

Awakening in the Word

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THE OVERVIEW

In many ways, our portion this week is filled with peculiarities which seem to indicate that this chapter is a completely independent story. Our portion begins with the historical report of an autonomous rebellion of five kings against their sovereign and their sovereign's quick and powerful response to his vassals' revolt. Our hero, Abram, is drawn into this conflict by the capture of his kinsman Lot, who had chosen to settle in the land of Sodom. Abram musters his own coalition, rescues Lot, and recovers Lot's worldly goods and all the booty that had been seized. On returning from his successful military campaign, Abram is met by the sudden appearance of Melchizedek, the mysterious royal priest. While this portion is dominated by historical narrative, it evokes many interesting questions and contains numerous important lessons for those desiring to live as the children of Abraham.

THE OUTLINE

- Genesis 14:1-3 The introduction of the combatants
- Genesis 14:4 The cause of the conflict
- Genesis 14:5-10 The conflict
- Genesis 14:11-12 The provocation of Abram
- Genesis 14:13-16 Abram's military campaign
- Genesis 14:17, 21-24 Abram meets the king of Sodom
- Genesis 14: 18-20 Abram meets Melchizedek, king of Salem

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What significance is found in the names?
2. What is the purpose of including this story in the Torah?
3. Why was Lot taken captive?
4. Why did Abram rescue Lot?
5. Why does Abram call Lot his "brother"?
6. What picture is foreshadowed in the actions of Abram?
7. What makes this chapter so unique in the narrative of Abram?
8. Who is Melchizedek?
9. Who received the tithe?
10. Who is El Elyon (Elohim most high)?

THE TEXT

Genesis 14:1-24 *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;² that these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.³ All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.⁴ Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and thirteen years they rebelled.⁵ And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.⁷ And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.⁸ And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;⁹ with Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.¹⁰ And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.¹¹ And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.¹² And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.¹³ And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.¹⁴ And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.¹⁵ And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.¹⁶ And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.*

¹⁷And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. ¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰and blessed be El Elyon, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. ²¹And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. ²²And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto YHWH, El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: ²⁴save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

Following is an interesting list of possible translations for the names of the kings involved in this conflict and their kingdoms:

The Kings

Amraphel—*sayer of darkness: fall of the sayer*
 Arioch—*lion-like*
 Chedorlaomer—*binder of sheaves*
 Tidal—*great son*
 Bera—*son of evil*
 Birsha—*with iniquity*
 Shinab—*who hate his father, or Sin (moon god) is my father*
 Shemeber—*lofty flight or powerful name*
 Zoar—*insignificance (this is also the name of a place)*

The Kingdoms

Shinar—*country of two rivers*
 Ellasar—*El is chastener*
 Elam—*eternity*
 Goyim—*nations*
 Sodom—*burning*
 Gomorrah—*submersion*
 Admah—*clay*
 Zeboiim—*gazelles*
 Bela—*destruction*

It seems as though the story of Lot's escape from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is told in the names of the kings and kingdoms. "Son of evil, burning with iniquity submerged, who hated his father (disrespected Abram), a man of the *adamah* (the lower realm), fled like a gazelle to an insignificant mountain escaping destruction."

Some other interesting names:

Rephaims—*giants*
 Zuzims—*roving creatures*
 Emims—*terrors*

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Our portion this week is a peculiar one. There are several anomalies contained within this portion which raise numerous questions. For example, this is the only chapter in the narrative of Abraham's life (Genesis 12-22) in which the voice of YHWH is not heard. It is also the only story of Abram, the quiet, almost timid shepherd, undertaking a military operation of significant magnitude. We also witness the sudden introduction of the mysterious king and priest of Salem, Melchizedek, who greets the victorious Abram with bread and wine and is never heard from again in all the Torah. The Creator is referred to for the first and only time in the Torah as El Elyon. Beyond these anomalies there are numerous lessons to be found within the words and stories of this peculiar portion; therefore, let us now turn our attention to the text.

While the focus of this portion is clearly upon Abram, the elect of Elohim, over half of the chapter is dominated by the story of the battle of the kings. It is this battle of the kings that becomes the context for the story of Abram. Because of all the peculiarities of this portion, we might ask why this unusual story was even included in the Torah. Since the focus of the portion clearly rests upon Abram, Nahum M. Sarna writes:

What are the purposes of Scripture in featuring this story? Undoubtedly, its primary motive is to bring into prominence new facets of Abram's character. The one who displayed fear and evasiveness in Egypt now shows himself to be decisive and courageous in the promised land. The man of peace knows how to exhibit skill and heroism in battle. He who experienced his nephew's estrangement unhesitatingly demonstrates self-sacrificing loyalty to him in his hour of need. Abram is a military hero, but is not glorified as such. He does not initiate the war—others do—and he is drawn into it, acquitting himself magnificently against enormous odds.¹

I agree with Sarna that Abram is clearly being portrayed in a brand new light. We need only remember Abram requesting of Sarai that she conceal the fact that they were married and reveal only their step-sibling relationship while in Egypt.

Genesis 12:11-13 *And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: ¹²therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. ¹³Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.*

We may also recall Abram's plea for peace between himself and Lot as well as between their shepherds and hirelings.

Genesis 13:8 *And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*

We witnessed the depth of sacrifice Abram was willing to endure for the sake of fulfilling the will of YHWH.

¹ JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 163

Genesis 12:1-4 Now YHWH had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:² and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:³ and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. ⁴So Abram departed, as YHWH had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Genesis 13:9 Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

In our story today quite a different picture of Abram emerges. While previously Abram seemed to live a quiet, pastoral life shepherding his flock and seeking to live peacefully among his neighbors, we now witness Abram acting as commander and politician. After receiving news of Lot's capture, we learn that Abram was already in a covenant relationship with several people or tribes around him. We also see that Abram had trained servants armed and ready to defend his wealth and family.

Genesis 14:13-14 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. ¹⁴And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

We also witness Abram as a military strategist.

Genesis 14:15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

All of these attributes describe a much grander picture of Abram than what we have witnessed in the previous stories about him. We also witness Abram's great loyalty to family and confederates, his self-sacrificing spirit, his generosity in tithing, his commitment to peace, and his shunning of the wicked. All of these attributes are indeed admirable and should inspire and encourage us to be like Abram. But is the revelation of the character of Abram the sole or even primary reason for the inclusion of this story in the Torah? If revealing Abram's growth of character was the reason for the inclusion of this story, it could have been reduced to the mere report of Lot's capture by a foreign king. But as we have already stated above, over half of this chapter focuses not upon Abram but upon the battle of the kings. Therefore, I am suggesting that there are at least two other primary reasons (and possibly a third subtle reason) for both including this story in the Torah and for placing it in this particular location in the Torah.

We have already stated that one of the peculiarities of this portion is the absence of the voice of YHWH. This absence of YHWH'S voice is indeed unique to the narratives of Abram.

- Genesis 12:1-3 The calling of Abram
- Genesis 13:14-17 YHWH promises the land to Abram and his seed
- Genesis 15:1ff YHWH makes a covenant with Abram
- Genesis 16:7-12 The angel of YHWH speaks to Hagar
- Genesis 17:1ff YHWH speaks to Abraham concerning circumcision
- Genesis 18:1-15 YHWH tells Abraham that Sarah will bear a son
- Genesis 18:16ff YHWH speaks concerning Abraham and the righteous
- Genesis 19:1-23 The angels of YHWH speak to Lot
- Genesis 20:3-7 Elohim speaks to Abimelech concerning Sarah
- Genesis 21:12-20 Elohim speaks to Abraham concerning Hagar and Ishmael; He speaks to Hagar as well
- Genesis 22:1-19 Elohim speaks to Abraham concerning the offering of Isaac

The narrative of Abraham does not end until his death in Genesis 25.

- Genesis 23:1ff The death of Sarah
- Genesis 24:1ff Finding a wife for Isaac
- Genesis 25:1-6 Abraham takes another wife
- Genesis 25:7-10 Abraham's death

It is interesting to note that there is no mention of Abraham talking with YHWH after the offering of Isaac. We clearly see that our portion breaks a pattern. But the absence of YHWH's clear voice does not imply His absence. This is quite evident in the story of Abraham's servant finding a wife for Isaac.

Abraham binds his servant with an oath to find a wife for his son, but not from the women of Canaan; nor does Abraham allow his servant to take Isaac out of the land of Canaan. The servant returns to Haran and there prays that the Sovereign One would indeed reveal the appropriate wife for Isaac.

Genesis 24:12-14 *And he said, O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. ¹³Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: ¹⁴and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

After Rebekah fulfills the criteria, the servant of Abraham praises YHWH and credits the Holy One with finding a wife for Isaac.

Genesis 24:21 *And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether YHWH had made his journey prosperous or not.*

Genesis 24:27 *And he said, Blessed be YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, YHWH led me to the house of my master's brethren.*

Genesis 24:42 *And I came this day unto the well, and said, O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, if now Thou do prosper my way which I go.*

Genesis 24:48 *And I bowed down my head, and worshipped YHWH, and blessed YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.*

Genesis 24:50 *Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from YHWH: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.*

While the voice of YHWH is never heard in this story, it is clear to everyone involved as well as to the reader that the Sovereign One was active throughout the whole event.

The same may be said of our portion. The portion begins with the names of several kings and their kingdoms. The meanings of the names are in themselves very intimidating – “sayer of darkness,” “lion-like,” “son of evil,” and “with iniquity.” The battle is provoked by the rebellion of five vassal kings against their sovereign king, who brings three other kings with him. Not only does the sovereign king win against these five rebellious kings, but he also marches against the Rephaims, the Zuzims, the Emims, the Horites, the Amalekites, and the Amorites, all of which were formidable foes in their own right.

The names of other peoples whom the Elamites and their allies subdued—Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, Horites, Amalekites, Amorites—would indicate that the uprising of the five southern kinglets was but one part of a massive effort to resist continued Mesopotamian control in the Transjordan. The invading kings repress such attempted revolts in grandiose and unmitigated style. Nobody can stand before them, even though the defeated Rephaim, Zuzim, and Emim are themselves imposing threats, people of giant stature (Deut. 2:10-12, 20-23). This makes Abram's ability to rout these potentates all the more impressive.²

The fact that the Torah gives such details as these intimidating names is not simply to reveal Abram's character but to demonstrate the fact that Abram and his small band of confederates could not possibly succeed against such a powerful military force as this. Chedorlaomer's army is seen described as an unstoppable, ruthless war machine marching across the country with speed and power. By including these details, it becomes clear that YHWH, not Abram, is the true "hero" of the story. While never overtly mentioned in the narrative itself, it is clear that Abram's victory over such a mighty military force is a miracle brought about by the true Sovereign of the Universe. This reality is attested to at the end of the story by the mysterious king-priest Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:18-20 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰and blessed be El Elyon, which **hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.** And he gave him tithes of all.*

There are two major points that we should understand from these facts. First, we should recognize that even when there is no blatant evidence of the Sovereign One being present in the events surrounding our lives, He is nonetheless present and acting. This is the thought behind the practice of covering one's eyes while reciting the "Shema."³ The hand over the eyes during the prayer is to signify that we still trust YHWH even when we cannot see Him. Remembering the reality of the Creator's eternal nature and His omnipresence will help us muster the courage to walk faithfully before Him.

The second lesson to be learned from this reality is the fact that when the Creator works covertly, the world will not recognize the hand of the Creator until we give Him the glory and credit that He rightly deserves. Therefore, we should always be quick to give credit where credit is due so that the whole world may know that it is YHWH who is the Sovereign of the Universe.

A second possible reason for the inclusion of the story of the rebellion of the Canaanite kings and their defeat at this point may have been to introduce us to the concept and consequences of the "Suzerain-Vassal" type covenant. This information will become extremely important in the portions to follow as we encounter YHWH entering into covenant with Abram and his descendants.

The Hebrew word most often translated as "covenant" is the word *briyt* (*bet, resh, yud, tav*). This same word is translated as "confederate" in our portion.

Genesis 14:13 *And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were **confederate** with Abram.*

According to Meyer, the word *briyt* is derived from the Hebrew root *bet, resh, hey*, which can mean "to eat bread." This is substantiated by the fact that many covenants or treaties in the Ancient Near East were

² The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 402

³ The Shema is the prayer "Hear, O Israel, YHWH is our Elohim, YHWH is One!" from Deuteronomy 6:4

concluded with the ritual of breaking bread and sharing table fellowship.⁴ There are some who theorize that the original root was *bet, resh, chet*, which can mean “to fasten” or “bolt together” and is a reference to the binding nature of an oath, treaty, or covenant.⁵ Regardless of the etymology of the word *briyt*, it is clear that responsibility and obligation are clearly implied.

There are three major types of covenants described in the Torah: Royal Grant, Suzerain-Vassal, and Parity. A **Royal Grant** is a covenant in which a superior grants favor to an inferior, possibly as a sign of gratitude for loyal service or perhaps merely as a display of the superior’s beneficent nature. The Noahic⁶ and Davidic⁷ covenants are examples of this type of covenant. A **Suzerain-Vassal** type covenant is one in which an inferior promises loyalty, faithful service, and obedience to a superior in exchange for protection, blessings, and favor from the superior. This type of covenant was usually entered into by lesser kings seeking peace and protection from an emperor or superior king. The Mosaic⁸ covenant between the children of Israel and the Sovereign One may be an example of a Suzerain-Vassal type covenant. A **Parity** covenant is an agreement or treaty between two or more equal parties. The confederation of Abram with his neighbors may well have been a Parity covenant.

The language of this text indicates that the five Canaanite kings were most likely vassals to the suzerain or sovereign king, Chedorlaomer. Victor Hamilton writes,

The relationship of the five vassal kings to Elam is described through the successive use of the verbs "abad"⁹ and "marad."¹⁰ Both verbs are used frequently in the OT to describe political relationships between nations. The first one means “to be subject to” a sovereign. The second one means to “refuse allegiance to, rise up against” a sovereign.¹¹

There is some debate as to the length of this rebellion. The dominant translations read:

Genesis 14:4-5 *Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. ⁵And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim.*

It would appear from this translation that the rebellion was short-lived and that the response came quickly, but this may not be the best translation. In the Hebrew text, the absence of the preposition “in” before the word thirteen as well as the use of cardinal instead of ordinal numbers would seem to indicate a parallelism. In other words, the phrase is very balanced.

Twelve years they served and thirteen years they rebelled.

In the next verse (14:5), however, the Hebrew uses the ordinal number for the “fourteenth” year. Thus, what we may understand from this is that the five vassal kings served Chedorlaomer for twelve years and

⁴ A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English, Ernest Kline, MacMillan Publishing Company, Pg. 85

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Genesis 9:1-17

⁷ 2 Samuel 7:8-16

⁸ Exodus 19-24

⁹ *Abad*, from the root *ayin, bet, dalet*, means to “work,” “labor,” or “serve.” It is the same root as that of the word “servant.”

¹⁰ *Marad*, from the root *mem, resh, dalet*, means to “rebel,” “revolt,” or “be against.”

¹¹ The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 402

then began to refuse allegiance. For the next thirteen years these five kings stood in rebellion, refusing to submit to their sovereign or suzerain or pay the agreed-upon tribute. In the fourteenth year of this rebellion Chedorlaomer finally took punitive action. Having raised an army from among his other vassal kings, Chedorlaomer blazed a trail to put down this rebellion before it spread any further. We should note that on its way to the battle, the army of Chedorlaomer attacked a number of other peoples.

Genesis 14:5-7 *And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.⁷ And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.*

Within the narrative of this story we are informed of the great patience of a king towards his covenanted vassals. We are also informed, however, of the dire consequences of violating such covenants. I am suggesting that beyond the historical reality of this story in the life of Abram, this narrative also serves to instruct the children of Israel concerning the nature and seriousness of entering into covenants. This becomes an especially important teaching in light of the fact that Abram is about to enter into covenant with the Sovereign of the Universe in the very next chapter of the Torah.

The third possible reason for the inclusion of this peculiar story in the Torah is as a shadow picture of the Messiah. We should not forget that from the very beginning of the story of Abram, we are informed that Lot is Abram's nephew.

Genesis 11:26-28 *And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.²⁷ Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.²⁸ And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.*

Genesis 11:31 *And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.*

Genesis 12:5 *And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.*

Yet in our portion Abram repeatedly refers to Lot as his brother.

Genesis 14:12 *And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.*

Genesis 14:14 *And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.*

Genesis 14:16 *And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.*

While death was the consequence of Adam's fall, the hope of a messiah to reverse this consequence has been at the heart of much of what we have learned in the previous portions. The hope of the restoration of life and creation is clearly a major theme and expectation throughout the Torah. Until the promised

“seed of the woman”¹² comes, however, the hope of immortality was realized in part through the remembrance of one’s name. This remembrance could be accomplished in a number of different ways. Kings and emperors often had cities named after themselves or erected great pylons engraved with their images, names, and conquests. But this hope of immortality through remembrance was not limited to kings and emperors. The common person would likewise establish a heritage through his progeny. Children, especially male children, were understood to be a means of keeping one’s name and memory alive. We see evidence of this in the teaching of the Levirate marriage and the laws of inheritance.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 *If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. ⁶And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. ⁷And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. ⁸Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; ⁹then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. ¹⁰And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.*

Examples of this practice are found in the stories of Tamar and Ruth.

Genesis 38:6-10 *And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. ⁷And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of YHWH; and YHWH slew him. ⁸And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. ⁹And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. ¹⁰And the thing which he did displeased YHWH: wherefore He slew him also.*

Ruth 3:9-14 *And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. ¹⁰And he said, Blessed be thou of YHWH, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. ¹²And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. ¹³Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as YHWH liveth: lie down until the morning. ¹⁴And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.*

Ruth 4:1-8 *Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. ²And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. ³And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: ⁴and I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it*

¹² Genesis 3:15

beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. ⁵Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. ⁶And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. ⁷Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. ⁸Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

An example of immortality through the protection of a name is likewise found in the laws of inheritance.

Numbers 27:1-4 *Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. ²And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, ³Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against YHWH in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. ⁴Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.*

There are numerous other examples of this hope expressed throughout the Scriptures.¹³ In our portion we should understand that Abram, out of love for his brother Haran and his memory, treats his nephew Lot as his brother. In other words, Abram rescues Lot out of love for Haran, Lot's father. It is Lot who will keep the memory of Haran alive, so Abram sees Lot not only as his nephew but also as the living evidence and memory of his brother Haran. In this regard Abram may now consider Lot as his brother.

Another concept that we should understand here is that of the kinsman redeemer. Here we must be clear to understand that Israel is called to be a people. The calling on Israel to manifest the image of YHWH in the world through faithfully and obediently keeping the covenant is a corporate calling. In many respects, we should understand the nation of Israel as being the first multimember embodiment of the Creator; thus, the Torah teaches that every member of the children of Israel has a responsibility for the whole body. Here we may remember Cain's question:

Genesis 4:9 *And YHWH said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*

The obvious answer is yes! This is reflected later in the Torah in the teachings on redeeming our poor brethren.

Leviticus 25:24-34 *And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. ²⁵If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. ²⁶And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; ²⁷then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. ²⁸But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession. ²⁹And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it. ³⁰And if it be not redeemed within the*

¹³ Exodus 32:32-33; Deuteronomy 9:14, 25:19-20; Job 24:20; Psalm 45:17, 127:3; Jeremiah 11:19; Ezekiel 21:32; Revelation 3:5

space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubile. ³¹But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubile. ³²Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time. ³³And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in the year of jubile: for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel. ³⁴But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession.

Leviticus 25:35-46 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. ³⁶Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy Elohim; that thy brother may live with thee. ³⁷Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. ³⁸I am YHWH your Elohim, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your Elohim. ³⁹And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: ⁴⁰but as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubile: ⁴¹and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. ⁴²For they are My servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. ⁴³Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy Elohim. ⁴⁴Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. ⁴⁵Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. ⁴⁶And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour.

Leviticus 25:47-55 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: ⁴⁸after that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: ⁴⁹either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. ⁵¹If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. ⁵²And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubile, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption. ⁵³And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight. ⁵⁴And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubile, both he, and his children with him. ⁵⁵For unto Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am YHWH your Elohim.

In these three texts we clearly see that if our brother should lose his property or inheritance to foreigners, we are to redeem it and restore it to our brother. If our brother falls into poverty or hard times, again, we are to rescue him and eventually restore him to financial security. Finally, if our brother falls to the degree that he must sell himself into bondage to a foreigner, then we are to redeem him from his captivity and restore him to his freedom. We will look at these teachings in greater detail in later studies. For now, however, it is enough to see that we are to redeem or ransom our kinsman. In our portion we witness Abram sacrificing his own well-being and security to rescue his nephew out of love for Lot's father, Haran.

In many ways this is a shadow picture of the Messiah, who gave his life as a ransom to rescue us from our bondage to sin and death.

John 8:34 *Yeshua answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

Romans 6:17 *But Elohim be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

Romans 6:19-22 *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. ²⁰For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. ²¹What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²²But now being made free from sin, and become servants to Elohim, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

Romans 7:23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

2 Timothy 2:26 *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

Matthew 12:29 *Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house.*

Isaiah 61:1 *The Spirit of Adonai YHWH is upon me; because YHWH hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*

Luke 4:18 *The Spirit of YHWH is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

Matthew 20:28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

1 Timothy 2:6 *Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

Clearly Yeshua is our “kinsman redeemer,” who out of love for the Father risked his life and security to rescue and redeem us from our bondage to sin and death. Just as Abram rescued Lot while he was alienated and willfully living among the wicked, so too did Yeshua pay our ransom while we were yet alienated and living as sinners.

Romans 5:8 *But Elohim commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us.*

This unique story of Abram’s rescue of his “brother” from captivity brings understanding to the apostle Shaul’s statement to the Galatians.

Galatians 3:8 *And the scripture, foreseeing that Elohim would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

So it is in the life of Abram that we begin to see the foreshadowing of the gospel of Yeshua the Messiah, the “seed of the woman,” fulfilling the promise to free mankind from the bondage of sin and death imposed by Adam at the fall.

Let us now turn our attention to another peculiarity in our portion – the introduction of the character of Melchizedek.

As the story of Abram’s miraculous rescue of Lot concludes, Abram returns to the land of his dwelling. On his way home with Lot and the spoils of his victory, Abram is met by two kings – Bera, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek, the king of Salem. The appearance of these two kings is somewhat surprising. Earlier in the narrative we are told that Bera, the king of Sodom, and Birsha, the king of Gomorrah, both “fell” in the vale of Siddim.

Genesis 14:10 *And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.*

We should understand that the Hebrew word *naphal*, translated here as “fell,” can also mean “submitted” or “bowed down.” Therefore, we should not assume that Bera and Birsha died in the vale of Siddim but that they humbly submitted to Chedorlaomer, thus ending their rebellion. So we see that Bera is back in Sodom when Abram arrives.

What is more surprising than the encounter with Bera is the encounter with a tenth king that has not previously been introduced, the king of Salem. Melchizedek, king of Salem, emerges – seemingly from out of nowhere – and encounters Abram. He is never mentioned again in the Torah. His name appears only once more in the Tanach in the book of Psalms and several times in the Messianic writings in the book of Hebrews. We should also note that this narrative between Melchizedek and Abram appears as a foreign insertion into the text. In other words, if we remove these verses about the king of Salem, there is no noticeable interruption to the story. Let us read the story of Abram’s return without the story of Melchizedek contained in verses 18-20.

Genesis 14:17, 21-24 *And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. ²¹And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. ²²And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto YHWH, El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: ²⁴save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.*

Had I not pointed out the missing verses, most readers would not have notice their absence; therefore, we must raise the question of why the story of Melchizedek is introduced into the narrative at this particular point.

First, let me suggest that the reason the Melchizedek story is introduced into the text at this particular time is because this is the way it happened in history. Second, I would suggest that the reason that this story is recorded here is to set up a stark contrast between Melchizedek and Bera. Let us recall that the name Bera means “Son of Evil,” while the title Melchizedek means “Righteous King.” The behavior of these two kings is indeed an example of contrast. It should be noted that in the Hebrew this text is somewhat ambiguous.

The narrator deliberately uses the expression "came out to meet him" because of its inherent ambiguity. Hebrew yatsa' likr'at is a neutral phrase deriving its coloration from the context. It may mean "to greet," as in Exodus 4:14, 1 Samuel 18:6, and Proverbs

7:15, or, much more frequently, "to confront," as in numbers 20:20, 31:13, and Joshua 8:5.¹⁴

Although both kings go out to meet Abram upon his return from battle, we may understand that the king of Sodom goes out to **confront** Abram, whereas the king of Salem goes out to **greet** Abram. This understanding is clearly seen in the words and actions of these two kings. We should note that the king of Salem greets Abram with both gifts and blessings, while the king of Sodom confronts Abram with the harsh words "Give me."

Genesis 14:18-19 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth.*

Genesis 14:17, 21 *And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. ²¹And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, **Give me** the persons, and take the goods to thyself.*

Abram's response to these two kings is likewise very different. Abram communes with Melchizedek and possibly gives him tithes of all the spoils of war. However, Abram refuses any gesture of reward from the king of Sodom; instead, he glorifies YHWH in Bera's presence, allowing the king no opportunity to elevate himself above YHWH.

Before we go into the identity of the person of Melchizedek, let us look at the question of the tithe. As I have stated above, the language of these verses is somewhat ambiguous. This is especially true of the matter of the tithe. The undefined pronouns used in these verses leave several options as to the direction and object of the tithe. Let me list three possibilities.

Genesis 14:18-20 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he (Melchizedek) was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abram), and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰and blessed be El Elyon, which hath delivered thine (Abram's) enemies into thy (Abram's) hand. And he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) tithes of all.*

This is the traditional and most accepted understanding of this passage. But there are other possibilities to consider.

Genesis 14:18-20 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he (Melchizedek) was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he (Melchizedek) blessed him (El Elyon), and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰and blessed be El Elyon, which hath delivered thine (Abram's) enemies into thy (Abram's) hand. And he (Melchizedek) gave him (Abram) tithes of all.*

Here we see that it is Melchizedek blessing Abram with tithes, possibly of the returned booty that was captured during the war. This would certainly be an appropriate gesture and consistent with the actions of Bera, who sought to give Abram the spoils of war as a reward.

Genesis 14:18-20 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he (Melchizedek) was the priest of El Elyon. ¹⁹And he (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abram), and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰and blessed be El Elyon, which hath delivered thine (Abram's) enemies into thy (Abram's) hand. And he (Melchizedek or Abram) gave him (El Elyon) tithes of all.*

¹⁴ The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 109

Here we see that it is El Elyon who is receiving the tithes, possibly out of gratitude for the victory and the clear blessing that was given.

All three of these possibilities are presented in the text. The first option is only substantiated later in the book of Hebrews. In establishing the primacy of the Melchizedek priesthood over the Aaronic priesthood, the author of the letter to the Hebrews clearly indicates that it was Abram who gave tithes to Melchizedek.

***Hebrews 7:1-2** For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of El Elyon, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.*

We should also realize here that this "tithes" is a one-time offering that was given; it is not the basis for the later pattern of yearly tithing.

There has also been great speculation concerning the identity of Melchizedek. Some teach that it is Shem, the son of Noah, who would still have been alive at the time of Abram. Others teach that it is the "preincarnate" Messiah who is greeting and blessing Abram. I am going out on a limb and teaching that Melchizedek is the king of Salem! This is what the text teaches. The name "Melchizedek" is most likely not a "name" but an honorary title which means "The Righteous King." The Torah gives us very little information about him. The rest of what we know about this king of Salem comes from Psalm 110, the only other reference to him in the Tanach, and the letter to the Hebrews.

***Psalm 110:4** YHWH hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

***Hebrews 7:1-3** For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of El Elyon, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;³ without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of Elohim; abideth a priest continually.*

Here we see that the person of Melchizedek has been cast into an eternal being who continues to serve as priest forever. To try and solve the mystery of Melchizedek's identity is to get lost in speculation and miss the very point that is being made. Clearly the focus of these additional texts is upon the type or order of his priesthood.

***Psalm 110:4** YHWH hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after **the order of Melchizedek**.*

***Hebrews 5:6** As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after **the order of Melchizedek**.*

***Hebrews 5:10** Called of Elohim an high priest after **the order of Melchizedek**.*

***Hebrews 6:20** Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Yeshua, made an high priest for ever **after the order of Melchizedek**.*

***Hebrews 7:11** If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise **after the order of Melchizedek**, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*

***Hebrews 7:17** For He testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever **after the order of Melchizedek**.*

Hebrews 7:21 *(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto him, YHWH sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever **after the order of Melchizedek.**)*

Hebrews 7:15 *And it is yet far more evident: for that **after the similitude of Melchizedek** there ariseth another priest.*

The emphasis of all these verses is not upon the person, who is never identified, but upon the manner, similitude, or order of his priesthood. The question that must be answered is not "Who is Melchizedek?" but "What is so unique about this priesthood of Melchizedek?" In contrast with the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood, which requires one to be a direct descendant of Levi, Aaron, and Pinchas, the Melchizedek priesthood is not contingent upon one's genealogy. We see as well that the Melchizedek priesthood is composed of the dual role of priest and king.

Genesis 14:18 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of El Elyon.*

Melchizedek was both a priest of El Elyon and the king of Salem. Contrary to the pattern of the later nation of Israel where the king came from the line of Judah and the priesthood came from the line of Levi, the Melchizedek priesthood combines these roles into one Royal Priesthood. What is being revealed in our portion through the ministry of Melchizedek is the very nature of the calling that will be extended to the descendants of Abram.

Exodus 19:5-6 *Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: ⁶and ye shall be unto Me a **kingdom of priests**, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

The children of Israel would eventually be asked to fill the role of the Melchizedek priesthood. Israel was to become a whole kingdom of priests. As a Melchizedek priesthood, the descendants of Abraham (even by faith¹⁵) would serve as mediators of the love, grace, mercy, justice, and holiness of the Sovereign Creator of the Universe to the whole world. The Melchizedek priesthood is the priesthood of the whole body of Israel. It should not surprise us that the rite of anointing the priesthood and the rite of restoring one afflicted with *tsara'at*¹⁶ is the same process.

Leviticus 8:23 *And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.*

Leviticus 14:14 *And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.*

What the Torah is teaching us in this ritual is that the Aaronic priesthood is simply an object lesson on how the body of Israel is to function as the Melchizedek priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood serves the Melchizedek priesthood as teacher and example. Just as the tabernacle of wood, wool, and linen serves as a shadow picture of the Temple of the body of Messiah, so too the Aaronic priesthood serves as the shadow picture of what we, as the body of Messiah, are to become. The relationship between these two

¹⁵ Galatians 3:7

¹⁶ The affliction of *tsara'at*, translated as "leprosy" in the Torah, is not leprosy or Hansen's disease as we know it today. It is a divine affliction best described as the physical symptom of a deeper spiritual condition. Its purpose is not for the mere punishment of sin but to serve as the chastisement of a loving Father administered in the hopes of leading the errant one to repentance, restoration, and above all, life.

distinct priesthoods could be described in this manner: the Aaronic priesthood is the priesthood TO the body of Messiah, while the Melchizedek priesthood is the priesthood OF the body of Messiah.

The same may be said of Yeshua and his *talmidim*.¹⁷

1 Peter 2:9 *But ye are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

The letter to the Hebrews is describing Yeshua Messiah as the *Cohen Gadol*¹⁸ of the Melchizedek priesthood. In other words, he is head of the priesthood OF the body. Thus, as the many-membered body of Messiah comes together without spot or blemish, filled with the Spirit of the Holy One and functioning under the headship of Yeshua our Messiah, we shall fulfill this calling to be functioning in the order of Melchizedek, without need for the shadow picture. This is also what is referred to in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:6 *And hath made us kings and priests unto Elohim and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Revelation 5:10 *And hast made us unto our Elohim kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

The important thing to understand concerning the Melchizedek priesthood is not who it WAS but who it WILL BE. Therefore, we may understand that what we see in this unique portion is not simply a historical account of a peculiar event in the life of Abram, but rather a foreshadowing of the redeeming ministry of the Melchizedek priesthood that we shall perform as members of the body of Messiah.

¹⁷ *Talmidim* is the Hebrew word for "disciples."

¹⁸ *Cohen Gadol* is the Hebrew for "High Priest."