

The Bible in Context Ep 27: Sodom, Yahweh, and Suzerain-Vassal Treaties Gen 15 Part 1

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All right, we are back. Welcome back to the Bible in Context podcast. Hey, Nate. Hey, Caleb. How are you doing? Doing good. This time it's actually been a couple of weeks, so glad to be back. And last that we talked, I believe we finished up with Lot making a terrible decision.

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He has his own fall narrative, moved to Sodom, and Abram is left in this Edenic state after having just shown loyalty to his brother and not being like Cain. What do you mean by Edenic state? Where is he specifically? Okay, yeah, so he's in Canaan and he's at the Oaks of Mamre.

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which is in Hebron, which is this place where he's built an altar. It's the place that one of the places he came to when he first got into Canaan after his exodus out of Babel, and then he came back to after his and Sarai's exodus out of Egypt. There are a lot of markers around these places that we talked about that paint these as like a Garden of Eden-like place. Right, right. I think this will get brought up again later on as we're walking through this chapter too. Yeah.

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means or what it should bring to mind because it is going to come up in this chapter and it's got some cool connotations later on in the chapter. We kind of break the scene here and go into something else in chapter 14 and this is kind of where the camera fades to black and we open up on a new scene here and we come to this scene of armies marching towards one another. I feel like this is Lord of the Rings. Exactly.

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Was it the Hobbit? Oh, yeah, it does seem like one of them had that same number. So yeah, we've got these armies, five verses four here, and we learn through the course of this passage that Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, is the leader of this first band of kings. But what do you notice in verse one? So in the days of Amraphel, King of Shinar...

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So he shows up first. And Kedilamer shows up third on this list. Why would they put the leader as the third on the list and front Shinar? Well, Shinar is a pretty significant name, isn't it? Yeah, it's shown up a few times in our story already.

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So this is the place where Babylon, the Tower of Babylon was started. The Tower of Babel, if you haven't listened before, but it's properly translated the Tower of Babylon, and Shinar is

where that was. Shinar is associated with all the terrible things and oppression that come along with Babylon. So these are bad guys. Yeah, this kingdom is fronted in this band of kings to show us this entire alliance just has a bad flavor to it.

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And so we might be thinking, hey, we're coming into a bunch of people who have already been portrayed as the seat of the serpent, so we're going to have like the ultimate showdown between the seat of the serpent and the seat of the woman here, right? You would think that, but then you get to the second list of armies that they, that King Cheddar, as I like to call him, because he's the big cheese. His alliance of kingdoms has gone against this other.

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group of five kings and they don't seem to be a whole lot better, do they? Yeah, they're led by Sodom. So that already just tells us, like, okay, we've got not the forces of good and the forces of evil facing off, we've just got a big messy battle of Seeds of the Serpent versus Seeds of the Serpent. Yeah, these are snakes, biting snakes. Yeah. And we learned something interesting, actually, about...

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Ketelahmer's alliance in that it tells us in verse c5 that he defeated the refaim the astaroth karnayim the zoom in the emmim and the horites through through all of his campaign so who are these people that kettle amyr goes through and wipes out well we learn a little bit of something about them in deuteronomy 2 so i want to read a couple verses from that chapter because these people are actually pretty significant in the biblical story

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So it helped us to understand why in the world did the author decide to put these people into this narrative. It's kind of like the author just split this narrative apart, inserted this list of peoples that Ketelahmere defeated, and then continued on with the story. So why bother?

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So in Deuteronomy two verse 10, it starts out and says.

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The Emim formerly lived there, a people great in many, as tall as the Anakim. Like the Anakim, they are also counted as Refahim, but the Moabites called them Emim. The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession when the Lord gave it to them. So here we learn a little bit about them, that the Emim are counted as Anakim, who are

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the the Horites mentioned we're not told a lot about them other than the fact that they lived in Seir but if we go on down to verse 19 it picks back up and says and when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon do not harass them or contend with them for I will not give you

any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession it is also counted as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly lived there but the Ammonites

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great in me as tall as the Anakim, but the Lord destroyed them before the Ammonites, and they dispossessed them and settled in their place as He did to the people of Esau who lived in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites before them, and they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day." So here we're starting to see that all these people are related to Anakim and Rephaim. So who are those?

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The Nephilim, right? The Nephilim, yeah. So yeah, they're the Nephilim. If we go back to Numbers 13, 33, we learn directly that these anechem are Nephilim. It says, and we saw there the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim. And we seem to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seem to them. So all these people groups, they're giants and Nephilim descendants. Right. So again, the question then is, weren't the Nephilim destroyed in the flood?

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I know a lot of people are probably asking that question if they're following along. And that's one of those lovely questions the Bible just decides not to answer. Right. But, I mean...

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I hate to speculate, but I guess there are a couple things we could speculate. So do you have any ideas how these Nephilim came about again? I mean, so doesn't the word Nephilim simply mean like one who rebels or some kind of connotation about rebellion? There's lots of ideas, I guess, circulating around that. So

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the root looks like it could just be the falling, the fallen ones. Heiser actually takes a different approach and he thinks it's based off, I believe an Amorite word for giant. And so he thinks it could be a lone word that means giant. And those seem to be like the two prevailing theories. I guess one theory could be that the sons of God who had originally rebelled were not like the.

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They're spiritual beings and so the flood doesn't kill their spirit and so they rebelled again later on and we just don't have that story. Right, or more rebelled or whatever. Or more rebelled, yeah. That's a possibility also if they were destroyed that perhaps there were more spiritual beings that...

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found the daughters of men attractive and took them as wives. Yeah. Well, and if you remember like the whole Tower of Babel incident and the Sons of God incident preceding that, kind of piggybacks off that Mesopotamian tradition where they would have, you know, the king goes up

the ziggurat once a year to meet with a cult prostitute who is possessed by a deity and then they have a two-thirds God, one-third human baby. And this is like a, well, not yearly.

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But this is like a regular thing that is done to perpetuate the kingship. And so it could be just assumed in this culture like This these guys are always being born. This is just the first time it happened in Genesis 6, right? So that that could be maybe in the minds. Yeah the readers well And we see giants all the way up to I mean David and Goliath and so there yeah Yeah, David is supposed to be the one who kills the last of them Okay, or at least him and his mighty men at the end of the books of Samuel. Okay

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There's people, people often talk about.

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how it's possibly that the flood was local and so some of them could have survived. I think that's a whole different conversation where you're trying to wed science and the Bible together and figure out the geography in which this happened, what catastrophic natural event happened. But according to the story, we live inside of a bubble. That bubble collapsed and everything died. It said all flesh died.

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scientific treatise on what happened. Everything died and so just take that for granted and I guess the sons of God came back again. Somehow. We just don't know how. Yeah. Yeah, they came back and there was another ritual in Morenephilim. I've heard another theory and I don't know that I buy into this but that somehow their DNA snuck into Noah's family somehow and yeah, I don't know how that happens. Is it like, oh gosh, who made the latest Noah movie or who is in it?

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So, yeah, the guy from Gladiator. Yeah. Oh my gosh. That's going to bother me. Russell Crowe. Okay, yeah. The latest note with Russell Crowe where... Okay.

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I think it was Lamech, but anyway, one of the dudes from the pre-flood sneaks onto the Ark. Oh really? Yeah, I hadn't seen that. It's wild. The sons of God in that one are these, when they get cast from heaven, they turn into stone and they're these big stone creatures walking around. Oh wow. It's wild. It may take a little bit of liberty. Yeah, a little bit. Alright, so going back to our story here in Genesis chapter 14, so it seems that there's some intention here about...

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as these two alliances of kingdoms are battling, that King Cheddar's alliance is wiping out these giant clans. And that seems to be something that we're supposed to notice. Yeah. And we see the same thing in Deuteronomy two, for instance, which we've already looked at where we've

got the Edomites and the Ammonites and the Kaftareem from Kaftor, which are the Philistines all being given their land by Yahweh. And as they come into their lands,

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They are pushing out and waging war on these giant clans, these Nephilim, these Anakim, these rebel offspring of the sons of God. And in that we see the same Deuteronomy 32 idea of Yahweh giving the nations their territory, apportioning them and dividing them according to the number of the sons of God. So that becomes a theme then? Yeah, you see a lot of places where Yahweh is using the nations to wipe out these children of the sons of God, these seeds of the serpent.

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And even though they're not remotely faithful to Yahweh, he's using these armies to defeat these enemies. Right. Well, and he does the same thing when he finally brings judgment down on Israel, too. I mean, he uses the nations to do that. The nations. Exactly. Yeah, the Leviathan on Elish. Right. In which Israel does the same thing when they go into Canaan. We just read Numbers 13, where there's all these anachim, these Nephilim and giants in the land, and he uses Israel to go in.

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wiped them out. A big theme in the conquest is not slaughtering everything, it's waging war on the giant clans and destroying the Canaanite identity. Yeah, yeah. And so if you trace that all the way back to Genesis chapter 6, you see this spiritual battle that's going on at the same time with the rebellious...

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humans right alongside of them. Yeah, and so I mean, it's just cool here to point out that the author is showing, yeah, just these nations waging this war, and maybe they have their own reason for not liking them. I mean, they're sometimes heroes in Israel's neighbors' literature. Sometimes they're bad guys. So maybe there's just a general understanding that they're not good because they're warlords, and if they're not on your side, they're not good.

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So maybe nobody wants them around except for the people who have them on their side. In either case, the Lord is using them to take out these rebels. Right. And Lot gets caught up in all of it then, huh? Yeah. So after King Kedalam or King Cheddar takes out all these anechem and nephelim, he moves on and wipes out Sodom and his alliance and takes Lot along with him. And it's kind of cool that...

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The author just kind of mingles this little tidbit about the Giants, right, with the rest of the story. So it's not something weird to them. This is how they imagine the world and how they're portraying meaning. So Lot gets swept up in this army and then someone escapes this battle

and comes to tell Abram. Yeah, Lot gets swept up into this war, gets taken away, and then somebody escapes, right? And goes and tells Abram.

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The Hebrew, which I think is interesting. Yeah, I don't know if he's been called a Hebrew yet. I don't think so. Yeah, that might be significant here because this is the first time that we see Abram living with other nations in peace. Because we come here and we have Abram the Hebrew, who was living.

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at the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, so Mamre is an Amorite, and his brother Eshkol, an Aner who are also Amorites, so he's got some Amorite friends, and that's going to be actually significant in the next story. It says that these were allies of Abram. In the Hebrew, what it actually says is they were possessors of a covenant with Abram.

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Yeah, so they have a covenant relationship with one another, which is significant. Yeah. And so, before this story, what's the first tree that we came to in Abraham's story? The tree of teaching. Yeah, more. More, yeah. Yeah, so now we have our second, like, M-R-H kind of... Similar word. Yeah, in Abraham's story we have more, mamre, and mariah, and they all are this M-R word.

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And so there's kind of an alliteration going on with them, a little rhyming thing as well. Garciel, in that biblical names book that I've mentioned a few times now, he proposes that all of these M words are a wordplay on the word ra, to see, as well. So that's possible. But either way, all of these locations are linked through this wordplay and the fact that in the Abraham story there are all of these Aedinic settings and these post-Exodus kind of settings.

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location where Abraham is here in covenant with the nations at some oaks with Mamre and the brother Eshkol really points to this being an Edenic garden-like spot that Abraham is dwelling in. Do you want to talk about Eshkol a little bit more? Yes, I do. So what's significant about Eshkol? What's he mean? It means cluster of grapes, right? Yeah. And where do we see him again? Well, we see the word cluster of grapes.

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In this same area, when the spies come back, they carry... It takes two spies, actually, in a pole to carry this huge cluster of grapes back from the promised land to where Moses is and gives this report that this is a land flowing with milk and honey. There's huge grapes. Right. Yeah, this guy doesn't show up again. But his name actually does.

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what I meant to say. But yeah, his name shows up again. It's in Numbers 13 where...

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Like you said, the word cluster in Numbers 13, 23, and 24, in the cluster of grapes that the spies brought back, they named the place that they brought them back to, Eshkol. Yeah. And the word cluster is Eshkol. And it was in Hebrew, and it was in this exact same space. Right. Was it in the same place? Yeah. Yeah, it was in Hebrew. Yeah, cause go, yeah, go to the Numbers passage. Oh yeah, it says in verse 22, they went into the Negev and came to Hebron. Yeah. Nice.

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So yeah, we have this guy who is named, or at least in the Torah, has connotations of the cluster of grapes that showed that Canaan was this Eden-like garden flowing with milk and honey and clusters of grapes the size that two people had to carry them. So there's all sorts of this just Adenic imagery all around Abram right now, and he is in covenant with the nations. So they have seen the blessing on him.

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They tied themselves to him to experience Yahweh's blessing. Yeah, so we're starting to see the promise being fulfilled already. Yeah, and this is going to show up multiple times through Genesis again. This is a theme that becomes an expectation in Genesis of the elect one. So we get this guy who comes and tells Abram in this identic setting, hey, your kinsman has been taken. By the way, it's your kinsman who just left you not long ago. So...

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He's abandoned you and left for what he thought was good in his own eyes. Now he's in trouble. What's Abraham going to do? Gathers an army. Yeah. He gets, he gets an army and he goes and divides his forces by night. And with only 318 guys, he goes and routes the entire army and chases them all the way to Dan, which is the very far north of Israel. And again, there's a few things we need to comment on in there. So first let's talk about the 300. Okay.

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There's this pattern that shows up later in scripture of a small army dividing their forces by night and then achieving victory for Yahweh.

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And that happens with Gideon. He has a small army that the Lord dwindles down to 300 men. Then you have like David's army in 1 Samuel 30, where he's got 400 men and they find a survivor of the battle or someone who's been left behind in the battle. And that person informs him of what has taken place of this battle that has just happened. So they go out and this small army of 400 men defeat the Amalekites.

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So, not quite the same number, but very similar events and still a small army that Yahweh gives victory for the sake of reclaiming his captured wives. So once again, someone's been captured. You just have this typological pattern of the elect one going out and defeating Yahweh's

enemies with this really ridiculously small army and dividing their forces. There's definitely this theme, and you see it in many places, where God takes a...

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insignificant or small army or small person or something that is

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makes it obvious that the victory belongs to the Lord. And I think that's what's happening here too. And that's exactly what we read later on as other biblical authors look back at this story, especially in the Psalms, that they very much attribute Abraham's victory in this situation to God. Yeah. So when you're reading these later stories, you're seeing again someone that Yahweh has chosen going out with...

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only really I mean Yahweh's help because this is a stupidly small army against all these confederations and nations and they're getting victory. And so it's really just highlighting what is the elect one doing? What does he look like? He looks like someone who relies on Yahweh and achieves victory even in insurmountable odds. Right, right.

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So next time you go back and read those stories, remember that these stories between Abram and Gideon and David, they're linked. And so read them in parallel and see what you can learn as they map onto one another. What meaning is the author trying to pull into the other stories from Genesis 14? Yeah, that's helpful. And then I want to say something too about the fact that he pursued them all the way to Dan.

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Where's Dan? Yeah, Dan is in the very north, it is the most northern tribe of Israel. So Abram, he's in Hebron, which is in the southern half of Israel, and he chases them all the way to the other end of the promised land. And I guess chases them out. But what's significant about that.

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Well, I mean, first of all, the fact just again, Yahweh gave him a very astounding victory that he chased him for, I don't know how many miles that is, but it's... It's over like maybe a couple hundred miles. I mean, it was a significant amount. So that, I mean, that's pretty significant. He drove that entire army back 200 miles with his small army. So again, this is just highlighting again Abram's victory from Yahweh. But it also creates a question that Dan was not yet a place. Dan was a tribe of Israel, and Israel was not yet a thing.

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So here we have a reference to a place that wouldn't exist for hundreds and hundreds of years within this story. And I think it's just worth pointing that out because it can at least maybe throw a helpful wrench in some of our theories of how this book was written. And I don't want to

deconstruct the reliability. I think actually the reliability of the text is strengthened through looking at the way it was written. But

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This may not have been written by someone contemporary of Abram or even Moses, because Moses died before he knew where all the tribes were going to be in Israel. This was probably written or at least edited together by someone who was living after Israel was created, or very possibly even after the Babylonian captivity. But at least the person who finally touched...

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the book of Genesis in its received form as inspired biblical text was long after Abram's life, long after the Exodus, even after Israel was a nation, because this reference to Dan wouldn't make sense otherwise. And not just in the sense that someone could say, well, this is the Bible. It was a prophetic look forward as to where Dan was going to be. Well, that's fine, but to the people that the ancient author would have been writing to if Dan wasn't a place, it wouldn't make

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good sense to include it and it wouldn't be good communication to write about places that are nonsensical. Well, and it's interesting, if you go to, where am I at, Judges chapter 18, it gives you the origin story of the city of Dan.

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And so they named it Dan, but it actually had a name before it was Dan. It was called Laish, which means lion. I don't know if that's anything significant, but it, so I had a name before it was called Dan and they could have mentioned that name, but they don't. They mentioned. Right. Yeah. I mean, even so later they end up.

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telling us about the name change, they could have just stuck with the old name here. Right. So anyway, it's just helpful to think about the fact that the biblical canon could have been written or edited by someone later who was inspired and authorized to do so by Yahweh. But we don't have to have this very strict idea that this is Moses sitting down one night in his tent and writing all this out in a trance or something like that. Right. Yeah. This is a very divine and human book.

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We've talked about that before, but it's just worth seeing it again. So they pursue him as far as Dan, and then what happens next? In verse 16, you see that they bring back all the possessions and...

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His kinsman, Lot, which that word kinsman means brother also, even though we know that this is his nephew actually, but it seems like we call each other brother and sister sometimes too, so it's probably similar to that kind of language. But he brings back Lot, all the other people that

were captured, and his possessions, and it mentions the women and the people. And so everybody, I think, is the point there. Like he brings everybody back, saves them all.

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picture because you've got this elect person who is in paradise in a garden, a Edenic setting, leaves paradise to pursue his kinsman who has gotten swept up in a sinful wicked world. By his own choices. By his own choices, rescues him and brings him back to the promised land.

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And I mean, what a beautiful picture of what Christ does for us, who left heaven, left the garden, left the promised land to pursue us who have been swept up in a world of wickedness by our own decisions and brings us back to...

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to live in the promised land once again. Yeah, yeah, and we're going to talk a little bit more next time about how this looks more like an exodus again. And so just in this exodus pattern, we're seeing what does the elect look like? What's he going to do? Exactly what you said. Leave the garden, leave paradise to come redeem his people. And yeah. Yeah. Good stuff.

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It is. I like here too how he mentions again that Lot is Abram's brother. And this was after he had previously mentioned that Lot was his quote unquote brother after showing him loyalty during Lot's fall. And so here there's a reference to Lot being Abram's brother at the fall. Abram shows loyalty. Here he shows loyalty again above and beyond when Lot has failed.

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So it just ties these narratives together and Abram shows loyalty throughout Lot's failure and unfortunate subsequent circumstance. Good stuff. Cool. We'll, yeah, meet back next time and talk a little bit more about the exodus in this story and maybe dive into Melchizedek. Yeah, which is a good conversation. Yeah, you ready for that? Yeah, that'll be fun.