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Reviewed work(s):
Published by: BRILL
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1517339

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THE RIDDLE OF GENESIS XIV

BY

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Few chapters in the Old Testament have provoked more disagreement among scholars than Genesis xiv, and its problems have often been discussed 2). In an article entitled 'Some false clues in the study of Genesis xiv', V.T., xxi (1971), pp. 24-47, I examined some theories that have tried to explain the chapter as a story transmitted in poetry or based on a poetic original, or as the translation of an Accadian document written in cuneiform, and I reached the negative conclusion that they are unconvincing. The purpose of the present paper is to offer a positive reconstruction of the chapter's literary history and of its basis in tradition. Inevitably, the discussion will lean heavily on the work of others, and any originality that it possesses will be found chiefly in the ways in which different opinions are reviewed and assessed, and in which different judgements are combined in a synthesis. It cannot be claimed that the interpretation of the chapter and the reconstruction of its history in tradition offered here can be proved up to the hilt, but merely that it offers an intelligible account of the evidence and that it avoids some of the difficulties facing other theories. That, perhaps, is the most for which anyone who dares to write on Gen. xiv may legitimately hope.

I

Before beginning a detailed examination of the chapter, it is convenient to draw attention to some parts that are probably secondary.

1) In this article, J.B.L. stands for Journal of Biblical Literature, V.T. for Vetus Testamentum, and Z.A.W. for Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. A list of works cited by their authors' names will be found at the end of the article. I am grateful to Professor B. S. Childs and Dr. R. E. Clements for reading and commenting on a draft of my paper, and to Professor W. G. Lambert for discussing several Assyriological questions with me.

First, it is generally agreed that the explanatory notes in verses 2, 3, 7, 8, and 17 are glosses. Secondly, it is likely that the references to Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre in verses 13 and 24 are not original, for they play no part in the rest of the story and are ignored in the account of the battle and the pursuit of the eastern kings. Possible reasons for the addition of these two classes of secondary material will be considered below.

II

The first question to be considered is the relation of Gen. xiv to the sources into which the Pentateuch is usually analysed. It is agreed by most scholars that the chapter does not belong to any of the sources, although there have been occasional attempts to prove the contrary, and there is more support for the view that, while not belonging to a source, it is dependent on one or more of them.

There are some affinities between Gen. xiv and the Priestly Writing, but the presence of the expressions וּרְכֵּס (verses 11, 12, 16, and 21), and יִלְדֵי יִבְנֵי חָיתָה (verse 14), and the use of וָזָא in the sense of 'person' do not suffice to prove that the chapter belongs to P or even that it is dependent on it. P (Gen. xxiii 2, 19, xxxv 27) places Abraham in Hebron, which it identifies with Mamre, and xiv 13 implies that he lives in the same district, but it has been seen that verse 13 is probably not an original part of Gen. xiv. It is, in any case, doubtful whether even the person responsible for adding verse 13 knew P, for xiii 18, which is usually ascribed to J, places Abram 'by the terebinths of Mamre, which are in Hebron'—quite apart from the fact that xiv 13 describes Mamre as an Amorite, whereas P (xxiii 3 ff.) regards the inhabitants of the place as Hittites (cp. MEINHOLD, p. 13). The affinities between the references to Lot in xiv 12, 14, and 16, and Gen. xiii, which is thought to show some signs of the presence of P as well as of J, will be considered below.

It has recently been argued by ASTOUR (pp. 68-73) that Gen. xiv is the work of the school of writers responsible for the later parts of Deuteronomy and for the Deuteronomic history. On examination, his arguments turn out to be unconvincing, for the evidence to which he appeals does not demand a Deuteronomic origin. According to ASTOUR, 'The concise recording style of Genesis 14, with its lists of many localities, and tribes, its chronological data and figures' recalls the Deuteronomic writings, and, in particular, the author's 'anti-quarian approach and erudition' resemble that of Deut. i-iii. It is
difficult to see why the characteristics to which he draws attention should be regarded as exclusively Deuteronomic. Nor does the argument become conclusive when it compares Gen. xiv 4-5, 11, where we read about the rebellion of the five kings after a period of paying tribute and about the plundering of Sodom and Gomorrah by the invaders, with such passages as 2 Kings xviii 7 b, 13, xxiv 1, 10, 12b-13, and also xxiv 20, xxv 1, where we read of the Israelites rebelling against Assyria or Babylon and then suffering from a punitive expedition. The most that such comparisons show is dependence on a style of history writing which may well be much earlier than the Deuteronomic work; M. Noth, for example, has argued that some of the places in 2 Kings compared by Astour with Gen. xiv are dependent on pre-Deuteronomic material 1). It is also possible to compare 2 Kings iii 4 ff. (notwithstanding the use of a different Hebrew verb ‘to rebel’), which is probably a story taken over by the Deuteronomic historian and which tells how Mesha rebelled and (presumably) withheld tribute, and how an expedition was launched against the Moabites. It is true that the mention in Gen. xiv of the Rephaim, the Emim, the Horites in Edom, and the Zuzim recalls the Deuteronomic references to these peoples (with Zamzummim in place of Zuzim), but there is no reason to suppose that they were Deuteronomic inventions rather than derived from older traditions 2). Even cumulatively, such arguments do not amount to a very strong case. The argument from resemblance in ideas is even weaker. The comparison of Abram’s 318 men with the 300 men in the pre-Deuteronomic tradition about Gideon’s army does not prove the Deuteronomic character of the former. Nor is it plausible to connect Melchizedek in Gen. xiv with the aspirations of the Zadokite priesthood and their rivalry with the king, and to argue for authorship by a member of the Deuteronomic school. There is no trace in the Deuteronomic writings of Zadokite aspirations to the kingship or of any rivalry. It certainly does not appear in what Deut. xviii says about the priesthood. It may also be observed that the tithe in Deuteronomy is different from the tithe in Gen. xiv, and the difference tells against

2) It is interesting to note that Morgenstern (pp. 231-2) thinks that some of these references are additions to Deuteronomy and that they ‘may very well be the work of one and the same hand’ as that of the writer responsible for the similar expressions in Gen. xiv.
Astour’s theory. His view that Gen. xiv originated in the Deuteronomic school is unconvincing.

I. Benzinger has sought to divide Gen. xiv between J and E, but the criteria employed by him are insufficient to prove his argument. The use of the word ‘Amorites’ in verses 7 and 13, and of דְּרוּ in verse 24 is not enough to demonstrate the presence of E, and the attribution to E of references to northern places and to J of southern places is legitimate only if it can be shown on other grounds that these two sources are employed. Winckler’s rather fanciful reconstruction of the literary history of the chapter (which was known to Benzinger) also uses geographical references as a criterion for detecting the hands of J and E.

A possible point of contact between Gen. xiv 14 and xv 2 (which is ascribed to JE by most commentators, although they differ in the detailed analysis of chapter xv) has been detected by some scholars. It is said in xiv 14 that Abram had 318 servants, and it has been observed since the time of the midrash Bereshith Rabba that 318 is the numerical value of the name of Eliezer, who is mentioned in xv 2. If the interpretation of the number by means of gematria were correct, it would argue for a late date and probably for dependence on xv 2. However, the explanation is very dubious, for Eliezer plays no part in the story of Gen. xiv, and it is difficult to see why a veiled allusion to his name should have been introduced. It may be doubted whether it is necessary to see any special significance in the number of Abram’s servants—the narrator may have chosen a number with the intention merely of giving a concrete detail to his story 1).

The only secure affinity between Gen. xiv and a Pentateuchal source is that Lot is described as living in Sodom, and that the J narrative in Gen. xiii and xviii-xix also places him there (part of xiii 11-12 is usually attributed to P). Although allowance must be made for the possibility that both Gen. xiv and J are dependent on a common southern tradition, it is quite likely that the present form of Gen. xiv is dependent on J. However, it is doubtful whether the references to

1) The question has recently been discussed by S. Gevirtz, Israel Exploration Journal, xix (1969), pp. 110-5, who compares the mention of 318 women in an Egyptian text, and the calculation that a total of 318 people are said to have been killed in ‘the four days of actual fighting recorded in The Iliad’. However, as he recognizes, the resemblance may be fortuitous. His suggestion that the reason why 318 was chosen is that it is the sum of the prime numbers between 7 and 72, of which there are twelve, is interesting, but impossible to verify. It seems at least as likely that no symbolic meaning was intended by the mention of 318.
Lot in Gen. xiv 12, 14, and 16 are original. Verse 12 mentions Abram despite the fact that he is introduced in verse 13 as ‘Abram the Hebrew’, as if for the first time. Some scholars, such as GUNKEL, therefore delete בִּכְרַאת אֵבוּרִים in verse 12, but the problem can just as well be solved by regarding the whole verse as secondary. Such a solution seems probable because, as commentators have observed, verse 12 clumsily repeats words already found in verse 11, and makes the invaders capture Lot and his possessions after they have left Sodom and Gomorrah. Admittedly, the fact that verse 13 is anticipated is not the only reason why GUNKEL deletes ‘the son of Abram’s brother’ in verse 12 (and it was not mentioned by DILLMANN, from whom GUNKEL borrowed the emendation): he also thinks that the phrase is in an awkward position after ‘and all his goods’, instead of after ‘Lot’. Yet it is conceivable that a writer who could compose a verse that follows verse 11 so clumsily was also guilty of composing it with one phrase in an awkward place. Verse 16 is also very clumsy in Hebrew, for the clause υπηρέτησεν interrupts the connexion between ἐν Λότ καὶ ἔχουσιν ἀνθρώπους καὶ τοῖς κατοικίας τῶν πολεμάτων ἐν Ἰὰμμα τῆς Σοδόμης. Similar reasons for doubting the originality of the present text are not found in verse 14, but its reference to Lot could be removed without difficulty. The words ‘Abram heard that his brother was taken captive’ supply the motive for Abram’s military action, but the story would make sense if it told simply how captives had been taken from Sodom, and how Abram went to the rescue as a friendly act. Verses 12 and 16 thus contain reasons for doubting the originality of the references to Lot, and the reference in verse 14 can be removed without difficulty. It is thus likely that Gen. xiv did not originally mention Lot, and that his name was added later, perhaps when the chapter was joined either to J or to the combined sources of the Pentateuch.

III

Verses 18-20, which recount the meeting between Abram and Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of El Elyon, are commonly regarded as an interpolation. Before the problem of the originality and significance of these verses is examined, a preliminary question must be considered.

Verse 20 says, ‘And he gave him a tenth of all’, but does not state explicitly whether it was Abram or Melchizedek who made the gift. However, since the word translated ‘tenth’ (מכש) is almost invariably
used of a sacred payment, and since Melchizedek is said to be a priest, it is natural to suppose that he received the tithe and that Abram paid it. By 'all' is presumably meant the spoil taken by Abram from the defeated eastern kings. The suggestion that it refers to Abram’s possessions in general is much less satisfactory in the context, in which Abram is scarcely to be supposed to be encumbered by goods other than the spoil. If Abram pays a tenth of the spoil, there is a contradiction with verses 21-3, where he states his intention of returning to the king of Sodom what he has taken from the eastern kings. However, the existence of the contradiction does not tell against the interpretation of the tithe as a tenth of the spoil, for the alternative explanation of verse 20 also involves a contradiction of verse 23, which gives as the reason why Abram will not accept the spoil as a present from the king of Sodom the possibility that he might say, ‘I have made Abram rich’. If Melchizedek had given Abram a tenth of ‘all’—presumably of all his possessions—then Melchizedek would have been able to make the same boast. There is thus a contradiction, no matter which interpretation of verse 20 is accepted, and it will be seen below that it is one of the reasons for believing the Melchizedek passage to be secondary. The contradiction does not tell against the probability that Abram is said in verse 20 to pay a tenth of the spoil to Melchizedek.

After considering that preliminary question, we must now ask why verses 18-20 are commonly thought to be secondary. One reason has already been mentioned: there is a contradiction between verses 21-3 and the statement about the payment of a tenth in verse 20. The other reason is that verses 18-20 interrupt the flow of the narrative. Verse 17 says that the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram in the vale of Shaveh, and the natural continuation of the verse is in verse 21, which begins ‘And the king of Sodom said unto Abram’. The Melchizedek passage interrupts in a strange way, and breaks off very abruptly after recounting Melchizedek’s blessing.

If the Melchizedek passage in verses 18-20 is not from the same writer (or transmitter of tradition) as the framework in which it is now found, it must be asked whether they were originally independent units of tradition or whether one of them presupposes the other. The reference to ‘Yahwe El Elyon, possessor [or, more probably, creator] of heaven and earth’ in verse 22 closely resembles the reference in verses 18-19 to the deity worshipped by Melchizedek, but the evidence is capable of being explained as the result of editorial
assimilation\(^1\). The statement in verse 20 that El Elyon has delivered Abram’s enemies into his hand is related, in the present form of the chapter at least, to the story of Abram’s defeat of the eastern kings. On the whole, it seems probable that the Melchizedek passage is a later addition to what is now its framework. The framework makes sense without the Melchizedek passage, whereas the Melchizedek passage can scarcely stand on its own. The Melchizedek passage begins without a proper introduction, and does not explain what Abram is doing at Salem or who are the foes whom he has just defeated. Moreover, it is easier to explain why verses 18-20 should have been inserted secondarily between verses 17 and 21 than to see why the framework should have been invented and written in a way that is so clumsy. If an interpolator wished to introduce a reference to Melchizedek, it is understandable that he should have done so after the reference in verse 17 to Abram’s return from his victory over the eastern kings, even though this involved the awkwardness that it interrupted the story of the meeting between Abram and the king of Sodom; it would have been even more difficult to add the reference to Melchizedek at the end of the chapter, after the climax of the story and at a time when a reference to paying a tithe of the spoil would have been yet more incongruous. On the other hand, if a narrator were inventing a story round the nucleus of verses 18-20, he would surely not have invented a framework that fits so clumsily and would not have detached verse 17 from the rest of the insertion. It is most likely that the framework is original, and that the Melchizedek passage in verses 18-20 is a later insertion, which was made by someone who knew the story of Abram’s victory over the eastern kings and of his subsequent meeting with the king of Sodom. Verses 18-20 were added to the framework. That does not, of course, exclude the possibility that the narrator was drawing on a tradition about Abram and Melchizedek, which he adapted to the present narrative.

At this point, we must consider an alternative view, namely the theory advanced by Sellin (pp. 939-40), by Procksch (pp. 509-10), and more recently by Astour (pp. 67-8), that the Melchizedek passage is an original part of the chapter, and that verses 17 and 21-4 are an addition. There is no need to consider arguments that will work either way, such as Sellin’s claim (which is dubious in itself) that

\(^1\) It is a secondary question whether the tetragrammaton should be deleted on the ground that it is ignored by the LXX and the Peshitta, or whether ba’elohim should be read with the Samaritan.
verse 23 is dependent on verse 20 because מְשַׁמָּה has been chosen to give a play on the word מְשַׁמָּה. A stronger argument is Sellin's assertion that the words 'Yahwe El Elyon' in verse 22 are dependent on the description of Melchizedek's deity; the present form of verse 22 probably is dependent on verses 18-20, and it was necessary to postulate above an assimilation by an editor. There is, however, no difficulty in the suggestion that the editor who added verses 18-20 partially assimilated the context to the addition. The other arguments have little or no force. It is claimed that the mention of Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre in verse 24 shows it, like verse 13, to be secondary. However, the argument is not a strong one, for, if it is held that verse 13 is an addition to what Sellin, Procksch, and Astour believe to be an original part of the chapter, it is also possible that verse 24 is a later addition but that verses 17 and 21-3 are as original as the context into which verse 13 has been inserted. Another argument in favour of the view that verses 17 and 21-4 are secondary is that there is a contradiction between verse 10, where the king of Sodom dies in a bitumen pit, and verse 17, where he is still alive. On pp. 27-8 of my earlier article, I have given reasons for doubting whether the death of the king of Sodom is implied in verse 10, but, even if he were thought to be dead, it would still be necessary to consider the possibility, which is favoured by some scholars, that there are two strands of tradition in verses 1-16, and that verse 17 belongs to a different strand from verse 10. Sellin finds another difficulty in the statement in verse 17 that the king of Sodom 'went out'. Whence did he go out? His city was zerstört, and, if he had escaped death in verse 10, he had sought refuge in the hills. However, the reference in verse 11 to the plundering of Sodom does not necessarily imply that it was uninhabitable, and there is no difficulty in supposing that the writer intended the reader to understand that the king had gone back to his city after the invaders' departure; alternatively, the writer may have meant that he came out of his refuge in the hills.

There is more substance in Sellin's observation that verses 17 and 21-4 mention only the booty taken from Sodom, and ignore that of Gomorrah (the references to the other cities of the plain are regarded by Sellin as secondary, and, in any case, verse 11 does not say that any cities other that Sodom and Gomorrah were plundered). Later in the present paper, consideration will be given to the hypothesis that the fundamental story underlying Gen. xiv mentioned the king of Sodom but not the kings of the other cities of the plain, but that
hypothesis and Sellin's hypothesis are not the only possibilities. Sodom and Gomorrah are regularly mentioned together in the Old Testament, and it is not surprising that they should both be involved in the events recorded earlier in the chapter; but there is perhaps more narrative force in an account of the meeting of two individuals, Abram and the king of Sodom, and the omission of the king of Gomorrah from this part of the story is intelligible. Finally, Procksch advances an argument which is dependent on his theory that Gen. xiv originally said nothing of the eastern kings but spoke only of a battle fought by the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah against local kings. He believes that verses 17 and 21-4 form the end of the story of the defeat of the eastern kings and are therefore to be regarded as secondary. It is, however, by no means certain that Procksch's theory about the eastern kings is correct, or that, even if it is correct, verses 17 and 21-4 necessarily presuppose it, rather than what Procksch holds to have been the original form of the earlier part of the chapter.

The arguments put forward by Sellin, Procksch, and Astour in support of the view that verses 18-20 are original and verses 17 and 21-4 an addition are thus unconvincing. Against them may be set the arguments advanced above for the secondary nature of the Melchizedek passage. Moreover, verses 17 and 21-4 are related in subject matter to the earlier part of the chapter and they round off the story, whereas the Melchizedek passage introduces a new and different idea.

Finally, consideration must be given to an argument from style that verses 17 and 18 belong together and that it is wrong to ascribe them to different writers. H. S. Nyberg maintains ¹) that a deliberate contrast is intended between the king of Sodom in verse 17 and the king of Salem in verse 18, and that it appears in the placing of a verse beginning with a verb before a verse introduced by the subject of a verb that comes later (as in Gen. xviii 33), and in the use of two forms of the same verb, 'and he came out' (כָּאָב) in verse 17 and 'he brought out' (שָׁנִיר) in verse 18. Yet the fact that a particular colloca-

¹) P. 361. The argument is repeated by I. Engnell, A Rigid Scrutiny (Nashville, 1969) = Critical Essays on the Old Testament (London, 1970), p. 54 (the Swedish original is not accessible to me), to illustrate the assertion that western scholars' judgements are too often 'based on an inadequate understanding of Hebrew mentality or, even worse, on an inadequate knowledge of the Hebrew language, especially its syntax'.
tion of types of sentence is sometimes used to express a contrast does not necessarily prove that such sentences cannot have come into proximity except with that purpose. In Gen. xxxi 33, for instance, it is said that Laban went into (אֶרֶץ) Rachel’s tent; the next verse then begins with the word ‘Rachel’, which is the subject of a verb, and the purpose of the construction is to show that the second verb is to be understood as a pluperfect. If an interpolator wished to insert a passage about Melchizedek after Gen. xiv 17, it is possible that he chose to place Melchizedek’s name at the beginning of verse 18 in order to introduce an important new person. The fact that the verb that follows is from the same root as the verb at the beginning of verse 17 may be fortuitous (and it should not be forgotten that there is a difference, in that the qal is used in verse 17 and the hiph'îl in verse 18), or may reveal no more than the fact that the interpolator had verse 17 in front of him and that it put the verb נָשָׁה into his mind. However, even if a contrast is intended in the present form of the text, it is possible to ascribe it to the editor who added verse 18 to verse 17.

The most satisfactory solution of the difficulties raised by verses 18-20 is thus that they are secondary. An interpolator has added the Melchizedek passage.

IV

If the Melchizedek passage in Gen. xiv 18-20 is an insertion, it must be asked why the insertion was made. It is impossible to discuss the question without considering at the same time the only other place in the Old Testament where Melchizedek is mentioned, Ps. cx, which begins by recording a divine oracle to someone who appears to be the king ruling in Zion. It later records an oath made by Yahwe:

Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.

It is thought by most scholars that the psalm is addressed to one person who is both priest and king, although a different view, which will be discussed later, is maintained by H. H. Rowley. The psalm shows that Melchizedek was remembered in Israel as a person who in some sense set the pattern for an Israelite priesthood, and, if the usual view is correct, a priesthood held by someone who was also king.

Since Ps. cx mentions Zion, it is probable that Salem in Gen. xiv 18 was identified with Jerusalem, and Salem is also mentioned in
Ps. lxxvi 3 in a context where Jerusalem must be intended. The present form of the text in Gen. xiv perhaps itself implies that Salem is to be identified with Jerusalem, for verse 17 refers to the King's Vale, which is also mentioned in 2 Sam. xviii 18, and which is said by Josephus (Ant. VII x 3 = § 243) to be two stadia from Jerusalem. While the reference to the King's Vale in Gen. xiv 17 is probably a gloss, and verses 18-20 are most likely a later addition to verse 17, it is probably legitimate to draw the conclusion that Salem was identified with Jerusalem at some stage of the tradition. The view that Salem was Jerusalem receives further support from the inherent probability that Melchizedek's city was a place of some importance, rather than one of the minor sites in Palestine with which some have indentified it 1). On the other hand, the presence of the element sdq in Melchizedek's name cannot be regarded as a strong support for connecting him with Jerusalem, as some have supposed, for the element is quite common in North-West Semitic proper names 2). Even without such support, the identification of Salem with Jerusalem is probable. Finally, it may be observed that it is in accordance with Hebrew usage to name the city of which a man was king after the word melek, and there is no reason to suppose that sdlem is to be understood otherwise than as a place name, let alone that it is corrupt and in need of emendation 3).

2) See M. Noth, Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung (Stuttgart, 1928; reprinted Hildesheim, 1966), pp. 161-2; H. B. Huffman, Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 256-7. Rowley (Bertholet Festschrift, p. 465) regards the presence of sdq in Melchizedek's name as evidence that Salem was Jerusalem. A. R. Johnson (pp. 35ff.) gives a careful and judicious survey of the evidence for the connexion with sdq, but does not use it as an argument for the identification of Salem, although he believes on other grounds that it was Jerusalem (pp. 47-8). R. H. Smith (pp. 146-7) rightly challenges the argument.
3) Johnson (pp. 47-8) rightly challenges the theory of Smith (pp. 139-46) that melek sdlem can legitimately be translated 'a submissive king'. Smith's objection to the identification of Salem with Jerusalem rests on two arguments. First, that there is no evidence for the identification before Pss. lxxvi and cx, which he dismisses on the dubious ground that it belongs to 'the latter part of the Old Testament period' (p. 141). Secondly, 'it was not customary for the Canaanites or Hebrews to shorten a compound name by dropping the first element of the compound' (p. 141). Against the argument stands the evidence that Pss. lxxvi and cx, whenever they are dated, appear to imply an identification of Salem with Jerusalem, and Smith's general statement about compound names is questionable: see Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible (E.T., London, 1966), p. 97. Smith's
The principal suggestions that have been made about the date and purpose of the Melchizedek passage will next be considered. The discussion will include some theories that do not hold it to be a later insertion in the chapter; in any case, it would be a mistake to confine the discussion to verses 18-20, because the person who inserted them may have intended them to have a meaning, not on their own, but in relation to the rest of the chapter. On the other hand, it will be convenient to postpone until later some arguments that depend primarily on other parts of Gen. xiv, such as the argument that the story of the eastern kings must be late and that the Melchizedek passage should, therefore, be ascribed to a late period.

(1) Theories that date Gen. xiv 18-20 in the post-exilic period

Many of those who have dated the Melchizedek passage late have also dated Ps. cx in the second century B.C., on the ground that it is an acrostic poem in honour of Simon Maccabee. While it is unnecessary to hold that Ps. cx and Gen. xiv 18-20 come from the same period merely because they both mention Melchizedek, it is not surprising that those who have dated the former late have tended to deny an early date to the latter. B. DUHM, Die Psalmen (2nd ed., Tübingen, 1922), even regarded the reference to Melchizedek in Ps. cx 4 as a scribal note which had found its way from the margin into the text, and suggested that the Melchizedek passage in Gen. xiv might be yet later and might be dependent on the corrupt text of the psalm. He

understanding of Gen. xiv 18 may have been influenced by W. F. ALBRIGHT, to whom he refers. ALBRIGHT, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, clxiii (1961), p. 52, argues that šālēm should be emended to šlōmōh, and that the phrase means 'a king allied to him'. He gives no reason for the emendation beyond the assertion that 'nothing is said in Gen. 14 about any relation to Jerusalem, which seems to be a much later notion'. In Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (London, 1968), p. 231, he rejects the translation that he had proposed in 1961, and also admits that a reference to Jerusalem is needed. He now thinks that 'Jerusalem' has been lost after 'king of', and that another 'king' should be supplied before his emended reading šlōmōh, so that the whole expression should be rendered 'king of Jerusalem, the king who was his ally'. It is difficult to see why, now that he has abandoned the reason that he gave in 1961 for emending the text, he should retain his emendation and also supply the name of the city in place of the name given in the Massoretic Text. H. E. DEL MEDICO, Z.A.W., lxix (1957), pp. 160ff., emends the Hebrew so that 'Melchizedek' becomes melek ṣādīq, 'le roi juste', and 'king of Salem' becomes melek šālōm, 'le roi pacifique', and he supposes that both refer to the king of Sodom. The emendation is part of a dubious interpretation of the whole passage, in which 'he gave' (verse 21) is understood to mean no more than 'he offered' — and the offer was not accepted.
did not explain how the scribe responsible for the marginal note had heard of Melchizedek, if he was unknown in any earlier part of the Old Testament. The date of Ps. cx cannot be discussed in the present article, and it must suffice to say that the theory of Maccabean dating has been subjected to searching criticism ¹), and has been shown to be improbable: the psalm is most likely to be dated in the pre-exilic period, and may be as early as the time of David.

One argument in favour of dating Gen. xiv 18-20 in a late period is the assertion that it contains a number of late Hebrew words, and the opinion may be illustrated by reference to H. Holzinger’s commentary (pp. 145-6). It is unnecessary to discuss the argument that the use of the name Melchizedek points to a late date, because no evidence is advanced in its favour, and it may be suspected that it rests on the assumption that Ps. cx is late (although Holzinger speaks of the psalm as addressed to David). The argument that ‘Salem’ is a late form of ‘Jerusalem’, on the ground that the city was known as Urusalim as early as the time of the Amarna letters, and that ‘Salem’ became current only later, is similarly unconvincing: the date of Ps. lxxvi is uncertain, and there is insufficient evidence to enable us to determine when the short form of the name was first used. Another argument is that the title ‘priest of El Elyon’ was current in Maccabean times. That, however, does not prove that it could not have been used much earlier, or that the Hasmoneans could not have borrowed it from Gen. xiv. The name יִרְאֶלֶּה is used in Old Testament texts which are regarded by many scholars as pre-exilic (e.g. Ps. xviii 14 = 2 Sam. xxii 14, Ps. xlvi 5, Deut. xxxii 8), and יֵלֶּה appears as the name of a god in an eighth century B.C. inscription from Sefire ²). Moreover, it is possible that Ps. lxxviii 35, the only other place in the Old Testament where ‘El Elyon’ is used, is pre-exilic ³). If the divine name can be pre-exilic, there is no reason why someone should not have been described as a priest of El Elyon in pre-exilic times. Holzinger also states that יֵאֵל may be an Aramaism, and it is possible that he therefore regards it as late, although he does not say so explicitly. If it is an Aramaism, it does not necessarily follow that it is late, and it may be observed that it is used in a Phoenician inscription

¹) See the commentaries, and also the article by Bowker.
from the seventh century B.C. (DONNER and RÖLLIG, xxix 1). Perhaps the clearest example of the weakness of Hölzinger's argument is his claim that the description of El Elyon as ה' הרץ is probably late because the idea of God as creator of heaven and earth first came into prominence in post-exilic piety, and that the use of ה' as a synonym of אלהים is late. As is now well known, El is described as ה' in a Karatepe inscription from 720 B.C. (DONNER and RÖLLIG, xxvi A III 16). Finally, the argument that ה' was more poetic in older usage is scarcely conclusive. Such arguments about supposedly late words and late uses are nowadays rightly suspect. Hölzinger's arguments are unconvincing.

Another argument that has been advanced against an early date for the Melchizedek passage is that it presupposes a post-exilic view of the priesthood. Procksch argues (p. 512) that Melchizedek typifies the post-exilic high priest who receives the tithes. He compares Lev. xxvii 30 ff., but the comparison is not very apt, since the passage says nothing about the high priest, and it has not been proved that the institution of the tithe was post-exilic. Moreover, the tithe of which the Priestly Code speaks in Leviticus is the tithe of the land's produce, whereas Gen. xiv 20 says nothing about agricultural produce but, as has been seen, probably refers to the spoil taken by Abram. Procksch also thinks that Melchizedek serves as the type of the messianic king, and he compares Jer. xxiii 6 (which gives to the future king the name בְּרֵכָה), the priestly functions attributed to the king in Jer. xxx 22 and in Ps. ii (which, in his opinion, is messianic and recalls Ps. cx, where Melchizedek is mentioned), and also the priestly traits ascribed to the king in Ps. cx 4 and Zech. vi 9 ff. (cp. the princely insignia of the priest in Zech. iii 8). According to Procksch, the development can scarcely have taken place before Jeremiah, and is probably post-exilic. The argument is unconvincing. As has been seen, the post-exilic dating of Ps. cx is questionable. Jer. xxx 22 appears to be a wrong reference, and Procksch probably has in mind verse 21, which uses of the future prince verbs that are used of priests in some places in the Old Testament. However, it is unnecessary to suppose that the verse presupposes a late development, for, as will be maintained below, there is evidence that it was possible for a pre-exilic king to perform some priestly acts. Not is there any evidence in post-exilic times before the Hasmonaean period for the combination of the offices of king and priest. Jer. xxiii 6 speaks of the Davidic king and does not describe him as a priest, and it is
widely agreed that the text of Zech. vi 9 ff. is corrupt—it is probable that the passage originally distinguished between king and priest. Moreover, יְהוָה הַשָּׁבָט, which may contain an allusion to the name of Zedekiah, need not have influenced the passages where Melchizedek is mentioned. While it may be true that the high priestly office took over some of the characteristics which formerly belonged to the kingship, there is no evidence that any high priest before the Hasmoneans claimed royal status. The very fact that Melchizedek is said to be king as well as priest (and he is not said to be high priest) tells against the view that the writer intended him to symbolize the post-exilic high priest. Further, it was important in the post-exilic period that the priests should be descendants of Aaron, and no such claim could be made for the Canaanite Melchizedek.

Finally, two further arguments for a late date will be considered. The first is the argument of K. Budde, Z.A.W., lii (1934), p. 44, that the Chronicler cannot have known the Melchizedek passage, for, if he had been acquainted with it, he would have included in his work a story which would so well have suited his purpose of glorifying Jerusalem. The argument from silence, which always needs to be used with caution, has little force in the present case: the Chronicler does not begin his record of events (as distinct from genealogies) until the time of the monarchy, and it would have been surprising if he had narrated a story of patriarchal times. The second argument is advanced by Meinhold (p. 48), who has the impression that Melchizedek is portrayed as the priest of the one almighty God, the creator of the world, and who holds that this reflects the belief of Judaism at a late date. Evidence for an earlier belief in the deity as creator has already been considered, and the supposition that Melchizedek is portrayed as a monotheist has no clear basis in the text of Gen. xiv 18-20 itself.

Having examined some arguments in favour of a late, post-exilic dating of Gen. xiv 18-20, we shall now look at some attempts (by such scholars as Meinhold, Procksch, and Budde) to detect in the passage motives appropriate to the supposedly late date. Such interpretations in terms of a post-exilic dating do not themselves argue for the origin of the passage in a late period, unless they can be shown to be more plausible than interpretations that demand an earlier date. It has been suggested that the Melchizedek passage is intended to strengthen the claims to authority of the post-exilic priests or high priests, their right to the tithe, and the position of Jerusalem as the legitimate place for the temple. As far as the priest-
hood is concerned, the difficulties were discussed above. MEINHOLD (p. 50) has a further suggestion which, he thinks, explains why Melchizedek is said to be a king: just as Alexander the Great was believed to have honoured the Jewish high priest before Jerusalem (Josephus, Ant. XI viii 5 = §§ 329-339), so King Melchizedek honoured Abram. MEINHOLD’s theory suffers from the difficulty that it conflicts with his own belief (p. 48) that Melchizedek is represented as the forerunner of the Jewish priests of Yahwe: how can Melchizedek appear both as the foreign king who honours the ancestor of the Jews and as the prototype of the Jewish priesthood? To turn to the question of the tithe, it was pointed out above that the tithe of Gen. xiv 20 is not the same as that of the Priestly Code. In any case, it is difficult to see why the need to establish the claim of the Jerusalem priests to the tithe should have been greater after the exile than before. The same consideration applies to the view that the passage seeks to vindicate the claims of Jerusalem as the site of a shrine against those of other sanctuaries in the post-exilic period. While there was in the post-exilic period an interest in the patriarchal origin of the sacral status of Jerusalem (cp. 1 Chron. iii 1), the need to legitimate its claims existed much earlier. MEINHOLD explicitly mentions (p. 49) Shechem, Hebron, and Bethel, and a number of commentators have compared Gen. xxviii 22, which they understand to be a basis for Bethel’s claim to receive tithes; yet all these sanctuaries are likely to have been rivals of Jerusalem before, rather than after, the exile. If the Melchizedek passage is thought to have been sufficiently late to reflect the post-exilic rivalry between Jews and Samaritans about the legitimate place for the temple, then, as ROWLEY has argued (BERTHOLET Festschrift, p. 462), it is strange that the latter should ‘have accepted as part of their Scripture a piece of propagandist literature which was written against them, and must have been known to have [been] 2) written against them, if it was written during the controversy and appealed to for support against their claims’. On the other hand, there is less force in ROWLEY’s argument that the passage cannot have been intended to legitimate the sanctuary at Jerusalem because it does not mention Melchizedek’s shrine: the purpose of legitimating a sanctuary would probably have been served

1) Cp. the argument advanced against a view of BOWKER (which is different from, although comparable to, the one under discussion) by H. H. ROWLEY, V.T., xvii (1967), p. 485.

2) ROWLEY appears to have omitted accidentally the word in square brackets.
sufficiently well by the mention of a city of which the priest and cult were recognized by Abram.

In conclusion, the arguments in favour of a post-exilic date for Gen. xiv 18-20 have been found to be unconvincing, and the theories about its purpose against that background are either unsatisfactory or equally, or more easily, compatible with a pre-exilic dating. Against the view that the passage originated at a late time is to be set the argument of Gunkel (p. 261): post-exilic Judaism was strongly opposed to heathen, including Canaanite, religion, and it is unlikely that a pious Jewish writer would have viewed a Canaanite royal priest not only with favour but as the forerunner of later Jewish priests, unless he had had an ancient tradition behind him. Such a view of Melchizedek is far more likely in a much earlier period. A post-exilic dating of Gen. xiv 18-20 is probably to be rejected, and it would become likely only if a consideration of the rest of the chapter made it inescapable.

(2) A theory that dates Gen. xiv 18-20 in the period of the divided monarchy

The view that the Melchizedek passage originated in the period of the divided monarchy is presented by H. Schmid (pp. 175-8). He holds that the passage reflects a polemic against the claims of Bethel (represented by the story of Jacob’s dream in Gen. xxviii) to the tithe, and that it comes from the time after the setting up of the bull shrines in Dan and Bethel as rivals to the temple in Jerusalem. The theory is plausible, and yet it may be asked whether the need to substantiate the cultic claims of Jerusalem against those of other shrines first came to the fore after the schism between the northern and southern parts of Israel. Would it not also have been thought desirable to give support to the claims of Jerusalem at an earlier time? Would it not have been particularly important to authenticate the claim of Jerusalem to be the most important Israelite sacred place immediately after the installation of the ark in the city that had so recently been captured from the Jebusites? May not Jeroboam I have exploited an earlier rivalry and opposition to Jerusalem from other shrines, where the claims to sanctity were believed to be older and better attested? Schmid seeks to answer such objections by advancing arguments against the theory of Nyberg that the passage comes from the time of David. He maintains, against Nyberg, that David’s claim to Jerusalem was based, not on an event on the time of Abram, but on military conquest, and that the legitimacy of the city as the place for
a sanctuary depended on the appearance of the angel recorded in 2 Sam. xxiv 16 ff. and on the fact that the ark had been brought thither. The arguments advanced by Schmid against Nyberg’s theory would not necessarily be valid against other theories that Gen. xiv 18-20 should be dated in the time of David, for it might be possible to formulate one in a way that was not open to the same objections. In any case, Schmid fails to allow for the possibility that the Melchizedek story was used, not in place of other arguments in support of David’s claims, but in addition to them: it is possible to think of ‘both-and’, rather than of ‘either-or’. The question must be decided by examining theories that date the passage in the time of David, to see whether they offer a more plausible account of the evidence than the theory put forward by Schmid.

(3) A theory that Gen. xiv 18-20 was intended to justify the position of Zadok in the time of David

H. H. Rowley has argued both in the J.B.L. and in the Bertholet Festschrift that Gen. xiv 18-20 and Ps. cx come from the time of David and are intended to legitimate the priesthood of Zadok. He maintains that Zadok was a member of an old Jebusite priestly family who was appointed by David to be a priest in the Israelite cult, and that his new position needed an aetiological justification. Rowley believes that the first part of Ps. cx is addressed to David, but that the words about Melchizedek are spoken to Zadok the priest. He does not, however, accept the theory of some scholars that Zadok had earlier been, not only a priest, but the Jebusite king of Jerusalem; it is, in his opinion, unlikely that David would have made so dangerous an appointment.

Rowley recognizes that his theory would be difficult to maintain, if Melchizedek were portrayed as a king as well as a priest, for there would then be an aetiological justification for Zadok to claim the kingship in addition to the priesthood, and David’s policy would not have been served by promulgating a story that would support a possible rival for the throne. David was the king and, if Melchizedek stood for Zadok, then Melchizedek could not be described as a king. He maintains, therefore, that Melchizedek is portrayed only as a priest, and not as a king. Against his theory stands the inconvenient fact that Gen. xiv 18 uses of Melchizedek the word ‘king’, as well as the word ‘priest’, and it is not easy to see how Rowley can claim that ‘it is doubtful whether Melchizedek was thought of as a priest-
king' (BERTHOLET Festschrift, p. 471). The use of the word 'king' renders ROWLEY's explanation of the passage untenable.

(4) Theories that Gen. xiv 18-20 was intended to further David's policy in other ways

The arguments in favour of the view that the Melchizedek passage was intended to further David's policy in other ways may be summarized in three groups: concerning the cult, the city of Jerusalem, and the claims of David as king both of Israelites and of Canaanites. The division cannot, however, avoid some overlap.

The first arguments concern the cult. Melchizedek is said to be the priest of El Elyon, which recalls the divine name known outside Israel both in the work of Sanchuniaton and, as has been seen, in the appearance of אליון in an Aramaic text from Sefire in the eighth century B.C. When, therefore, Gen. xiv attributes the worship of El Elyon to a priest living in Jerusalem in pre-Israelite times, it is entirely plausible. The story appears to reflect a syncretism between the cults of Elyon or El Elyon and Yahwe, and it has been suggested that David adopted, in some form, the Jebusite cult 1) and tried in the Melchizedek story to reconcile both his Israelite and his Canaanite subjects. The Canaanites would see that Abram, the ancestor of the Israelites, treated the cult of El Elyon with respect, and the Israelites would see that, in view of Abram's behaviour, offence could not legitimately be taken at the syncretism. The suggestion is very plausible, and it should probably be accepted. The story also implies that David, as king in Jerusalem, had inherited the priestly status of Melchizedek: that appears to be the implication of Ps. cx, when the late dating of the psalm and also ROWLEY's interpretation of it have been rejected. It has often been observed that Davidic kings sometimes performed priestly actions—David, for example, wore an ephod, which was a priestly vestment, when he danced before the ark. Finally, the Melchizedek story may have been used to justify the payment by Israelites of tithes in Jerusalem.

The second arguments concern Jerusalem. David captured the city from the Jebusites and made it his capital. He also brought the ark into this Canaanite city, and made it the central place of pilgrimage, although not, of course, the only place of worship. The Melchizedek

story may be seen as a justification of the sacral status given to the city by David for the people of Israel. Although the story may not justify the status of the sacred site in the narrower sense, it may imply that the Canaanite city as a whole was a legitimate place to hold the ark. There is no other clear reference to Jerusalem as a sacred place in the patriarchal stories, and it has been seen that it would have been helpful for David to be able to appeal to an event in the time of Abram to support the claims of Jerusalem against those of shrines elsewhere, which had held a place in Israelite tradition much longer and which had already been linked with stories of the patriarchs.

The third arguments concern the position of David as king both of Israelites and of Canaanites. As was argued above, Ps. cx probably implies that the Davidic dynasty laid claim to a priestly status as heirs of the priestly kingship of Melchizedek. That judgement carries with it the view that the dynasty also laid claim to the royal status of Melchizedek. David ruled in a city that had known Canaanite kingship in the past. The Melchizedek story showed to David’s Israelite subjects that there was nothing objectionable in his reigning in the place where Melchizedek had formerly reigned, for none less than Abram had recognized the status of Melchizedek and had even paid tithes to him. On the other hand, the Canaanite subjects saw that David was a fit person to occupy the throne in Jerusalem, for his ancestor Abram had been respected and blessed by Melchizedek. It is possible to maintain such a view without attempting to define precisely who stands for whom in the story and thus becoming open to Rowley’s objection that David cannot be represented both by Abram and by Melchizedek 1).

The military implications of Gen. xiv should also be observed. When the invaders come from the east and attack Canaan and the neighbouring lands, it is Abram who is the champion of the westerners, and who defeats the attackers and pursues them as far as Hobah north of Damascus. Incidentally, we gather from 2 Sam. viii 6 that Damascus was subject to David’s rule, and an implication of the story in Gen. xiv may be that Abram chased the attackers out of the territory over which David was later to rule 2). The Canaanites might thus look to David, not only as the descendant of someone blessed by Melchizedek,

2) MAZAR (p. 17) has recently argued that one of the main purposes of Gen. xiv was to support the claim of David to rule over the different territories in his kingdom.
but as a warrior who, like Abram long ago, had shown himself able to fight against invaders and so to help Canaanites as well as Israelites. Thus, if the Melchizedek passage was added in the time of David to the story of the defeat of the invaders, that story too would serve David's purposes. On the other hand, according to the present text of the chapter, Abram had Canaanite allies, for we read in verses 13 and 24 of the help given him by Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. It has been seen that their presence in the story is probably secondary, but their insertion may have been motivated by the desire to show that it was in the interests of both Canaanites and Israelites to stand together—under Israelite leadership, of course—against a common enemy. While there is no means of dating precisely when the addition of Abram's three allies was made to the chapter, it is an attractive hypothesis that it was at the time when the Melchizedek passage was inserted in the story.

Gen. xiv portrays Abram as a friend and helper of people living in and near Canaan, and the view was advanced above that the person responsible for inserting the Melchizedek passage wished to further the union of Canaanites and Israelites under Davidic rule. It has, however, been suggested that the chapter reveals a difference in attitude towards different peoples living in the west. While H. S. Nyberg recognizes that Abram is represented as the defender of Canaan and as the rescuer of Lot, the ancestor of the Moabites and Ammonites, he thinks that a sharp contrast is made between Abram's attitudes towards Melchizedek and the king of Sodom: from the one he receives a gift of bread and wine and a blessing, but he refuses the other's offer of the booty as a present. It was noted above that Nyberg believes that a contrast is implied by the fact that the king of Sodom is said to come out, whereas Melchizedek causes to come out bread and wine. He thinks that the contrast is connected with difference of cult. Abram accepts the cult of El Elyon represented by Melchizedek, but rejects the cult practised by the king of Sodom. The latter is said to meet Abram in the Vale of Shaveh, that is, the King's Vale. We have seen that the valley, which is also mentioned in 2 Sam. xviii 18, may well have been the one which according to Josephus, was very close to Jerusalem, and Nyberg identifies it with the valley of the sons of Hinnom. The valley of the sons of Hinnom became the centre of the Molech cult, which Nyberg believes originally to have been the cult of the melek or king, that is, of the deity regarded as a king (cp. Isa. xxx 33, 2 Kings xxiii 10). The King's
Vale is thus, in Nyberg's opinion, a symbol of the cult practised there. Gen. xiv expresses approval of the cult of El Elyon, but disapproval of the cult in the valley of the melek. Nyberg further argues that Sodom is regarded in Gen. x 19 as lying outside the land of Canaan. He also compares Hos. xi 7-9, which he understands to mean that Admah and Zeboiim, cities that are allied with Sodom in Gen. xiv, were overthrown by the god 'Al, whom he identifies with Elyon. Thus, he holds that Abram, who accepts the cult of El Elyon in Jerusalem, rejects the local cults of the nearby peoples outside Canaan (p. 363).

A similar view is taken by J. W. Bowker, apparently independently of Nyberg's article. He thinks that the point of the story is as follows: 'It is legitimate to accept "gifts" from Jerusalem (which is what David had done in taking over ideas of kingship from there and in establishing Jerusalem as his capital); but it is not legitimate to accept them from other nations. In other words, David's action is not to be extended into a general principle of syncretism, nor is his action to be criticised on that ground' (p. 39). Bowker does not put forward the same argument as Nyberg that Sodom was outside Canaan, but his distinction between Jerusalem and 'other nations' perhaps implies a similar approach.

The theories of Nyberg and Bowker are unconvincing. As far as Nyberg's suggestion about the significance of the King's Vale is concerned, it reads into the text more than can legitimately be extracted from it. The passage itself says nothing about the religion of the king of Sodom. It is also highly unsatisfactory to suggest that the writer seeks to distinguish between the Canaanite cult of El Elyon and the non-Canaanite melek cult, and yet that he chooses as the symbol of the latter a place that was within Canaan, and was, indeed, in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. Moreover, even if Sodom was not regarded as part of the land of Canaan (and Gen. xviii 12 would have been a better verse to quote in support of the view), it was very close to it, and was doubtless within David's sphere of influence. It would not, therefore, have been the most obvious and forceful symbol of a non-Canaanite people. On the other hand, the chapter certainly portrays Abram as the friend and helper of the king of Sodom, and as the defender, not only of Canaan in the narrow sense, but also, as Nyberg agrees, of the west in general. There is not much evidence in the chapter for a fundamental difference in the relations between Abram and Melchizedek on the one hand and the
king of Sodom on the other; and, when it is examined, it is doubtful whether it proves the alleged point of the story. Nyberg and Bowker exaggerate the contrast between the attitudes of Abram to the two kings. The merely verbal play on the root 'to come out' may be fortuitous, and, even if it was intended by the editor, it does not necessarily imply a fundamental difference of attitude. Nor are the circumstances in which gifts are offered to Abram the same. Melchizedek brings out bread and wine, presumably as a present to Abram, but there is a considerable difference between accepting food offered hospitably to a traveller and accepting a large amount of booty. The acceptance of hospitality would not have laid Abram open to the charge that Melchizedek had made him rich, and the fact that Abram was willing to accept hospitality but not enrichment does not justify the view that he is represented as having totally different attitudes towards those who offered the gifts. The passage thus does not make a clear contrast between Abram's attitudes towards the two kings. Further, if the writer intended the passage to be a polemic against Sodom as a symbol of non-Canaanite peoples, it is strange that he did not make the point clearly and forcefully. Sodom was, no doubt, notorious for its wickedness, but, if the writer had wished to condemn the city, he might have been expected to express an explicit opinion, rather than leaving the reader to supply a moral judgement from his knowledge of Sodom's reputation. Although the king of Sodom is not portrayed as a successful, or even courageous, warrior, and Abram does not wish to be indebted to him, the story reveals nothing of the moral condemnation of Sodom found elsewhere. Moreover, if the writer had relied on Sodom's special reputation for wickedness, it is unlikely that he would have used it as a symbol for nearby non-Canaanite peoples in general. It is also unlikely that he would have represented Abram as offering help to the king of Sodom, if he had had the intention ascribed to him by Nyberg and Bowker.

To sum up this part of the paper, it is plausible to argue that the person who inserted the Melchizedek passage lived in the time of David, and wanted to give support to David's rule over the Canaanites, to his making Jerusalem the national and religious capital of Israel, to his uniting of the cults of Yahwe and El Elyon, and to his inheriting the royal and priestly status of the Canaanite kings of Jerusalem. The insertion was made with the intention of influencing both Israelites and Canaanites.
It must now be asked when the origin of Gen. xiv 18-20 can most probably be dated. It will have become apparent from the above discussion of different views that the theory that explains the passage against the background of David's reign, or the years immediately after, seems most likely to me. Some of the motives that are probably to be detected would have been possible at any time during the period of the monarchy, but one points unmistakably to the reign of David, or at least to the united monarchy. If the passage reveals a desire to reconcile and unite Israelites and Canaanites, no period would have been so appropriate as that of David, or perhaps that of Solomon, when the issue was still a live one. It is, therefore, best to accept this period as a working hypothesis, unless further evidence is found elsewhere in Gen. xiv to argue for a different date.

The question of the origin of the material used in Gen. xiv 18-20 must also be considered. Was it invented by the interpolator out of his own imagination, or did he draw upon tradition? If the passage was inserted with the motives suggested above, it appears that El Elyon was a deity worshipped in Jerusalem before the time of David—that, at least, was not a figment of the writer's imagination. Moreover, the writer's purpose would have been better served, if there was already in Jerusalem a well-known tradition about a great king named Melchizedek. The name has often been compared with that of Adoni-zedek who, according to Joshua x, was a Canaanite king of Jerusalem, and, even if it is right to be cautious about the evidential value of the element sdq, it may well have been common for kings of Jerusalem to have names compounded with it. It therefore seems inherently likely that there is some kind of tradition underlying Gen. xiv 18-20. It is, however, impossible to get back to the tradition, beyond pointing to the names of the king and his god, and it is rash to try to go much farther. The attempt made by R. H. Smith (pp. 131-9), for example, to reconstruct the original tradition by reading into Gen. xiv parts of the Ugaritic story of Keret must be rejected, because it lacks an adequate basis in the biblical text. Nor is there enough evidence to justify the acceptance of the suggestion (which is made with admirable caution) of L. R. Fisher, J.B.L., lxxxi (1962), pp. 246-70, that 'Abram was a merchant prince fighting in the service of Malkišedeq' (p. 269), and that the tithe paid by him was 'an expected obligation to his king' (p. 268).
VI

If the Melchizedek passage in verses 18-20 is an insertion, there must have been something into which it could be inserted. What material was there before the Melchizedek passage was added? Is it possible to analyse the rest of the chapter into sources, or to reconstruct the way in which the original form of the story was modified and expanded? In order to show some of the different ways in which the evidence has been interpreted, it will be convenient to summarize several theories about the literary history of the chapter—including some that do not accept the view that verses 18-20 are an insertion. It is desirable to present the main points of the analyses as clearly and simply as possible, and so the summaries will, for the most part, ignore details about such questions as the small editorial glosses in verses 2, 3, 7, 8, and 17. Benzinger’s theory (which is influenced by the suggestions made by Winckler in 1900) will not be described, because it has already been considered in the discussion of the reasons for allocating some material to J and some to E.

(1) H. Winckler (in 1893)
   a. The first stage was the original form of verses 1-2, 4-5a, 10-17, 21-4, which told of a campaign of Chedorlaomer (without naming his allies) against the king of Sodom alone during the reign of Amraphel.
   b. The story was expanded, and verses 3, 5b-9 were added. The number of kings was thus increased to four from the east and five from the west.
   c. The Melchizedek passage in verses 18-20 was added.

(2) H. Winckler (in 1900)
   a. The first stage was a Babylonian legend of a campaign by Chedorlaomer and Tidal against an Amorite city (the name of which has not been preserved in the present form of Gen. xiv). The two eastern kings were victorious, but they were later defeated by a Habiru sheikh.
   b. An Israelite writer, who is identified by Winckler with E, adapted the story to a North Israelite setting. The Amorite city that was attacked was identified with Hazazon-tamar (in the north), and its king appeared where now the king of Sodom is mentioned. By Kadesh in verse 7 was meant the city of that name in Galilee,
and the Salt Sea of verse 3 was Lake Huleh. Abram was said to come from Mamre, which was, according to Winckler, originally believed to be in the north. The story spoke only of Chedorlaomer and Tidal as the invaders from the east, but dated their attack in the time of Amraphel and Arioch. The story told by E consisted of the original form of verses 1-2, 4-5, 3, 7-8, ... the end of 10, 11, 13, 14b-16, 21-4.

c. J took over E's story, and changed it to fit a southern setting. Kadesh was now identified with the city of that name to the south of Judah, and the vale of Siddim with the valley in which the Dead Sea lies; and the king of Hazazon-tamar was replaced by the king of Sodom. Under the influence of Joshua x, which speaks of five kings, he was given four allies. The original form of verse 1 was misunderstood, and it was thought that Amraphel and Arioch were allies of Chedorlaomer and Tidal. Lot was introduced into the story, and Abram was said to come from Hebron.

d. The Melchizedek passage was added.

(3) E. Sellin

a. The first stage was the original form of verses 1-16, 18-20. The only western kings to whom it referred were those of Sodom and Gomorrah.

b. These verses were expanded.

c. Verses 17, 21-4 were added to represent a more strongly Israelite point of view and to counterbalance the glorification of Melchizedek in verses 18-20.

(4) J. Morgenstern

a. The first stage was the original form of verses 11-17, 21-4, which told of Abram's pursuit and defeat of attackers who were, not great eastern kings, but bedouin raiders.

b. Verses 1-10 were added later as an introduction. The original form of the introduction can be reconstructed in verses 2, 8, and 10.

c. The Melchizedek passage was a still later addition.

(5) O. Procksch

a. The first stage of the story, in the original form of verses 2-3, 10-12, 14, 16, 18-20, told of a war of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah against the three other western kings, and went on to tell of Abram and Melchizedek.
b. The rest of the chapter is later. The story of a war among minor western kings was transformed into a story of the invasion by the eastern kings.

(6) G. von Rad

a. Verses 1-11 are based on a Canaanite tradition, which did not mention Abram, but told of the war between the eastern kings and the Canaanites.
b. Verses 12-17, 21-4 contain a tradition about Abram, to which the Canaanite tradition has been united.
c. The Melchizedek passage was added, in order to commend to the Israelites the importance given by David to Jerusalem and its traditions.

(7) E. Kutsch

a. Verses 11-17, 21-4 contain a young tradition about Abram as a warrior.
b. An old tradition about the eastern kings was worked into it.
c. Verses 18-20 are an addition to the story, but pre-Israelite traditions of Jerusalem may lie behind them.

Having outlined some of the attempts that have been made to interpret the evidence, we shall now examine the principal arguments on which the theories are based. It will not be necessary to review a second time any arguments already considered in discussing the question whether verses 18-20 and the references to Abram’s allies in verses 13 and 24 are secondary.

First, it is unnecessary to do more than mention one argument, which has been used by some scholars in analysing the chapter: the alleged contradiction between verse 10, where the king of Sodom is thought to meet his death in a bitumen pit, and verse 17, where he is alive. If the former verse is understood in the way suggested on pp. 27-8 of my earlier article, the contradiction disappears (cp. also p. 410 above).

Secondly, another argument concerns the number of kings who are said to resist the eastern invaders. Verses 2 and 8 mention five kings, but verses 17 and 21 ff. refer only to the king of Sodom; verse 11 records the plundering only of Sodom and Gomorrah, and verse 10 has the strange phrase מָלַךְ שֶׁדֶּם וְגוֹמֹרָה. While allowance must be made for the writer’s carelessness and for the possibility that he...
wished in the later part of the chapter to concentrate attention on
the most important western king, there is a case for suspecting that
the original story told of the king of Sodom alone. PROCKSCH goes
farther, and develops a theory about the original form of the story on
the basis of the fact that the accusative particle נ is used before the
names of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, but not before the
references to the other western kings in verse 2: he believes that the
story once told of a war of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah against
the three other western kings. Verse 2 is certainly clumsy—and the
problem will be considered again in the following paragraph—but
its awkwardness is not necessarily to be explained as due to an attempt
to turn into allies of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah three kings
who were once their enemies. There are other signs of clumsiness in
the chapter, and it is possible merely that the verse was clumsily
composed in the first place; another possibility is that it originally re-
ferred only to the king of Sodom (or to the kings of Sodom and
Gomorrah), and that the clumsiness is due to the person responsible
for adding the other kings. Incidentally, there is a similar inconsistency
in the use of נ in 2 Kings xix 12 = Isa. xxxvii 12.

Thirdly, verse 2 is awkward, for the subject of the verb has to be
understood to be the kings who are listed after a word in the construct
state in verse 1, and that is contrary to normal Hebrew usage. Different
scholars draw different conclusions from the existence of the awkward-
ness. PROCKSCH argues that verse 1 is an addition. WINCKLER, on the
other hand, draws the conclusion that verse 1 dates the following
events in the days of Amraphel and Arioch, and that the subjects of
the verb in verse 2 are only Chedorlaomer and Tidal—and he points
out that the order of the eastern kings is different in verse 9, where
Chedorlaomer and Tidal are mentioned before the others. It must be
agreed that the opening verses of the chapter are clumsy, but it was
argued in my earlier article (pp. 35-36) that the Hebrew construction
is not impossible; and, if it is legitimate to postulate a clumsy author
instead of a clumsy redactor, then it is unnecessary to infer from the
clumsiness of the construction that the Massoretic Text of verses 1-2,
or of verse 9, is not original.

Fourthly, there is also an awkwardness of narration in that verse 2
tells how the eastern kings made war with the five kings, and verse 3
how they gathered in the vale of Siddim, but verses 4-7 narrate what
had happened earlier, and then verse 8 brings the armies to the vale
of Siddim, where they were in verse 3. It can, therefore, be argued
that verses 4-7 interrupt the course of events described in verses 1-3 and 8. However, it is by no means certain that the evidence can be explained only on the hypothesis of the combination of sources or the working over of the original form of the text. It is conceivable that an author who wished to write in an imposing historical manner opened the chapter by giving a date and by describing the war between the eastern and the western kings, and then realized that he had failed to describe the circumstances, and so clumsily went back in verse 4 to narrate earlier events.

Fifthly, Procksch regards verse 15 as secondary, on the ground that it is a variant of what has already been said in the preceding verse: verse 14 tells how the invaders were pursued as far as Dan, and verse 15 how they were defeated and then pursued as far as Hobah; and the same verb (יָדַע) is used to describe the pursuit in both verses. The argument is not decisive, because the verb may be used with two different shades of meaning, and it makes sense to speak of Abram’s force following the invaders until they catch up with them, defeating them in battle, and then chasing the retreating enemy as far as Hobah.

Sixthly, there is a difference in character between the two parts of the chapter. One part portrays Abram as an heroic warrior and describes his dealings man to man with the king of Sodom, whereas the opening verses give the impression of a document written by a learned student of annals. As long ago as 1875, Dillmann commented on the strangeness of the fact that lists of names and other pieces of information are found in proximity to what might otherwise be a folk tale. Since then, scholars have come to ask about any passage in the Bible questions concerning its character, the extent of the unit of tradition, the form in which it was transmitted, the reason for its transmission, and the people who transmitted it. Whatever the danger of subjectivity in the answers given to such questions, the questions must be asked, and a plausible account of a tradition and its transmission must, if possible, be offered. A consideration of Gen. xiv from that point of view encourages us to distinguish between its two types of material. We can imagine a popular oral tradition about the heroic and noble doings of Abram, a tradition that was told both because of its intrinsic interest as a good story and because of a desire to glorify the ancestor of the Israelites. For the sake of convenience, the tradition may be described as a ‘hero story’, but the description should not be understood to imply too precise a definition. In contrast,
the annalistic type of information in the opening verses is not what we should expect in such a popular tradition, just as, on the other hand, we should not expect such an historical record to tell of Abram's proud refusal to accept the recaptured booty as a gift. The opening verses of the chapter are also written in a style reminiscent of historical books in the Old Testament. The argument for a separation between the two parts of the chapter is perhaps reinforced by the fact, to which von Rad has drawn attention, that the story takes a long time to reach Abram, although he is the most important person in it. If the opening verses of the chapter were not originally part of the popular story, then Abram may once have been introduced in it nearer its beginning.

The arguments listed above differ considerably in strength from one another, and some have little or no force. The sixth seems to me to be the most convincing, and to be sufficiently strong to justify the acceptance of its implications as a working hypothesis. The second argument too is attractive, and the problem that it raises would be solved, if the conclusions of the sixth argument were accepted: perhaps the hero story in the second part of the chapter mentioned none of the western kings other than the king of Sodom, and his allies belonged to the different type of material at the beginning of the chapter. The second and sixth arguments should probably be accepted, and the hypothesis that the hero story once existed independently of the more annalistic part of the chapter should be adopted and explored further.

VII

The hero story about Abram, which has been detected in the second part of Gen. xiv, contains two motifs that resemble motifs found elsewhere in the Old Testament—in addition to any general resemblances that may be detected between it and accounts of heroic deeds such as those of Jonathan and some of the Judges. First, Abram's victory with the help of his 318 servants over the eastern kings has been compared with Gideon's success with 300 men against a large force of Midianite raiders. Secondly, the climax of the hero story in verses 22-3 (ignoring verse 24, which refers to Abram's allies and is probably, as was argued above, secondary) portrays Abram's nobility of character in refusing to accept any booty as a gift, lest it be said that the king of Sodom has made him rich. We see Abram as a noble and proud man, who is jealous of his reputation and prefers to
suffer loss rather than to be thought indebted to anyone else. Such a portrayal of nobility, pride, and concern for one's reputation has several partial analogies in the Old Testament. Something partly comparable is seen in the attitude to death displayed by some men. In Judges viii 21, Zebah and Zalmunna, the bedouin raiders, ask Gideon himself to kill them, and not to leave the task to his son. It may be suspected that the proud raiders were not concerned merely to meet a speedy death at the hands of an experienced warrior, and to escape an inefficient and painful execution by a hamfisted youth: they probably thought that death would be more honourable if inflicted by a great warrior, rather than by a young man without a military reputation. Certainly, in Judges ix 54, Abimelech is alarmed at the thought that people may say that a woman killed him, and so he asks his armourbearer to strike the mortal blow. Centuries later, Judas Maccabaeus is represented as saying, 'Let it not be so that I should do this thing, to flee from them: and if our time is come, let us die manfully for our brethren's sake, and not leave a cause of reproach against our glory' (1 Macc. ix 10). Although Abram does not face death at the end of Gen. xiv, he perhaps resembles Judas in his concern for his reputation. There are also affinities in the accounts of several events in the life of David. The first is when David spares Saul's life (1 Sam. xxiv 6, 10, xxvi 10-11, 23-4). Nothing is said of David's concern for his reputation, and another motive for sparing Saul is given, and yet the reader is perhaps intended to admire the nobility of the man who will not harm a defenceless enemy (cp. 2 Kings vi 22). The second occasion is when David refuses (2 Sam. xxiii 16-7) to drink the water brought by the three heroes at the risk of their lives, but pours it out as a libation. Thirdly, in 2 Sam. xxiv 24, David will not offer God something that has cost him nothing 1). Despite the differences between these passages and Gen. xiv, there is a resemblance in the spirit revealed. The resemblance helps us to imagine the story about the noble hero Abram being told orally among the Israelites. If the story is such a popular tradition, it is, of course, impossible to give a verdict about its historicity: it is like many other patriarchal stories in that its historicity can be neither proved nor disproved.

It is not easy to be sure how much of the present chapter xiv belonged to the hero story. It included verses 21-3, preceded by

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1) The motif is certainly to be found in the present form of the story, even if W. Fuss, Z.A.W., lxxiv (1962), pp. 159-60, 162-3, is right in regarding it as a later addition.
verses 13-17, but the story cannot have begun there. As has been seen, von Rad believes that the story begins with verse 12, and he uses as evidence the repetition of what has already been said in verse 11. However, the awkwardness of the relation to verse 11 was explained above on the alternative hypothesis that verse 12, which mentions Lot, is an addition, and that view is supported by the fact that the reference to Lot in verse 16 shows signs of being most probably an addition. Morgenstern thinks that verse 11 is where the story begins, or rather that the beginning of the story has been suppressed by an editor but that verse 11 is the first part of it to be included in the present form of Gen. xiv. It is difficult to be certain. It may be that the substance of verse 10, which tells of the battle in the vale of Siddim, is original to the story, although it has been dovetailed with the more annalistic first part of the chapter. It is probably wisest not to try to disentangle the beginning of the story. Nor is there sufficient evidence to answer the question whether Abram’s enemies were eastern kings, or, if they were not, who they were. It is impossible either to prove or to disprove Morgenstern’s theory that they were originally no more than bedouin raiders. Anyhow, it is possible to detect in Gen. xiv a hero story about Abram which is coherent and can easily be understood as an orally transmitted popular tale.

It must now be asked whether it is possible to date the hero story. The hypothesis was provisionally accepted above that the Melchizedek passage in verses 18-20 was inserted into the story about Abram in the time of David or, at least, of the united monarchy. That would be possible, only if the hero story about Abram were in existence at the time. Yet it has been maintained by some that the story is, as Morgenstern (p. 235) puts it, ‘a post-exilic midrash’. What are the reasons that have been advanced for dating it so late? The argument that the reference to Abram’s 318 servants is an example of late gematria has already been examined and rejected. Kutsch believes that the portrayal of Abram as an heroic warrior, which is otherwise alien to the Pentateuch, testifies to a late date—perhaps after P—but it is difficult to see why such a portrayal should be thought more likely at a late date than at an early one. Although the patriarchal stories are almost unanimous in picturing Abram as peaceful, Gen. xlviii 22 (probably to be attributed to JE) refers to the portion (perhaps Shechem) which Jacob ‘took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow’, and Gen. xxxiv certainly portrays
Jacob's children as far from peaceful; in any case, there is no reason to deny the possibility that Israelites in the period before David could have told a story about their ancestor as a warrior. There is nothing in the story of Gen. xiv to argue against the dating of it before the time of David. Incidentally, the fact that Abram is described as a Hebrew in verse 13 is compatible with (although it does not demand) such a dating, for the word is recorded as having been used shortly before the time of David (1 Sam. iv 6, 9; xiii 3, 7, 19; xiv 11, 21; xxix 3).

Finally, it must be asked why the editor who inserted the Melchizedek passage chose this particular story for his purpose. Two reasons may be suggested. First, it portrayed Abram as a warrior—and the very rarity of the portrayal may have been a reason for selecting this story—and it was seen above how that would have suited the editor's purpose. Secondly, it also suited his purpose because it showed Abram to be on good terms with, although clearly superior to, the ruler of a city in, or, at least, very near, Canaan. Whether the story reached the editor in oral form or whether it had already been written, it is difficult to say, and the question may be left open. Indeed, the term 'editor' has been used for convenience, but it is not intended to imply a judgement on the question precisely when the combination of traditions was put into writing.

VIII

What can be said about the earlier part of the chapter? Its learned character has often been noted, and also its resemblances to passages in the historical books of the Old Testament, some of which were mentioned in the discussion of ASTOUR's theory that the chapter was the work of the Deuteronomic school (although ASTOUR was not the first to draw attention to the similarities). The words 'And it came to pass in the days of . . .' (verse 1) recall such verses as Isa. vii 1, Ruth i 1, Esther i 1, and also 1 Sam. xxi 1, and 2 Kings xv 29. The pattern of events in verses 4-5, whereby the vassal kings pay tribute, then rebel, and are punished by a military campaign involving the taking of prisoners and plunder, recalls 2 Kings xxiv 1 ff. and xviii 7, 9, 13 (cp. 2 Kings iii 4 ff.). The phrase 'four kings against the five' in verse 9 has been compared by A. JIRKU with Joshua xii 24 and 2 Sam. xxiii 29 (cp. p. 36 of my earlier article). We cannot be sure what material was used by the writer. He obviously did not invent all the the names that he employed: it is now well known that Arioch and
Tidal resemble names that are attested elsewhere in the ancient Near East, and that Chedorlaomer can be plausibly explained as compounded of two elements that are found in Elamite names, even though this particular combination is not yet attested. However, in precisely what context the Israelite writer found the names, it is impossible to tell. It is conceivable that he had no more than a list of names and that he invented the rest to fit the story about Abram, but a writer with antiquarian interests might be expected to have had more substance for what he records. He may have had a document that told of a military campaign in the west waged by oriental kings, and Winckler (Geschichte, pp. 28-9) suggests that he had access to a Babylonian legend like the legends of Naram-Sin and Sargon of Accad, and points out that there is evidence in the Tell el-Amarna tablets for the knowledge of Mesopotamian legends in the west. Whether or not he is right in his estimate of the character of the source used by the Israelite writer, it is probable that a source was used, and that it was of ultimately Mesopotamian origin. In view of the uncertainty about the source, it is wise to be cautious in trying to determine the archaeological and historical background of the campaign of the eastern kings.

What were the writer's motives in adding to the hero story of Abram the detailed information about the eastern kings and their campaign? He may have wished to display his erudition and to indulge his interest in antiquarianism, but he probably also wished to glorify Abram by setting him against the background of world history, and by showing him to be a warrior who could overcome even great kings.

The date when the addition was made to the hero story is not easy to determine. The motives suggested above are compatible with the view that the addition was made at the same time as the insertion of the Melchizedek passage and also, perhaps, of the references to

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1) A useful collection of references is given by K. A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament (London, 1966), pp. 43ff. A. Van Selms, Genesis (Nijkerk, 1967), defends the view that the eastern kings were really petty rulers from North Syria.


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Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. On the other hand, it may have been later. If it is right to think that the author was influenced by an existing style of historical writing, then it is, of course, presupposed that there were earlier historical works, and probably historical records that told of the relation of vassal states to a foreign overlord. The possibility that such records existed as early as the reign of David cannot be denied: there is reason to believe that some writings of the Old Testament are to be dated in that period, and it is conceivable that the Israelites became acquainted with Canaanite historical records. If, however, it is judged more probable that Gen.xiv presupposes a longer tradition of Israelite historiography, then it follows that the first part of Gen. xiv was added later than the insertion of the Melchizedek passage.

IX

Finally, it must be asked when the explanatory glosses were added in verses 2, 3, 7, 8, and 17. They are found both in the hero story and in the earlier part of the chapter, and so, if they all come from the same hand, they cannot have been added before those two parts of the chapter were combined. They may be later than the combination, but it is possible that they were added by the writer responsible for the expansion of the hero story, who thought that obscure and archaic references in his sources needed to be explained.

X

The reconstruction offered above of the history of Gen. xiv may now be summarized:

1. There was a popular oral tradition which told of the heroic deed and noble behaviour of Abram. This is preserved in verses 13-17 and 21-3, and probably in verses 10-11.

2. The Melchizedek passage in verses 18-20 was added, probably in the reign of David. It was hoped to encourage Israelites to accept the fusion of the worship of Yahwe with the cult of El Elyon, to recognize the position of Jerusalem as the religious and political capital of Israel, and to acknowledge that the status of David as king had behind it the ancient royal and priestly status of Melchizedek. It was also hoped to encourage Canaanites to accept the same combination of religious and political traditions, to acknowledge David as the heir of the old Canaanite royal traditions, and to regard the
Israelites, under David’s leadership, as their protectors against foreign attack.

3. The references to Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre were added in verses 13 and 24, probably at the same time as the Melchizedek passage, in order to show how Canaanites and Israelites could unite successfully against a common enemy.

4. The story of the eastern kings was added, either at the same time or later, in order to glorify Abram yet further as a military leader of international significance. The writer drew on a source, whether oral or written.

5. The glosses in verses 2, 3, 7, 8, and 17 were added then or later, in order to explain the meanings of archaic names in the traditions.

6. The references to Lot were added in verses 12, 14, and 16, in order to connect Gen. xiv with the J tradition, which told how Lot lived in Sodom.

List of works cited by their authors’ names

The following books and articles are cited by the writer’s name and, in some cases, by an abbreviated reference to the work concerned:


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‘Melchizedek and Zadok (Gen. 14 and Ps. 110)’, Festschrift für Alfred Berthalet
(Tübingen, 1950), pp. 461-72.
H. Winckler, ‘Zu Genesis 14’, Altorientalische Forschungen, i (Leipzig, 1893),
pp. 101-3.
Geschichte Israels in Einzeldarstellungen, ii (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 26 ff.

Correction

Page 43, line 35, (VT xxi, 1 (1971) ) of my earlier article contains a regrettable
mistake. The numerical value of Enoch’s name is not 365 and, as far as I am
aware, no scholar has maintained that it is.