

When God is Silent Fight On

Genesis 14:10-16 HCSB Now the Valley of Siddim contained many asphalt pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, *some* fell into them, but the rest fled to the mountains. (11) The *four kings* took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food and went on. (12) They also took Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, for he was living in Sodom, and they went on. (13) One of the survivors came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was at the oaks belonging to Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and the brother of Aner. They were bound by a treaty with Abram. (14) When Abram heard that his relative had been taken prisoner, he assembled his 318 trained men, born in his household, and they went in pursuit as far as Dan. (15) And he and his servants deployed against them by night, attacked them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus. (16) He brought back all the goods and also his relative Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the *other* people.

Introduction

The 1999 edition of the Canadian Army and War Journal reports that “since 3,600 BC, the world has known only 292 years of peace. During this period, there have been 14,531 wars, large and small, in which 3 billion 640 million people have been killed. The value of the destruction would pay for a belt of solid gold around the world 97.2 miles in width, 33 feet thick.”

A man by the name of Dr. Gustave Valbert asserts that between the years 1496 BC to 1861 AD there were 13 years of war for every year of peace.

What a long a terrible history! Adam and Eve's misguided decision to pursue godlike knowledge only brought shame, fear, separation from God, ignorance, bitterness, rage and murder.

- **James 3:16, 4:1-3 HCSB** For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. (4:1) What is the source of the wars and the fights among you? Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you? (2) You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. (3) You ask and don't receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may spend it on your desires for pleasure.

In Genesis 14, we find the first recorded war in history and it's already well advanced. We see – neither a petty brawl nor mere inter-tribal warfare – but a coalition of city states at war with each other!

Some historians call this the Dead Sea War; because verse three tells us that these kings met in conflict near the Salt Sea which is another name for the Dead Sea area. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and three other neighboring cities had been dominated for twelve years by Chedorlaomer the King of Elam and these lesser kings finally determined to rebel. So, in the thirteenth year of Chedorlaomer's reign they rebelled, only to be defeated the following year and returned to subservience.

However, my goal this morning is not to speak to you on the issue of war, but of the believer's response to war. As all right thinking men do, I hate war and I hope you do too.

War may sometimes be a necessary evil, but no matter how necessary it remains an evil, never a good. We will never learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children.

War is an ugly thing – but it is not the ugliest thing. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much, much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless

made so – and kept so – by the exertions of better men than himself. There were few better men than our father Abraham.

I. Abram's Forethought

After the coalition of five kings were defeated by Chedorlaomer and his allies we read:

- [Genesis 14:11-12 HCSB](#) The *four kings* took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food and went on. (12) They also took Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, for he was living in Sodom, and they went on.

Abraham's nephew Lot, having chosen the world, the Lowlander culture and materialism, now finds himself caught up in the ramifications of his decision.

Brothers and sisters, if you make this world and its baubles your priority, then don't be surprised if you are overtaken, beaten, and robbed by others who have the same priorities but are unhindered by your sense of ethics because they have spent more time wallowing in the world's culture.

There was one person who escaped the conflict and I find it interesting that he did not run to another king or another city. He ran to Abram the Hebrew (the first instance of the use of that word by the way).

Abram's response? He armed his "trained servants", and from the context we understand that these servants were trained in war. Abram had 318 of these that had been born in his household so he knew for a fact where their loyalties ran.

Abram heard about it and was immediately concerned. Furthermore, I'd like you to pay particular attention to the fact that (unlike Lot who is repeatedly shown as weak and incompetent) Abram was already prepared for bad times. Let me ask you a question. How long does it take to develop an army of 318 men who are sufficiently disciplined, trained, and armed to take on four kings and defeat them? Abram did not wait for the evil day. He considered the possibility and prepared for it.

- [Proverbs 3:21-24 HCSB](#) Maintain *your* competence (*literally "good planning"*) and discretion. My son, don't lose sight of them. (22) They will be life for you and adornment for your neck. (23) Then you will go safely on your way; your foot will not stumble. (24) When you lie down, you will not be afraid; you will lie down, and your sleep will be pleasant.

II. Abram's Concern

When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken, he could have said, "He made his own bed, let him lie in it." He could have said, "He's a big boy, he's not my concern anymore." He could have been indifferent, apathetic, unmoved by the plight of the pathetic victims and if he had – he wouldn't have been that much different from many professed Christians.

In September of 1940, the America First Committee was created. While a war was brewing in Europe that would eventually result in 165 million deaths of mostly Africans, Asians, and Europeans, six million "Gold Star Mothers", many wearing fine clothing and living comfortable, safe lives, protested not only participating in the war but even rendering aid to the victims.

The leaders of the AFC *claimed* they were motivated by concern for American lives. For some, this was no doubt true. Unfortunately, however, the literature published by and records of the debates in the AFC in the year prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor reveals xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiment within its leadership as well as among its supporters.

The study of the history of the America First Committee is thus a cautionary tale. Those who stand aside in self-imposed isolationism are doomed to suffer the fate of those to whom they fail to offer mercy.

G.K. Chesterton once said, “*There are no uninteresting things; there are only uninterested people.*” Far too many of the Master’s disciples are uninterested in the various and complicated needs that surround them.

Quoheleth, the Teacher, had this to say on the matter.

- **Proverbs 24:10-12 HCSB** If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited. (11) Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. (12) If you say, “But we didn’t know about this,” won’t He who weighs hearts consider it? Won’t He who protects your life know? Won’t He repay a person according to his work?

Abram saw the world’s needs and felt compassion for them. He did not remain passive and apathetic. He saw the need, acknowledged the need and got involved emotionally.

III. **Abram’s Action**

- **Genesis 14:14-16 HCSB** When Abram heard that his relative had been taken prisoner, he assembled his 318 trained men, born in his household, and they went in pursuit as far as Dan. (15) And he and his servants deployed against them by night, attacked them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus. (16) He brought back all the goods and also his relative Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the *other* people.

Abram had considered the possibility of war; had prepared for it; when it came he got emotionally involved; he didn’t simply withdraw into himself and try to protect himself, and he got involved.

He didn’t say “I don’t care”, and he didn’t limit himself to making statements and public condemnations. He saw injustice, was moved by it emotionally and allowed those emotions to tip the balance of action.

Look carefully at verse 14:

- **Genesis 14:14 HCSB** When Abram heard that his relative had been taken prisoner, he assembled his 318 trained men, born in his household, and they went in pursuit as far as Dan.

The word the translators of the HCSB rendered “relative” here is the Hebrew word “ach”. It is literally the word “brother”. He regarded Lot not merely as his rebellious and materialistic nephew who had tried to “get one over” on him and to profit off of his generosity. He regarded Lot as his “ach”, his brother.

- **Malachi 2:10 HCSB** Don’t all of us have one Father? Didn’t one God create us? Why then do we act treacherously against one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Abram was not simply moved by the dilemma because Lot was his nephew. He was moved because of his empathy for a fellow human being. Abram put his money where his mouth was.

Theodore Roosevelt once said,

“It is not the critic who counts. It is not the person who points out what the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great passions, enthusiasms, the devotions; and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.”

Abram strapped on his sword, stepped out of his tent, and looked across his assembled troops, started humming “Onward Christian Soldiers”, and got involved.

IV. Abram's Strategy

A. Mobility.

- [Genesis 14:15 HCSB](#) And he and his servants deployed against them by night, attacked them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus.

Notice Abram's brilliant strategy. He had a clear idea of the odds and he did the best he could with the resources he had. He knew he could not face 4 full armies with 318 men in a head-on conflict. He divided his already small party into even smaller parties which implies that he had competent officers who were able to take the lead in combat. The Master taught that we should take careful inventory of our resources and act wisely upon them. He said,

- [Luke 14:31-32 HCSB](#) "Or what king, going to war against another king, will not first sit down and decide if he is able with 10,000 to oppose the one who comes against him with 20,000? (32) If not, while the other is still far off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

B. Surprise.

- [Genesis 14:15 HCSB](#) And he and his servants deployed against them by night, attacked them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus.

Abram's strategy was one of mobility and surprise. He attacked the enemy at night. In the darkness, the enemy had no idea how small his army was. All they knew was that they were being attacked on all sides. There was a real chance that in the darkness they suffered as many deaths through "friendly fire" as through Abram's troops!

Obviously, Abram was as brilliant as he was bold! Again, Jesus said,

- [Matthew 10:16 HCSB](#) "Look, I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves.

Solomon taught that a wise man is cautious and that it is the quick tempered man who acts foolishly. The gullible pay for their foolishness but the sensible are crowned for their knowledgeable behavior. ¹

C. Commitment and Follow-Through

- [Genesis 14:15 HCSB](#) And he and his servants deployed against them by night, attacked them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus.

Abram was certainly not guilty of making a half-hearted, febrile attempt. Chedorlaomer may have had a bigger army, but Abraham obviously had a better army. The fact that he pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus, meant that he chased them for 120 miles! He didn't simply attack them and cause them some damage. He drove them completely out of the country!

V. Abram's Victory

One of many images that Adonaic Christians consider to be an appropriate metaphor for their lives is that of a soldier. Unlike many Cultural Christians who seem to regard themselves as children on a playground, or conspicuous consumers of the world's material goods, we take to heart Hashem's many calls for justice.

- [Deuteronomy 16:20 HCSB](#) Pursue justice and justice alone, so that you will live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.
- [Psalms 37:28 HCSB](#) For the LORD loves justice and will not abandon His faithful ones. They are kept safe forever, but the children of the wicked will be destroyed.

¹ Proverbs 14:16-18

- **Psalms 82:2-4 HCSB** "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah (3) Provide justice for the needy and the fatherless; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. (4) Rescue the poor and needy; save them from the hand of the wicked."
- **Psalms 106:3 HCSB** How happy are those who uphold justice, who practice righteousness at all times.
- **Psalms 146:6-7 HCSB** the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them. He remains faithful forever, (7) executing justice for the exploited and giving food to the hungry. The LORD frees prisoners.
- **Proverbs 2:7-8 HCSB** He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity (8) so that He may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of His loyal followers.
- **Proverbs 21:15 HCSB** Justice executed is a joy to the righteous but a terror to those who practice iniquity.
- **Isaiah 1:15-17 HCSB** When you lift up your hands *in prayer*, I will refuse to look at you; even if you offer countless prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. (16) "Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil. (17) Learn to do what is good. Seek justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.
- **Isaiah 59:14-18 HCSB** Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far off. For truth has stumbled in the public square, and honesty cannot enter. (15) Truth is missing, and whoever turns from evil is plundered. The LORD saw that there was no justice, and He was offended. (16) He saw that there was no man--He was amazed that there was no one interceding; so His own arm brought salvation, and His own righteousness supported Him. (17) He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and He wrapped Himself in zeal as in a cloak. (18) Thus He will repay according to *their* deeds: fury to His enemies, retribution to His foes, and He will repay the coastlands.
- **Amos 5:22-24 HCSB** Even if you offer Me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept *them*; I will have no regard for your fellowship offerings of fattened cattle. (23) Take away from Me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. (24) But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream.

On and on it goes. We could have considered literally hundreds, if not thousands, of verses that relate to the issue of justice and social involvement. With a God/King like ours we cannot afford to be apathetic to the sin and suffering that lies before us. We must not merely

shake our heads and bemoan the state of the world. We must get involved and DO something about it. We must not be overcome by evil but must instead overcome evil with positive, active good!²

³Now, notice Abraham's amazing victory. The odds were seriously stacked against him. With 318 men he overtook and defeated 4 kings and their armies that had just wiped out 5 kings with no problem. Remember, those 5 kings had rebelled against Chedorlaomer. They had to have known that war was coming. They were prepared for war and they



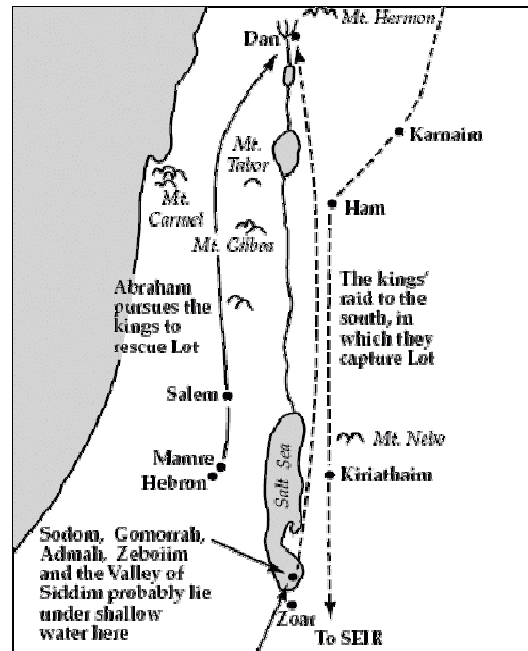
² Romans 12:21

³ <http://libraries.slu.edu/archives/digcoll/manuscripta08/images/c1-07a.jpg>

had the advantage of fighting defensive wars from behind walled cities. Yet they suffered near-instant defeat.

⁴Now, Abraham takes his puny little group, executes a forced march, and defeats them handily. On this map, you can get an idea of the way things worked out. Chedorlaomer came from the north east, gathering allied armies on the way and attacked the rebels down around the south-eastern side of the Dead Sea. Then they swung around and began marching back up the smooth plain that lies to the east of the Jordan.

Abram heard from a survivor who had probably come around the southern tip of the Dead Sea to find him between Hebron and Mamre. He gathered up his 318 men and marched about 120 miles from Hebron to Dan across mountainous terrain, met up with the five kings and defeated them. Then he marched his men and the captured hostages, along with all the booty (which included not only what had been taken in Sodom but also the materials that had been brought by the 5 kings), all the way back to Salem.



What a feat! However, God has promised us that if we are fighting in a just cause,

- [Leviticus 26:3, 7-8 HCSB](#) "If you follow My statutes and faithfully observe My commands...(26:7) You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before you by the sword. (8) Five of you will pursue 100, and 100 of you will pursue 10,000; your enemies will fall before you by the sword.

As we fight our battles, whether they be purely spiritual battles with our own yetzer haras or with the myriad injustices and social ills of this sin-sick world, we may feel like we are 318 fighting tens of thousands but regardless of whom we fight we can be victorious! Chedorlaomer may have had a bigger army but Abraham had a better God.

VI. Abram's Faith

Let me ask you a question. Did Abram get a visit from God? Did he hear a voice from heaven saying "GO RESCUE THE PEOPLE OF SODOM!!!"? Was there fire from heaven or a million singing angels? No – nothing like that is recorded.

One very stupid commentator claimed that because God was not implicit in the text then God must have been absent from the scene which (in his befuddled mind anyway) implied God did not approve of Abram's actions.

However, as we see in later verses, Melchizedek, the priest/king of Salem, and of whom we are told was a priest of Yahweh, specifically blessed Abram for his faithful obedience. From this we should learn that

"Even when God is silent we should fight on."

Sometimes I encourage people to attend church and they answer "Well pastor I'll pray about that." What's to pray about? You know for a fact that it's God's will. He said so in the Bible. You don't need to pray about what God has already commanded – you just need to obey. Abram didn't need God to come down and with miraculous signs confirm that it was His will to intervene on Lot's behalf. Abram was God's friend.

⁴ http://www.ldsces.org/inst_manuals/ot-in-1/images/05-08.gif

- **2 Chronicles 20:7 HCSB** Are You not our God who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and who gave it forever to the descendants of Abraham Your friend?
- **Isaiah 41:8 HCSB** But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, My friend--

Abram spent a lot of time in God's presence, learning from Him and obeying Him. He knew what God liked and didn't like. Some of you may remember a sermon I preached a while back called "Does God like mushrooms on His pizza?" We should be so aware of God and familiar with His Word that the vast majority of life's decisions are clear to us – because we know His will as revealed in His word. And we too can get the title "God's friend". Jesus said,

- **John 15:14 HCSB** You are My friends if you do what I command you.

Though God did not call on the horn and say, "Abraham do such and such" Abraham instinctively knew what right was. He knew where justice lay and he knew that God would want him to do the right thing. So, Abram strapped on his sword and went to the rescue.

We should obey the truths that God has already revealed without waiting for supernatural confirmation. As Abram later told the rich man in Hades:

- **Luke 16:31 HCSB** "But he told him, 'If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

When God is silent; when He seems strangely absent; when the heavens seem as brass and our prayers simply bounce off the ceiling...we must strengthen ourselves in the knowledge of what God has already revealed and commit ourselves to faithful obedience. If we do, sooner or later, God will show up and vindicate us as Melchizedek did for our father Abram.

Derashot

1. We must wisely plan for potential threats.
2. We must allocate our wealth and time in training and preparing for bad days.
3. We must remain emotionally involved with the world's ills. We must have regard for our "brothers".
4. A fortress mentality will only lead to our eventual demise.
5. We may get involved in a just war.
6. We must take appropriate, proactive action to fight evil and bring about justice.
7. The discipline of martial arts (in the truest rather than the philosophic sense) is allowed among Adonaists.
8. Being few in number or poor in resources should not hinder us from doing what is right.
9. We should be honest in our self-evaluation and wise in our selection of strategies.
10. When outgunned and outmanned we should develop a strategy of mobility, surprise and total committal.
11. Our primary concern should be neither resources (whether human or natural), nor potential personal cost, but should instead be the question "Are we within God's will?"
12. We should obey the truths that God has already revealed without waiting for supernatural confirmation.