

## Appendix 2 Genesis 14:18-20: An Insertion or Not

Only a handful of interpreters, such as Sarna, reject the general scholarly assessment that vv. 18-20 is a later insertion. He argues in light of the plot of the story that the Melchizedek episode “is original and not a later insertion” and serves to heighten the tension of the coming of the king of Sodom.<sup>884</sup> Similarly, Sailhamer argues that the episode is read in contrast to Abraham’s dealing with the king of Sodom and the king of Salem.<sup>885</sup>

Furthermore, a close rhetorical reading of Genesis 14:18-20 and the rest of the chapter reveals how the text has been carefully and skillfully written and should be read as one unit.<sup>886</sup> The following five observations point to the unity of Genesis 14.

First, the author uses a literary technique called “*taw-aleph*” link<sup>887</sup> (the end-word of a sentence becomes the start-word of the next sentence, הַמֶּלֶךְ מֶלֶכִּצְדֶּק) to connect verses 17 and 18 together.<sup>888</sup> Note how verse 18 begins with זֶה-צְדָקָה, that is, the last two words in v. 17. This technique, used in vv. 17-18, in Wenham’s words, “also bespeaks its [Genesis 14] unity.”<sup>889</sup>

Second, the author repeats the same word in the preceding context of Gen 14:18-20. To illustrate, in v. 17, “the king of Sodom came out (אָצַר)” is linked to Melchizedek who “has brought” (אָצַר) a meal for Abraham in v. 18.<sup>890</sup> Note how the same verb (also in the same form, אָצַר) is used to describe the king of Sodom in v. 8. In v. 8, however, to many the singular verb “come out” is grammatically problematic considering the plural subject.<sup>891</sup> This raises the question, is the king of Sodom being singled out because of

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<sup>884</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 109.

<sup>885</sup> Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 147 (notes 55 and 56). Compare his similar comment in “*Genesis*,” 122-23. He bases his argument primarily on the Hebrew syntactical structure of Genesis 14.

<sup>886</sup> Emerton, among others, proposed the growth [development?] of the text of Genesis 14 in various stages, and it seems, in our opinion, that Emerton and others venture into the traditions behind the text rather than into the final text itself. Please refer to chapter one where we address the issue of text and tradition. See Emerton, “*Some Problems*,” 73-102. This article is an update of his original proposal in “*The Riddle of Genesis XIV*,” *VT* 21 (1971): 403-39.

<sup>887</sup> See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 307.

<sup>888</sup> This evidence, on the other hand, might fit the argument that it is used by the narrator as an adhesive to connect the episode to v. 17. Indeed, without vv. 18-20, the narrative is perfectly smooth. Nonetheless, what we are presenting in the rest of this section will provide a cumulative effect on all the evidence the narrator of Genesis intends to submit in this unit as part of Genesis 14.

<sup>889</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 307. Wenham minimally supports the unity of Genesis 14. Disagreeing with Wenham in this regard, Emerton basically criticizes Wenham’s observations of the literary links between vv. 18-20 and the rest of the chapter. See Emerton, “*Some Problems*,” 80-84. In our judgment, Emerton has not been able to successfully refute Wenham’s argument for the unity of Genesis 14. Rather than concentrating on the unity of the chapter, Emerton appears more interested in defending his theory of the development? of the text in Genesis 14, evidenced in his posture of challenging theories that differ from his.

<sup>890</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 305.

<sup>891</sup> See the grammatical permissibility in GKC, §1450.

his role in the later part of this chapter, thereby explaining why a singular verb is used for him even with composite nouns? This may be answered in the affirmative by examining the rhetorical effect fortified by the grammatical-syntactical structure around v. 17. Note that in v. 16, the same word (בָּשָׂר) appears twice, once in Hiph. imperfect followed by Hiph. perfect. This is balanced by the same word (אָמֵן) used twice, once in Qal imperfect (v. 17) followed by Hiph. perfect; whereas, the former describes the king of Sodom and the latter, the king of Salem. Clearly the authorial intention is to contrast the two kings: the former came to wage war; the latter came to bless.

Third, the author repeats the same word in the subsequent context of Genesis 14:18-20. The Melchizedek episode ends with וַיַּעֲשֵׂה (v. 20), in contrast with וְלֹא (v. 17) the first word uttered by the king of Sodom in v. 21.

Fourth, the author uses the name of God to connect Genesis 14:18-20 with its context. The name of God, אֱלֹהִים, is used by both Melchizedek in his blessing to Abraham and by Abraham himself later when he talks to the king of Sodom (vv. 19, 22; cf. vv. 18, 20).

Fifth, word-play is another literary element that provides a link between the Melchizedek episode and the rest of the chapter.<sup>892</sup> The hapax word in v. 23, העשְׂרִית, resembles the word used in v. 20, גָּמָשׂ.<sup>893</sup> Another evidence is paronomasia,<sup>894</sup> a word play on a proper name.<sup>895</sup> Nahum Waldman notes the contrast of the king of Salem and the king of Sodom, not only in their behavior (speech) but also “in” their names. “The very names of the two kings say as much: Melchizedek, whose name includes the element *tzedek*, ‘righteousness,’ and Bera, where we hear the word *ra*, ‘evil.’”<sup>896</sup> These five observations are sufficient to establish the unity of the chapter, thus allowing us to read Genesis 14 as one rhetorical unit.

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**892** Scholarly study attests to word play, particularly with the use of proper names to link together a paragraph or section. Cf. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 94-97.

**893** Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 318; quoted in Emerton, “Some Problems,” 84. Doré arrives at the opposite conclusion based on the word play. Idem, “La recontre Abraham-Melchisédech,” 77, 90.

**894** For paronomasia as a literary device, see J. J. Glück, “Paronomasia in Biblical Literature,” *Sem* 1 (1970): 50-78. See Andrzej Strus, *Nomen-Omen: La Stylistique Sonore des Noms Propres dans le Pentateuque* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 90-99, about paronomasia on a proper name. For a complete list of terms used in word play, see Anthony J. Petrotta, *Lexis Ludens: Wordplay and the Book of Micah* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 20.

**895** See Luis A. Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Subsidia Biblica 11 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 29-30, Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 34. I. H. Eybers, “The Use of Proper Names as a Stylistic Device,” *Sem* 2 (1971/1972): 82-92.

**896** Nahum M. Waldman, “Genesis 14 – Meaning and Structure,” *Dor le Dor* 16 (1988): 259. Cf. Michael C. Astour, “Political and Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis 14 and in its Babylonian Sources,” in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 74.