



## Searching for a Winner: Military Science from the Divine Viewpoint: Abram's Delta Force, Gen 14:1-12: Chedorlaomer & the Jordan Valley Campaign

Dr. Ferrill expounds upon these ideas on page 29:

Romans generally fought in close order in waves of thin lines. The advantage of the Roman system was that all available manpower could be brought into direct action along this line. Roman soldiers were not expected to fight to the death before being replaced by men from the rear. There was a regular rotation of fighting waves. Such a system demanded good fighters throughout. There was no place for weak troops in the Roman legion.

Although the efficient use of manpower in the Roman army was obviously important, the psychological advantages of such a system were enormous. Because Roman soldiers in the front of the line could expect to be reinforced in the course of the fighting, they fought confidently, and knew in the depths of their souls that their comrades-in-arms to the rear would not leave them in the lurch. As a result, Romans inflicted heavy casualties even when they were defeated. Against untrained troops, they simply could not be defeated, even when they were greatly outnumbered.

Biblical history confirms these principles in its chronicle of famous Israelite victories. We will note several and will discover in doing so biblical principles that instruct client nations on how to defend themselves from the assaults of predators, be they national entities or terrorist insurgents.

### III. Military Science from the Divine Viewpoint:

#### A. Abram's Delta Force, Genesis 14:1-16

Maps:

"Bible Lands Old Testament." In *Sun Light Bible Atlas*. (Ft. Smith: Sun Light Publishers, 1997).

Pritchard, James B. (ed.). "Patriarchal Routes in Canaan According to Genesis: Chedorlaomer's Campaigns against the Canaanite Kings." In *The Harper Atlas of the Bible*. 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers; © 1987 by Times Books Ltd.), 33.

Unger, Merrill F. "Canaan before the Conquest." In *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press; © 1966 Moody Bible Institute).

**Genesis 14:1** - And it came about in the days of Amraphel \am' ra-fel\ king of Shinar \shī' nar\, Arioch \ar' i-ok\ king of Ellasar \el-lā' sar\, Chedorlaomer \ked-or-lā-ō' mer\ king of Elam \ē' lam\, and Tidal \tī' dal\ king of Goiim \goi' em\,

**v. 2** - that they made war against Bera \bē' ra\ king of Sodom, and with Birsha \bir' sha\ king of Gomorrah \go-mor' ra\, Shinab \shī' nab\ king of Admah \ad' mah\, Shemeber \shem-ē' ber\ king of Zeboiim \ze-boi' im\, and the king of Bela \bē' la\ (that is, Zoar \zō' er).

**v. 3** - All these joined forces together in the Valley of Siddim \sid' im\ (that is, the Salt Sea).

- 1- The first seven verses of Genesis 14 is a roster of kings who confront each other in the Battle of the Valley of Siddim.



- 2- Introduced first is the Mesopotamian Allied Army under the command of Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. His army is allied with those of three other Mesopotamian kings, Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch, king of Ellasar, and Tidal, king of Goiim.
- 3- They declared war on the kings of the Pentapolis, the five city states that were grouped at the southern end of the Salt Sea, what we know today as the Dead Sea.
- 4- The reason for this war is given in verse 4, “Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. The details behind this verse are given by:

**Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch. *The Pentateuch. Vol. 1 of Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. Translated by James Martin. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 201-202:***

Elam possessed the supremacy in inner Asia. It appears that the imperial power of Asia had already extended as far as Canaan, and had subdued the valley of the Jordan, no doubt with the intention of holding the Jordan valley as the high-road to Egypt. The kings of the valley of the Jordan and the surrounding country submitted to the worldly power.

- 5- The “high-road to Egypt” mentioned by Keil and Delitzsch refers to the King’s Highway. We learn details about it from:

**Tenney, Merrill C. (ed.) *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Vol. 3. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 824:***

**King’s Highway.** An important road running north and south from Damascus to the Gulf of Aqabah, east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley.

It was one of the essential caravan routes in international commerce. It ran through Bashan, Gilead, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and connected with roads across the Negeb leading into Egypt. This route of travel is known to have existed well before 2000 B.C.

- 6- The way Chedorlaomer controlled the Jordan Valley was by tribute, a form of taxation. In essence, Chedorlaomer cut a deal with the cities of the valley that they would remain undisturbed by him and his allies if they contributed annual sums of money and exports to them.
- 7- The purpose was the guarantee of an open trade route to Egypt. However, after twelve years of paying tribute, the Pentapolis joined into a confederation and challenged Chedorlaomer by withholding tribute beginning with the thirteenth year.
- 8- This activated a treaty that Chedorlaomer had with the Mesopotamian kings of Shinar, Ellasar, and Goiim. In the fourteenth year these kings formed an allied army and began a campaign to secure the Jordan Valley and access to the King’s Highway.
- 9- It took a year to complete the campaign. The hostilities started in the upper Jordan Valley and consisted of seven major battles before the armies arrived at the Pentapolis.

**Genesis 14:5 - And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim \ref’ a-im\ in Ashteroth-karnaim \ash’ te-roth kar-na’ im\ and the Zuzim \zū’ zim\ in Ham and the Emim \ē mim\ in Shaveh-kiriathaim \shā’ veh kir-ya-thā’ im\,**

**v. 6 - and the Horites \hō’ rītes\ in their Mount Seir \sē’ ir\, as far as El-paran \el-pā’ ran\, which is by the wilderness.**



**v. 7** - Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat \en-mish' pat\ (that is, Kadesh \kā'desh\), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites \am' a-lek-ītes\, and also the Amorites \am' o-rītes\, who lived in Hazazon-tamar \haz' a-zon-tā-mar\.

- 1- The first engagement for the Mesopotamian Allied Armies was the Battle of Ashteroth-karnaim \ash' te-roth kar-na' im\ where they defeated the Rephaim.
- 2- The second was the Battle of Ham where the Zuzim were whipped.
- 3- Number three in the campaign was the Battle of Shaveh-kiriathaim \shā' veh kir-ya-thā' im\ where the Emim were the victims.
- 4- The fourth took the armies down into the Arabah where they secured the King's Highway all the way to what we know today as the Gulf of 'Aqaba. The Hittites fell to the Allied Armies at the Battle of Mount Seir.
- 5- The fifth battle occurred down at the seaport of El-paran where the Edomites were beaten.
- 6- Having secured the highway all the way to its southernmost point, Chedorlaomer turned back to the northwest to lock down the trade routes in the Negeb where his first engagement was the Battle of En-mishpat near Kadesh and the defeat of the Amalekites.
- 7- Finally, in order to protect his western flank before engaging the Pentapolis Confederation, Chedorlaomer went up the western shore of the Salt Sea and took on the Amorites, defeating them at the Battle of Hazazon-tamar \haz' a-zon-tā-mar\.
- 8- Having eliminated all possible assaults from the populations in the Jordan Valley, Chedorlaomer now concentrated his forces against the rebels in the Pentapolis.
- 9- The Valley of Siddom, or literally, the valley of the Green Fields, is at the southern end of the Salt Sea. In that area are what the King James Version refers to as "slime pits."
- 10- The substance is actually bitumen, a hydrocarbon allied to petroleum and natural gas. In the Valley of Siddim it accumulated in pools as tar and presented quite an obstacle in the path of any who sought to traverse the area.
- 11- Chedorlaomer obviously had very good G-2. He was able to learn that the Pentapolis Confederation was going to use the tar pits tactically as a buffer from an assault they assumed would come from the south.
- 12- They assumed that once the King's Highway was secured down to the Gulf of 'Aqaba that Chedorlaomer would return up the Jordan Valley and hit them from the south.
- 13- However, Chedorlaomer went northwest, secured the Negeb and then went up to Hazazon-tamar to the northwest of the Valley. When he came into the Valley of Siddim he hit the Pentapolis armies from the north trapping them in front of the tar pits.

**Genesis 14:8** - And the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the Valley of Siddim,

**v. 9** - against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.

**v. 10** - Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them [ **the tar pits** ]. But those who survived fled to the hill country.



**v. 11** - Then they [ **the Mesopotamian Allied Army** ] **took** all the **goods** of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.

**v. 12** - And they also **took** Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

- 1- Once an army is defeated on the battlefield then the population it was trying to defend becomes vulnerable to whatever are the whims of the conquering forces.
- 2- Victorious armies accumulate booty, described in verse 11 by the Qal imperfect of **נָקַח** **laqach**, which means “to seize violently.” What they seized were “goods,” **rekush**, the wealth, possessions, and things of value.
- 3- This is a major hit to the cities of the Pentapolis. Their rebellion was based on poor leadership and emotionalism related to degeneracy and decadence.
- 4- When a population drifts to a certain level of immorality and corruption then the Lord will graciously provide its people with a collective disaster.
- 5- It is designed to motivate a reevaluation of their behavior patterns, character traits, and lifestyle. If salvation is in order its objective is to direct them toward the gospel. If reversion recovery is in order its objective is to direct them toward doctrine.
- 6- For the Pentapolis, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in particular, the military defeat imposed by the Mesopotamian Allied Army was an opportunity for it to orient to priorities and to isolate distractions that were leading their citizens into disaster.
- 7- There are evils in which men may become involved that when taken to certain levels violate the rules of engagement for the appeal trial. A certain level of degeneracy is common to any population for there are always some who have no restraint on their sinful natures and thus follow its lust patterns to their ultimate demise.
- 8- However, this is personal and is managed on a personal level. But when a population collectively declines into levels of sinful action that threaten the survival of the human race and thus destruction not only of a client nation but of potential witnesses for the Prosecution, then that population is collectively disciplined.
- 9- Those of the Pentapolis, and especially the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, were involved in such a form of collective decadence. For them it was widespread involvement in homosexual behavior and public approval of it.
- 10- The assault by Chedorlaomer, the loss of life on the battlefield, the loss of capital as booty to the conquering army, and even the taking of hostages was a clear warning to these people that they were under the discipline from divine justice.
- 11- This wrath was in fact a gracious opportunity for the people to denounce their ways and recover by compliance with divine mandates. Once Chedorlaomer's army marched north up the Jordan Valley those who were left behind had the opportunity to regroup and recover.
- 12- Their problem was made known in Scripture at the time that Lot made the decision to move to Sodom:

**Genesis 13:12** - Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley [ **the Pentapolis** ], and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

**v. 13** - Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.