

Torah Readings: Genesis 14:1-24 – Abram rescues Lot; meets Melchizedek

Hanukkah celebration!

Psalm 10

Haftarah: Isaiah 41:2-5 + 8-13

Zechariah 9:10 – 10:1 + 12

Micah 4:11 – 5:6

The Battle of Siddim

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Siddim

This Wikipedia article gives an explanation of the background of this battle, and some guesses at who these kings were.

According to Jewish tradition, the revolt started with their refusal to pay tribute to King Chedorlaomer. In response, Chedorlaomer and three other kings started a campaign against King Bera of Sodom, and four other kings allied with him.

The name Abi-ramu (Abram?) has been found on Babylonian contracts from about 2000 B.C.

Archaeologist Kenneth Kitchen asserts that the only known historical period in which a king of Elam, whilst allied with Larsa, was able to enlist a Hittite king and a King of Eshunna as partners and allies in a war against Canaanite cities is in the time of Old Babylon c 1822-1764 BC. This is when Babylon is under Hammurabi and Rim Sin I controls Mari, which is linked through trade to the Hittites and other allies along the length of the Euphrates. Chedorlaomer king of Elam could be a transliteration of the Elamite compound Kudur-Lagamar, meaning “servant of Lagamaru” - a reference to Lagamaru, an Elamite deity. But there is no scholarly agreement on who he actually was.

Genesis 14:13 - The mention of “Abram the Hebrew” suggests the report of this battle was taken from a contemporary gentile source and woven into Genesis by Moses.

Some see a typology at work in Chedorlaomer’s victory over the five kings, representing the defeat of the five senses.

Genesis 14:14 - Abraham rescues Lot with his 318 servants, similar to the number of Gideon’s reduced army in his defeat of the Midianites.

Melchizedek

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melchizedek>

The battle serves as an introduction of Abram to Mechizedek, a mysterious figure that some have identified as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, or at least a type of Christ’s priesthood, with whom he shares bread and wine in a picture of communion.

Targum Jonathan, Targum Yerushalmi, and the Babylonian Talmud – presents the name (מלכי־צדק) as a nickname title for Shem, the son of Noah. Rashi maintains that the land of Canaan was initially allotted to Shem by Noah his father, and the offspring of Cham conquered the land by forced expansion.

In the majority of Masoretic Hebrew texts the name is written as two words, Meleki-şedeq, melek(h) "king" and şedeq "righteous(ness).

In Canaanite and Phoenician religions the şedeq or tsadik part of the name became associated with the evening star, a diety.

The Tithe

Abram tithes to Melchizedek - the first mention of a tithe in the Bible.

Hebrews 7:4 - "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."

This tithe establishes the ascendancy of the Melchizedek priesthood over that of Levi:

Hebrews 7:10 - "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him."

A type of Messiah

Psalms 110:4 alludes to Melchizedek as a prototype of the Messiah.

"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

This led to the re-interpretation of the name as "king of righteousness" in Hellenistic Judaism. In the Qumran Scrolls, it was also used as a name of the Archangel Michael as an intermediary with God.

Leviticus Rabbah maintains that God intended to permanently bring forth the priesthood through Melchizedek's patrilineal descendants, but since Melchizedek preceded Abram's blessing to that of God, God instead chose to bring the priesthood forth from Abram's descendants.

In Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21 - Jesus Christ is identified as a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, quoting from Ps. 110:4. Melchizedek the "king of righteousness" and "king of peace" is explicitly associated with the "eternal priesthood" of the Son of God.

Psalms 110

Psalm 110, which mentions Melchizedek, is an important source for New Testament messianic texts:

Matthew 22:43-45

"What do you think about the Messiah, whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." "Then how is it," he asked them, "that David in the Spirit calls him 'Lord, when he says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit here at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? "If David then calls him 'Lord, how is he his son?"

Acts 2:33-36

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua, whom you executed on a tree!

Hebrews 1:13

To which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

1 Corinthians 15:24-25

. . . then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when he has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Ephesians 1:20, 22

. . . he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. . . . He put all things under his feet.

... and many more references.

Luther taught that Melchizedek was a historical figure and an archetype of Christ. "Therefore He is the true Melchizedek. Second, this is understood in accordance with the office, because Melchizedek offered the bread and wine."

The blessing of Melchizedek

Genesis 14:20 - "And [Melchizedek] blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And [Abraham] gave him tithes of all.
“

Genesis 14:23-24 - Abraham refuses to claim any spoils from his victory.

(Compare I Samuel 15 - Saul's self-justification of keeping the Amalekite goods in disobedience to God.)