  To sin against God is to willfully fail to keep His commandments.

**Question:** What advice does the Psalmist give concerning associating with sinners in Psalm 1:1-6 and 26:1-12?  What is the Catechism's definition of sin?  See CCC 1849-50.  
**Answer:** The Catechism defines sin as any act that *is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods.  [..]* and as *an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law* (CCC 1849).   According to the sound teaching of the Catechism, sin damages the human psyche in that s*in sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it* (CCC 1850)*.* To lead a sinless life consecrated to Yahweh, it is best to avoid all forms of sin.

Sodom was the Las Vegas of the ancient Near East.  Scripture notes that Sodom was a city known for its wealth, vicious sinfulness (Gen 13:13; 18:20-21; 19:5 ), and the sexual immorality of her citizens who lacked a healthy fear of God's sovereignty and authority over the actions of mankind.  The name of the city came to symbolize perverted sexual acts (Is 3:9; Lam 4:6: Ez 16:49-50; 2 Pt 2:6-7; Jude verse 7; Rev 11:8) prohibited by God (Gen 19:5; Lev 18:22; 20:13, 23; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 6:18-20; 1 Tim 1:9-11).  Such perversions persisted in Canaan even into the era of the Judges of Israel (Jdgs 19:22).  Lot's choice of Sodom as a dwelling place will become a negative example, illustrating that prolonged exposure to sin can lead to disaster.

**Question:** What is ironic concerning Lot's comparison of the Jordan Plain near Sodom with the "garden of God" in Genesis 13:10?  What is the warning for us?

**Answer:** Lot thought he was viewing paradise, but in reality the beauty of the view hid the corruption of Sodom and the entrance to the gates of destruction.  The devil is both clever and subtle (Gen 3:1), hiding the ugly sin within a tempting package.

**Question:** What can happen when the righteous come in close contact with sin?  Hint: there are three possibilities.  
**Answer:** If the righteous man or woman is intent on bringing the sinner to salvation through his good example and love of God, a life may be saved'eternally.  However, when living in the midst of sin, the righteous may be drawn away from God and into sin, or the sin may reach out and harm the innocent believer and his family.

**Question:** Scripture records that Lot "moved off eastwards" (Gen 13:11).Since the fall of man what had moving to the East come to symbolize?  What is the significance of Lot moving to the east?  See Genesis 3:24; 4:16; 11:2; 19:36-38; Num 21:21-22; 22:1-3.  
**Answer:** To move to the East symbolizes moving away from God.  God was with Abraham, but the "seed of the serpent" (Gen 3:15) lived in Sodom.  Lot's decision will have dire consequences for him and his descendants.  Lot's descendants, the Ammonites and Moabites, will live on the borders of the Promised Land, but they will never possess it.

Later, when the desert Tabernacle and the Temple were built, God instructed the children of Israel that the entrance to His Sanctuary was to face to the east (Ex 27:13-16; 38:13-15; Num 3:38).  However, the faithful moved from the east to the west when entering the Sanctuary and the Ark of the Covenant was in the western most part of the Tabernacle/ Temple.  Likewise, Scripture records that Jesus will come from the East when He returns (Acts 1:9-12), but He will be moving to the West when He enters Jerusalem.  In Matthew 24:26-27, speaking of His coming in judgment, Jesus said: *If, then, they say to you, "Look, he is in the desert," do not go there; "Look, he is in some hiding place," do not believe it; because the coming of the Son of man will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing far into the west.*  See the plan of the desert Tabernacle in Charts/ Old Testament/ Pentateuch.

At this time the region at the southern end of the Jordan River valley was a fertile area called the Valley of Siddim; the Dead Sea did not exist at this time.  This passage describes the region at this time as a veritable Eden (Gen 13:10), but Scripture also mentions that it was a region that contained naturally occurring pools of bitumen or asphalt (Gen 14:10). This reference may be a link to the wicked builders of the city and the tower in chapter 11 where bitumen was also mentioned (Gen 11:3).([2](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "end2))

**Genesis 13:14-15:** 13:14*Yahweh said to Abram after Lot had parted company from him, 'Look all round from where you are, to north and south, to east and west,* 15*for all the land within sight I shall give to you and your descendants for ever.* First Abram was separated from the land of his birth, now Abram is separated from his only kinsman.  In each loss God consoled Abram with His blessing (12:1-3; 13: 14-16).  Standing on the heights at Bethel, Abram is invited, by the one who owns the land (the Lord) to legally take possession of the land he sees in all directions.

**Question:** When will Yahweh invite another major player in salvation history to take visual possession of the Promised Land? See Deuteronomy 34:1-4.  
**Answer:** Yahweh will also invite Moses to take visual possession of the Promised Land from the heights of Mt. Nebo before the conquest of Canaan.

**Question:** When will Satan attempt to usurp God's plan for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth with a similar invitation to symbolically take possession of the land, not as Lord but as Satan's vassal?  See Mt 4:8-9  
**Answer:** In the third temptation of Jesus, Satan took Him to a high mountain and visually presented to Him all the kingdoms of the world'it was an invitation Jesus refused.  Jesus came to destroy the power of Satan and his hold over the earth (1 Jn 3:8)

**Question:** What sign did God give to Abram in Genesis 13:15 that he will have many descendants?  
**Answer:** The dirt that Abram walks upon in the land God promised to him is the sign of the numbers of descendants God will him'with every speck of dirt representing a future descendant.

This is an example of hyperbole in Scripture'using a symbolic exaggeration to make a point.  Abram's descendants are spiritual as well as physical.  St. Paul wrote that everyone who accepts Christ as Lord is a spiritual descendant of Abraham (Rom 9:7; Gal 3:29).  When one considers the multitudes of people of every age: past, present, and future who have or will come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior as well as those who are from Abraham's physical seed, Abraham's descendants are numerous indeed.

The dirt Abram walked upon was a "sign."  In Scripture "signs" are always something visual/material in nature that the faithful can look to and be reminded of God's promises.  Our seven Sacraments are all given to us with a visual "sign" representing their spiritual effect i.e., Baptism = water; visible sign of the bread and wine of the Eucharist.; etc.

**Genesis 13:17:** *On your feet!  Travel the length and breadth of the country, for I mean to give it to you.'*

After the visual "acquisition" of the land, Yahweh commanded Abram to make a second spiritual conquest by walking the land God had promised him.  It was the custom of ancient rulers to assert their sovereignty over their land by symbolically tracing out its boundaries, this is the intent in God's command to travel the length and breadth of the country.([3](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "end3))

**Question:** In a manner similar to Abram's spiritual conquest of the land, how will Jesus of Nazareth carry out His spiritual conquest of the Holy Land when, as the promised Redeemer-Messiah, He comes to restore Israel and to establish His sovereignty over Israel and the Kingdom of Heaven on earth?  
**Answer:** He will establish His authority over the land by walking the length and breathe of the Holy Land during His three year ministry, preaching the Kingdom of God from the boarder with Syria in the North in His visit to Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13; Mk 8:27; Lk 9:18), to His ministry in the Galilee (Mt 4:12; 21:11; Mk 1:14), to His journey to the boarder on the west near Sidon (Mt 15:21; Mk 7:24), to the northeastern border in his visit to the territory of the Gadarenes (Mt 8:28; Mt 5:1; Lk 8:26) to His three journeys to Jerusalem in the center and to Jericho on the southeastern border of the Holy Land (Mt 20:29; Mk 10:46; Lk 10:30).

**Genesis 13:18:** *So Abram moved his tent and went to settle at the Oak of Mamre, at Hebron, and there he built an altar to Yahweh.*

After completing his spiritual conquest, Abram settled at Hebron near the Oak of Mamre.  The name "Hebron" in Hebrew means "confederacy," suggesting that several different groups who lived in the area were united in an alliance.  According to Scripture the original name of Hebron was *Kiriath-Abra,* which means "city of four."  The clans of three men: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, formed a covenant with Abram at Hebron (Gen 14:13, 24; 23:2-4).  These faithful allies will help Abram to recover Lot and his family when they are taken captive by the Mesopotamian army (Gen 14:24).

In the Hebrew text of Genesis 13:18, the word for "oak," in the place-name "Oak of Mamre" is plural (sometimes translated as *terebinths*) as it is in Gen 14:13 and 18:1; it was singular in 12:6 in reference to the Oak at Shechem (*Brown-Driver-Briggs,* page 577).   Mamre is both a place name and a personal name.  Mamre was an Amorite ally of Abram who, like Abram's other covenant "brothers" was blessed by God in fulfillment of the promise that Abram was to be a blessing to those who blessed him (Gen 12:3; 14:13, 24).  It is a promise that will be repeated to those who bless Jacob and bless the children of Israel (Gen 27:29; Num 24:9). ([4](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "end4))

Chapter 14: The War between the Kings of Mesopotamia   
and the Kings of Southern Canaan

*Why this uproar among the nations, this impotent muttering of the peoples?  Kings of the earth take up position, princes plot ...* Psalm 2:1-2a

The narrative in Genesis 14:1-16 is presented in an alternating pattern, identifying the focus of the narrative on God's preservation of Abram in the course of perilous human events in fulfillment of the promise to bless those who bless Abram and to punish those who are a threat to Abram and his family (Gen 12:3):

A. The motive for the Mesopotamian attack: the rebellion of the Canaanite cities

            B. The Mesopotamian kings conquer rebellious southern kings

                         C. They plunder the southern cities

                                      D. Lot is captured

A. The motive for Abram's attack: the Mesopotamians have captured his nephew Lot

            B. Abram and his allies conquer the retreating Mesopotamian army

                         C. They plunder the booty of the Mesopotamians took from Canaan

                                      D. Lot is returned

**Please read Genesis 14: 1-12: The War Begins**  
14:1*When Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch King of Ellasar, Chedor-Laomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of the Goiim,* 2*made war on 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*all the latter joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (now the Salt Sea).* 4*For twelve years they had been under the yoke of Chedor-Laomer, but in the thirteenth year they revolted.* 5*In the fourteenth year Chedor-Laomer arrived and the kings who had allied themselves with him.  They defeated the Rephaim at Ashteroth-Carnaim, the Zuzim at Ham, the Emim in the Plain of Kiriathaim,* 6*the Horites in the mountainous district of Seir near El-Paran, which is on the edge of the desert.* 7*Wheeling around, they came to the Spring of Judgment (that is Kadesh); they conquered all the territory of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-Tamar.* 8*Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and engaged them in the Valley of Siddim:* 9*Chedor-Laomer king of Elam, Tidal king of the Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar: four kings against five.* 10*Now there were many bitumen wells in the Valley of Siddim, and in their flight the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into them, while the rest fled into the hills.*

The inspired writer goes to great lengths to present this part of the narrative as the first historical account of international warfare.

**Question:** What kinds of historical details are included in the narrative?  
**Answer:** The inspired writer provided the names of the principal individuals involved, the historical background including the precise number of years before the conflict began, and he provided a series of place names which included the ancient names as well as the names the various places that were known at the time the account was written.

It is interesting that the narrator listed the opposing forces in alphabetical order, followed by the names of the peoples who were in the path of Chedor-Laomer and his allies' armies as they swept south across the Transjordan and into southern Canaan to engage the rebellious Kings of Southern Canaan.  This means that King Chedor-Laomer [Kedorlaomer] king of Elam, who was clearly the dominant Mesopotamian king (Gen 14:4, 9, 17), was not mentioned first.  Instead Amraphel, King of Shinar, is listed first in verse 1, not because he is the dominant king, but because the inspired writer had his reasons for naming each set of kings alphabetically.  In the second list naming the kings of southern Canaan, the dominant king, Bera of Sodom was first in the list, but only because his name came first alphabetically.  The Hebrew word *melech,* "king" appears 28 times in chapter 14, emphasizing the significance of Abram's victory.

**Kings listed in the narrative in Genesis 14:1-2:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Kings of Mesopotamia** | **Kings of Southern Canaan** |
| Amraphel king of Shinar | Bera king of Sodom |
| Arioch king of Ellasar | Birsha king of Gomorrah |
| Chedor-Laomer [Kedorlaomer] king of Elam | Shinab king of Admah |
| Tidal king of the Goiim | Shemeber king of Zeboiim |
|  | The king of Bela (that is Zoar) |

Note the alphabetical listing of all the king's names.

* The name of the Elamite king, Chedor-Laomer is consistent with names found in documents associated with Elam, a kingdom in what is today southwestern Iran.  The prefix of his name appears to be from the Elamite word *kudur,* "servant,"a common component of Elamite theophoric names (names associated with the name of a god or goddess.  The second element of his name may be related to the name of the goddess *Lagamar.* If this is the case, his name means "servant of the goddess Lagamar(Waltke, page 228; *History of the Ancient Near East,* page 33, 63-64).
* Tidal was a Hittite royal name.  The Hittites migrated from the area around the Black and Caspian Seas into Asia Minor circa 2000 BC; these people occupied lands on the fringes of Mesopotamian civilization.
* The name Arioch has been found among the ancient documents known as the Mari Tablets.  It was the name of a son of King Zimrilim of Mari who ruled circa 1750 BC.([5](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "end5))
* The name of the king of Sodom means "to triumph."  He was probably the leader of the rebellion.
* Notice the addition of the more recent place name provided for Bela'Zoar.  This city was not considered important enough to list the name of its king.

None of these kings have been positively identified in other ancient documents, but scholars have concluded that their names reflect names that are common to the whole Mesopotamian River Valley from the Persian Gulf to the Zargos Mountains and the Black Sea (Waltke, page 228).  However, two place names are easily identified both from biblical and non-biblical sources: Elam is listed in the Table of Nations in Genesis chapter 10 as the firstborn son of Shem (Gen 10:22) whose descendants established the Kingdom of Elam (part of modern Iran), and Shinar (part of modern Iraq), mentioned in the Table of Nations as the land where Nimrod founded his kingdom and the city of Babel/Babylon (Gen 10:10).

**Place names listed in the narrative:**

Kingdoms of Mesopotamia:

1. Shinar: In central Mesopotamia (Iraq), Shinar was the land where Nimrod built his cities (including Babylon), which are listed in the table of nations in Genesis 10:8-10.
2. Ellasar: Possibly the city-state Ilansura mentioned in the Mari tablets and located between Carchemish and Haran (on Syrian-Turkish border).  However, St. Jerome identified this as an ancient name for Pontus on the Black Sea.
3. Elam: Ancient territory to the E and NE of the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates in the Zagros Mountains (modern Iran).  Listed as descendants of Shem in Genesis 10:22, Elam was governed by feudal lords until one dynastic family gained dominance.  In 1950 BC Elam expanded its territory by conquering most of Mesopotamia including Babylon (in Shinar), which it dominated until the 12th century BC.  At this point in the history of Mesopotamia (Abraham's time), Elam was the dominant Mesopotamian power.  Elam is called the "land of archers" in Is 22:6 and Jer 49:35.
4. Goiim (Goyim): Literally in Hebrew = "nations;" therefore, "king of Goiim" means "king of nations."  Jews refer to all Gentiles as the Goy.  This is probably a reference to tribal people like the Hittites who lived on the fringes of the Mesopotamian cultures, in Asia Minor (Turkey) or along the Black and Caspian Seas.

City-states of the kings of the Siddim Valley in southern Canaan:

The valley occupied the depression that is now filled by the Dead Sea.  The names of the kings from these cities were also listed in alphabetical order in Genesis 14:2

* Sodom
* Gomorrah
* Admah
* Zeboiim
* Zoar: Name means "trifling."  The city is so small that its king isn't named.

The question remains, why did the inspired writer choose the alphabetical listing of the two sets of kings instead of naming them according to their rank, which is the usual custom?  Is the reason because he wants the reader to also look for a pattern in the names of the peoples the Mesopotamians engaged as their armies moved south?  The pattern is the geographic progression from north to south of the peoples and places engaged by the King of Elam and his allies.  The order of the geographical progression of the conquest can be traced through the place-names:

1. Rephamim (Rephaites) at Ashterroth-Carnaim: This is an area in the northernmost part of the Transjordan (see Gen 15:20; Dt 3:13).  The Ammonites called them Zamzummites (Dt 2:20).  They were evidently very tall people.  Joshua's soldiers thought they were giants (Josh 12:4).  Evidence of their culture has been found at the archaeological of Tell Ashtar.  Ashteroth-Carnaim [Ashtaroth- Karnaim] is Ashtaroth near Karnaim, the capital of Bashan king of Og (Num 21:33, Josh 9:10).  The location of this ancient capital has not been discovered.
2. Zuzim at Ham: Ancient pre-Israelite people who inhabited the land on the east side of the Jordan north in what later came to be called the land of Moab. The Ammonites called them Zamzummites and identified them as being related to/neighbors to the Rephamim (Dt 2:20). Tell Ham is about 19 miles (30km) east of Beth-Shean.
3. Emim/ Emites in the Plain of Kiriathaim: The name given to the people who first inhabited the land of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River at the north end of the Dead Sea region (Dt 2:10 f).  They too are described as physically powerful people.  Their name means "terrors" (Dt 2:10-11).
4. Horites of Seir near El-Paran (on the edge of the desert): El-Paran is a general name for the eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula. These people were also known as the Hivites or Hurrians.  In the O.T. the Hurrians were the original inhabitants of the land near Mt. Seir, the hill country southeast of the Dead Sea.  The Horites are known from ancient Near Eastern documents from the 2nd millennium BC.  They occupied what later became the land of the Edomites, the descendants of Abraham's grandson Esau, the elder brother of Jacob.  This territory was located southwest of the Dead Sea (Gen 36:20, 30; Dt 2:12, 22).
5. Spring of Judgment (at Kadesh): *wheeling around they came to the Spring of Judgment:* This Kadesh is not to be confused with the Kadesh that was in what is present day Syria.  The Kadesh in Genesis 14:7, also called in Scripture Kadesh-Barnea to differentiate it from the other Kadesh, was an oasis in the SW corner of the Negeb near the Sinai Peninsula. Numbers 13:26 locates this place near the desert of Paran.  The mention of the "spring of judgment" probably refers to the experience of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea on the journey to the Promised Land in Num 13-14).  This oasis was on stopping point of the major trade routes out of Egypt and the Arabian Desert.
6. Amalekites: People of the Negeb (Num 13:29) in the desert between Sinai and Canaan (1 Sam 15:7).
7. Amorites of Hazazon-Tamar: Descendants of Ham and Canaan.  They occupied an area near the end of the Dead Sea on the west.
8. Sodom: Possibly the ruins of a large city discovered at Bab-edh-Dra, destroyed by fire circa 2000-1900 BC, and located on the spit of land that juts out into the Dead Sea on the eastern side.
9. Gomorrah: Possibly the ruins of a large city at the archaeological site called Numera that was destroyed by fire circa 2000-1900BC.  The site is located at the southern tip of the present Dead Sea.  The other cities of the plain are probably submerged under the waters of the Dead Sea.
10. Damascus: Important commercial city on the major trade routes, located in modern Syria where Abram caught up with the retreating foreign invaders.

Genesis 14:3 suggests that the area now covered by the Dead Sea was once a valley.  The Great Rift runs directly through the region of the Dead Sea and the geologic data indicates that this area has always been subject to numerous, and sometimes extremely violent, earthquakes.  The mention of the asphalt seeps is an accurate detail.

**Question:** What appears to be the reason for the war in Genesis 14:1-4?  
**Answer:** The Mesopotamia king of Elam, Chedor-Laomer, controlled the city-states of the Siddim Valley in southern Canaan as vassal territories for 12 years.  Vassal states were required to pay tribute, to provide slaves, grain, and animals to their overlords and to come to the aid of the overlord in times of war.  In the 13th year after Elam had asserted its dominance over the region, four of the southern Canaanite cities formed an alliance and revolted, probably by refusing to pay their allotted tribute.  Chedor-Laomer decided he could not accept such a challenge to his sovereignty, and calling upon his other vassal states and allies to assist him in subduing his rebellious vassal cities in southern Canaan, he went to war.

The king of Elam and his allies' armies' marched southward, running rampage over the Transjordan (land to the east side of the Jordan River).  The progress of his army is detailed in the naming of the different peoples caught up in the war.  The armies of the Mesopotamians continued to push south until they suddenly turned west near El-Paran (Gen 14:7), by-passing the Siddim Valley and attaching Kadesh, located on the edge of the Negeb on the border of lands controlled by Egypt. After reaching this objective, the Mesopotamians turned southeast again and proceeded to the Valley of Siddim where the five rebel kings engaged the northern army in a major battle (Gen 14:8-10).

Some scholars have suggested that this part of the narrative is an invention meant to elevate Abram's importance.  To them it seems unreasonable that such a Mesopotamian alliance would be formed for such a far-reaching expedition to punish a few relatively unimportant Canaanite cities.  But do not miss the importance of the details provided in this part of the narrative.  Why are the kings listed alphabetically instead in order of importance?  If the kings are listed according to a pattern, is the geographical list also in an intentional pattern?  What does the inspired writer want us to glean from this detailed information?

**Question:** Look at the list of peoples caught up in the invasion.  It is a list that traces the route of the Mesopotamian armies. Look carefully at the route of the Mesopotamians and locate where the Mesopotamians made a significant turn.  What does their route suggest?  Consult a map of the region and identify the major trade routes out of Egypt, called the "King's Highway and the "Way of the Sea" and the major trade route out of the Arabian Peninsula.     
**Answer:** The armies followed the major trade route known as "The King's Highway," south from Mesopotamia into the Transjordan and then turning west near El-Paran, on the edge of the desert, by-passing the Valley of Siddim which was supposed to be their objective, and finally coming to Kadesh-Barnea, an oasis in the SW corner of the Negeb near the Sinai Peninsula. Almost as an after thought, the Mesopotamians turned back to the east and destroyed the armies of the rebel cities.  Chedor-Laomer's goal wasn't just to punish a few rebellious vassal city-states; his goal was also to control the major trade routes out of Egypt and the Arabian Desert.

Chedor-Laomer's invasion traveled southward along the major trade route which is called the "King's Highway."  Then his forces strategically turned westward to take control of Kadesh-Barnea, which was one of the branching off points of the "King's Highway, one road leading to Egypt and a branch leading to Ezion-Geber, a trading center on the Gulf of Aqaba where the "King's Highway" from Egypt met with the major trade route coming north out of the Arabia Peninsula.  Chedor-Laomer's armies also had an impact on Egypt's second major trade route, the "Way of the Sea," which originated in Heliopolis, Egypt, traveling up the Mediterranean coast with one branch extending further along the coast into Phoenicia and Asia Minor while a second branch went thought Raphia on the coast, turning inland to the east and passing through Ekron and Jerusalem, then across the Jordan River to Rabbah (probably Zuzim at Ham which was just north of Moab just as Rabbah is north of Moab) to join the "King's Highway" which continued north through Damascus, the major trade center mentioned in the Mesopotamian retreat (Gen 14:15).  The King's Highway is mentioned in Numbers 20:17-21.

Like Homer's story of King Agamemnon who formed a Greek alliance of Mycenaean Greek city-states to destroy Troy in Asia Minor, using the abduction of Helen as an excuse to defeat a major rival city, and Hitler just prior to WWII invading Poland with the pretext of protecting Germans citizens, Chedor-Laomer may have used the rebellion of the city-states of southern Canaan as an excuse to extend his power base in an attempt to control the wealth of the major trade routes coming out of Egypt and Arabia.([6](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "end6))

**Question:** Where did the four Mesopotamian kings meet the five Canaanite kings?  What was the outcome of the battle?  
**Answer:** The five Canaanite kings came out the meet the four Mesopotamian kings at the Valley of Siddim.  A battle was fought, the Canaanites were defeated, and their cities were plundered.  In their retreat from the battlefield the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (or their forces) fell into pools of bitumen in the valley (Gen 14:10).  In the sacking of Sodom, Lot and his family were caught up in the violence and were taken by the victorious armies of Chedor-Laomer back to Mesopotamia by way of Damascus.

At this point in the narrative, the kings of Mesopotamia have extended their political power all the way to the Egyptian border, probably leaving troops behind to maintain control at politically strategic sites.

**Please read Genesis 14:13-16: Abram's War against the Mesopotamian Alliance**  
14:13*A survivor came to tell Abram; and Aner the Hebrew, who was living at the Oak of the Amorite Mamre, the brother of Eshcol; these were allies [in covenant with] of Abram.* 14 *When Abram heard that his kinsman [brother] had been taken captive, he mustered his retainers born in his own household, numbering three hundred and eighteen, and gave chase as far as Dan.* 15 *He and his retainers deployed against them under cover of dark, defeated them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.* 16 *He recaptured all the goods as well as his kinsman Lot and his possessions, together with the women and people.* [The brackets indicate the literal Hebrew words].

The literal translation of 14:13 is that these men "were in covenant with Abram" (*Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-English,* page 31).

**Question:** Who were the men who had a covenant treaty with Abram?  What was their ethnicity?  Which sons of Noah are the fathers of their people?

**Answer:** Aner the Hebrew, Mamre the Amorite, and his brother Eshcol.  Aner is a descendant of Shem through Eber/Heber, and Mamre and his brother Eshcol are Amorites who are the descendants of Ham through Canaan.

These three loyal men honored their covenant of brotherhood with Abram and followed their friend into battle (Gen 14:24).  Outnumbered by a much greater and more experienced fighting force, they were loyalty to Abram and their covenant oath (Gen 14:19-20).  In their loyalty to Abram they stand in contrast to Lot (mentioned in the next verse) who left his uncle to make his own way.  In this case kinship by covenant became stronger than kinship by blood.

**Question:** When was the reward for their loyalty to Abram promised by God?  
**Answer:** In Genesis 12:3 when Yahweh promised Abram: *I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you...*

**Genesis 14:14:***When Abram heard that his kinsman [brother] had been taken captive, he mustered his retainers born in his own household, numbering three hundred and eighteen, and gave chase as far as Dan.*

The word translated "kinsman" is literally "brother" in Hebrew (as it was also in Gen 13:8) in describing Abram's relationship with Lot.  The phrase: "his retainers born in his own household" is more literally translated "born of his household his trained? /dedicated men" (*Interlinear Bible,* page 31).

**Question:** Why did Abram only choose servants/slaves who were born in his household?

**Answer:** Slaves who were born in his household were more likely to remain loyal.

**Question:** The servants/slaves that Abram selected who were born in his household numbered 318'a very small force to attack the seasoned troops of the Mesopotamian armies.  What is the significance of the number 318?  
**Answer:** 3 + 1 + 8 adds up to 12, the symbolic number of perfect order of government.  In other words, he had just the perfect number of men to recover Lot.

It should be noted that even though Abram's army was outnumbered, for a landless chieftain he was still able to muster an impressive number of fighting men from his household.

**Question:** What happened at Dan?  
**Answer:** Abram's forces surprised the enemy in a night attack, defeated them, and chased them nearly to Damascus.

The place-name "Dan" is a later addition.  Tell Dan lies at the foot of Mt. Hermon on the border with Syria (Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20).  After the conquest and the division of the Promised Land among the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Dan possessed the tribal lands in the northern most part of the Holy Land.  The saying "from Dan to Beersheba" will come to mean from one end of the Promised Land (north) to the other (south).  It is interesting that God is not mentioned once in this part of the narrative concerning the first biblical description of nations at war.

**Please read Genesis 14:17-24: Melchizedek and the King of Sodom**  
14:17*When Abram returned from defeating Chedor-Laomer and the kings who had been on his side, the king of Sodom came to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the Valley of the King).* 18*Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High.* 19*He pronounced this blessing: 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.  And blessed be God Most High for putting your enemies into your clutches.'* 20*And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.* 21*The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself.'* 22*But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, 'I swear by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth:* 23*not one thread, not one sandal strap, will I take of what is yours, for you to be able to say, "I made Abram rich,"* 24*For myself, nothing'except what the troops have used up, and the share due to the men who came with me, Eschol, Aner and Mamre; let them take their share.'*

**Genesis 14:17:** 14:17*When Abram returned from defeating Chedor-Laomer and the kings who had been on his side, the king of Sodom came to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the Valley of the King).*

**Question:** With Abram's defeat of the four Mesopotamian kings and their armies, who had previously defeated numerous groups of peoples in their invasion to the South and who had also defeated the five kings of the cities in southern Canaan, what position does Abram occupy?  
**Answer:** His is now the most powerful political and military leader in Mesopotamia and Canaan and the hero of the region, having saved Canaan from foreign domination.

**Question:** After Abram's return from battle he is met by two kings.  Who are these kings?  
**Answer:** Melchizedek Priest-King of Salem and the King Bera of Sodom.

**Question:** Where does the king of Sodom come to meet Abram?  
**Answer:** The Valley of Shaveh, which the text identifies as the Valley of the King.

In Hebrew *shaveh/ seba/ shava* canmean either the number seven or to swear an oath.  The literal translation could be the Valley of the Oath" or the "Valley of Seven."  2 Samuel 18:18 records that King David's son Absalom erected a pillar to himself "which is in the Valley of the King," and Josephus located the Valley of the King "two furloughs distance from Jerusalem," or a quarter of a mile from Jerusalem (*Antiquities 7.10.3 [243]*).  Some scholars identify the valley as a fairly flat area north of Jerusalem, but most believe it is the valley west of the old City of David in Jerusalem.  It is a mystery why the valley meeting place of Abram and the king of Sodom was also known as the "Valley of the King," unless the "king" is Melchizedek, the righteous king of Salem who also came out to meet Abram. Notice this is another connection to the number 7, to swear an oath is "to 7 oneself" in Hebrew, and both covenants and covenant renewal are established and passed on to the next generation by oath-swearing.

**Question:** Melchizedek was the Priest-King of Salem.  Where was Salem located?

**Answer:** The place name "Salem," which means "peace" in Hebrew, is identified in ancient Jewish tradition and by many of the Fathers of the Church as the ancient name for Jerusalem, a city located on Mt. Moriah in central Canaan. Psalms 76:1-2 also seems to make this connection: *God is acknowledged in Judah, his name is great in Israel, his tent [dwelling place] is pitched in Salem, his dwelling is in Zion.*

**Genesis 14:18-20:** 14:18*Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High.* 19*He pronounced this blessing: 'Blessed beAbram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.  And blessed be God MostHigh for putting your enemies into your clutches.'* 20*And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

**Question:** What does this king's name mean in Hebrew? What does Scripture record about him in Psalms 110:4; Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:2, 11-26?  
**Answer:** *Melech* is the Hebrew word for "king" and *zedek* means "righteousness;" he is the "king of righteousness" (*The Works of Philo*, *"Allegorical Interpretation, III," page* 59; *Antiquities of the Jews 1.10.2*) who, according to Josephus, ruled Jerusalem, which was formerly known as Salem (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews 1.10.2, 7.3.2; The Wars of the Jews 6.10.1*).  The Book of Hebrews identifies him as the King of Salem (Yireh-salem = "provides/will provide-peace"; see Gen 22:14) who like Jesus Christ is God's high priest by virtue of God's call and not through an ancestral line like the priests of the Sinai Covenant who came to the priesthood by heredity, having to prove their descent from Moses' brother Aaron (first High Priest of the Sinai Covenant) through their father and mother. Melchizedek's priesthood was like Christ's High Priesthood, a higher order priesthood. King David prophesied the return to a priesthood like Melchizedek's in Psalm 110:4: *Yahweh has sworn an oath he will never retract, you are a priest for ever of the order of Melchizedek,* quoted in the New Testament in Hebrews 5:6.  The Psalm 110 passage is also quoted by Jesus, a passage which He applies to Himself in Matthew 22:43-45, quoting from verse 1 but referring to the entire Psalm 110 and the prophecy of the prerogatives of His worldwide sovereignty and perpetual priesthood.

**Question:** Who was this man who bore the throne name "King of Righteousness"?  
**Answer:** According to Jewish and Christian oral tradition he was God's man Shem, the righteous firstborn son of Noah.  Shem is still alive at this time; in fact Shem will outlive Abraham.

There is biblical precedent for Shem changing his name and adopting a "throne name" when he became King of Salem.  King Solomon's name was changed from Jedidah (Yedidyah = "beloved of Yahweh), the name given him at his birth by the prophet Nathan.  The king name he was known by was Solomon (from the Hebrew word for "peace").   There is also historical precedent: kings in the ancient Near East (and most kings) took a throne-name other than their birth name (i.e., the Egyptian pharaohs).  The Vicar of Christ also takes a "throne name" upon his ascension to the Papal throne of St. Peter (who was born Simon), like Joseph Ratzinger who is now Pope Benedict XVI.

Both St. Ephraim in the 4th century AD and St. Jerome in the 5th century AD acknowledged Shem's link to Melchizedek:

* *This Melchizedech is Shem, who became a king due to his greatness; he was the head of fourteen nations.  In addition, he was a priest.  He received this from Noah, his father, through the rights of succession.  Shem lived not only to the time of Abraham, as Scripture says, but even to the time of Jacob and Esau, the grandsons of Abraham* ( St. Ephraim, doctor of the Church: *Teaching on Genesis 14:18-20*).
* *The Jews say that Melchizedek was Shem, Noah's son, and, counting up the total years of his lifetime, they demonstrate that he would have lived up to the time of Isaac* (St. Jerome, doctor of the Church: *Hebrew Questions on Genesis 14:18-19*)*.*

You may recall that Shem was the first man identified in Scripture as "God's man": *Blessed be Yahweh, God of Shem* (Gen 9:26a), and Shem was also the righteous "firstborn" son of Noah with whom God's Covenant with Noah continued.  Abram/Abraham was his descendant according to the genealogy in Genesis 11.  Genesis 11:10 records: *When Shem was a hundred years old he fathered Arpachshad, two years after the flood.  After the birth of Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years.* Shem lived to be 600 years old.  If you calculate the age of Shem from the toledoth of Genesis chapter 11 you will discover that Shem was 390 years old when Abram was born.  Genesis 17:24 records that Abraham (his name was changed by then) was 99 years old when Ishmael was circumcised at age 13.  At that time Shem was a venerable 489 years old-- still alive after the events of Genesis chapter 14.  For information on Shem as Melchizedek also see *Babylonian Talmud, N'darim 32b;* and most modern Jewish Bible study notes: i.e., *Tanach* (Stone edition), note on page 29; and *The Jewish New Testament Commentary,* page 679.

**Question:** What did Melchizedek bring to Abram?  How did Melchizedek's gift prefigure the Eucharist?  See CCC 1333, 1373-77 and 1544.

**Answer:** In an act that has the elements of liturgical worship, he brought Abram "bread and wine"'the future sign of the Eucharist, and pronounced a blessing in the name of "God the Most High, Creator of heaven and earth," giving credit to God for Abram's victory over his enemies.  Christ, as our High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary, receives our offerings of bread and wine and returns them to us, transformed by the miracle of Transubstantiation, into His Body and Blood; it was a gift which He promised to us in the Bread of Life Discourse in the Gospel of St. John chapter 6: *In truth I tell you [amen, amen], if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have not life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day.  For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.  Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person* (Jn 6:53-56).  Melchizedek's priesthood prefigured Christ's (Heb 5-7), and his gift of bread and wine to Abram prefigured Christ's gift of the Eucharist to His Church.

**Question:** What elements of the celebration of the Mass do you see in this passage?

**Answer:**

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| **Melchizedek** | **The Priest in the Liturgy of the Mass** |
| 1. He offered bread and wine to Abram. | 1. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist the bread and wine are brought forward and are transformed into Christ's Body and Blood, which the priest offers to the faithful. |
| 2. He pronounced God's blessing on Abram. | 2. The priest calls down God's blessing upon the people. |
| 3. He offered praise to God. | 3. The priest leads the people in praise of God. |
| 4. He received Abram's tithes. | 4. The priest receives the people's tithes and offerings. |
| 5. He was acknowledged as God's representative. | 5. The priest is acknowledged as Christ's representative to the people. |
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After his gift of bread and wine, Melchizedek blessed Abram.

**Question:** How was Melchizedek's blessing for Abram similar to Noah's blessing for Shem?

**Answer:** It was a blessing that was an echo of the blessing Noah gave Shem in Genesis 9:26, both praising God for blessing Shem and for binding his enemy: *Blessed be Yahweh, God of Shem; let Canaan be his slave!*  Compared to: *Blessed be Abram by God Most High, [..].  And blessed be God Most High for putting your enemies into your clutches.*

A blessing is that which is conferred by God through His priest, effecting what is pronounced.  In the liturgy of Israel in the Sinai Covenant, two types of blessings form the ritual of worship:

1. The people in prayer petitioning God for His blessings
2. The people bless God, giving thanksgiving for God's goodness and mercy

(Num 6:22; Dt 27:14-26; Ps 103:1-2; 144:1; Dn 2:19-23).

In Genesis 14:19 Melchizedek conferred the same kind of two-part blessing that will be the foundation of liturgical worship in the Sinai Covenant, in prayers offered by the priests in every liturgical service:

* First he gave Abram God's blessing as God's covenant representative
* Then he blessed God in a hymn of praise for God's goodness in giving Abram victory over his enemies.

From the time after the flood when God established a covenant with Noah and all creation, all of humanity was under the Noahide Covenant, which remained in effect for the Gentiles until the proclamation of the Gospel (see CCC 58).  If Shem/Melchizedek was Yahweh's Covenant representative, it makes perfect sense for Abram to acknowledge his leadership and to pay a tithe.  Scripture records that Abraham died when he was 175 years old (Genesis 25:7).  At that time Shem would have been a venerable 565 years old, outliving his "son" and heir, Abraham, and dying in his 600th year!  Making the argument that Shem is Melchizedek, St. Ephraim wrote: *Shem lived not only to the time of Abraham, as Scripture says, but even to the time of Jacob and Esau, the grandsons of Abraham.  It was to him that Rebekah went to ask and was told, "Two nations are in your womb, and the elder shall serve the younger."  Rebekah would not have bypassed her husband, who had been delivered at the high place, or her father-in-law, to whom revelations of the divinity came continually and gone straight to ask Melechizedek unless she had learned of his greatness from Abraham or Abraham's son. Abraham would not have given him a tenth of everything unless he knew that Melchizedek was infinitely greater than himself.  Would Rebekah have asked one of the Canaanites or one of the Sodomites?  Would Abraham have given a tenth of his possessions to any one of these?  One ought not even entertain such ideas.* St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis.*

 Some Bible scholars have suggested that Melchizedek was a pagan king serving a Canaanite god whose name was *Elyon*, Hebrew for "Most High."  Scripture itself clearly refutes this interpretation by identifying the god Melchizedek worshiped as the "God Most High (El Elyon), the Creator of heaven and earth" (Gen 1:12:4a) who is also Abram's God by whom Abram swore an oath to the king of Sodom using Melchizedek's same words: *I swear by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth* (Gen 14:22).  Would Abram swear an oath by a Canaanite god?  Surely not!  Would he pay a tithe to the priest of a pagan god?  As St. Ephraim vigorously wrote, one mustn't even entertain such thoughts!  Melchizedek is a priest of God the Almighty'the God of Creation and the God of Abraham.  Similar titles/names for God as "God Most High" are also found in the Old Testament in Psalm 7:17;9:2; 21:7; 47:2; 50:14; 57:2; 73:11; 77:11; 78:17; 78:56; 82:6; 83:18; 91:1, 9; 92:1; Is 14:14 (Satan calls God "Most High"); Lam 3:35, 38; Dan 3:26; 5:18, 21; 7:18, 22, 25 (twice), and 27.

**Question:** In the New Testament book of Hebrews the inspired writer (who according to the Church fathers was St. Paul) compared Melchizedek to Jesus. How did St. Paul present Melchizedek as a "type" of Christ, prefiguring Jesus Christ as God's priestly king? See Heb 4:15; 5:1-10; 6:19; 7:1-28; 8:1-5; 9:25-28; 10:10  
**Answer:** Melchizedek, God's priest-king of Salem, the "city of peace," prefigured Jesus, the Son of God, the High Priest of the Heavenly Sanctuary and the King of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth:

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| **Priestly order of Melchizedek as Shem** | **Priestly order of Jesus Christ** |
| Shem/Melchizedek is the first priest in Scripture appointed by God (Gen 14:18). | Jesus is the eternal High Priest'the last and the only eternal priest appointed by God (Heb 7:26-8:2). |
| He was chosen from among men (Gen 9:26-27) to rule over his brothers and their descendants through the Noahide world Covenant (Gen 9:8-10, 17). | He was chosen from among men to be a compassionate High Priest and advocate of the worldwide New Covenant people of God (Mt 28:19-20; Heb 4:15). |
| Tithes were paid to the priest Melchizedek by Abram; if he is Shem the tithes are paid within the covenant family (Gen 14:20). | Tithes are paid to Christ our High Priest through His Church by the covenant family |
| Abram paid a tithe of a tenth of his spoil from battle to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20). | The covenant people bring Christ, our High Priest, offerings of bread and wine and He gives us, under the appearance of bread and wine, His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (Mt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-27). |
| As God's priest he blessed Abram and brought bread and wine as a priestly gift (Gen 14:18-19). | He offers eternal blessings to the people and an eternal sacrifice to God on behalf of the covenant people (Heb 9:25-28; 10:10). |
| Melchizedek was both a High Priest and the King of Salem/Jerusalem (Gen 14:18). | Jesus is both the New Covenant High Priest and King of the heavenly Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Heave on earth. |
| Melchizedek is titled in Genesis 14 as "the priest" of the Most High God. There is no other priest. | God's New Covenant is extended to include all nations (Mt 28:19-20). Jesus is the eternal high priest bringing the peoples of the earth back into one covenant family. Jesus is the eternal priest of the New Covenant. There is no other High Priest of the New Covenant |
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**Question:** There is a contrast between the greeting Abram received from the two kings who met him in the Valley of Shaveh and in his response to them.  How does the Priest-King of Salem respond to Abram and how does Abram, the most powerful king in the region having defeated all the other armies, respond to the Priest-King of Salem?

**Answer:** Abram humbled himself before the King of Salem who offered Abram bread and wine as a priestly act (Gen 14:18) and in blessing Abraham acknowledged that it was the "Most High God," in Hebrew *El-Elyon*, "Creator of heaven and earth" who delivered the enemy into Abram's hand, giving God the glory for their deliverance through Abram (Gen 14:19).  Abram not only acknowledged Melchizedek's sovereignty as God's representative by humbly receiving his blessing but Abram also submitted to his priestly and kingly authority by paying a tithe of 1 tenth of all his accumulated wealth during the conflict.

**Genesis 14:21-24:**  
14:21*The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself.'* 22*But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, 'I swear by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth:* 23*not one thread, not one sandal strap, will I take of what is yours, for you to be able to say, "I made Abram rich,"* 24*For myself, nothing'except what the troops have used up, and the share due to the men who came with me, Eschol, Aner and Mamre; let them take their share.'*

**Question:** Why did Abram refuse the offer of the king of Sodom?  Compare the king of Sodom's reception of Abram to Melchizedek's.   
**Answer:** Compared to Melchizedek's kindness to Abram and thankfulness for his heroic effort, the king of Sodom seemed ungrateful and grasping.  Without any thanks or acknowledgment of Abram rescuing his people, he demanded that his subjects be returned, offering Abram the booty he recovered from the Mesopotamians which was rightfully Abram's as the victor. Abram refused to accept anything from such a man.  He told King Bera that his share will be what provisions his men used and the rest was to be the rightful share for his allies.

**Genesis 14:24:** *For myself, nothing'except what the troops have used up, and the share due to the men who came with me, Eschol, Aner and Mamre; let them take their share.'* The blessing that the three covenant "brothers" of Abram received prefigures the blessing of the Gentile nations through the faithful remnant of the seed of Abraham'the 12 Apostles of the New Covenant in Christ.  Through the "seed of Abraham," in the faithful remnant of Old Israel, the blessings of Jesus Christ were carried to every Gentile nation on earth through the New Israel, the Universal (Catholic) Church.  It is a mission that the faithful continue to fulfill today'calling all nations to salvation in the universal language of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The offer King Bera of Sodom made to Abram may have been an attempt to recruit Abram as his vassal, making Abram beholden to him for the material wealth Abram would have received had he accepted Bera's offer.  Abram's reply that he didn't want anyone to say that he was obligated to Bera adds credibility to this interpretation.  Abram already knew that his blessings and his victories would not come through reliance on human kings but on his reliance on and trust in God.  It is the same assurance of victory for the faithfully obedient that will be made to the children of Israel: *Yahweh your God is marching with you, to fight your enemies for you and make you victorious* (Dt 20:4

**Questions for group discussion:**

**Question:** Was Lot a foolish man?  Compare what criteria Eve used to make her choice in Genesis 3:6a and what criteria Lot used in Genesis 13:10.  How are Lot and Eve alike and how are they different?  
**Answer:** Yes, Lot was a foolish man:

1. Lot chose by sight and not by faith and separated himself from Abram, the carrier of God's blessing through whom everyone who was associated with Abram was to be blessed (i.e. Abram's three friends).  Lot's choice was similar to Eve's choice which was also based on what she saw.  The land looked good toward Sodom, so Lot moved east and away from God's altar at Bethel.
2. Lot's choice was like Eve's in that he sought his own desires at the expense of his uncle; Eve's choice was based on her selfish desires at the expense of her relationship with God.
3. Then, after his rescue by his uncle, who refused to take anything from the king of Sodom, a decision that reflected his distaste of the man and what he stood for, Lot returned to Sodom'staying in the "east"'moving away from God and living in exile instead of staying with Abram (Gen 19:1).  Likewise, Eve left Eden in exile, and on the east the cherubim guarded the entrance to the garden Sanctuary so she could not return.
4. The difference between Lot and Eve was that Lot could have returned to Abram and to the altar of Yahweh at Bethel or to the altar at Hebron, but he chose not to return.

Eve and Lot Compared:  their failure to recognize what was spiritually good versus what was materially good.

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| **Eve** | **Lot** |
| 1. Eve's choice was based on what looked good: *The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye* (Gen 3:6) | 1. Lot's choice was based on what looked God: *Looking round, Lot saw all the Jordan plain, irrigated everywhere* (Gen 14:10) |
| 2. Eve's choice was selfish: *and that it was enticing for the wisdom that it could give* (Gen 3:6) | 2. Lot's choice was selfish: *So Lot chose all the Jordan plain for himself* (Gen 13:11) |
| 3. Eve's choice resulted in separation from God: *He banished the man, and in front [east] of the garden of Eden he posed the great winged creatures and the fiery sword* (Gen 3:24) | 3. Lot's choice resulted in separation from Abram and his God: *So Lot chose ... and* *moved off eastwards.  Thus they parted company* (Gen 13:11) |
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\*The brackets indicate the literal word in Hebrew

**Question:** What did Abram's reception of the King of Sodom and his rejection of the king's offer teach us about dealing with worldly men?  See what Jesus said about material wealth in Matthew 6:19-24.  
**Answer:** Do not be seduced by material rewards and desires of the flesh; only spiritual rewards are eternal.  Jesus said one cannot serve two masters'you cannot serve both God and the world.

**Question:** Abram did not abandon Lot after he foolishly chose Sodom.  Instead Abram showed his nephew his love and compassion by risking everything he had to come to his rescue.  Such acts of brotherly love are depicted throughout the Bible.  Can you provide two other examples this kind of love and self-sacrifice?  
**Answer:** (There can be various answers).  Judah son of Jacob/Israel offered to spend the rest of his life as a slave to save his brother Benjamin in Genesis 44:14-34, and Judah's descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, gave up His life on the Cross to save His brothers and sisters in the human family.

**Endnotes:**

[1](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "note1). Only Hebron was higher at 3,050 ft. [927 meters] (Waltke, page 223).

[2](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "note1). At one time the Jordan River probably flowed out to the Gulf of Aqaba.  The volcanic upheaval of the earth, possibly in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, blocked the flow of the Jordan River to the south, forming the stagnant Dead Sea (Gen 14:3).   The salt deposits and high mineral content of the region eventually turned the lake created in the earthquakes into an inland lake with such high salinity that fish could not survive. Geological surveys of the region verify that the region had once been a fertile plain watered by the Jordan River and its tributaries.

[3](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "note3). On the day of a new Egyptian Pharaoh's enthronement ceremony he walked the circuit of the walls of his fortress in a festal procession.  It was also the custom for Hittite kings to annually tour their territory during the Hittite winter festival.  In a similar symbolic act of claiming sovereignty over Jericho, in Joshua chapter 6 the priests of Israel marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, God's earthly throne (Waltke, *Genesis,* pages 222-23).

[4](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "note4). Hebron, where Abram settled, is in the hill country about 20 miles south of Jerusalem.  It is the highest settlement in the region, located 3,050 feet [927 meters] above sea level on the strategic route between Jerusalem and Beersheba to the south.  According to Scripture the city was founded 7 years before Zoan in Egypt.  Prior to the conquest, Israel's scouts described Hebron as a well fortified city (Num 13:22).  Hebron was also called *Kirjath-abra*, meaning "city of four," perhaps referring to the site where four men and their families settled, forming an alliance (Abram, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre), and perhaps later referring to the city of the four Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph who are buried there (Gen 23:2; 35:27; Josh 14:15; 15:13, 54; 20:7; 21:11; Judg 1:10; Neh 11:25).  Hebron is part of the territory that the modern state of Israel relinquished to the Palestinian Arabs in an attempt to bring peace to the region.  See the map of Abraham's journeys in the Map section of the Main Menu.

[5](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "note5). Mari was a prosperous ancient Mesopotamian city-state located on the middle Euphrates River.  The city's most prosperous period dated to the time of Abraham, circa 2000-1950 BC.  Mari was destroyed by King Hammurabi of Babylon circa 1760 BC.  The city was never rebuilt and disappeared from the pages of history until the discovery of its ruins in 1979.  The ruins of Mari are located at a site about 50 km north of the current border between Syria and Iraq.  The archaeological excavation of Mari has yielded over 20,000 cuneiform tablets from the royal archives.  The Mari tablets contain diplomatic correspondence, treaties with other city-states, letters concerning commerce with other cities, details of palace administration, ritual religious texts, and even letters from the royal women of Mari, the so-called "Harem Texts" which contain requests for supplies and luxury items, lists of the queens' children, and questions concerning religious customs, perhaps submitted by foreign women whose culture worshipped other gods, etc.  (*Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. 4. pages 525-337*).

[6](http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_8.htm" \l "note6). The "Way of the Sea," called in Roman times the "Via Maris," and the "King's Highway," were the two major trade routes that connected Egypt to the Levant and Mesopotamia.  Both trade routes originated in Heliopolis, Egypt.  From there the King's Highway traveled eastward to Clysama (modern Suez), through the Milta Pass and the Egyptian forts of Nekhl and Themed in the Sinai desert.  At Kadesh-Barnea the King's Highway then branched south and north.  One branch went to Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba.  Ezion-Geber at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba was a major trade center where caravans from Egypt and caravans with trade goods and spices from the route leading from Arabia gathered to trade their goods.  From Kadesh-Barnea the other branch of the "King's Highway" proceeded northward past what would become the land of the Edomites, through what would become Moab to Madaba, then extending to Damascus and ending at Resaba on the Upper Euphrates.  The "Way of the Sea" originated in Heliopolis and followed the Mediterranean coast up through the Levant and into Mesopotamia.