

Date: 8 Cheshvan 5786 (October 30, 2025)

Torah Portion: Lech Lecha

Topic: The Footsteps of Moshiach

As it is written (Genesis 14:1): “And it happened in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar; Arioch, king of Ellasar; Chedorlaomer, king of Elam; and Tidal, king of Goiim.” The Midrash offers an interpretation of Amraphel’s identity. He was known by three names: Cush, Nimrod, and Amraphel. He was referred to as Cush because he was, without a doubt, a Cushite. Nimrod, the son of the original Cush (Genesis 10:8), was also known by his father’s name, Cush.

Others contend that when the verse (Genesis 10:8) states, “Cush begot Nimrod,” it does not imply that Cush physically fathered a son named Nimrod. Rather, it suggests that he introduced the concept of rebellion into the world and was thus called Nimrod, which means “Let us rebel.” According to this interpretation, Cush and Nimrod were in fact the same individual. He was therefore known as Nimrod, as he originated the concept of rebellion, and as Amraphel, because his pronouncements were dark—he issued decrees that darkened the world. He spoke to people and persuaded them to rebel against Elohim, and he also enacted laws to further this agenda. These actions brought great darkness upon the world. Alternatively, he was called Amraphel because he declared, “Fall [into the fiery furnace]!”

The Midrash presents another interpretation concerning the names of the territories ruled by the four kings: “And it happened in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar”—this (Shinar) alludes to Babylonia, which was located in the land of Shinar. “Arioch, king of Ellasar”—this (Ellasar) alludes to Greece, for his name is composed of the two Hebrew words אֶל אָסַר (*el asar*), meaning “he forbade [serving] Elohim.” Accordingly, the phrase מֶלֶךְ אֶלְסָר (*melech Ellasar*) means “the king who forbade the worship of Elohim”—an allusion to the Grecian monarchs of the Chanukah era, who commanded the Yehudim to inscribe upon the horn of an ox that they had no share in the Elohim of Yisrael.

“Chedorlaomer, king of Elam”—this (Elam) is understood as an allusion to Persia-Media. Since Elam is located within the region of Media, it serves as a symbolic reference to the Persian-Median Empire. Ramban, however, cites an alternative version of the Midrash in which Ellasar represents Media and Elam represents Greece. Yefeh To’ar supports Ramban’s version, asserting its greater accuracy, as Media invariably precedes Greece in the traditional rabbinic listing of the Four Kingdoms.

“And Tidal, king of Goiim”—this is interpreted as an allusion to the Evil Kingdom, which imposes its tyranny upon the nations of the world. The Roman Empire, which dominated the known world, imposed oppressive decrees from all corners of the globe. Consequently, the Torah refers to this empire as *Goiim*, literally meaning “nations.”

The Midrash concludes: If one witnesses kingdoms engaging in conflict with one another, one should anticipate the footsteps of the Moshiach. For in the days of Avraham, it was through such inter-kingdom conflict that redemption came to him.

A Torah-observant individual must never fall into the dangerous error of believing that major historical events are mere coincidences, or that they are solely the result of political, economic, or various other natural causes. Rather, Elohim’s orchestration of history is rooted in humanity’s fidelity to His Torah. He governs worldly events in accordance with His divine purpose.

So-called “intelligent analysis” has always attempted to rationalize crises in secular terms. Any claim that Elohim orchestrated these events for the benefit of His people is often met with skepticism or outright derision. Yet the truth is that it was precisely Elohim’s intervention that generated strife among the nations, thereby granting Yisrael a reprieve from the schemes of its enemies.

This is the essential message conveyed by the Midrash. When we observe nations engaged in diplomatic or military aggression against one another, we must understand that Elohim has arranged these developments for the ultimate benefit of His people. And when He intervenes in history, we are to view it as a harbinger of redemption—an indication that He is prepared to bring the final salvation. Our proper response must be to deepen and intensify our service to Elohim.

Shalom.