

Genesis 14:1-3

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The Kings of the plains went to war with the kings from the east. It was four allied kings from the east against five allied kings on the plains (including Sodom and Gomorrah).

Thirteen years before, *Chedorlaomer the king of Elam* (Persia, modern Iran), had conquered various kings in the Jordan plain where Sodom and Gomorrah were located (e.g., [Gen 14:4](#)). Now, five of these kings *rebelled* against Chedorlaomer (e.g., [Gen 14:4](#)). Most likely, they refused to pay the tribute that was assigned to them by Chedorlaomer. Chedorlaomer appeals to his allies for help subjecting the cities in the plains to servitude, and paying the required tribute.

Chedorlaomer's allies are: Amraphel (from Shinar or Babylonia), Arioch of Ellasar, and Tidal the Hittite (from Anatolia, modern Turkey). These four kings led by Chedorlaomer represent the eastern alliance from lower Mesopotamia. The five western revolting kings are all kings from cities on the Jordan plain. They are: *Bera* king of Sodom, *Birsha*, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Admah, Shemeber, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (e.g., Zoar). Zoar was at the southern tip of the valley of Jericho ([Genesis 19:22-23,30](#); [Deuteronomy 34:3](#)). Such alliances were a common aspect of politics in the ancient Near East.

They made war, this is the first war recorded in Scripture. Each of the five cities of the plains of Jordan, as well as the four cities from the east had its own king.

All these came as allies, which is the Hebrew word *Chabar*, meaning to unite, join together, make an alliance, or to join battle forces. In the face of a common threat, the rebellious cities formed a pentapolis or five-city confederacy against the allied forces of the kings from the east. Each allied army came to *the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)*. The *Salt Sea* today is called the Dead Sea. The Siddim Valley was the valley that is now the Dead Sea. The water of the Dead Sea on this side of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah has an average of 32 percent salt content as compared with the 3 percent average of ocean water. It is the densest large body of water on earth.

Biblical Text:

¹ And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ² *that* they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³ All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).