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The Meeting Between Abram and Melchizedek: From Bread and Wine to Peace Treaty

Abstract

This study examines the pivotal meeting between Abram and Melchizedek (Gn 14:18–21) within the broader narrative of conflict and resolution. Using a synchronic literary approach, the analysis traces the emergence of the motif of bread and wine from their encounter and situates it within the context of ancient Israelite society. The symbolic roles of bread and wine are examined in mediating relationships between adversaries and in their broader cultural meanings. The argument demonstrates how this episode both concludes the narrative sequence and contributes to the literary construction of Abraham as the founding figure of the Israelite nation.

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Introduction

The Bible describes meetings between people for various reasons—family reunions between brothers (Gn 33:4; Ex 2:8, 4:27), marriage arrangements (Gn 24:17, 21:10), and social gatherings among shepherds and warriors (Gn 26:20; 2 Sm 2:13). Encounters may be random (Ex 2:17, 11:2) or intentional (Gn 38:16, Ex 5:1, 1 Sm 16:20, 2 Sm 13:8). The focus here is a deliberate meeting between two rival political groups, where the central motif is the serving of wine and bread.

In biblical texts, "bread and wine" typically appears in this order, signifying covenants (Gn 14:18) or gestures of welcome and peace (1 Sm 10:3, 16:20). These are positive symbols during feasts (Ps 104:15, Eccl 9:7, 1 Chr 12:41). Conversely,

overindulgence in bread and wine symbolizes theft or excess (Hos 9:4; Prv 4:17; Eccl 10:19; Neh 5:15). "Wine and bread" appear only twice (Eccl 14:15), indicating joy, while its use in Josh 9:4 suggests deceit (Avishur 1972, 17-81).

Frame Story: Genesis 14:1–24

The narrative describes political rivals outside Israel, with Abram drawn into the conflict due to his relationship with Lot, a resident of Sodom. It ends with an implicit agreement between the parties. The meeting between Melchizedek and Abram occurs within a broader context of adversarial confrontations that culminate in this encounter. Melchizedek presents bread and wine as part of the agreement. Typically, the weaker party offers such gifts to the stronger or victorious side, a gesture loaded with cultural and social meaning. The broader narrative is connected to the motif of the bread and wine offering, and literary devices are used to provide insights into biblical Israelite society. The story is linked to the establishment of Abram, the patriarch of the Israelites.

In Genesis 14:1–24, the rivals are the kings of Sodom [1]. This narrative aligns with the broader theme of land inheritance (Gn 13–15), which involves territorial agreements with adversaries. For instance, Lot's and Abram's shepherds dispute grazing land (Gn 13:7), stemming from economic and agricultural reasons. However, Abram and Lot are not the direct parties (Gn 13:8). These interwoven stories illustrate the land boundaries promised to Abram and his descendants (Gn 13:14–17), stretching from Egypt to Aram (Gn 12:10, 14:15). Genesis 14 contains four connected stories: the battle between northern kings and those from Sodom (vv. 1–16); Abram's rescue of Lot (vv. 10–16); Abram's treaty with the king of Sodom (vv. 17, 21–24); and the story of the treaty with Melchizedek, king of Salem (vv. 18–20). Continuous editing encourages comparison. Therefore, the story of Abram and Melchizedek (vv. 17–24) is treated as a distinct episode [2].

The war between the kings is linked to Lot's captivity through verse 11, which describes how the kings of the alliance of Chedorlaomer stole Sodom's property, including food. A war refugee [3] reports to Abram [4] at Mamre [5] about his nephew Lot (13a). Verse 13b mentions a covenant between Abram and the Amorites, as well as between Eshkol and Aner—likely Amorite kings involved in the defense agreement with Sodom, as Abram's nephew lives in their city. Verses 12–13 emphasize the word "my brother," (אָחִי), possibly highlighting a covenant among equals or settlements of similar political status. Eshkol and Aner might also refer to individuals or regions [6].

Comparing "equal" (שָׁוֶה – v. 5) to the brotherhood in "we are brothers" (13:8) reveals a nuanced political landscape. Abram has a covenant with outsiders, but his relationship with Lot is ambiguous. The text may compare the relationship between Lot and Abram to that between the kings and Abram, possibly alluding to a parallel between the other houses of David and Saul, and the houses of Lot and Abram [7].

Abram decides to rescue Lot with the help of 318 apprentices from his household, suggesting these individuals were trained in his home. Abram pursues Lot's captors as far as Dan, a northern location described as the pursuit's western edge. In v. 15, Abram reaches Obah, west of Damascus [8]. The reference to Dan is puzzling, as the tribe did not yet exist and would later settle in the north [9]. To highlight the contrast between the kings' battle in Sodom and Abram's pursuit (v. 6), the narrative emphasizes Abram's journey to the far north, almost to the region from which the kings originated (vv. 14–15).

Abram saves Lot, his property, the women, and the people, in a graded order indicating their importance (v. 16). War usually mentions the most important person captured at the beginning and again at the end when returned (1 Sm 4:11), whether an object or person, in very personal matters. The author may expect the reader to be impressed by Abram's heroism in saving so many people and property, including the honor of Sodom, and wonders if he will do the same in the future for his nephew and for strangers. If so, the author strengthens Abram as a hero willing to sacrifice for family and strangers to save them from humiliation and death. However, this event may place Abram on equal footing with the people of Sodom, legitimizing Abram and his role for the people of Israel in the future [10]. This may signal the continuation of the narrative: the establishment of a covenant with the kings of Sodom and the meeting with Melchizedek, all part of a deeper story hinted at by the narrator.

The Story in Genesis 14:18–21

The brief story unfolds in three verses and features two central characters: Abram and Melchizedek, along with background participants. It highlights social statuses, including kings, free people such as Lot and Abram's servants, and slaves. Abram and Melchizedek, priests of the Most High God, are chosen by their respective deities. God chooses Abram, while Melchizedek is a priest of the Highest God; however, the nature of the god is not clearly identified.

Valley of Shaveh, or the King's Valley, serves as the setting (Gn 14:17). Following the war, the Amorite kings defeated the alliance of Chedorlaomer. The King of Sodom welcomes Abram to *the Valley of Shaveh* [11]. The concept of "equal" (*Shaveh* – שוה), parallel to "Kings' Valley", reappears here, emphasizing Abram's status among the Amorite kings as an equal [12]. This echoes Abram's earlier acceptance into the group of kings at Mamre in the Hebron area (13:18). Abram is now a full member of the kingly group. While the narrative does not imply a specific alliance with the Amorites, Lot's wealth causes the people of Sodom to rely on Abram, who watches over Lot as his heir. Abram saves Lot, acting as a protector. Lot returns to Sodom, while Abram remains with Bela, the king of Sodom, his ally. The repeated mention of Valley of Shaveh—the King's Valley—emphasizes Abram's greatness in the eyes of his allies and the Amorite kings. Politically and economically, given the famine before his descent into Egypt, this alliance is crucial: each party can provide for the other. Sodom offers property and residence, while Abram brings livestock and military strength. The narrative presents Abram as a reasonable family man who maintains alliances.

The main story recounts the covenant with Melchizedek in three verses (14:18–20), dividing the meeting with the king of Sodom into two parts [13]: the initial meeting upon Abram's return from war (v. 17), the encounter with Melchizedek (vv. 18–20), and the king of Sodom's return in v. 21, requesting the return of his people.

Verse 17 connects to the preceding story (vv. 10–16), introducing King Salem and his covenant with Abram (v. 18). Melchizedek's origins are vague, as he is not mentioned earlier. Identified as the king of Salem—often equated with Jerusalem—Melchizedek embodies justice [14]. His name, Melchizedek, highlights the king's justice, either personal or divine. He is also described as a priest of the Highest God (El Elyon), though it is unclear which god this refers to [15]. The repeated mention of "Tzedek," "Valley of Shaveh," "king," and "El Elyon" (vv. 18, 19, 20, 22) emphasizes justice, equality, kingship, and divinity, suggesting a sense of wholeness [16]. The author's goal is to unite and reinforce these concepts, using linguistic (EL-High 'אל-על') repetition to clarify the message. The phrase "God Most High, Purchaser of heaven and earth" (vv. 19, 22) indicates God's sovereignty and protection, connecting the narrative to God's covenant with Abram regarding land inheritance (Gn 13 and 15). This association extends to the priesthood in Jerusalem's temple [17].

The mention of Dan in v. 14, where a platform for God existed (2 Chr 30:5), suggests the centralization of worship—a theme attributed to later periods of unified

worship in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:10, Ez 44:15, Neh 10:40, 12:47). The story hints at struggles between tribes, particularly Dan and Judah [18].

Melchizedek serves as a witness to the covenant between the Amorite kings and Abram. The narrative presents Abram as an ally of Melchizedek, despite their apparent differences—Melchizedek being a foreigner and Abram being a Hebrew. This agreement legitimizes Abram as the father of the nation and supports the future priesthood and temple service. Melchizedek acts as God's messenger, reflecting the covenants made by God with Abram (13:14–18, 15:4–8) [19]. The chapter portrays Abram as the redeemer of captives, foreshadowing his role as savior of the future nation, even though Israel does not yet exist. The story encompasses another group—the Amorites—in covenant with Abram, whom he also saves, suggesting shared fate and ancient foreign roots for Jerusalem (Ez 16:3). This contrasts with the Amorites' later antagonism toward the Israelites (Nm 21:34, Dt 1:7). The story reinforces forgiveness and assistance as qualities attributed to Abram [20].

Symbolism of Bread and Wine

Melchizedek, king of Salem, brings bread and wine for Abram. This gesture may be to honor a war-weary man or as an offering to gods or victors, symbolizing reconciliation and the recognition of status [21]. It suggests Melchizedek acknowledges Abram's equal or superior status [22]. Bread symbolizes the grain of the land, abundant in Sodom, while wine represents wealth and agricultural produce. The choice of these items is linked to v. 11, where the people of Sodom lose all possessions, including food, making bread and wine symbols of salvation. In the future, overindulgence in wine and food leads to Sodom's downfall (Gn 13:13, 19:3). Melchizedek's modest offering contrasts with later excesses and symbolizes honor. Wine is also associated with Lot's people after his city's destruction (19:32–33) and bread with Ishmael's expulsion (21:14), suggesting the possibility of repairing family relations. The phrase "priest to the Highest God" implies that bread and wine may symbolize divine worship or gifts. Abram, a shepherd unfamiliar with crops (13:7), receives an offer that unites nomadic and settled peoples, recalling the rivalry between Cain (farmer) and Abel (shepherd). Here, bread and wine facilitate the reunification of rivals. Brotherhood is emphasized through repeated references to "brothers" (13:8; 14:12, 13, 14), highlighting Abram's ability to unite adversaries—an ideal leadership trait (19:3). The motif of bread and wine, peace,

and justice forms part of a covenant that strengthens perfection and unity, symbolized by repeated words and the pairing of bread and wine with heaven and earth [23].

Melchizedek's offering extends beyond food; he blesses Abram with the protection of the Highest God (vv. 19–20), which is customary in covenants where one party is stronger. Melchizedek may also give Abram a tithe of all he has returned. This can be interpreted in two ways: Melchizedek testifies that God gave Abram the tithe, or Abram is required to tithe upon receiving the blessing [24]. Ancient covenants suggest Melchizedek may have paid Abram a tithe, while the king of Sodom demands only the souls of his people, leaving property with Abram (v. 21) [25].

The mention of wine and bread in the context of tithes connects to Jerusalem's custom of yearly temple tithes. The tithe belongs to God, while the spoils of war belong to the victors. Analogies reinforce the explanation that the king (Abram) receives a tithe from God (Melchizedek), thereby strengthening Abram's status as the father of the nation and his greatness. There is also an implicit message that a human king needs God's tithe in the name of justice and equality. Alternatively, the tithe is God's gift to Abram, allowing annual gratitude for divine favor [26].

The Fourth Story: Comparison with the King of Sodom

The narrative continues from v. 17 through vv. 21–24, inviting comparisons between the king of Sodom and King Salem. The division of the king of Sodom's story into two parts is intentional. In v. 17, the king of Sodom does not offer blessings or food to welcome Abram, making the meeting's location—Valley of Shaveh—significant. The king of Sodom's status is lower than Abram's, contrasting with Melchizedek in Valley of Shaveh [27].

In v. 21, the king of Sodom offers property for the return of his people, referring to them as "souls." Abram refuses all property, stating symbolically, "from a thread to a shoelace," indicating he will not take anything, even the smallest item. Interpretations vary regarding the meaning of these items. Abram insists on not taking what is not rightfully his and requests acknowledgment that the king of Sodom did not enrich him (v. 23). Melchizedek's promise of a tithe in v. 20 adds complexity. The author employs wordplay with the consonants מעשׂר and העשׁרתי. The repeated mention of "property" throughout the chapter suggests economic equality and potential for an equal alliance. Abram's refusal to accept anything for himself demonstrates his noble qualities and contentment in serving others—qualities that establish him as the nation's leader.

Abram's response to the king of Sodom repeats the oath spoken by Melchizedek but adds God's name to the title "God Most High, Purchaser of heaven and earth," clarifying his faith's sovereign. He swears and refuses the king of Sodom's spoils to avoid indebtedness (v. 22), hinting that only what is divinely given should be accepted. Abram's character is reinforced as content and modest, recognized by God. He requests rewards for his three allies (v. 24), treating them with equality and concern for their interests. This completes a circle, presenting Abram as a leader who values his allies and upholds justice.

Abram's Leadership and Legacy

The story's message is that of a perfect leader. Abram, destined to lead the nation according to God's promises, demonstrates bravery, generosity, modesty, forgiveness, and the ability to form alliances and foster brotherhood among foreign nations. The narrative raises questions about places and customs—such as Dan, Valley of Shaveh, Salem, tithing, covenants, and the bread and wine offerings—while reflecting Abram's struggles in his personal life. These elements give Abram a seal of approval as the father of the nation and legitimize kingship through his character [28].

Wine emerges as a positive motif with its own merit. The modest offering of bread and wine gives the impression of a grand feast among equals, suggesting that gifts were used to secure covenants between stronger and weaker parties. In Abram's case, the unspecified quantities imply equality.

Meetings often take place in symbolic locations, such as Emek Shaveh, the Valley of the Kings, and a flat area (Gn 14:17), as well as other areas associated with tribal conflicts. Most agreements are made in neutral locations, maintaining equality. The repeated use of verbs such as "went out," "descended," "go," and "sent" describes how parties approach one another, with the weaker side typically initiating gestures to the stronger. Abram's meeting is unique in its mutual approach and lack of surprise.

The phrase "found favor" recurs in related stories, often linked to wine. In Abram's story, it is implied in the blessing, "Blessed be Abram to the Highest God... who protects and provides" (Gn 14:19–20). Abram seeks favor only from God, who blesses him through Melchizedek.

Other recurring themes include brotherhood and unity through military and agricultural cooperation. Agreements include verbal pledges of protection, with Abram

receiving blessings from Melchizedek and God, echoing broader patterns of compromise and alliance.

Covenant Patterns and Leadership Qualities

The covenants follow a recognizable pattern: approaching the opponent, exchanging food, questioning the agreement, blessing, protection, and property. In Abram's case, the pattern shifts: when the king of Sodom asks for his people, Abram requests that property be withheld as a token of the agreement. Unlike others, Abram refuses the property, positioning him as a noble leader whose status as father of the nation is emphasized.

Blessings are a key feature: Melchizedek blesses Abram with protection and wealth. Abram responds not directly to Melchizedek but to the king of Sodom, refusing to take anything from God. Abram's oath, "I will lift my hand," reflects a non-vindictive, non-warrior ideal, contrasting with David's frequent acts of revenge.

The story stands out as an agreement with a deity rather than merely a human contract. The narrative highlights doing good to the weaker parties, as seen in Abram's request for the welfare of his young men (Gn 14:24). Abram is adopted by Melchizedek, paralleling the relationship between God, the priest, and Abram. (Andersen 1995, 297, 506).

The motif of the donkey, bread, and wine symbolize property and the significance of offerings. The bread and wineskin tie the narrative strands together.

Wine and bread serve as flag motifs symbolizing agreements. The message is one of fair and respectful agreements, with leaders prospering by adhering to divine rules. Wine metaphorically represents tolerance, generosity, relaxation, and, at times, conflict and vengeance.

Summary

The use of "bread and wine" in the agreement between Abram and Melchizedek represents rival groups seeking balance and wholeness. Though not a common biblical pairing, both commodities are valuable for their agricultural significance and their role in fulfilling human needs. Bread and wine are seen as gifts from God and the result of human labor, making them suitable offerings in equal agreements. Their appearance without specified quantities symbolizes sacrifice, balance, and peace between adversaries.

Ultimately, wine and bread are positive symbols that support the rule of the father of the nation, Abram, and the Canaanite peoples.

Notes

[1] The name Abram is mentioned in the biblical source because his name had not yet been changed to Abraham.

[2] Gunkel claimed (according to A. Gaddes, 1800) that they are independent and small units of various types. Grossman finds messages in them on the political and social levels. Von Rad and Goldingay believe that there is a uniqueness here to an international narrative (Goldingay 2020, 230; see Grossman 2014, 85-6; Gunkel 1998, 80-1; Von Rad 2005, 175).

[3] Nm 21:29. For another case where a refugee from war is mentioned in connection with Jerusalem, see Ez 33:21, and for the Amalekite "man of the camp" who fled (2 Sm 1:2-3) from the war between Israel and the Philistines led by King Saul, whom David kills for murdering the king.

[4] Glender and Gunkel identify the author as a foreigner because he states that Abram is a Hebrew (Gn 14:13). In my opinion, there is no foreign writing here; rather, it's a nickname indicating that Abram came from somewhere else. This could be a retrospective justification for a later event or suggest that Abram was seen as a different person when he passed through Sodom's square. Zeron argues that Abram is called "Hebrew" by nomads or foreign peoples (compare Gn 39:14, Ex 1:16, 1 Sm 14:21), but also as a refuge. Jonah also identifies himself as a "Hebrew" to the foreign sailors on the ship (Jon 1:9). Artzi highlights a parallel to an Akkadian document from the second millennium BCE, which describes the status of nomads known as *Habīru*; according to Ugaritic and Egyptian records, they were also referred to as *Afiru*. This term signifies a socially lower status in various nations, such as in Syria and the Land of Israel. They held a better status during conflicts between cities. They were hired as soldiers, or when they sought refuge between cities, like the Edomites, the king of El-Lakh (15th century BCE), and during the Amarna period. In other words, Abram's status was that of a landless, nomadic person, bound by covenants rather than crossing a river. (Artzi et al. 1993, 105; Glender 2006, 98; Zeron 1982, 129).

[5] Mamre is mentioned as Abram's place of residence (13:18) and is not mentioned as an Amorite area. Some identify Mamre with Hebron, as Ramban does. Is Mamre intentionally mentioned to remind us that Abram has a covenant and therefore resides there? In v. 24, the name Mamre is mentioned (without the oaks). It seems that Abram's trained camp is divided between three allies. Making such a covenant reminds Zeron of the story of Jehoiada, who made a covenant between God, the king, and the people,

thereby breaking down the altars and restoring the king to the throne (2 Kgs 11:4) (Goldingay 2020, 235; Zeron 1982, 131–2).

[6] Eshkol – Nm 13:24, 32:9, and Aner is a city of refuge.

[7] The title "brother" is mentioned in the ancient Near East when people made a covenant that indicated the economic adoption of an adult (see the Nuzi adoption tablets) or in a state of war, when kings of cities fight together, they are called *axum*, a kind of brotherhood, as can be found in Mari (FM II.117.29; 118.6). In the case of Abram and his allies, it is not stated whether there is peace or war between them (Gn 14:13 and compare Zec 11:14). In cases of brotherhood, the brothers are obligated to each other in matters of military aid and diplomacy, but not in giving gifts or granting territories (Anbar 2007, 92-3; Stone, Owen and Mitchell 1991; Roth 1984).

[8] Hobah and Damascus – an allusion to the borders of the land reflecting the period of David's kingdom. Abram's covenant with the kings (Gn 15:18, compared to Gn 10:19) prompts him to pursue the kings as far as the city of Hobah, located to the left of Damascus. This allusion to David's conquest of Aram-Damascus (2 Sm 8:5-6) establishes a border as far as Hamath. Damascus is perhaps identified with *Upi*, which was called in a letter to Pharaoh Amenhotep III, in the *Apum* inscriptions, and in the Mari documents. It was also known as Darmesh (1 Chr 5:18, 16:2, 24:23, 28:23) and as *ša imêrišu* (the city of his donkey), because it was a city through which caravans of nomadic donkeys passed, and a special breed of donkeys grew up there. On the other hand, it may be from the term *Hamer*, meaning one who is engaged in leading caravans of donkeys. Some believe that it is a Hurrian name for the Assyrian name for Damascus. (Heltzer et al. 1993, 106; Speiser 2008, 104); Weinfeld et al. 1993, 102-3).

[9] Dan is a settlement in the north, as mentioned in Damascus and Hobah (v. 15), and see also Dt 34. According to Nm 2:25, Dt 33:22 and Jgs 18, 20:1, Dan (probably a corruption of the name "Dedan" which is at the northern end of the Euphrates), is found in the north and from the common name "from Dan to Beersheba" (1 Sm 3:20, 2 Sm 24:15). If so, Abram's pursuit to Dan is an anachronism according to Von Rad. The basis for the story recorded here is found in documents from Mari (according to Malamat, 1970), which are part of military diplomatic campaigns from the 18th century BCE. The author employed a two-part model, drawing inspiration from a distinct literary form: the first part, in the style of a list of annals (vv. 1-16), and the second part, serving as a historical record to glorify the kings. But in the present story, it is Abram who is praised for his victories. Nevertheless, it is puzzling why the kings retreat instead of moving forward, while Abram pushed them back into place? (Glender 2006, 100-1; Goldingay 2020, 235; Heltzer et al. 1993, 106; Von Rad 2005, 178).

[10] There are stories in the Bible of kings' victories, thanks to divine intervention (see 2 Chr 2:16-17, 13:20-3, 14:14-8), and in all of them, despite the surprise, the merit of God's heroism remains evident. The model here is reversed; Abram acts alone on his own initiative and, in practice, does not take property that does not belong to him. Conversely, when God helped him in Egypt, he took the property that was given to him (Gn 12:20-13:2). This is an unusual aspect of the story, indicating that Abram's entitlement to receive the land was not only a result of a blessing, but also a consequence of his deeds. This definition of a political and diplomatic outlook allows for acting independently, based on initiative, and defines allies under God's protection. Therefore, Abram is awarded the inheritance of the land in chap. 15. Brueggemann believes that the purpose of the story is to portray Abram as a nobleman and an exemplary family man, and Grossman also connects Abram with the father of the nation (Brueggemann 1982, 135; Grossman 2014, 92-4).

[11] According to BDB – simple. The phrase *Valley of Shaveh*, according to Rashi, refers to a place where the nations of the world made Abram their king. The meaning of the name suggests an equal status between the two leaders, Abram and King Salem. The mention of the two valleys indicates the meeting between two groups of leaders: the kings and Abram, who return from war to meet with Melchizedek. As a result, the reader is prepared to be moved by this meeting. Despite the identification, the question arises as to why Melchizedek meets Abram halfway back to the square of Sodom? According to Artzi, the king of Sodom welcomes Abram in *Valley of Shaveh*, which is identified with the *Kidron Valley*, located between the *Valley of Ben Hinnom* south of the City of David (2 Sm 18:18), precisely where he resides. In mentioning the place where the king of Sodom and Abram met, Artzi argues, there is a reason for attributing importance and holiness to Jerusalem, which was a foreign land in the days of David, and thus linking it to the father of the nation. Weinfeld supports this by claiming that it is an ancient tradition that the *Dead Sea* (v. 3) is *Kadesh* (v. 7) and the King's Valley (v. 17). Goldingay suggests that the place is identified with the place to which Absalom fled during the rebellion, which is identified with the *Beit HaKerem Valley* in Jerusalem and is based on 2 Sm 18:18, 1QapGen 22:13-14, but these are retrospective interpretations (Elgavish 2001, 496; Artzi et al. 1993, 100-1; Goldingay 2020, 231, 236; Grossman 2014, 86-7; Glender 2006, 98; Hamilton 1990, 365; Weinfeld et al. 1993, 102).

[12] The King's Valley is identified with Jerusalem according to: "He came to Salem, which is Jerusalem, and Abram camped in the Valley of Sheva, and the King's Valley is in the Valley of Beth-Kerem" (External Scroll to Genesis, p. 40, and in Josephus, Antiquities 1, p. 180). According to Keel, the reception of Abram by the King of Sodom in the King's Valley is a contrast to the reception of King Shelem, in which a blessing was pronounced,

and an offering was given. V. 17 is broken in that it lacks continuity, as it supposedly indicates a time when Abraham returns, the King of Sodom goes out to meet him, and at the same time, King Shelem appears. A similar phenomenon occurs in v. 13 when a refugee comes to tell Abram what he told is missing from the text, and it is immediately told where Abram is sitting. (Keel 1997, 386; Ἡρόδοτος and Shor 1935, 180; Emanueli 1970, 70).

[13] Winfield and Grossman wonder about the interruption of the encounter with the king of Sodom and a later return to him. In terms of geographical location, this does not work out, since the king of Sodom is located southeast, while Melchizedek is in the Jerusalem area (see note 20) (Weinfeld et al. 1993, 106; Grossman 2014, 84).

[14] The term *Salem* is based on the statement in Ps 76:3 for Zion, but the connection is not clear. In the etymological identification of *Salem*, according to Onkelos and Rabbah, there are descriptive and literary elements that portray a priest to the Highest God. That is, Abraham chooses Jerusalem, and what it represents – justice (1QapGen. Rab. 43:6). According to Hamilton, in Hebrew, it is common to drop part of the name as the first element. Suppose the first element is Uru (city) in Sumerian. In that case, the name "Uru-Shalim" may also be a Sumerian name given to it when it was a border city, even before Jerusalem came under David's control. He proves this according to an external scroll to the book of Genesis (1 Qap Gn 22:13 see note 13). Houston supports this claim through the LXX and the Roman translations, as evident in the comparison between Melchizedek and Salem, which corresponds to Jerusalem. In addition, he parallels the Ugaritic story of *Keret* by finding the root *Slm* and interpreting it as the name of a god, and Melchizedek as the title of God. On the other hand, he attempts to proves that Salem signifies a covenant of peace. According to Rashbam, another identification of Salem with *Shechem* (Nablus) is identified from the time of Jacob with Shechem (Gn 33:17-20). It is based on the LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate translations. Perhaps there is a definition that explains the difference between these two cities in terms of their distinct pronunciation, such as the exchange of consonants between Shiloh and Salem. According to Shadal, these are cities that were together: Gibeon, Shechem, Shiloh, Nebo, and Jerusalem. However, Sodom is in southeastern Judea, not in the mountains of Samaria. Albright identified the name as Shalem[o], and in his opinion, Melchizedek is a nickname for Abraham, who was both a king and a vassal. Houston bases this on Gn 34:21 when Jacob also meets Esau and calls it *Salem* (in addition to using the expression "a spacious land" – compare with Gn 13:9, Am 1:9). One could also think of a corruption of the place name *Laish*, the seat of the tribe of Dan, and having a platform as a contrast to Jerusalem in which the only temple is found. (Artzi et al. 1993, 105); (Albright 1961, 36–54); (Dimant and Parry 2014, 28;

Elgavish, 1988, 31 f. 23, 89; Elgavish 2001, 496–7; Grossman 2014, 85, 88-9; Hamilton 1990, 366; Keel 1997, 388; Houston 1965, 139-44; Von Rad 2005, 179).

[15] According to Rashi, Melchizedek is the son of Noah (Nederim 22b). Rabbah states that Melchizedek is a king in the place of Tzedek (צֶדֶק – Justice). Therefore, it is a collective name or the name of the city of Tzedek, and this may refer to Jerusalem (see Is 1:21, Ps 45:13, 1QapGen. Raba 43:6 and compare Adonei-Tzedek in Josh 10:1) according Weinfeld in the sense of 'plain' and 'justice' (2 Sm 8:15; Is 9:6, 16:5), i.e. the city of Tzedek (Is 1:26; Jer 31:22). Hamilton saw here a descriptive name (Ezr 3:2, Hg 1:1) or an adjective (like Jehozadek – upright God or God is justice), or a characteristic of a city and a person – a pursuer of justice, based on the behaviour of Abram and Melchizedek and based on the interpretation of the name of the king of Sodom (Bare – bad man). Hence, Melchizedek is identified with Jerusalem based on the words 'Zedek' and 'Shalem' as a theophoric name (Zedek – 1 Kgs 2:35; Zedekiah – 2 Kgs 17:24; Jehozadek – 2 Chr 5:41 all related to Judah and Jerusalem). However, Keel interprets the name Melchizedek as a nickname, like Pharaoh (compare Is 1:21, 26; Jer 31:22, and 1QapGen 2:13). Houston also denies that such a suffix indicates Jerusalem or a deity associated with a place that was never mentioned. Therefore, he suggests that there is no definite identification with either the city or the king, and perhaps it still has a connection to the story of *Keret* and the city of Edom. Houston finds further evidence of the connection between Melchizedek and Abram in the Phoenician writer *Sanchuni-Athon*, translated by Philo of Meghil into Greek. Historical evidence suggests that Melchizedek originated from the city of Argizim, which is connected to Mount Gerizim. Still, he qualifies this possibility, suggesting that perhaps these traditions originate from the Samaritans, who identify themselves with Shechem, where a temple to the God of the Covenant was located. Other evidence from the *Amarna letters* on Vat 327 tablet mentions the name Rabitzedki in l. 45, and this is in a letter written by Egyptian called 'Ezru' to "brother" after *Ezru, king of Amoru*. In 11Q13, the name Melchizedek serves as a substitute for the name of God, as per Is 61:2, in the interpretation of the scroll's roles, where God is also portrayed as the judge of the people of Israel: מלכיצדק יעשה את נקמת משפטי האל משפטינ מיקום צדקו מלכי.

It also seems that the interpreters continue the hypothesis that Melchizedek is God or is considered part of the two messiahs. Suppose Melchizedek serves as a priest of God. In that case, it follows that Abram serves as his servant and builds an altar to God (Gn 23:6). According to the story, it seems that the foreign Melchizedek blesses in the name of his God. Still, according to verse 22, there is a complete identification of God with the name (see Ex 24:16, Dt 32:8, Ps 7:18, 78:35). The scholarly discussion of the name Melchizedek in both the Qumran literature, which interprets the Bible, and in pre-Christian literature is extremely rich. In addition, according to Hamilton,

Melchizedek is first mentioned in Hebrews 5:6–10; 6:20–7:28, where Jesus is called a priest forever by the name of Melchizedek (the reference is based on Ps 110:4). In v. 10, the name of the Messiah, Jesus, is mentioned. He is defined as a high priest. In chapter 7, which expands Genesis from an interpretative perspective, there is a parallel between Jesus and Melchizedek in the context of the superiority of the priesthood, in their lack of lineage (the priesthood was not inherited by them), and both are in the role of blessers and are presented as a superior figure. That is, there is They have the power to give life forever (7:16) and therefore they are priests forever (7:24). The second parallel to the story is expressed in Melchizedek blessing Abram in the name of the God of *heaven and earth* like the blessing to Jesus in 7:7. And the third parallel is when Abram gives a tithe to Melchizedek of everything (7:4-6, 10). This action is akin to donating to the temple. From this, it appears that Melchizedek is attributed great honour, like that of Jesus, when believers follow him (Heb 5:6-10, 6:20, 7:1-28). Another reference to Melchizedek in the New Testament (according to Is 61:1-2) is as a figure of the Judge of the Day of Judgment who appears in heaven, and after him, the Day of Judgment when the sentence is carried out. In addition, both Jesus and Melchizedek are attributed to being from the tribe of Judah; however, Hamilton believes that this cannot be attributed to Jesus or the divine qualities that Melchizedek represents. Hence, the figure of Melchizedek, "It provided an anchor for the emerging Christian movement to establish credibility among the people" (Hamilton 1990: 366). The title El Elyon, according to Onkelos, means "other gods" (Ex 20:3; Dt 10:7), and according to the Ramban, it refers to a priest serving other nations. The title "El Elyon" is not the name of a Canaanite god (v. 18), because the addition of "Buyer of heaven and earth" refers to the Creator of heaven and earth and alludes to the God of Gen 1. Some believe that there may be a fusion of two separate deities here, "El" and "Elyon" or an alternative name. However, "El Elyon" is a synonym for God, based on various sources (Ps 7:11, 55:3, 88:35 refer to God as El Elyon). The Judean Desert sect during the Hasmonean period in 142 BCE, reinforces the idea that this is not a god based on Ps 110:4, and this idea continues In the New Testament, there is a reference to the head of the state as a 'high priest forever' (1 Mc 14:4, 41). As well as the appearance of the title 'high priest' in 1QapGen col 22:15; 1Q20:20 (Cekiera 2021, 412, 424; Brueggemann 1982, 138-9; Chirilă, Pașca-Tușa and Onețiu 2017; Cochavi-Rainey and Rainey 2014, 172; Dimant and Parry 2014, 20; Elgavish 2001, 496; Flowers 2016, 194; Goldingay 2020, 238-9; Hamilton 1990, 366, 370; Houston 1965, 146-552; Keel 1997, 387-9; Speiser 2008, 104, f. 16; Weinfeld et al. 1993, 106; Zakovitch 1992, 22-34).

[16] In my view, there is a touch of arrogance here: the king is equated with God. However, these terms can also be interpreted to indicate the equality of God and the king under divine law, or that justice and equality are principles guiding the actions of both

God and the king. Nonetheless, the term 'God' here might be considered synonymous with the king. In any case, a parallel exists between the king and God, as well as between equality and justice. However, Emanueli does not see the connection between expressions such as "brother," "equal," and "Highest God" as similar to other phrases in the Torah. (Emanueli 1970, 68).

[17] Von Rad links everything to the legitimization of God, who allows Melchizedek to grant Abram control over a Canaanite city (perhaps Jebus, which became Jerusalem) and thus prepares David to reign over it as a descendant of Abram. The description of "buyer of heaven and earth" (Ps 133:3) means creator buyer or owner, in allusion to the Canaanite god. Such inscriptions, including the Phoenician texts and the Karatepe inscription (Cilicia), from the 8th-9th century BCE, identify God with creation (*ʾl qn ʾrṣ* – "El, the creator of the earth"). The descendants of El in the Phoenician tradition were called priests of the Highest god, as were also the Hittite and Hurrian traditions. Philo of Gebel speaks of Elion, the highest, Uranus, Heaven, and Elus, God, and Adud, Hadad-Baal (equivalent to the names of Hittite and Hurrian gods). The Canaanites call Elus – 'God of the Earth'. That is, there is a distinction between a Highest God and a God who is the chief between heaven and earth (see the Aramaic prophecy from Sfira, dated to the 8th century BCE). In contrast to the belief of Israel that there is no distinction, but that there is one God and that is what they call *Elohim* (Ps 9:3, 47:3, Dt 32:8). In the Bible, "buyer" is mentioned in the context of property or possession, and sometimes also creation, so the possibility of interpreting this makes sense (Gn 4:1; Ex 15:16; Dt 32:16; Ps 78:54, 139:13) and at the same time also of a shelter or shelter (Prv 8:22, 14). In parallel with other Semitic languages, when the intention is to create, in Ugarit, according to the myth of Anat (Aqht UT 2 VI:15-16, 41 and UT, 76: III:5–7). In parallel with Dt 6, the pronoun *qnyn dyknn* is "He who created (made, fashioned) us" and therefore, *qnyn* must be "our Creator, Father." A 9th-century BCE Aramaic inscription from Kilamuwa also indicates the root *qny* meaning to create: [*smr z qn klmw br ḥy] for Rakib-ʾEl*. ("Son of Haya, fashioned grant him length of life May Rakib-ʾEl." (Swiggers 1982, 249–53). Brueggemann notes that "creator of heaven and earth" is a well-known formula from Israelite literature (Habel, N. 1972) that indicates a crisis of faith, and its meaning is help in a difficult moment as a consolation or use for blessing and strength in life, that is, it is a greater understanding of the deity. He adds and links to the name another dimension in which the text may be interpreted and understood, such as the concept of syncretism (worship of many gods besides God, as described in the Bible) or the adoption of the worship of one god, specifically the Israelite God, according to him. He bases his words on translations that reflect the takeover of worshipping God over worshipping other gods, and thus, the church adopted this approach based on the phrase "creator of heaven and

earth." He sees a great complexity in the two divinities, one referring to the Creator and the other to the Redeemer, in historical terms, and Abram is aware of this (Brueggemann 1982, 136-7; Von Rad 2005, 180-1; Hamilton 1990, 367-8; Keel 1997, 387; Weinfeld et al. 1993, 106).

[18] The historical period is the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4), during which there was an attempt to unify worship of God in one place to prevent an invasion by the Assyrians, which was perceived as punishment for sins. Hezekiah rebels against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who came to fight him in his 14th year (2 Kgs 18:13). An echo of the struggle can be seen in the tension that developed with the birth of Dan, immediately after the birth of Judah, when Rachel envies her fertile sister Leah (Gn 29:35-36), and also in Jacob's blessings that give the two sons control (Gn 49:8-12 compared to 16-17), with other brothers intervening between the blessings. Similar tensions are found in the story of Samson (Jgs 13:2), when his father, from the tribe of Dan, lived in the region of Judah (Zera).

[19] And continuing with the kings from the house of Judah. See David's will to Solomon 1 Kgs 2:3, 6:11-13.

[20] The story in 1 Sm 30 recounts David's efforts to rescue his wives and children (1 Sm 30:22) from Amalekite captivity, while also recovering all the people of Ziklag after they had burned it. For this reason, there are many striking similarities between the stories: the people of Sodom, including Abram's family, were taken captive (Gn 14:11-12), and it seems that the city was destroyed (the same applies when God burned it in Gn 19:24-25, 28-29). The phrase "and they went" appears (Gn 14:2, 10, 24) as opposed to "those who went with me" (1 Sm 30:22). In both, the impression is created that in terms of the wording of the sentence, the phrase is placed in an odd position: the captivity similar mentioned together with the people (Gn 14:15); In 1 Sm 30:9-10, 14, there are 600 warriors, four hundred of whom remained with David and are called "boys" compared to Abram's 318 boys (Gn 14:14). In both, typological numbers are mentioned; in 1 Sam 30:11 a refugee comes in the form of an Egyptian man, and in Gn 14:13; Similar to the phrase "from a thread to a shoelace" in Gn 14:23, the phrase "and there was nothing lacking to them from the least to the greatest" in 1 Sm 32:19 emphasizes that nothing was lacking from the captivity in property or people; additional emphasis on the phrase "Behold, you have a blessing from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD" (1 Sm 32:26) similar to Melchizedek's blessing (Gn 14:20) and finally the mention of food: 1 Sm 32:16 refers to a feast-celebration of the Amalekites, which ends with David killing them. It should be noted that camels are used as a means of escape, whereas in Gn 14:18, Abram is given "wine and bread" when he returns from the war. The Egyptian refugee receives bread, a slice of bread, two raisins, and water from David (1 Sm 12). He also makes an

oath with David (v. 15) so that he can reveal to him where the enemy is and ensure his life. According to Weinfeld, these are motifs found only in David's wars, as are Abram's concern for the participants in the war (Gn 14:24 vs. 1 Sm 30:23-24), pursuit of captives (1 Sm 30:19), and other similar idioms (Gn 14:17, 18:6 vs. 1 Sm 30:21; Gn 15:14 vs. 1 Sm 30:10; Gn 14:20-14 vs. 1 Sm 25:22-23). However, Brueggemann finds no solid evidence for this (Brueggemann 1982, 135; Hamilton 1990, 370; Weinfeld et al. 1993, 102-3).

[21] Melchizedek brought bread and wine to provide provisions for exhausted warriors, as is customary (based on the Midrash of Genesis Rabbah, which implies offerings of offerings). Rashi refers to this as "taking out of the treasures" to assist those who come from war. And Rivash adds, as in 2 Sm 17:27. RSG notes that this is the reason Melchizedek is called the priest of the Most High God, the servant of God. Grossman adds that Melchizedek brings out wine and bread for Abram, in contrast to the king of Sodom, who does not bless him at all, meaning that he does not wish to establish an economic relationship (Grossman 2014b, 89; Hamilton 1990, 366; Keel 1997, 387-9).

[22] Bringing wine and bread to Abram as an offering has a ritual significance (Paschim 15:1:5, B. Talmud). Bread and wine are equivalent in meaning (Dt 29:5; Ps 104:15; Eccl 10:19; Prv 4:17). In the opinion of Houston Hamilton, Grossman, and others, this has a political significance because the king brings the offering himself, and according to the nature of his blessings. In their opinion, a feast was also held with their agreement. They base this on Gn 26:30, 31:54, and Ex 24:11. Some scholars suggest comparing Dt 23:4-5 with the law prohibiting hospitality to Ammonites and Moabites, as they did not provide the Israelites with bread and water when they came to their land. It seems that Abram is the only one who receives the honour after fighting in a coalition of many warriors. It is inevitable to associate the story with both the Gibeonites (Josh 9) and 1 Sm 10:3. While Brueggemann claims that the bringing of tithing is not a gift but rather an acknowledgment of a subordinate to his superior. In addition, Hamilton finds a place to compare it to the letter of Tudhaliya IV, king of Hatti, who writes to his vassal, Shalmaneser I, king of Assyria (KU13 XXII 103: 4-5): "If he (Shalmaneser) would enter my land of, If I as to enter his…we would eat the bread of one another". Another example of a gift in a treaty is found in Abraham's treaty with Abimelech (Gn 21:27), where Abraham gives him sheep and cattle. In the second treaty between Abimelech and Isaac (Gn 26:30-31), an agreement was made at a feast. On both occasions, there were quarrels over water wells in the Beersheba area. The fact that agreements were made over water control areas in Beersheba is very different from the place where the treaty with Melchizedek was made. However, there was a later altar in Beersheba (Gn 46:1; 2 Kgs 23:8; Am 5:5). If Beersheba, in the territory of Simeon and annexed to Judah, may be a negligible place, the writer does not ignore its importance. Likewise, the covenants can

be considered part of the altar offerings, mixed with water from the wells, but there is a distance in this in that there is no mention of Isaac's feast with wine, except in an implied way (Dziadosz 2023, 335–65; Brueggemann 1982, 135; Elgavish 2001, 497; Hamilton 1990, 376-9; Houston 1965, 136; Otten 1959, 42–3; Malamat 1955, 175-182; Morschauser 2013, 142).

[23] According to the Sages, it does not appear that the symbols bread and wine were given a serious status. However, Gen. Raba. 33:6 refers to this from various aspects: the bread is the showbread of the Temple, and the wine is the wine of consecration, which is used on the altar when a sacrifice is offered (Ex 25:13, 30; Nm 4:7, 15:10, 28:14; 1 Kgs 7:48). However, it is worth noting that Melchizedek did not bring an animal sacrifice. But the Sages compare this to the work in the Temple in Jerusalem. In another interpretation of Gen. Raba. compares the bread and wine to the Torah, as part of God's gifts (see Prv 9:5). According to the Midrash, Abba Kahana sees that wine is always mentioned in a negative context except for this case, and according to Rabbi Levi it is a symbol of the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt (based on Gn 15:13) which is a later tradition that developed. Philo also notes that Melchizedek did not bring out bread and water as usual for the guests, but rather wine. Similarly, in the external scroll of Genesis, it states "food and drink," whereas all translations refer to the matter of bread and wine (Grypeou and Spurling 2013, 211-5).

[24] Melchizedek, the priest, blesses Abram as God's beloved because he went out to volunteer and help, by Rabah. This is also a well-known Phoenician blessing of God, or, according to the Hebrews, of God (Ps 7:18). Melchizedek's blessing corresponds to the blessing with which Abram is blessed before and after inheriting the land and receiving recognition of his power from the kings of the East. The Most High God is also blessed here by Melchizedek (Nm 24:16, Ps 107:11, and in the inversion of Ps 57:3, parallel to the God of Israel Ps 78:35) (Brueggemann 1982, 135; Hamilton 1990, 367; Keel 1997, 390).

[25] Compare 1Q20 col. 211:1-. (Dimant and Parry 2014, 26-7).

[26] It is not clear whether God the Most High will receive a tithe, or whether it will be Melchizedek or perhaps Abram. Most commentators argue that Abram is the one who gives a tithe to Melchizedek from all his property (according to the subject in the law and according to Heb 7:6), and that it is only logical that he would pay the king a tithe from what he acquired in the war. However, the traditional interpretation (such as Yosef Kimchi) holds that Melchizedek is the one who gives, as he says, "You are the one who tithes according to the law." According to Moshe Kimchi, it is not logical that Abram gives to Melchizedek and does not take it for himself. In other words, it is a gift, and therefore, he is not liable to pay tax from the spoils to the king in whose name he fought. But Keel believes that the tithe belongs to the king according to the king's law

(1 Sm 8:4). Grossman adds to the lack of clarity the author's intention for deliberate ambiguity to confuse the reader and emphasize the reciprocity between Melchizedek and Abram, that it does not matter which of them gives tithes, as in their meeting in the Valley of Shava. Zeron believes that the expression 'tithe' is not related to this period. Without a doubt, the comparison is necessary to the temple service and the gift given to God when successful in his name in wars. 1 Sm 31:17 provides evidence for taking the spoils of war, when it is the warriors who receive the spoils, as does 1 Sm 30:30 when David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, are kidnapped by the Amalekites and released after fighting the Amalekites (this explains why women are mentioned exceptionally in chapter 14). For an extensive discussion of the matter. Regarding the tithe mentioned above, the question should be raised again whether there is a basis here for giving Tithes from the people to the priests, so that the king would not have to pay them, or is this about the king's own temple? According to Glender, there is also a precedent here for bringing tithes to the priestly/religious establishment that was only done later (Glender 2006, 103; Grossman 2014b, 86-7; Hamilton 1990, 368-9; Keel 1997, 390-1; Weinfeld et al. 1993, 102; Zeron 1982, 129).

[27] According to Grossman, this leap encourages the reader to make a comparison between the two stories of Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and the king in the context of Abram's contrasting attitudes towards the two kings. In both, there are similar expressions, such as "And he brought forth, and he came forth, the Most High God by the heaven and earth, and gave him/gave me," which share a similarity in both linguistic style and content, in the sense of bringing forth things. In Grossman's opinion, this is an expression of the Bible's sensitivity to idolatry. The difference between the stories is that Abram objects to the king of Sodom but does not harm Melchizedek and feels a friendship and religious appreciation for him that is not explicitly stated. There is a chiastic structure here within the story of the encounter itself. However, Elgavish thinks that the meeting with Melchizedek in the middle of the encounter with the king of Sodom is unnecessary and therefore creates a contrast. Glender views verses 17-24 as a dramatic story, which is described in detail compared to the limited first part. Therefore, the question is whether these are not two scenes in which Abram meets with the kings Melchizedek and the king of Sodom, as mentioned in v. 17. This idea is not plausible in his opinion, because the king of Sodom comes to Abram without blessing him, and Melchizedek goes out to meet Abram. As a result, it is unclear whether they both arrived at the same place in the Valley of Sheva, and Abram also does not return the blessing to Melchizedek. Glender suggests that verses 17-24 present two angles to the same meeting: one, it was with the king of Sodom, and the other with King Shelem. In the first, property and life were discussed, and in the second, a ceremony was performed in Abram's honour. Knowing the exact

location of the Valley of Shaveh would help determine who came out to meet him first, but the beginning of the meeting with the king of Sodom is missing, and the meeting with King Shelem lacks a description of its conclusion. It could be argued that there is a lack of courtesy on the part of the king of Sodom, who wants to rush and close a deal with Abram. Perhaps this indicates his character, in contrast to Abram's description and the scene with King Shelem. Thus, it appears that the King of Sodom's offer is part of a ritual performed by King Salem, and Abram's response to the King of Sodom is, in fact, a response to Melchizedek, which raises a theological debate: Who is God? Abraham will later call Him God of the World (Gn 21:33) (Elgavish 2001, 495; Grossman 2014b, 85-6; Glender 2006, 102-3).

[28] Wenham believes that there is a record of three battle stories here that reflect vv. 17-24. In these battles, property was seized, allies were formed, and the spoils were divided. The work incorporates a larger story. Abram's concern for Lot highlights his paternal instincts and explains his capacity to become the father of the nation. It also emphasizes Abram's generosity, which was also hinted at in Gn 13:13. According to Wenham, Melchizedek is important here because he draws the reader's attention to Lot on the one hand, and on the other hand, he serves as the one who blesses Abram in God's name. Unlike Abram, Lot chooses prosperity and wealth over Abram's rejection of tithes and wealth. Lot's departure creates tension between the two as they separate and Abram is left alone because he still has no descendants. Another tension is the moral tension that raises the issue: Can Abram claim the property of the sinful people of Sodom? But he is not tempted and offers to take only for his allies and his men who fought with him. From this, Wenham concludes that this is a voluntary sacrifice to a legitimate and righteous king, as the meaning of his name is presented here in a positive light (Westermann 1995, 185–208; Von Rad 2005, 174–81; Wenham 2017, 58-61, 73-7).

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