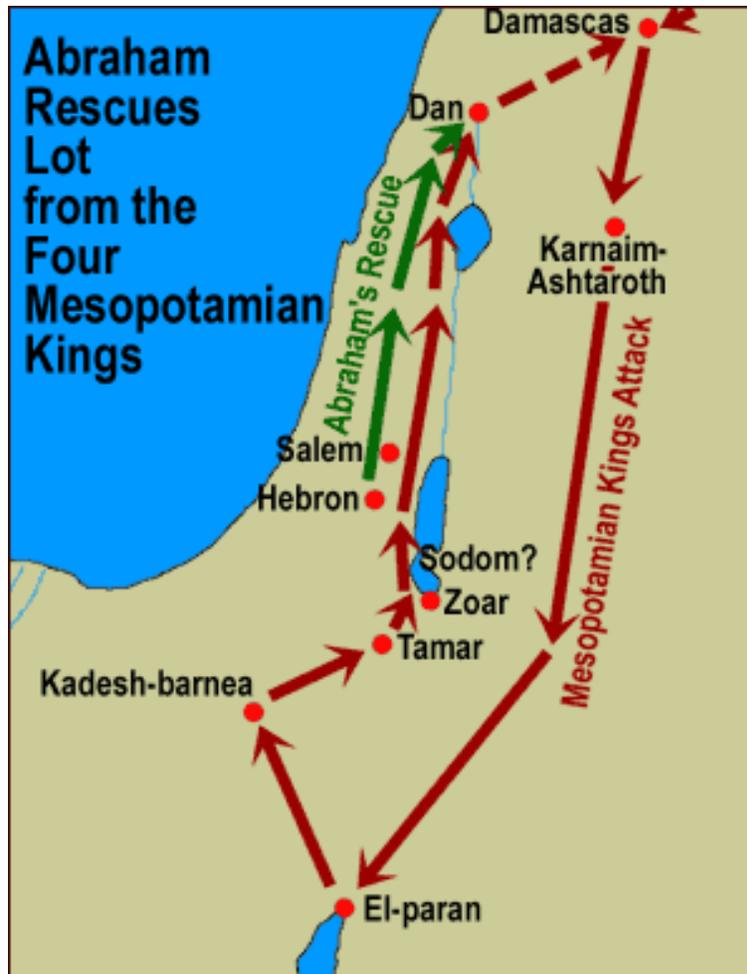


Midweek Meditation July 1
Genesis 14



The first portion of this passage sets the stage for the second. I am not going to spend a lot of time on the first part. It just explains that in the area east of where Abram settled, and in fact, as we have learned, where Lot settled, there were neighboring kingdoms that were at odds with each other. The area where Lot settled is on the south end of the Dead Sea, then called The Valley of Siddim. A group of towns, in the Valley of Siddim, including Sodom where Lot was living, and Gomorrah and three other towns had been under the control of another group of towns to the north. That means that these southern towns were required to pay a tribute or tax. And they were sick and tired of giving goods

away to this group of four towns to the north, which had taken control over them twelve years ago. So, they defiantly, stopped paying the tribute, but unfortunately, that did not make the kingdom to the north happy. And, they attacked this region to the south in order to force this southern kingdom to be compliant with the tribute payments. It didn't go very well for the southern kingdom. While they were in retreat, some fell into tar pits and other fled into the hills. The scripture says that the victors in this battle took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah. And they took captive some of the men, including Lot and all of his possessions. One of the ones who fled, from the battle, reported to Abram that his nephew had been captured. According to the passage, "when Abram heard that his relative, Lot, had been captured he called out 318 of his trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night while in Dan, Abram divided his men to attack this northern kingdom and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative, Lot, and his possessions together with all the women and the other people. Now the stage is set for what I referred to as the second part of this passage. After Abram routed the opposing armies and recovered the possessions and the people who had been captured, the king of Sodom, who was very thankful for Abram's help, came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh. Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God most High. And he blessed Abram saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of all the earth, and Blessed be God most High who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then the King of Sodom said to Abram, give me all the people who were captured, but we owe you a great debt. Keep all the goods as a compensation for your help.

So, there are some important things for us to remember about the rescue of Lot described in this story. First, Abram. He had the wisdom to not get involved with these disagreements that were going on in the east. Only when a part of his family, God's family, was involved did he then decide that it was time. Abram sought Justice and safety for his brother in the name of Lord. And so, should we. This is an example that we should be compelled to follow. The second thing I want us to think about has two parts. First, let's think about what has happened to Lot. Remember, he made his decision to go to the east, and he set up his tent in the green land just outside of Sodom. In this passage,

he was no longer just outside of Sodom, he is living in Sodom, and we know from last week, the people of Sodom were extremely wicked. Lot, a righteous man, went to that place where the grass was greener, and with each day that passed, he perhaps gave a little more of his heart to the wickedness among the people. Maybe he did not participate in the wickedness. But sometimes silence can have a louder voice than the loudest proclamation. So, as time passed, perhaps a little less of his heart is left for the God who delivered him from the land of Ur. And even if Lot was able to keep himself completely separate from the wickedness of Sodom, he and his family and his possessions had gotten swept up in the lust for wealth and power that was around him. In contrast, Abram was living in the land to the west, not as green and lush as the place where Lot had chosen, but the Land of Abram has provided him and his people all that they need to peacefully walk with God. We must also note, that Abram was given a chance to reap some of the material bounty of the land of Sodom. The King of Sodom offered Abram all of the possessions and goods that Abram's armies had recovered in their military victory. But Abram said, "I will accept nothing so that you will be able to say, I have Made Abram rich." Abram knew that this victory belonged to God. God had used him and his army to protect God's family, to sustain God's family, and to further the purpose of God's family. It would not be honorable to the name of God to accept a reward that rightly belongs only to God. Perhaps even more important than the lesson that Lot should have learned, or the way the Abram continued to grow in the faith that led his call to lead God's people, is the appearance of the High Priest, Melchizedek. He first appears here in this passage to bless Abram. There are no details about when he was born or when he died. The only clue that we have to his identity is that he is the king of Salem, which is thought to be Jerusalem. And that he was a priest of God Most High; and that he was authorized somehow to bring God's Blessing to God's chosen one, Abram. He is referred to only two other places in the Bible. First, in Psalm 110:4 where David is prophesying about the coming Messiah in the order of Melchizedek. Next he appears in Hebrews where Melchizedek is set apart from all the Levitical priests from the Old Testament. Hebrews summarizes the Story told in our lesson, and adds a little substance to the story of this man who is the priest of all priests, and who blessed the father of our faith and seems to be the ancient forerunner of our Priest of all priests, Jesus Christ. In Hebrews it says of Melchizedek, that

his name means “King of Righteousness,” and that he is without father or mother, without beginning days or end of life. Like the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

So, I want to sum up by reviewing what we have learned. Lot, having gravitated toward the place where the grass was greener, perhaps discovered that his way of looking at blessing and prosperity may have caused him to give his heart to the wrong people, and the wrong way of life. Even if his heart was still pure, as he dwelled in a land of wicked people, and we really do not know, he was at the very least taken captive because he was in the wrong place, and perhaps with the wrong people. We learned that Abram valued the reward of blessing from the Great High Priest, sharing bread and wine with the Great High Priest, Melchizedek. And he willingly gave one tenth of his property over to the Great High Priest and was glad to accept God’s affirmation from this Christ-like priest. At the same time, Abram did not value or accept a reward for rescuing the people and possessions of Sodom. First, it was God’s victory, not Abrams. Second, Abram realized that by accepting a reward, he could become beholden to a wicked king and a wicked people, and he would be beholden to only one, God Almighty. I want us all to reflect on what you can learn from Lot’s story, and what you can learn from Abram’s story here in Genesis 14. And then, Melchizedek the living prophesy of the Messiah. He was a priest before all Levitical priests. That is all the priest that emerged from the law of Moses. The Order of Melchizedek as it is referred to by King David is just another way of saying the way of the order of the Messiah, or the way of Jesus Christ. Christ’s Blessing to Abram thousands of years before his birth here on earth. Who is Lot? Who is Abram.? Which example is the one you should follow? Who is Melchizedek? He shows us that Christ was not constrained by the years of his life in this world. He was a blessing to Abram, and Blessing to Peter and Paul, and he remains a blessing to you and to me. Let us Pray