

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

THE KINGS OF AVRAM'S DAY

WAS HIS TENTH A WAR CUSTOM, A PEACE TRIBUTE, OR A COVENANT ACT?

בְּרֵאשִׁית טז | Bereishit (Genesis) 14 — Historical-Covenant Analysis

A Companion Research Study to the Laws of Tithing (June 2026)

Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution | Pearl River, Louisiana

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Authority: The Tanakh | Standard: Devarim 19:15 | Audience: Judaism | Christianity | Islam

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

This document operates under the sole authority of the Tanakh. No rabbinic tradition, church council, hadith, or commentary carries binding authority over covenant law. Scholars and historians cited herein serve as *historical witnesses only* — not as doctrinal authority. All findings are weighed against the written Tanakh text by the Devarim 19:15 two-or-three-witness standard.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT — TANAKH BOOK NAMES

The primary Tanakh book under examination is **Bereishit (Genesis)**, specifically chapter 14. Supporting references come from **Tehillim (Psalms)** (Ps. 110:4) and historical records from the ancient Near East. The nine kings of Bereishit 14 are named in the text and identified in this study by their roles in the political-military order of Avram's day.

PART I — THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The previous covenant study on the Laws of Tithing established that Avram’s tithe to Malki-Tzedek (Melchizedek) in **Bereishit 14:20** is the *first* act of tithing recorded in the Tanakh. It occurs approximately 430 years before the Mosaic covenant was given at Sinai. This raises a critical investigative question that Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution now puts to the plumb line:

“Was the tenth that Avram gave to Malki-Tzedek a customary act of his culture — either a war-spoils tribute owed to a local king, or a peace-keeping gesture to maintain regional alliances — rather than a spontaneous act of covenant worship?”

If the answer is **yes** — **it was merely cultural custom** — then Avram’s tithe carries no binding covenant authority and the argument that tithing predates the Torah collapses. If the answer is **no** — **it was a voluntary covenant-worship act** that happened to use a cultural form but was motivated by something entirely different — then the evidence must prove it. **Devarim 19:15** demands the witnesses.

PART II — THE WORLD OF BEREISHIT 14: WHO WERE THESE KINGS?

A. THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF CANAAN IN THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

Bereishit 14 opens on a complex geopolitical scene: nine kings in active military conflict across the Levant. This was not unusual for the ancient Near East of the Middle Bronze Age (approximately 2100–1550 BCE), which scholars widely accept as the general framework for the Patriarchal narratives. The political order of this era was defined by:

- **City-state sovereignty:** Canaan in this period consisted of independent city-states, each ruled by its own king (*lugal* in Sumerian, *sharru* in Akkadian). Each controlled agricultural hinterland and taxed the population.
- **Vassal-overlord tribute systems:** Stronger city-states or regional powers imposed tribute obligations on weaker ones. *Non-payment was rebellion*. This is the exact political context of Bereishit 14:1–4: the five kings of the Jordan plain had been vassals of Chedorlaomer for twelve

years and **refused tribute in the thirteenth year** — triggering the punitive military campaign.

- **Temple-palace integration:** In every major culture of Avram’s day — Sumerian, Akkadian, Amorite, Canaanite — the temple and the palace were inseparable. The king was often the chief priest or held priestly functions. The temple treasury WAS the state treasury. Tribute paid to a king-priest served simultaneously as religious tax and political submission.

B. THE NINE KINGS OF BEREISHIT 14 — IDENTIFIED

The text names nine kings across two coalitions. Each represents a distinct regional power of Avram’s world:

KING	CITY / REGION	COALITION	HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
Chedorlaomer	Elam (Persia / modern Iran)	Eastern (dominant)	The overlord. He imposed the tribute system on the five Jordan plain kings for twelve years. His campaign was to <i>reassert vassal obligation</i> after rebellion.
Amraphel	Shinar (Babylonia)	Eastern (allied)	Shinar = ancient Babylon. The alliance of Elam and Shinar reflects the major Mesopotamian power dynamic of the Middle Bronze Age.
Arioch	Ellasar (likely Larsa, Babylonia)	Eastern (allied)	Larsa was a major Sumerian city-state of the period, consistent with Avram’s Mesopotamian origin.
Tidal	Goiim (Hittite / Anatolian region)	Eastern (allied)	The Hittite presence in this coalition reflects the broad geographic reach of the alliance: from modern Iran to modern Turkey.
Bera	Sodom	Canaanite (rebel)	His name likely means “in evil.” He was a vassal who refused tribute. His city held Lot, Avram’s nephew.
Birsha	Gomorrah	Canaanite (rebel)	His name likely means “in wickedness.” Allied with Sodom in the rebellion against Chedorlaomer’s tribute demand.

Shinab	Admah	Canaanite (rebel)	One of the five rebellious vassal city-states of the Jordan plain.
Shemeber	Zeboiim	Canaanite (rebel)	Another of the five rebellious vassals.
King of Bela (Zoar)	Bela / Zoar	Canaanite (rebel)	The fifth vassal city. The absence of his personal name in the text is notable — he is identified only by his city.
Malki-Tzedek	Shalem (Jerusalem)	NOT a combatant	The tenth figure. He appears <i>after</i> the battle — not as a party to it. He is both king and priest of El Elyon . His city, Shalem, means “peace.”

PART III — THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST TITHE/TRIBUTE CUSTOM: THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

A. THE ESRETU / EŠRETŪ — THE MESOPOTAMIAN TENTH

The most important piece of historical evidence for this investigation comes from Mesopotamian cuneiform records. The Akkadian term *esru* / *ešretū* (cognate with the Semitic root *šr*, meaning “ten”) designated a **one-tenth tax** levied across the ancient Near East. The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago records specific cuneiform tablet evidence:

“[Referring to a ten-percent tax levied on garments by the local ruler:] the palace has taken eight garments as your tithe (on 85 garments).” — Cuneiform tablet, Ebabbar archive (cited in Assyrian Dictionary, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)

The *esretu* was NOT uniquely a religious act. In Mesopotamia, it functioned as:

- **A state tax:** Paid to the palace/temple treasury from agricultural produce, livestock, textiles, metals, and other goods.
- **A temple tribute:** Channeled through the temple because the temple was the state treasury. The Sumerian city-state of Lagash records taxes as far back as 3400–3000 BCE — paid as one-tenth of income in harvest, livestock, or manufactured goods.

- **A war-spoils custom:** Victorious warriors commonly gave a portion of battle plunder to the city's temple or king-priest in acknowledgment that the victory belonged to the god.

Critical scholarly finding: According to Wikipedia's synthesis of William W. Hallo (1996) and other Near Eastern scholars: "*None of the extant extrabiblical laws of the Ancient Near East deal with tithing, although other secondary documents show that it was a widespread practice in the Ancient Near East.*" The practice is attested but not legislated in surviving law codes — which means it was **cultural convention**, not statutory obligation, in the pre-Sinai period.

B. THE UGARIT CONNECTION — MAASHARU AND TEMPLE-STATE ECONOMICS

Ugarit, the Late Bronze Age city-state on the Syrian coast (14th–13th century BCE), gives scholars the closest parallel to the Canaanite world Avram navigated. The Ugaritic term *ma'ašartu* (cognate with Hebrew *ma'aser*) designated the tenth-portion temple tax. Ugaritic texts reveal a critical structural feature: **at Ugarit, cultic personnel were royal dependents and the needs of the temples were mostly supplied by the royal treasury.** The temple and the palace were economically unified.

This means that in Avram's cultural world, giving a tenth to a king-priest like Malki-Tzedek would have been simultaneously:

- **A political act:** Acknowledging Malki-Tzedek's authority over the region of Shalem (Jerusalem).
- **A religious act:** Channeling tribute through the priest of **El Elyon** to the deity who had given the victory.
- **A diplomatic act:** Establishing or confirming peaceful relations with the king of the city closest to Avram's own territory in Hebron.

These three dimensions were not separable in the ancient Near Eastern mind. They were always simultaneously present in any act of tribute or tithing.

C. THE VASSAL-TRIBUTE SYSTEM: WHAT THE FIVE KINGS' REBELLION TELLS US

The political backbone of Bereishit 14 is the vassal-tribute system. For twelve years, the five Canaanite kings paid tribute (a form of tithe) to Chedorlaomer. Their refusal to pay in the thirteenth year was

read as rebellion. **The entire war was fought over tribute refusal.** This tells us that in Avram's world:

- The tenth (or tribute) was the currency of political submission and peace maintenance.
- A strong party who refused to pay tribute would have been making a **statement of political independence** — or theological independence, if the tribute was owed to a deity-king.
- A victorious warrior who **voluntarily** gave a tenth to a king-priest was making the opposite statement: *I acknowledge your authority. I am not making a claim of independence from the divine order you represent.* He was also not the king of Sodom, who tried to keep the spoils.

Avram's situation was unique: **he was the military victor.** He owed nothing to Malki-Tzedek by the political custom of his day — he was not a defeated vassal. Yet he gave the tithe anyway, voluntarily. This is the critical distinction.

D. THE CARTHAGINIAN PARALLEL — WAR SPOILS AND TEMPLE TRIBUTE

A strikingly close parallel to the Avram-Malki-Tzedek event is recorded by Diodorus Siculus regarding the Carthaginians. The Encyclopedia.com records: *"The annual tithe of the Carthaginians, which was sent to the Temple of Melqart in Tyre (Diodorus 20:14), is to be understood in a like manner. The Temple of Melqart was the state treasury of Tyre, and so the tribute paid by the Carthaginians had a political character besides its sacred one."*

The Carthaginian practice of sending a tenth of war gains and annual produce to the temple of Tyre demonstrates that the war-spoils tithe was a recognized custom across the ancient Semitic world. This was **not unique to Avram.** It was standard practice to send a portion of battle plunder to the temple of the supreme deity in acknowledgment of the divine source of victory.

PART IV — READING BEREISHIT 14 THROUGH THE EVIDENCE

A. THE TEXT'S OWN TESTIMONY — FIVE DECISIVE OBSERVATIONS

1. The Object of the Tithe Was Battle Spoils — Not Avram's Own Property

The author of Hebrews makes explicit what Bereishit 14 implies: *"Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek"* (Hebrews 7:4). The text in Bereishit 14:20 says Avram gave him **"a tithe of all"** — all of what? All the captured plunder from the battle against Chedorlaomer's coalition. There is no

record in the entire Tanakh that Avram ever tithed from his own accumulated wealth, flocks, or agricultural produce to anyone. This was a one-time act on captured war goods.

2. The Timing: After Blessing, Not Before

Malki-Tzedek blessed Avram first (**Bereishit 14:19–20a**). Then *"he gave him a tithe of all"* (14:20b). The sequence is critical: **the tithe was a response to the blessing**, not a payment for a service or a tribute owed in advance. In the cultural logic of the ancient Near East, this order signaled that Avram was *reciprocating honor* — not satisfying a debt or purchasing protection.

3. Avram Was the Victor — He Owed Nothing by Political Custom

In the tribute-vassal system, the weaker party pays the stronger. Avram had just defeated Chedorlaomer and his three allied kings — the dominant regional power of the day. By the political calculus of the ancient Near East, **Avram was now the most powerful military figure in the region**. No one could compel him to give anything to anyone. His giving of the tenth to Malki-Tzedek was not a tribute from a defeated vassal. It was a voluntary gift from a military conqueror.

4. He Refused the Rest of the Spoils to the King of Sodom

Immediately after honoring Malki-Tzedek, **Avram refused to take a thread or sandal-strap from the King of Sodom (Bereishit 14:22–24)**. His reason: *"lest you say, 'I have made Avram rich.'"* Avram's words reveal his governing theology: **Yahweh** (named here as **El Elyon**) is the source of his wealth — not any king. He returned everything to its original owners except: (a) what his men had eaten, (b) the share of his allies Mamre, Eshkol, and Aner, and (c) the tithe he had already given to Malki-Tzedek. He kept nothing for himself.

This contrast is the theological heart of the chapter: **Avram honored Malki-Tzedek with the tithe while simultaneously refusing to be enriched by the King of Sodom**. One he gave to; from the other he took nothing. The difference was not politics. It was the identity of the deity each king represented: Malki-Tzedek was priest of **El Elyon** — whom Avram explicitly identified as **Yahweh (Bereishit 14:22)**. The King of Sodom represented a city destined for divine judgment.

5. The Name and Location of Malki-Tzedek's City

Malki-Tzedek's city, **Shalem**, means *shalom* — **peace**. The name *Malki-Tzedek* means **King of Righteousness** or **My King Is Righteous** (*malki* = my king; *tzedek* = righteousness, H6664). His dual title — king of Shalem and priest of El Elyon — combined the functions that would later be separated in Yisra'el: the royal and the priestly offices. The Tanakh connects Shalem with Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) (**Tehillim 76:2**). Most scholars who conclude it refers to pre-Davidic Jerusalem point to

Bereishit 14:17's "King's Valley" as a geographic marker identifying this area with the Kidron Valley below Jerusalem.

B. THE THREE COMPETING THEORIES — EVALUATED AT THE PLUMB LINE

Scholars, theologians, and historians have proposed three main theories for Avram's tithe:

THEORY	ARGUMENT	COVENANT ASSESSMENT
<p>Theory 1: Pure Cultural Custom — It was standard war-tribute practice, nothing more</p>	<p>The <i>esru</i> tithe on war spoils was common in Mesopotamia and Canaan. Avram was simply following the custom of his day. No unique theological significance should be read into it.</p>	<p>PARTIALLY TRUE but INSUFFICIENT. Yes, the form was cultural. But Bereishit 14:22 records Avram identifying El Elyon as Yahweh — his own God. He did not simply follow neutral custom; he directed the tribute to his God through the priest who served that same God. The cultural form carried a specific theological content.</p>
<p>Theory 2: Political Peace-Keeping — He needed Malki-Tzedek's good will</p>	<p>Avram lived near Shalem. His ability to operate safely in Canaan may have depended on regional relationships. Honoring Malki-Tzedek maintained his political position in the land.</p>	<p>POSSIBLE as a <i>secondary</i> dimension but fails as the <i>primary</i> explanation. Avram had just defeated a coalition that included powers from Elam to Anatolia. He was the dominant military force in the region. He needed no political favor from Malki-Tzedek. His refusal of Sodom's offer confirms he was not seeking to build political alliances through tribute.</p>
<p>Theory 3: Voluntary Covenant Worship — He acknowledged Yahweh as the source of victory through the act</p>	<p>Avram voluntarily used the cultural form of the war-tithe to make a theological declaration: the victory belonged to Yahweh. The tithe to Malki-Tzedek, priest of El Elyon, was the vehicle for that acknowledgment.</p>	<p>CONFIRMED by the text's own evidence. (1) Malki-Tzedek's blessing credits El Elyon for the victory. (2) Avram identifies El Elyon as Yahweh. (3) Avram gives the tithe <i>after</i> receiving the blessing. (4) He refuses all gain from the King of Sodom. (5) No one compelled him. The voluntary, post-blessing,</p>

		theologically-named act cannot be reduced to mere custom.
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PART V — WAS THE CUSTOM WIDESPREAD? THE HISTORICAL RECORD

A. SUMERIAN EVIDENCE: THE LAGASH TAX TABLETS

The oldest written tax records in human history come from the Sumerian city-state of Lagash. Cuneiform clay tablets approximately 6,000 years old record tax receipts of 29,086 units of barley over 37 months (between 3400–3000 BCE). Before coined money, taxes were commonly paid as **one-tenth of income** in harvest, livestock, or manufactured goods. This is documented evidence that the *one-tenth principle* is among the oldest structured tax customs in human civilization — predating Avram by more than a thousand years.

B. MESOPOTAMIAN TEMPLE-STATE ECONOMICS: TRIBUTE AS SACRED DUTY

In the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian temple-state economies, the temple was the central economic institution. The ziggurat (temple-tower) served simultaneously as:

- State treasury and bank
- Grain storage and distribution center
- Legal registry for land and commerce
- Residence of the city’s patron deity

Taxes, tribute, and tithes flowed **to** the temple. This meant that paying tribute to a king-priest was not merely a political act — it was simultaneously an act of religious acknowledgment. **Malki-Tzedek’s role as both king and priest of El Elyon in Shalem directly mirrors this Mesopotamian king-priest-temple model.** Avram, who came from Ur of the Chaldees (a city with one of the most famous ziggurat-temple complexes in the ancient world), would have understood this structure perfectly.

C. AVRAM’S CULTURAL BACKGROUND: UR OF THE CHALDEES

Bereishit 11:31 places Avram’s origin in **Ur of the Chaldees** — one of the great Sumerian city-states, center of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112–2004 BCE). The ziggurat of Ur, dedicated to the moon-god Nanna, dominated the city’s economic and religious life. Tithes and temple taxes were standard institutional practice in Ur from Avram’s earliest cultural formation. This means:

- Avram knew the one-tenth custom from birth.
- He would have understood that giving a tenth to a king-priest was an act of divine acknowledgment.
- When he encountered Malki-Tzedek, he recognized a legitimate king-priest office serving a deity he already worshiped — and responded with the one universal cultural form he knew: the tenth.

The cultural form was the vehicle. The content was covenant theology: **Yahweh — not Chedorlaomer, not the King of Sodom, not any Canaanite deity — gave the victory.**

D. THE VOLUNTARY DISTINCTION: THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FINDING

After examining all the historical evidence, the single most important finding of this research is the distinction between **compulsory tribute** and **voluntary acknowledgment**:

CHARACTERISTIC	COMPULSORY TRIBUTE	AVRAM’S TITHE
Was it required?	Yes — under threat of military force	No — Avram was the military victor
Who initiated it?	The overlord (Chedorlaomer imposed tribute)	Avram himself — responding to Malki-Tzedek’s blessing
Was there a political incentive?	Yes — pay tribute or face war	No — Avram also refused all gain from King of Sodom
Was there a covenant/theological declaration?	Not necessarily — tribute could be paid to an enemy god	Yes — Avram explicitly identified El Elyon as Yahweh (Bereishit 14:22)
Was it repeated?	Yes — annual tribute obligation	No recorded repetition in the Tanakh

Conclusion	Compulsory tribute = political submission	Avram’s tithes = voluntary covenant worship using a cultural form
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PART VI — COVENANT FINDINGS: ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Having applied the Devarim 19:15 two-or-three-witness standard to the historical and textual evidence, Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution issues the following findings:

FINDING 1: THE FORM WAS CULTURAL — THE CONTENT WAS COVENANT

The one-tenth figure was a universal ancient Near Eastern convention — present in Sumerian tax records from 3400 BCE, in Akkadian cuneiform as *esru/ešretū*, in Ugaritic as *ma’asārtu*, and in Canaanite practice throughout the second millennium BCE. Avram did not invent the number ten. He used a form his entire world understood. But he directed that form toward **Yahweh** — not toward Chedorlaomer, not toward the Canaanite pantheon, not toward the King of Sodom. The form was cultural; the covenant content was specific.

FINDING 2: IT WAS NOT A WAR-CUSTOM TRIBUTE IN THE POLITICAL SENSE

A war-custom tribute is paid by a *defeated* party to a *victor* — or by a vassal to an overlord as a condition of protection. Avram was the victor. He was the overlord of the moment. No political custom of his world required him to give anything to Malki-Tzedek. **The tenth he gave was not tribute in the political sense.** It was an act of worship using the cultural vehicle of tribute.

FINDING 3: IT WAS NOT A PEACE-KEEPING GESTURE TO THE REGIONAL POWERS

Avram had just demonstrated that he could field 318 trained fighting men and defeat a coalition of four kings including the dominant regional power (Chedorlaomer of Elam). His military credibility was at its highest. He explicitly refused political alliance and economic entanglement with the King of Sodom. He was **not seeking peace through tribute.** He was acknowledging a covenant truth through worship.

FINDING 4: THE ACT WAS A ONE-TIME, POST-VICTORY, VOLUNTARY COVENANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Avram's tithe to Malki-Tzedek was:

- **One-time:** Not repeated in the Tanakh. He did not establish a pattern of regular tithing to any sanctuary.
- **Post-victory:** Given after the battle, after the rescue, after Malki-Tzedek's blessing. It was a response to grace, not an advance payment for divine favor.
- **Voluntary:** No law, no superior, no political threat required it.
- **Covenant:** Its theological meaning is locked in by Avram's own words in the very next verse: "*I have raised my hand to Yahweh, El Elyon, Possessor of heaven and earth*" (**Bereishit 14:22**). He identified the deity to whom the tithe ultimately belonged.

FINDING 5: THE CULTURAL PARALLEL ILLUMINATES — IT DOES NOT EXPLAIN AWAY

The fact that the one-tenth custom was universal in the ancient Near East does not neutralize the theological significance of Avram's act. It does the opposite: it *contextualizes* it. Avram was not doing something strange or unprecedented. He was doing what every person in his world understood — giving the sacred tenth to the king-priest who represented the supreme deity. The difference was which deity stood behind the king-priest: **El Elyon — whom Avram named as Yahweh**. In a world of competing king-priests and competing deities, Avram's tithe was a declaration of covenant allegiance.

FINDING 6: THE TANAKH'S NARRATIVE IS THEOLOGICALLY DELIBERATE

Biblical scholars (including Britannica's analysis) note that "*for Abraham to recognize the authority and authenticity of a Canaanite priest-king is startling and has no parallel in biblical literature.*" The Tanakh does not record Avram acknowledging any other king-priest in Canaan with a tithe. This selectivity is theologically intentional. **Malki-Tzedek was the one Canaanite king-priest who served the same Elohim Avram served**. The tithe was an act of covenant recognition across the boundary of ethnicity and nation — a point the Tanakh's own narrative elevates as unique.

PART VII — IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THREE-RELIGION AUDIENCE

A. FOR JUDAISM

The historical finding confirms that *ma'aser* as an institution is older than the Mosaic covenant. The one-tenth principle was embedded in the covenant people's culture from the Patriarchs forward. However, the Bereishit 14 tithe: (1) was from war spoils, not agricultural produce; (2) was to a non-Levitical priest; (3) was voluntary, not legally commanded; and (4) was a one-time act. It is not a template for the Levitical tithe structure — it is the **covenant instinct** from which that structure would later be institutionalized.

B. FOR CHRISTIANITY

The Christian use of Bereishit 14 as authority for the church tithe has three problems the historical evidence now forces into view: (1) Avram gave from war spoils, not income; (2) Avram never established a pattern of regular tithing; (3) the cultural context was the *esru* war-tribute custom — not a model for weekly monetary church giving. The genuine lesson for Christianity is this: **Avram used the highest cultural form of acknowledgment available to him to declare that Yahweh — not the political powers of his world — was the source of his victory and prosperity.** That principle stands. The institutional application to mandatory salary tithing does not follow from the text.

C. FOR ISLAM

Islam's recognition that zakat was commanded upon the Children of Israel and flows from the Abrahamic covenant is confirmed by this research. The Abrahamic instinct toward giving the tenth as an act of covenant acknowledgment predates all formal legislation — in Avram, in Ya'akov, and in the covenant structures of the ancient world Avram inhabited. The *principle of zakat* — that wealth is a trust from Allah and a portion belongs to the covenant community and the poor — has its deepest roots in this exact event: an ancestor who was not compelled to give, yet gave, because he understood who owned the victory.

CONCLUSION — THE ANSWER

Was Avram's tenth to Malki-Tzedek a war custom of his culture? **Partially yes** — the *form* of giving the tenth from war spoils was the universal ancient Near Eastern practice, attested in Sumerian Lagash, Akkadian cuneiform, Ugaritic, and Carthaginian records.

Was it a peace-keeping tribute to maintain regional alliances? **No** — Avram was the military dominant party. He owed nothing to Malki-Tzedek. He simultaneously refused all entanglement with the King of Sodom.

Was it a covenant act of worship? **Yes — conclusively.** The voluntary character, the post-blessing sequence, Avram's explicit identification of El Elyon as **Yahweh** in the very next verse, and the refusal of all other political enrichment converge to establish that Avram was using his world's most powerful cultural form of divine acknowledgment to declare a covenant truth: **Yahweh is the Possessor of heaven and earth. The victory was His. The tenth belongs to Him.**

The cultural form was borrowed. The covenant content was original. And the act became, in the unfolding of the Tanakh, the seed from which the entire institutional *ma'aser* system would grow at Sinai.

"And 14:22 בְּרֵאשִׁית records Avram's own declaration: I have raised my hand to יְהוָה, El Elyon, Possessor of heaven and earth."

The tithe was not a custom. It was a covenant confession.

Prepared and Transmitted by

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