

The Lord Allowed Lot to be Taken as a Captive

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the way that Abram grew in faith as he learned to walk with God. In this way, we also help them learn to walk by faith in their own lives. In this topic, we will see that Lot moved into the city of Sodom and was taken captive when that city was conquered.

In Genesis 14:1-4, we read, “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, *that* they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.” The land called “Shinar” means *country of two rivers*. It was the original name by which Babylon was called. Ellasar was a city-state in the region of Babylon about twenty-nine miles east of the city of Ur of the Chaldeans. The land called “Elam” was an area east of the area of Babylon and northeast of the lower Tigris River.

We see that the fourth kingdom was the title given to an area known as “the nations”. The word translated “nations” is used five hundred and fifty-eight times in the Old Testament and is translated by the words: nations, heathen, Gentiles, and people. The first uses are in Genesis 10. In Genesis 10:5, we read, “From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.” It is used twice in this verse – the first time translated “Gentiles” and the second time “nations”. In Genesis 10:31-32, we read, “These *were* the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations. These *were* the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.” In these verses, it is translated “nations” all three times. As a result, we are uncertain of the exact area of the fourth nation referred to by this word.

The five cities they conquered were all in the lower Jordan Valley, in the general area where the Dead Sea is now located. Many people think that the Valley of Siddim was the large point of land that sticks out into the Dead Sea on the east side, and that it may have been connected all the way across, so the Dead Sea was smaller at that time. These five cities were united together by their need to protect themselves from the nations to the east. However, when these nations conquered them, it meant that they were forced to pay taxes (tribute) to these nations from the east. They paid these taxes for twelve years. Then, in the thirteenth year, they decided to rebel against Chedorlaomer and did not send the tribute money to Chedorlaomer and the other kings.

That resulted in Chedorlaomer and the kings coming to invade that area with a large army the next year. Genesis 14:5-7 says, “In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that *is*, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.” These armies

from the east started their attacks against some of the other cities in Canaan before coming to the area of the Dead Sea. The word translated “Rephaim” means *giants*. This word is also used in 2 Samuel to speak of the sons of Goliath, as well as in a number of other places. In fact, the word is used a total of twenty-five times in various places, mostly in the area of the Philistines along the Mediterranean Sea. The armies of the east began their attacks in Ashtoreth Karnaim, which means the city of Ashtoreth between two mountain peaks. This area was on the east side of Jordan in the area of Bashan near the Sea of Galilee.

The location of “Ham” (which means *hot or sunburned*) was probably also on the east side of the Jordan River, but the location is not definitely known. The people living in that area were known as the Zuzim. “Shaveh Kiriathaim” means *the plain of two cities* and these cities were where the people of Emim lived. The word “Horites” means *the people who lived in caves*. They lived on Mount Seir, west of the cities of the Jordan Valley. This later became the area of Edom where the descendants of Esau later lived. Chedorlaomer and his armies continued on south to El Paran, which was near the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea and nearly a hundred miles south of the Jordan Valley. Then, they came back north and attacked En Mishpat (Kadesh) and the whole surrounding area. They also attacked the city of Hazezon Tamar where the Amorites were located. This city was to the north and west of the cities in the lower Jordan Valley.

However, the five cities in the lower Jordan Valley realized that these armies of the east were attacking all of the nearby areas, so there would be no help for the five cities when the armies of the east began to attack them. As a result, the five cities of the lower Jordan Valley gathered their armies and went out to fight against these armies from the east. Genesis 14:8-12 says, “And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that *is*, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim *was full* of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; *some* fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.”

Here, we see that the five kings of the cities in the lower Jordan Valley met the armies of the east under the command of Chedorlaomer at the Valley of Siddim when they went out to fight them to protect their cities. We said earlier in this topic that the Valley of Siddim was probably where the land sticks out into the Dead Sea on the east side and that it may have gone all the way to the western shore, so the Dead Sea was not as large at that time. That would have meant that the area south of the peninsula was a part of the lower Jordan Valley and the Valley of Siddim. We read that the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits (tar pits). The material in these pits could be used to seal things. In the other two places where this word is used, we read in Genesis 11:3, “Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.” Here, we see that word used for the mortar that held the bricks together on the Tower of Babel. Then, Exodus 2:3 says, “But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river’s bank.” This speaks of the ark in which Moses was placed as a baby. The material from these pits could be used both to cause bricks to stick together and to waterproof the ark in which Moses was placed.

When the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, all of the men scattered. Some were killed in the valley or fell in the asphalt pits, while the rest fled to the mountains. As a result, it was no problem for the kings of the east to capture the cities because their fighting men were either killed or had gone into hiding. We see that these armies of the east took all of the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah. The word translated “goods” meant anything of value including gold, silver, possessions, animals, and anything else that had any value. The word translated “provisions” meant any kind of food supplies that they found in the cities. As a result, nothing of value was left in these cities. This word is used several times in Genesis chapters 41-47 to speak of the food in the land of Egypt that Joseph gathered during the seven years of plenty, so that there was food in the years of famine.

We also see that they took Lot, who was then living in the city of Sodom. We said in an earlier topic that Abram walked by faith, while Lot walked by sight. Now, we see the first consequences of that choice. Notice the choices of Lot. Genesis 13:10-11 says, “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.” Lot made his first choice by what he saw. Genesis 13:12-13 says, “Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.” Here, we see the second choice that Lot made. He moved into the middle of the plain where the five cities were located and pitched his tent near Sodom. Then, here, in Genesis 14:12, we read, “They also took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.” Here, we see the third choice of Lot. He had moved out of his tent and was now living in the city of Sodom, even though the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful.

These continuing choices are going to cost Lot everything he had over the coming years. Here, we see that Lot and all of his goods were taken by the armies of the east when they captured the city of Sodom. As a result, Lot, his family and all of his goods were taken captive by these armies from the east. They were on their way to lives of slavery and had temporarily lost everything. Here, we see an example of some of the consequences of wrong choices. However, we will see that the consequences got much worse for Lot and his family.

2 Corinthians 5:7-8 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the life of Lot shows that the consequences of sin are the result of choosing to walk by sight, instead of walking by faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why it is important to learn to walk by faith.