



The biblical practice of tithing in Genesis 14:18– 24: An exegetical and theological study

BB Mafa

 **orcid.org/0000-0001-5575-4246**

Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Theology with Old Testament* at the North-West University

Supervisor: Prof A.J. Coetsee

Graduation: June 2026

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing skills and the art of conveying ideas through the written word requires a collective effort. Much gratitude goes to the Triune God, who in his infinite love, grace, and mercy has provided me with divine helpers to offer support financially, spiritually, directionally, and assisting in times of need (Phil. 4:13).

I wrote this thesis to investigate the reasons behind the over-emphasis on tithes in religious circles above righteousness and purity. I hope this study answers some of the questions that preachers, believers, and common lay people are afraid to investigate.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the North-West University (NWU) for allowing a person of my age to undertake the task of investigating a difficult passage, Genesis 14:18–24. Special thanks are extended to my supervisor Prof. Albert Coetsee for his patience, encouragement, support, and prayers. The suggestions you made and the interest displayed, have significantly improved the quality of my study.

Furthermore, I extend my gratitude to the Faculty of OT studies for accommodating me during the five years of unresponsive auto-immune disorder. The grace period of extension and financial support is highly appreciated. Special thanks goes to the library personnel of the NWU (Potchefstroom Campus) for your dedication, assistance, and the excellent service which you offered.

To my husband SL Mafa, my beloved daughter Charmaine, and the members of the Ark of the Lord Ministry: thank you so much for your heartfelt love, prayers, support, encouragement, and commitment in serving the Lord during my absence. Shalom, beloved family, and grace upon grace.

ABSTRACT

According to Genesis 14:18–24, after Lot’s rescue, Abram willingly gave a tithe of everything to the priest-king Melchizedek. Since this is the first passage in Scripture that touches on the practice of tithing, and since Genesis 12:3 seems to indicate a link between Abram and all the families of the earth, some argued that Genesis 14:18–24 forms the bedrock for biblical tithing practices. In fact, various churches and scholars support the claim that contemporary Christians should tithe by referring to the example of Abram. However, this study challenges this position. The study argues that while Genesis 14:18–24 describes the practice of tithing as Abram performed it, it does not give the principle for tithing. The text is descriptive rather than prescriptive. While the biblical practice of tithing may be based on other passages, it cannot be entirely motivated from Genesis 14.

The study commences by presenting an overview of various interpretations of Genesis 14:18–24 in relation to its implications for tithing. Chapter 2 identifies scholars who view the passage as prescriptive and still binding for Christians, and those that view the passage as merely descriptive. Chapter 3 conducts an exegetical analysis of Genesis 14:18–24 to determine what the passage says and does not say about tithing. Chapter 4 followed identifying the place and function of Genesis 14:18–24 within the larger biblical practice of tithing in the Hebrew canon. Chapter 5 determines how tithing is understood in the NC in relation to the Old Testament. Chapter 6 concludes by synthesising the findings to identify the unique contribution and legitimate applications of Genesis 14:18–24 in the debate on tithing.

Key terms: Tithing, tithes, giving, offering, Genesis 14:18–24, Melchizedek, prescriptive, descriptive.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
ESV	English Standard Version
GWT	God’s Word Translation
LXX	Septuagint – Greek translation of the OT
ME	Melchizedek Episode
MT	Masoretic text
NASB	New American Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NLT	New Living Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NC	New Covenant
OC	Old Covenant
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
v.	verse

OT Books

Gen. Genesis	1–2 Chron. 1–2 Chronicles	Jer. Jeremiah
Exod. Exodus	Ezra Ezra	Lam. Lamentations
Lev. Leviticus	Neh. Nehemiah	Ezek. Ezekiel
Num. Numbers	Esther Esther	Dan. Daniel

Deut. Deuteronomy Josh. Joshua Judg. Judges Ruth Ruth 1–2 Sam. 1–2 Samuel 1–2 Kgs. 1–2 Kings	Job Job Ps(s). Psalm(s) Prov. Proverbs Eccl. Ecclesiastes Song. Song of Songs Isa. Isaiah	Hos. Hosea Joel Joel Amos Amos Mal. Malachi
---	--	--

New Testament Books

Matt. Matthew Mark Mark Luke Luke John John Acts Acts Rom. Romans 1–2 Cor. 1–2 Corinthians	Gal. Galatians Eph. Ephesians Phil. Philippians Col. Colossians 1–2 Thess. 1–2 Thessalonians 1–2 Tim. 1–2 Timothy Titus Titus	Phlm. Philemon Heb. Hebrews Jas. James 1–2 Pet. 1–2 Peter 1–3 John 1–3 John
--	---	---

Dead Sea Scrolls

1QapGen Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1

11Q13 11QMelchizedek

The OT Pseudepigrapha

b. Ned. Babylonian Talmud Nedarim

Gen. Rab. Genesis Rabbah

Philo, Abr. Philo, On Abraham

Philo, Alleg. Interp. Philo, Allegorical Interpretation

Pirqe R. El. Pirkei DeRabbi Elieze

Tg./Tgs. Targum/Targums

Tg. Onq. Targum Onqelos

Tg. Neof. Targum Neofiti I

Tg. Ps.-J Targum Pseudo Jonathan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.1.1 Personal background leading up to the study	1
1.1.2 Biblical background of tithing	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	4
1.3 Aim and objectives.....	4
1.3.1 Aim of the study.....	4
1.3.2 Objectives.....	4
1.4 Central theoretical argument.....	5
1.5 Methodology	5
1.6 Ethical considerations	6
1.7 Outline of chapters.....	6
CHAPTER 2: DIFFERENT TITHING INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 14:18–24	7
2.1. Introduction	7
2.2 An overview of the prescriptive interpretation of tithing in Genesis 14	7
2.2.1 Kendall (1983).....	7
2.2.2 Davis (1987).....	8
2.2.3 Landsdell (1992).....	8
2.2.4 North (1994; 2011)	9
2.2.5 Goldingay (2002).....	9

2.2.6 Pink (2006).....	10
2.2.7 Price (2006).....	10
2.2.8 Murray (2011).....	10
2.2.10 Otabil (2019).....	11
2.3 An overview of the descriptive interpretation of tithing in Genesis 14.....	12
2.3.1 Brueggemann (1982).....	12
2.3.2 Hamilton (1990).....	13
2.3.3 MacArthur (2000).....	13
2.3.4 Snoeberger (2000)	13
2.3.5 Pryce (2000).....	14
2.3.6 Pohlmann (2003).....	14
2.3.6 NIV Cultural Study Bible (2016).....	14
2.3.7 Kelly (2007)	14
2.3.8 Kidner (2008).....	15
2.3.9 Quiggle (2009).....	15
2.4 Table of positions.....	15
2.5 Conclusions.....	17
CHAPTER 3: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 14:18–24	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 Overview	18
3.2.1 Genesis 14:18–24 in the Masoretic Text and two source-orientated English translations	18

3.2.2 Demarcation of the passage.....	19
3.2.3 Textual critical matters (Gen. 14).....	21
3.3 Context	21
3.3.1. Historical context	21
3.3.2 Literary context.....	25
3.4 Structure	32
3.4.1 Patterns	35
3.4.1.3 Characterisation	38
3.4.2 Stylistic and rhetorical literary devices	39
3.5 Leitwörter.....	41
3.5.1 בָּרוּךְ	41
3.5.2 אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן	41
3.5.3 קִנְיַת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.....	43
3.6 The identity of Melchizedek.....	43
3.6.1 The meaning of the name מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק	43
3.6.2 Extra-Biblical and Second Temple literature	44
3.7 Genesis 14 in the OT Pseudepigrapha.....	44
3.7.1 Jubilees 13:22–27	44
3.7.2 Jewish interpretation.....	44
3.8 Verse by verse analysis	45
3.8.1 Verse 18.....	45
3.8.2 Verse 19.....	47
3.8.3 Verse 20.....	47

3.8.4 Verse 21.....	47
3.8.5 Verse 22.....	48
3.8.6 Verse 23.....	48
3.8.7 Verse 24.....	48
3.9 Intertextuality.....	49
3.9.2 References and links within the OT	49
3.10 Theology of the passage.....	50
3.12. The way forward	51
CHAPTER 4: GENESIS 14:18–24 WITHIN THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF TITHING IN THE OT	52
4.1 Introduction	52
4.2. Tithing before the giving of the law.....	52
4.2.1 Introduction.....	52
4.2.2 Tithing in the rest of the Torah	54
4.2.3 Tithing in the historical books	60
4.2.4 Tithing in the poetical and wisdom literature	62
4.2.5 Tithing in the prophetic literature.....	64
4.3 Tithing during the intertestamental period (c. 433–435 BCE).....	65
4.3.1 Introduction.....	65
4.3.2 Tithing system	66
4.4 Conclusion.....	67

**CHAPTER 5: HOW IS TITHING UNDERSTOOD IN THE NT IN
RELATION TO THE OLD COVENANT 68**

5.1 Introduction 68

5.2 Tithing in the Gospels 68

5.3.1 Tithing in the gospels (Matt. 23:23, Luke 11:42; 18:12) 68

5.3.2 Principles governing giving in the gospels 69

5.4 Tithing in the book of Acts 70

5.4.1 Introduction..... 70

5.4.2 Acts 2:44–45 70

5.4.3 Acts 4:32–37 70

5.4.4 Acts 5:1–11 71

5.4.5 Non-monetary offerings in Acts..... 71

5.5 Tithing in the Pauline Epistles..... 72

5.5.1 Introduction..... 72

5.5.2 Sacrificial offering (Rom. 12:1–3)..... 72

5.5.3 Serving God with Spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3–8) 72

5.5.4 Collection for the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26–27)..... 72

5.5.5 Financial support for ministers and workers..... 73

5.5.6 The NT temple (1 Cor. 6:19–20)..... 73

5.5.7 The principles of giving 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15) 73

5.8 Tithing in General Epistles 75

5.8.1 Financial support for dedicated ministers..... 75

5.8.2 Spiritual pitfalls of riches..... 75

5.8.3 God’s chosen people (1 Pet. 2:9–10).....	76
5.8.4 Warning against deceivers	76
5.9 Tithing in the book of Hebrews	76
5.9.1 The connection between the OT and NT Melchizedek	76
5.9.2 The change of the Priesthood (Heb. 7:12–13)	77
5.9.3 Conclusion.....	77
5.10 Tithing in the Apocalypse	77
5.11 Conclusion.....	78
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....	79
6.1 Introduction	79
6.2 Summary of previous chapters	79
6.3 Conclusion: The unique contribution of Genesis 14:18–24 on the debate about tithing	79

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Positions of scholars on tithing in Genesis 14:18–24 (own composition)	16
Table 2: Genesis 14:18–24 in two source-orientated English translations	18

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Personal background leading up to the study

The study was prompted by the heightened demand for tithing in some Christian churches. I was raised in a very traditional African family and my parents were non-Christian. After the death of my father in 1976, my mother introduced me to Christianity and laid the foundations of religious faith in my life. The church constantly demanded tithes. Although I was ten years old, I often heard the priest saying, “I need money in the church”. As a result, my mother devised a plan to sell tomatoes to earn some money to pay an annual fixed tithe to access indispensable church services.

At the age of 20, I got married and converted to Christianity. In 1999, 13 years into my marriage, my husband died. An elder of the church advised me not to pay tithes from my widow’s pension because tithing is outmoded in the New Testament church. Confusion started to build in my mind and my personal questions about tithing intensified. Nonetheless, I continued tithing because I was taught in church that if tithes are withheld, God will curse me and reclaim his tithes by punishing me and family members. The senior pastor informed the church that he has a right to demand payslips to calculate the exact tithe of each employed church member. In 2006, I failed to pay tithes for three months. A meeting was arranged, and the senior pastor demanded an explanation for why I defrauded and stole God’s money. I argued with my spiritual leader that the New Covenant doctrine of the “priesthood of believers” (1 Pet. 2:4–5) invalidates the OT tithing practices (Kelly, 2007:203). The pastor argued that God considered me a thief according to Malachi 3:6–12. Afterwards, I was dismissed from the office of deacon because of these charges. These circumstances persuaded me to investigate tithing in the whole of Scripture.

1.1.2 Biblical background of tithing

1.1.2.1 A brief overview of tithing in the Old Testament

The Hebrew root used in the OT to refer to tithes or the practice of tithing, is עָשָׂר. From this root is derived the nouns עֶשֶׂר (“ten” [cardinal number]), עֶשְׂרִים (“ten” [in compound numbers]), מַעֲשֵׂר (“tithe”), עֶשְׂרִים (“ten”, “decade”), the adjective עֶשְׂרִי (“a tenth”), the verb עָשָׂר (“to take a tenth”; “to tithe”) and various other derivatives (cf. Brown *et al.* (1977:797-798); Jenson (1977:552-554).

Genesis 14:20 recounts the initial event of Abram offering a tenth of his repossessed merchandise to a deity through the priesthood of Melchizedek. In Genesis 28, Jacob, while fleeing from his

brother Esau, vowed to give a tenth to God of all that God gives him as a sign of his thankfulness (Gen. 28:20–22). However, Jacob's tithe was not prescribed by God, and one may suggest that Jacob's vow was dependent on God meeting his conditions (Fagan, 1992:37).

In the Mosaic Law, the practice of tithing was centred around the nation of Israel, the temple in Jerusalem, the Levitical priesthood, and the poor. The following tithes were distinguished in the Torah.

Firstly, the tithe of the land (Lev. 27:30–33). The sacred tithes (Num. 18:20–24) were holy and set aside for supporting the Aaronic priests as an inheritance and compensation for temple services. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. Likewise, it was illegal for the Levites to eat their tithes before giving a tithe of the tithe to the Aaronic priests (Num. 18:30–32).

Secondly, the festival tithes (Deut. 12:17–19; 14:22–27) were separated to cater for travelling expenses to the Jerusalem temple, and household consumption during the celebration of God's feasts. Lastly, the charity tithes (Deut. 14:28–29) was set aside to support the widows, poor, and foreigners.

Goldingay (2002:203) indicates that tithing is intertwined with first fruits offerings (cf. Gen. 4:4) at first glance. God required the first best portions of the harvest be presented annually (Lev. 23:9–14). The people of God presented their first fruits as an act of worship, gratitude for God's provision, and blessings like tithing.

Tithing is not attributed to the "Former Prophets". However, Samuel warned Israel that their desire for a king was problematic because Israel's priesthood was threatened and the people will be over-taxed (1 Sam. 8:10,17). Israel neglected God's appointed Levitical priesthood support by means of tithes (2 Chron. 31:5–8; Neh. 10:35–39; 12:44; 13:4–13). Even so, these passages do not bring new understanding on tithing practices.

In the prophetic books, tithing is cited in Amos and Malachi. Amos 4:4 accuses the northern tribes of idolatry (Murray, 2011:86), and links tithing inconsistency to cultic practices that in Bethel and Gilgal. Malachi 3:8–12 and Nehemiah 13:10 warns Israel for ignoring the proper ways of tithing to support the priesthood (cf. Moretsi (2004:19). As a result, the Levites abandoned temple services to support themselves, resulting in the suspension of services in the Jerusalem temple (Neh. 13:10).

1.1.2.2 A brief overview of tithing in the New Testament

The Hebrew words "tithe" or "tenth" are translated in various words in Greek (Vine, 1996:634). Parker (2012:207) indicates that the verb δεκατώω refers to the act of collecting or receiving tithes

(Heb. 7:6, 9), while ἀποδεκατώω denotes “to tithe” (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:20) or “to collect a tithe” (Heb. 7:5). The adjective δέκατος refers to a “tenth”.

Tithing in the gospels seems to be prescriptive and a common practice among the Jews (Matt. 23:23 and Luke 11:42; 18:10–14). Strikingly, Jesus never condemned tithing in these passages, possibly because he ministered under the OT system (De Gray Birch, 2007:5).

Additionally, De Gray Birch (2007:7) is of the opinion that the book of Acts does not endorse tithing per se but refers to generous giving. When reading Acts, perhaps the picture that one gets is that the parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity was not abrupt. Some of the Jews still upheld tithing as a ceremonial rite whereas others adopted a new way of giving generously according to God’s grace, sharing, ability, and almsgiving (Acts 4:34–35; 11:27–30; 24:17).

Tithing is not explicitly mentioned in the Pauline epistles. Paul as a Christian Jew was called for both Jews and Gentiles. Paul completely discontinued and condemned some of the Jewish cultic practices connected to the temple like tithing, temple sacrifices, etc. Some of the Jews expected non-Jewish Christians to be converted to Judaism and follow all the Jewish ceremonial ritual practices like tithing, circumcision, and others to be fully accepted as Christians. As a result, the Jerusalem Council was held by Jewish leaders to resolve concerning how Gentile believers should practice their salvation (Acts 15). A consensus was reached in that council that non-Jewish Christians were not obliged to practice most of the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:1–29). Paul alludes that giving should flow from a joyful, loving, willing, and cheerful attitude of the heart. All the NT apostles did not advocate tithing for the Christians but emphasised the generous act of giving and using God ordained gifts to serve one another (Jas. 1:17; 1 Pet. 4:10).

1.1.2.3 Introduction to Genesis 14

In Genesis 14, tithing follows references to a specific time in history when the four Mesopotamian kings joined forces under the leadership of Chedorlaomer, who fought against the five Canaanite kings of the city states (Gen. 14:1–3). A fugitive from the battlefield informed Abram that his nephew Lot and all his possessions had been captured (Gen. 14:13). Abram, allied with Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, gathered 318 of his trained men (Gen. 14:13–14). Abram defeated Chedorlaomer and his associates (Gen. 14:17a) and rescued all the people, including women and children and his nephew Lot, and recovered all the plundered possessions (Gen. 14:16). Subsequently, while Abram was journeying home, he was met by the king of Sodom in the valley of Shaveh (Gen. 14:17). Surprisingly, Melchizedek appears on the scene and the focus shifts from the king of Sodom to Melchizedek, who is called both a king and a priest. Melchizedek provided Abram and his trained men with bread and wine, and blessed Abram in the name of God

Most High, maker of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:18–19). In response, Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything (Gen. 14:20). Then Melchizedek disappeared from the scene inexplicably. Verse 21 describes the meeting between Abram and the unnamed king of Sodom who gives Abram an offer to retain all the recovered goods except for his people. However, Abram rejected the offer based on God's promise (Gen. 14:22–23), even though it was lawful for him to take the spoils of war (see, for example, the later legislation of Deut. 20:14b). Still, Abram only demanded the share that was due to his fighting men (Gen. 14:24).

1.2 Problem Statement

The study aims to investigate the biblical practice of tithing by focusing on Genesis 14:18–24, the first passage in Scripture where we read of tithing centuries before its inclusion in the Mosaic law. The primary research problem of this study is to investigate whether the biblical practice of tithing as stated in Genesis 14:18–24 is still valid for contemporary Christians. Consequently, tithing in Genesis 14:18–24 calls for further investigation in light of the New Testament.

The following questions guided the efforts to answer the main research problem:

1. *How do scholars understand tithing in Genesis 14:18–24?*
2. *What can be deduced about tithing from an exegetical analysis of Genesis 14:18–24?*
3. *By what means does Genesis 14:18–24 fit within the projection of the practice of tithing?*
4. *How is tithing understood in the NT in relation to the Old Covenant?*

1.3 Aim and objectives

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to determine whether the practice of tithing as recorded in Genesis 14:18–24 is still applicable to contemporary Christians.

1.3.2 Objectives

In order to reach the above-mentioned aim, the specific objectives were:

1. to identify scholars' different interpretations of Genesis 14:18–24 concerning tithing.
2. to do an exegetical analysis of Genesis 14:18–24 to deduce what the passage reveals about tithing.

3. to determine how Genesis 14:18–24 fits into the overall canonical picture of tithing.
4. to understand how tithing is understood in the NT in relation to the Old Covenant

1.4 Central theoretical argument

This study investigates why Genesis 14:18–24 as the first passage in Scripture to introduce the concept of tithing is often used to advocate tithing for Christian communities. Various scholars and spiritual leaders also argue whether the tithe under examination sets a precedence for timeless tithing or describes the historic events that took place in a certain time and place in canonical history.

1.5 Methodology

Genesis 14:18–24 is conducted from a canonical qualitative descriptive research perspective. Faith communities employ Scripture as a timeless norm whereas canonical interpretation integrates exegetical and theological understandings for teaching and edification of Christian communities. Genesis 14:18–24 cannot be investigated as an isolated text, but it will be interpreted in reference to the entire canon as an act of divine communication (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:99-100).

The following methodologies will be used to answer the various research questions provided above:

1. In order to identify scholars' different interpretations of Genesis 14:18–24 concerning tithing, an in-depth literature study of scholarly work on Genesis 14:18–24 was done focusing on commentaries, journal articles, theological lexicons, and monographs.
2. In order to deduce what Genesis 14:18–24 reveals about tithing, the passage was subjected to an exegetical analysis, canonical, and theological approach using the grammatical-historical methodology.
3. In order to determine how Genesis 14:18–24 fits into the bigger biblical practice of tithing, references to tithing were traced throughout Scripture.
4. In order to understand how tithing is understood in the NT, allusions to tithing is investigated in relation to the Old Covenant.

5. In order to answer the main research question of this study, the findings of the previous investigations were synthesised.

1.6 Ethical considerations

The study in its entirety involves literature evaluation and textual analysis. Thus, the ethics risk level is deemed to be minimal. Consulted sources are referenced, and the different viewpoints of scholars are conveyed accordingly. The study did not involve any interviews or empirical studies of either a quantitative or qualitative nature.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 serves as a framework for the entire study.

Chapter 2 examines the arguments of scholars who view biblical tithing in Genesis 14 as either prescriptive or descriptive. The investigation is limited to the last 50 years. The chapter concluded by classifying various understandings of the passage and spelling out their preliminary inferences.

Chapter 3 subjected Genesis 14:18–24 to an exegetical analysis to deduce what the passage reveals about tithing. It concluded by stating what the text of Genesis 14:18–24 say and does not say about tithing.

Chapter 4 investigated how Genesis 14:18–24 fits into the overall biblical picture of tithing and required gifts. This was done by tracing references of tithing throughout Scripture. The chapter concluded by summarising the place and function of Genesis 14:18–24 in the biblical practice of tithing.

Chapter 5 offers how tithing is understood in the NT in relation to the Old Covenant.

Chapter 6 subsequently synthesises the findings of the previous chapters, and provides a brief discussion of the legitimate use and unique contribution of Genesis 14:18–24 in the debate on tithing.

CHAPTER 2: DIFFERENT TITHING INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 14:18–24

2.1. Introduction

This chapter surveys how scholars understand tithing in Genesis 14:18–24. Various scholars interpret the biblical practice of tithing differently. In general, two approaches to tithing in Genesis 14:18–24 can be identified: (1) those who view the passage as prescriptive and still binding for Christians, and (2) those who view the passage as merely descriptive. As a result, this section delineates the prescriptive and descriptive interpretation of Genesis 14:18–24. The investigation is limited to the last 50 years. The chapter concludes by classifying various understandings of the passage and spelling out the preliminary inferences.

2.2 An overview of the prescriptive interpretation of tithing in Genesis 14

Some scholars interpret Genesis 14:18–24 as prescriptive; thus, signifying that the practice of tithing is still binding for contemporary Christians.

2.2.1 Kendall (1983)

Kendall (1983:18) proclaims that tithing is vital for Christian maturity. The tenth that Abram offered to Melchizedek was not of his own accord but was organised as he gave one-tenth of the acquired spoils of war. Abram never estimated the exact amount to be offered but wisely separated God's sacred tenth from the rest of the booty. Abram's tithing was autonomously initiated and functions as a presage for the New Covenant standard (1 Cor. 9:14). Kendall (1983:51-54) suggests that Abram foresaw the gospel ahead of time (Gal. 3:8), and the Spirit of God was covertly operating in the inner man of Abram because the will of God was engraved in Abram's heart. As a result, Abram functions as a model of what Christians should do concerning the gospel. Kendall (1983:64-65) maintains that tithing is not a continuation of the Mosaic law that was established because of the sinfulness of the nation of Israel, but a practice learned from Abram's example. The Mosaic law possessed a historic basis and an archaic ending. Kendall believes that tithing gives honour to humanity and destroys the economic social system impediment amongst church members and the community. Various quantities of tithes place worshippers on an equal footing in God's estimation without prejudice. Kendall (1983:94) resolves his argument by asserting that the theological interpretation of Abram's faith action of tithing to Melchizedek is not legalistic but forms a prescriptive pattern of tithing. Moreover, Kendall maintains that when believers emulate Abram's pattern of tithing, they are led by the Spirit of God.

2.2.2 Davis (1987)

Davis (1987:87) claims that tithing was a recognised criterion of prescriptive worship in Abram's time prior the codification of the Mosaic tithing law based on obedience. The tithe that Abram gave to Melchizedek laid a foundation for the Mosaic law as a prescriptive Jewish practice (Davis, 1987:90).

Davis (1987:90) maintains that tithing is prescriptive even for today's church. He justifies his claim by citing that Melchizedek received Abram's tithe as the representative of God Most High. Given the fact that Melchizedek foreshadows Jesus Christ, Davis underscores the everlasting superiority of the Messiah's high priest as a key element of perpetual tithing. He upholds that believers should continue tithing as an expression of their love and dedication to Yeshua until his second coming.

Davis bases his argument on Hebrews 7:9–10, which states that *“Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”* The fact that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek prior the institution of the Mosaic law, in his view shows that tithing is “viewed as an eternal principle and not a dispensational one”. In addition, Davis compares tithing to honouring the Sabbath day. He argues that whatever preceded the law, including tithing, was later integrated into the law, and is also effective subsequent to the law.

2.2.3 Landsdell (1992)

Landsdell (1992:46-48) reasons that the tenth that Abram presented to Melchizedek was prescriptive because it was so distinctive compared to voluntary offerings. Abram did not have the right to surrender the tenth or to retain it according to his personal will power. His claim is based on the unlimited interpretation of the phrase “everything” in Genesis 14:20, and the use of the word “war plunder” in Hebrews 7:4 in reference to the tenth that Abram offered to Melchizedek. Landsdell reasons that Abram did not have any power to keep the one-tenth to himself but had inner personal conviction of offering one tenth of the plunder to God through Melchizedek.

Landsdell seems to ignore the context of Genesis 14 by forcing his own presupposition into the text, proposing the probability of Melchizedek's periodic administration of priestly and royal functions for every Canaanite combatant and persons who paid their tenth intermittently. In addition, Landsdell insists that commentators should not presume that Abram paid a one-time “tenth” (מַעֲשֵׂר) of his wealth to Melchizedek. He contends that there might be a likelihood of Abram's repeated tithing based on the proximity between Salem and Mamre. Surprisingly,

Landsdell admits that Abram adopted the Babylonian ethos and religious system by stating that Abram established a yearly pattern of paying a tenth of his assets according to the ANE tradition.

2.2.4 North (1994; 2011)

North (1994:1-4) contends that any effort to evade the continuity of prescriptive tithing for today's church is an attack on Jesus's priesthood, which is founded on the Abrahamic covenant. He underscores the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood, the stance of Christians as the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), and lastly, the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant in Christ (Matt. 5:17–19). Therefore, believers are obliged to tithe to God as Abram tithed to Melchizedek as God's representative. North showcases how the New Covenant church rejects the authority of the Abrahamic covenant as the backdrop to the Mosaic covenants in kingdom economics. North, however, seems to neglect that Abram was acting based on the promises that God gave to him in Genesis 12:1–3 instead of a covenant (that is made in Genesis 15), and his name was not yet changed to Abraham. North upholds that all believers constitute a royal priesthood in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 2:9) and the administration of bread and wine serve as emblems of the Eucharist (North, 1994:42).

North (2011:119-123) built his argument on the typological, symbolic, and instructive understanding of the tenth that Abram gave to Melchizedek. More emphasis is placed on the covenantal contributory value of the pre-Mosaic tithing for contemporary believers. Jesus Christ is seen as the archetype of Melchizedek, and the five-fold ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11) are seen as God's representatives.

2.2.5 Goldingay (2002)

Goldingay (2002:203) argues that Abram was familiar with the custom of giving a tenth to a deity and maintains that such knowledge did not require divine special illumination. In his argument, Goldingay states that Abram knew that tithing was the right thing to do, like the expression of loyalty, love, worship and prayer. He points out that the whole of Scripture promotes tithing, but its objective and worth are calculated afresh in distinct ratios and networks. He maintains that the practice of tithing remains stable. Therefore, tithing remains prescriptive for contemporary Christians, the only thing that is needed is to "discern afresh what God wants to do through tithing".

Goldingay relates tithing to the concept of Jubilee in Scripture. He argues that when God provides humans with necessities of life, people should in turn acknowledge the source by giving a portion back to God, just like Abram gave a tenth of the spoils of war to God through Melchizedek. Furthermore, Goldingay likens tithing to the sacrificial offering in Genesis 4 and the commandment of leaving the land unplowed in the sabbatical year (Exod. 23:11).

2.3.6 Pohlmann (2003)

Pohlmann (2003:7) posits that the practice of tithing functioned prior the Mosaic law as a “creation principle” rather than a prescriptive requirement for the Israelite community. This creation principle developed to become a legal requirement primarily for Israel (Exod. 4:2) and transferred to the NT church (Matt. 23:23). The creation principle holds that Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek as a response to the battle triumph, ceremonial meal, and blessings.

Pohlmann suggests that Abram’s spontaneous one-tenth was inscribed in his DNA and not founded in any ANE tithing practices. ANE and the Mosaic tithing practices require the warrior to keep the booty, but Abram relinquished the remaining 90 per cent to the king of Sodom except for what was due to his allies and trained men. Pohlmann claims that Abram’s tithing implies absolute withdrawal from corrupted economic and political cosmic influences.

2.2.6 Pink (2006)

Pink (2006:3) infers that Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek as the father of the faithful community of believers; accordingly, his offspring should also emulate his actions. Based on the notion that the text did not uncover why Abram paid tithes to the royal priest, Pink concludes that Abram was revealing God’s intellect and accomplishing his willpower.

2.2.7 Price (2006)

Price (2006:559) indicates that Abram’s tithing to Melchizedek emanates from an intimate fellowship observance of relying on a legitimate agreement between the Almighty and mortals. Price upholds that ten represents divine order, governance and wholeness, contending that God prescribed tithing for economical sustenance and maintaining equilibrium among his people. Price distinguished worshippers as the only people eligible to pay tithes and be subordinate to God. Tithing implies that attained earthly assets are not linked on one’s willpower, but solely rely on obedience and serving God faithfully. Price (2006:559) concludes that tithing is an individual call that is performed freely to guarantee the permanence and affluence of God’s sanctuary. It does not only profit the worshipper but also benefits the tither’s posterity. Price underscores the importance of tithing for people who have entered into a covenant relationship with God and received great conquests with God (Gen. 14:20).

2.2.8 Murray (2011)

Murray (2011:67) contends that tithing is prescriptive for modern Christians based on the spiritual rank of Abram as the father of all nations and Christian faith as supported by the New Testament. Murray supports his claim by making an analogy between Melchizedek and Christ. He argues

that just like Abram esteemed the kingship and priesthood of Melchizedek, Christians should adopt the practice by offering tithes to the kingship and priesthood of Christ. Abram serves as a model for contemporary believers and Melchizedek as a type of Christ (Murray, 2011:67).

2.3.9 Barnwell (2012)

Likewise, Barnwell (2012:130-132) claims that Abram considered Melchizedek as an authentic persona of God and a model for the New Covenant church to emulate his faith actions as the Father of every person who believes without being circumcised in the flesh (Rom. 4:12–16). He underscores that tithing was never meant to be a legalistic practice, but a voluntary privilege.

As Abram tithed without being instructed, believers should pay tithes willingly to the ambassadors of God instead of an organisation. Abram did not tithe mainly to receive blessings, but to honour God as the source of blessing that he already possessed. Barnwell indicates that tithing is a mechanism that maintains a sequence of blessing that God pronounced to Abram in Genesis 12:1–3.

2.2.10 Otabil (2019)

Otabil (2019:46-47) contends that even though Abram functioned as a priest for his family and built altars (Gen. 12:7–8; 13:4, 8; 15:9–18), Scripture nonetheless lacks references to Abram offering “tenths” (מַעֲשֵׂר) at those altars. Otabil (2019:51) imputes Abram’s tithing to Melchizedek as a precedence for an eternal biblical tithing practice, a mark of honour to אֱלֹהֵי עֲלְיֹן for mankind’s victorious outcome from the storms of life. The מַעֲשֵׂר of Abram was different from the prescriptive agricultural produce that God required from the nation of Israel (Num. 31:25–41) and carries intense inferences for present-day Christians.

Otabil (2019:53-55) uncovers three significant tenets that relate to the מַעֲשֵׂר that Abram presented to Melchizedek. Firstly, Melchizedek was a king of Salem and a priest of אֱלֹהֵי עֲלְיֹן (Gen. 14:18). Otabil claims that Abram paid a tribute to a state that was represented by Melchizedek the king. Abram’s מַעֲשֵׂר validates the canonical importance of compensating the king with tributes and the state with taxes as a system, as was widespread in his time.

Secondly, Otabil (2019:54) affirms that the מַעֲשֵׂר that Abram offered to Melchizedek was exclusively for God. Melchizedek was אֱלֹהֵי עֲלְיֹן’s priestly representative. He implies that Abram was realising the distinctive hegemony of אֱלֹהֵי עֲלְיֹן whom Melchizedek worshiped. On this second tenet, Otabil urges believers to note that although there are officers who are recipients of the tithe that is paid, those tithes are not for their individual profit, but a sacred offering belonging to God. Otabil deduces this by revealing two different offerings that Abram presented to Melchizedek through

his one-time tithe. He claims that Abram paid tribute to the city state of Salem, which Melchizedek represented and tithed to אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן, creator of heaven and earth. Otabil makes an analogy to Abram's tithe to Melchizedek to the offering of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that the wise men from the East gave to the eternal kingship and priesthood of Jesus Christ (Matt. 2:11). According to Otabil (2019:147), gold signifies the supremacy of a deity, frankincense implies worship, and myrrh denotes subordination, coupled with laying down of one's life to אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן.

Lastly, Otabil (2019:54-55) argues that Abram performed a legitimate action in offering tithes and Melchizedek responded likewise by receiving it in righteousness. This principle validates that the recipients of tithes should exert veracity and use it in a virtuous manner instead of practising avarice. He concludes by asserting that the precedence of Abram's tithe forms the theological bedrock in which all tithing practices are constructed.

2.3 An overview of the descriptive interpretation of tithing in Genesis 14

Other scholars argue that Genesis 14:18–24 is descriptive and not binding on modern believers. Based on the narrative genre of the passage, the passage should be interpreted accordingly. The following scholars can be viewed as proponents of this view.

2.3.1 Brueggemann (1982)

Brueggemann (1982:135) reasons that the tithe in Genesis 14:20 does not imply a sacred action but an old-fashioned responsibility if viewed from a canonical perspective. One-tenth is not tied to a "free-will offering", but the acknowledgement of a liaison between the immortal divine deity as the creator and the subservient. When looking at Abram's מַעֲשֵׂר, one can extrapolate some probabilities: Abram gave a tenth of everything to acknowledge the divine superiority of the priesthood and authority of Melchizedek, acknowledging victory for triumphing over the five Eastern kings, and lastly, as a custom already predominant among the ANE.

Brueggemann maintains that the מַעֲשֵׂר and the refusal to keep the acquired plunder demonstrates that אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן is the only source of "everything" that belongs to the heavens and the earth. In the Hebrew text מַעֲשֵׂר is the adjectival form of the number ten (Brown *et al.*, 1977:798). Moreover, vv. 21–24 sheds more light on the fact that Abram's relationship with God was constructed on the solid foundation of his calling (Gen. 12:1–3). Genesis 12:1 underscores that God commanded Abram to come out of his country and father's house. It appears as if God was teaching the patriarch that He is the source of everything in any given situation. It would suggest that Abram considered God first before considering all the circumstances of life, including this military project. Yet Christians respond in different ways to God's grace, life, blessings, and the victories that God

offers. Brueggemann deduces his claims by stating that Abram's מְעִיטָר is not commanded for the new covenant church but demonstrates a relationship between the deity and the inferior.

2.3.2 Hamilton (1990)

According to Hamilton (1990:413), "Abram presented a gift to Melchizedek." A gift according to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary is "something that is voluntarily transferred to another without compensation." It is often given to show appreciation. Hamilton distinguishes Abram's tithe from prescriptive taxes levied to kings customarily after winning a battle. Abram tithed voluntarily from the spoils of war and distributed the remaining goods to his allies and the Sodomites.

Abram surrendered everything and kept nothing for himself. The warriors and civilians received an equal distribution of the spoils of war (Num. 31:17; 1 Sam. 30:22–31). In light of this practice, Hamilton claims that Abram's tithe to Melchizedek was not prescribed.

2.3.3 MacArthur (2000)

MacArthur (2000:99-101) argues that the fact that tithing was introduced prior to the codification of the Mosaic law does not prescribe tithing for today's Christians. Abram's tithe is different from the Mosaic and post-exilic tithing practices. The text does not indicate that Abram gave a tenth of his own assets but gave a tenth of the spoils of war he accumulated from defeating the five eastern kings. MacArthur (2000:103) claims that Abram's tithe was "a free, voluntary, one-time action, totally motivated by his heart, not by divine command."

2.3.4 Snoeberger (2000)

Snoeberger (2000:94-95) indicates that Abram's tithing is culture-bound and irrelevant for contemporary believers. Snoeberger argues that Scripture lacks any reference to Abram's consistent pattern of tithing. The composition of Abram's tithe offered to Melchizedek is unrelated to the Mosaic law requirements. Spoils of war were separated into different quantities and groupings (Num. 31:27–54). The Levites, priests, captains of the army, and warriors received their shares as stipulated. The remaining spoils were kept in the tabernacle as a memorial for the nation of Israel.

Even though the Bible says that Abram gave a tithe of "everything", it is improbable to assume that Abram was in possession of "all" his wealth on such an urgent military expedition. Certainly, Abram was far from his hometown. On the contrary, and the NT does not advocate tithing. The Mosaic priests were descendants of Aaron from the tribe of Levi. Snoeberger (2000:94-95) concludes his investigation by asserting that there is nothing in the pre-Mosaic tithing practices that serves as a groundwork for viewing tithing as a NT requirement.

2.3.5 Pryce (2000)

Pryce (2000:15) identified a number of references to tithing in the book of Hebrews (cf. Heb. 7:12,18; 8:7, 8, 13; 10:9). However, the context of these passages addresses the greatness of the New Covenant and Jesus Christ's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.

2.3.6 Pohlmann (2003)

Pohlmann (2003:7) posits that the practice of tithing functioned as a "creation principle" prior the Mosaic Law. This principle evolved to a legal requirement primarily for Israel (Exod. 4:2) and transferred later to the gospels (cf. Matt. 23:23; Mark 12:41–44; Luke 18:9–14; 21:1–4).

Pohlmann suggests that Abram's spontaneous one-tenth was inscribed in his DNA and not founded in any ANE tithing practices. ANE and the Mosaic tithing practices require the warrior to keep the booty, but Abram relinquished the remaining 90 per cent to the king of Sodom except for what was due to his allies. Pohlmann claims that Abram's tithing implies absolute withdrawal from corrupted economic and political influences. In light of this, Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek as an intrinsic response to the battle triumph, ceremonial meal, and blessings.

2.3.6 NIV Cultural Study Bible (2016)

The ANE tradition avows that a tithe of the spoils of war belong to the presiding local priest-king, while the remaining 90 per cent belong to the conqueror. Still, giving of a tenth is well-known in the ANE and in the OT in a variety of contexts (Walton & Keener, 2016:39). Compulsory tithes were calculated by the imperial fortress and offered to the temple gods as early as 2000 BC. Ugaritic manuscripts reveal the payment of tithes in a form of grain from the community instead of individuals to the majestic depots. Hittite concordats forbade their serfs fighting on behalf of their ruling nation to share the goods acquired from war conquest. The war prisoners and the plunder remained in possession of the subjects, except the land. The Cultural Study Bible posits that Abram's tithing in Genesis 14 is completely eccentric to the canonical writings and the ANE practices.

2.3.7 Kelly (2007)

Kelly (2007:24-26) maintains that Genesis 14 describes the historical events of how Abram obeyed the ANE war custom of paying a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek. Kelly agrees with Brueggemann (1982:135) that Abram's tithe was not a "free-will offering". However, Abram was indebted by the predominant ANE practice to present a tenth of the goods that he acquired after the war to Melchizedek as the sovereign of Salem.

According to Kelly, Abram's tithing was a binding common levy to a heathen deity or head of state. Genesis 14:21 supports that the מַעֲשֵׂר that Abram offered to Melchizedek was constructed on an agnostic practice rather than God's prescription.

Kelly (2007:27-28) argues that Abram's tithe is not alluded to in the Mosaic law, but it coincides with the Canaanite tithing practice. The unnamed king of Sodom started the ancient practice when he negotiated for the release of his war captives. Obviously, the prevailing tithing custom allowed Abram to keep the booty and only return the prisoners of war (Gen. 14:21). However, Abram forfeited his right of keeping the booty to attest that his validation, consecration, and affluence is constructed on faith instead of existing pagan practices and laws.

2.3.8 Kidner (2008)

Kidner (2008:145) clarifies that Abram's justification of faith and the establishment of the covenant is disconnected from the covenant that was given at Mount Sinai as it relates to grace instead of law. The fulfilment of this covenant is grounded on the promise that God gave to his servant Abram that he would deliver Israel as his firstborn son out of Egypt after four hundred years of slavery. Kidner disapproves that the offering of Abram's tithes to Melchizedek is prescriptive. However, the passage is merely descriptive of the historical events that took place.

2.3.9 Quiggle (2009)

Quiggle (2009:1) underscores that Hebrew language used the noun מַעֲשֵׂר to describe Abram's tithing in Genesis 14, in contrast to the verb עָשָׂר which has been overlooked in various biblical English translations. The tithe that Abram gave was not intended to support individuals, the priesthood, or sanctuaries because he did not tithe from his personal belongings. Abram sojourned in Hebron as a nomad and was not submitted to any regulations of any city-state. Even though Melchizedek is depicted as the king of Salem, he did not possess any legal rights over Hebron. On the other hand, Abram did not owe tax to any king.

In addition, Quiggle claims that tithing prior to the codification of the Mosaic law is disparate from its application during the Levitical priesthood tithing practices. Quiggle contends that Abram's tithing to Melchizedek is descriptive instead of being prescriptive.

2.4 Table of positions

As seen above, some scholars contend that Genesis 14:18–24 is prescriptive and still binding on Christians today, while others view the text as merely descriptive of a historic event. The following table gives an overview of various arguments concerning Abram's tithing in Genesis 14:18–24.

Positions on tithing in Genesis 14:18–24	Scholars in support of the interpretation	Brief clarification
Abram's tithing is based on obedience and was later integrated into the Mosaic law as a prescriptive Jewish practice,	Davis (1987); Kendall (1982:50); Pink (2006).	The tithe in Genesis 14 functions as a backdrop for all prescriptive tithing in Scripture.
Abram's tithing was autonomously initiated, and the theological interpretation creates a model of prescriptive godly exposé.	Kendall (1982); Landsdell (1992); Murray 2011; Otabil (2019:46–47); Davis 1987; Pink (2006).	Abram's tithe in Genesis 14 suggests a timeless principle.
Abram's tithing to Melchizedek sets a precedence for an eternal biblical tithing practice.	Otabil (2019); Pink (2006).	A proof text method of interpreting Scripture is employed, and the genre is largely overlooked.
Abram's tithing portrays submission to God's will.	Landsdell (1992); Goldingay (2002); Brodie (2001); Pohlmann (2003), Pink (2006), Pryce 2000..	God engraved the need to offer a tenth on Abram's heart.
Abram's tithe narrates a historical event.	Brueggemann (1982), NIV Cultural Study Bible (2016), Kelly (2007), Kidner (2008), Barnwell (2012).	The genre of most OT narratives is descriptive.
Abram's tithing is unrelated to the Mosaic tithing system.	MacArthur (2000), NIV Cultural Study Bible (2006), Quiggle (2009).	Abram's tithe in Genesis 14:20 is distinctive.
Abram's tithe to Melchizedek is culture bound.	Snoeberger (2000); Kelly (2007).	Abram's tithe corresponds with ANE culture.

Table 1: Positions of scholars on tithing in Genesis 14:18–24.

2.5 Conclusions

This section briefly evaluated the arguments of scholars who view biblical tithing in Genesis 14 as either prescriptive or descriptive. The focus is directed on general arguments. Chapter 3 will focus on exegetical analysis of Genesis 14:18–24.

CHAPTER 3: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 14:18–24

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provided an overview of different tithing interpretations of Genesis 14:18–24. The current chapter sets out to deduce what Genesis 14:18–24 reveals about tithing. In order to do this, the passage is subjected to an exegetical analysis using the canonical approach (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:99-100).

Genesis 14:18–24 is analysed in its original text and two source-orientated English translations to identify significant critical textual matters. An overview of the study is provided to ascertain how different scholars demarcate the passage and provide biblical motivation for the choice of demarcation. The structure of the entire book is analysed to uncover how the passage fit in the book of Genesis as a whole.

3.2 Overview

3.2.1 Genesis 14:18–24 in the Masoretic Text and two source-orientated English translations

Table 2 below shows the content of Genesis 14:18–24 in original Hebrew and two source-orientated English translations.

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)	NKJV	NRSVUE
וּמֶלְכִי-צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וְיַיִן וְהוּא כֹהֵן לְאֵל עֵלְיוֹן:	¹⁸ <i>Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.</i>	¹⁸ <i>And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.</i>
וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֵלְיוֹן קֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:	¹⁹ <i>And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;</i>	¹⁹ <i>He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth,</i>
The Hebrew phrase קֹנֵה means “ <i>acquirer</i> ”, “ <i>owner</i> ”, as in Isaiah 1:3; 24:2. The Vulgate renders קֹנֵה as “ <i>owner</i> ”. But the Canaanites renders the phrase as “ <i>creator</i> ”. NKJV refers to it as “ <i>possessor</i> ” and NRSVUE “ <i>maker</i> ”. The LXX and Vulgate refers the phrase as “ <i>created</i> ”.		

<p>וּבְרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵי עֲלִיוֹן אֲשֶׁר־מָגֵן צָרִיךְ בְּיָדְךָ וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ מֵעֶשֶׂר מִכָּל:</p>	<p>²⁰<i>And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.</i></p>	<p>²⁰<i>and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything</i></p>
<p>The Hebrew phrase מָגֵן is derived from a <i>piel</i> denominative verb from מָגַן apparently a <i>verb</i> meaning “shield or buckler”; encompass with; figuratively “to rescue”, “to hand safely over” denoting “to surrender” or “to deliver”. However, in the context of Genesis 14:20 it refers to “unshielded” similar to its reference in Hosea 11:8 “hand over” and Proverbs 4:9 “deliver”.</p>		
<p>וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־סֹדֶם אֶל־אַבְרָם תְּנֵה־לִּי הַנְּפֹשׁ וְהַרְכָּשׁ קַח־לָךְ:</p>	<p>²¹<i>Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.”</i></p>	<p>²¹<i>Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself</i></p>
<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־מֶלֶךְ סֹדֶם הֲרִימֹתִי יָדִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ:</p>	<p>²²<i>But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth</i></p>	<p>²²<i>But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to God Most High, maker of heaven and earth,</i></p>
<p>The LXX, 1QapGen omits the use of the proper name of the God of Israel in Hebrew “יהוה” derived from the Hebrew verb “היה” meaning “to be” or “to exist”. The Samaritan Pentateuch used “God”. It is so amazing that Abram used the word “LORD” in Hebrew tetragrammaton “יהוה”. At this stage, the nation of Israel is unknown. God has not yet revealed his “covenant name” until Exodus 3:15. In this context, Abram employed the name LORD/יהוה” as a practical anachronism. Anachronism is pragmatic where the description of events are inconsistent with the ancient data. The variances in the names of God does not alter the meaning of the text (Gen. 14:20).</p>		
<p>אִם־מִחוּט וְעַד שְׁרוּךְ־נֹעַל וְאִם־אֶקַּח מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ וְלֹא תֹאמַר אָנֹכִי הַעֲשִׂיתִי אֶת־אַבְרָם:</p>	<p>²³<i>that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’</i></p>	<p>²³<i>that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’</i></p>
<p>בְּלַעְדֵי רֶק אֲשֶׁר אָכְלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וְחֵלֶק הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הִלְכִנוּ אִתִּי עִנְרֵי אֲשָׁכֶל וּמַמְרָא הֵם יִקְחוּ חֵלְקָם:</p>	<p>²⁴<i>except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”</i></p>	<p>²⁴<i>I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their share.”</i></p>

Table 2: Genesis 14:18–24 in original Hebrew two source-orientated English translations

3.2.2 Demarcation of the passage

Genesis 14:18–24 appears at the end of chapter 14 as the culmination of the war report. The demarcation is dependent on the criteria spelled out by Stuart (2009:5) using linguistic markers

to delineate the limits of the text. The text is a historical narrative; therefore, its construction consists of an introduction, middle and conclusion. A change in time, person or place is usually an indication of a new event.

Verse 18 sets the stage for a new scene by introducing a new character called Melchizedek and his dual offices of kingship and priesthood. Verses 19–20 give Melchizedek's blessings and describes how Abram reciprocated the blessings, thus creating the main idea of the passage which also functions as the middle portion. Verses 21–24 describe the contrasting dialogue between the king of Sodom and Abram, and functions as the climax of the passage.

Bible translations and scholars delineate the passage differently because of the complexity of the Hebrew verbal formation of the passage. The BHS as the original text has demarcated the passage from verses 17–24 unlike the NKJV which delineates the passage from verses 18–24.

3.2.2.1 How scholars demarcate the passage

Scholars have not yet reached consensus regarding the unity of Genesis 14. At first glance, the passage seems unfamiliar compared to others in the canon. Hence, the place and function of the passage has led to considerable theological disputes (Brueggemann, 1982:285; Currid, 2003; Westermann, 2004).

Wenham (1987:256) notes that the pericope is part of Genesis 14, despite its epic qualities. The literary link between (Gen. 14:17; 21) is interrupted by the abrupt emergence of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20). Melchizedek's absence from the war account appears to be a discrepancy (Hamilton, 1990:408).

On the other hand, (Wenham, 1987:369) notes that the abrupt appearance of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18) contains a chiasmic clause that is carefully structured. The Hebrew verb אָצַק meaning "went out" (Gen. 14:17) is similar to "brought out" (Gen. 14:18). The king of Sodom and Melchizedek acted simultaneously to encounter Abram. Whether scholars or Bible translations demarcate the passage differently and argue about the unity of the text, the context and Hebrew verbal formations confirms a unity. The division does not discredit the flow of events or suggest two distinct pericopes. Genesis 14:17 acts as a transitional verse that links the two paragraphs. The passage can be delineated from verse 17 or 18, respectively. Most scholars demarcate Genesis 14 as follows:

- The battle account (14:1–11)
- The Abraham-Lot cycle (14:12–17, 21–24)
- The Melchizedek episode (14:18–20)

3.2.3 Textual critical matters (Gen. 14)

Textual critical issues in Genesis 14:18-24 underlines the unexpected insertion of the ME. The passage is generally considered an ancient unique passage inserted within the Abrahamic narrative. The names of places and kings seems to be adapted from prehistoric source manuscripts probably edited over a period of time.

The battle account (Gen. 14:1-16) is incomprehensible as it renders the passage complex to date its composition, and how it fits into the historical narrative of Genesis ((Brueggemann, 1982:134-135). The dialogue between Melchizedek and Abram seems to interrupt the meeting between the king of Sodom and Abram (Gen. 14:17, 21–24). Von Rad (1972:180-181) contends that the ME is a late redactor work. The Masoretic text (Gen. 14:20) also poses uncertainty concerning the giver of one-tenth.

The linguistic of the text fits the use of a Canaanite source and does not fit the patriarchal epoch. In light of this, the giving of one-tenth was added to syncretise the Canaanite deity El Elyon with God Most High. Even though the priestly blessing suggests that Abram gave tithe to Melchizedek, the uncertainty of the original Hebrew text warrants an extensive analysis.

The critical issues implies that Genesis 14:18-24 is archaic, revised, and contextualized within the Abrahamic narrative to exalt the legitimacy of Melchizedek's priesthood with God Most High.

3.3 Context

3.3.1. Historical context

The historical understanding of Genesis 14 is constructed upon the ancient Near Eastern's (ANE) background in the second millennium BCE. Abram received adjustment of beliefs and practices which existed for centuries. The language and imagery of the Hebrew canon is deeply rooted in the ANE customs. God did not entirely reject the ANE concepts, literal, cultural, political, geographical, and religious influences altogether, but employed it as a backdrop for revelation and theological interpretation. The manuscripts of the Torah are greatly influenced by the Sumerian empires. The superpowers in Sumer included Hammurabi (founder of Babylon or Shinar), Tiglath-Pileser (founder of the Kingdom of Assyria), Sargon (founder of the Kingdom of Akkad), and Ur Nammu (King of Ur). Chapter 14 rests primarily on the culture of Ur of the Chaldeans in Sumer of southern Mesopotamia where Abram was raised and assimilated its culture (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:41-43).

Sumer comprised of many city-states governed by a system of vassalage and imperialism. Each city-state had its own god and was governed by a king, lord, or suzerain. Kings served as mediators between the people and city deities.

The geography of ANE includes places, trade routes, wars, etc. Secondly, the political climate include kings, priests, vassalage, treaties, taxation, etc. Lastly, the religious climate of Sumer included ziggurats structures like the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11) and sanctuaries nearby for religious purposes. ANE deities would descend to fellowship with the people, receive gifts, worship, and bless his people whereas priests ministered in temples. The Assyrians and Sumerians offered tithes which included spoils of war, individually, or as a community annually without a prescribed percentage. The ANE tithe was regarded as an annual prescribed sacred ritual from agrarian harvest, livestock, metals, or income whereas gifts and offerings were personal free-will promptings. Conversely, taxes and tributes were politically influenced. (Stevens, 2006:6-7) Based on this context, God later systemised tithing after the giving of the Law in Mount Sinai (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:44).

The text of Genesis 14 in its current form did not originate during the time of Abram. Therefore, when analysing its historical context, it is noted that the text does not need to have been written during the period it describes. Even if Moses is employed as the author of Genesis traditionally, the text indicates a late composition. The stories of Abram may have circulated among the Hebrews in oral form, and later codified. Therefore, the narratives of Abram are part of the stories of origins of a particular people. Such stories may be historical, non-historical, and mythical (Anon, 2006:40-41).

Even though scholars find it difficult to link the Mesopotamian four kings who invaded the Jordan plain to contemporary history. These kings might be concomitants from the period of Abram (19th or 18th century BCE). Their names allude to several empires in ANE (Sumer). The crux of the passage depicts Abram in the history 'of' the text but not history 'in' the text (Kidner, 2008:142). The role of history described in Genesis is to provide the prelude, the formation of the nation of Israel, the giving of the law in Exodus, and the kingdom of God.

3.3.1.1 Historical events preceding Genesis 14:18–24

Abram is revealed from the eleventh *toledoth* of Genesis (Terah's genealogy). The election of Abram flows from God's grace following the destruction of the Tower of Babel and the scattering of the nations (Gen. 10:1–11:9). God called Abram (Gen. 12:1–3) as a channel to mediate "God's blessings to all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3).

The link between Genesis 13 and 14 is based on the citing of Lot (Gen. 13:12). God's protection is observed when Abram rescues Lot from Chedorlaomer's coalition. The mention of 'Mamre' (Gen. 13:18) ties the battle account and the ME (Gen. 14:18–20), thus concluding the climax with the reference to 'Mamre' in Genesis 14:24.

3.3.1.2 Religion of Abram

Hamilton (1990:84) accentuates that Abram's religion at this point was pre-covenant, pre-tabernacle and pre-priestly. Subsequent God's call, Abram left Haran for Canaan (Gen. 12:1). The act of obedience of leaving his home country, family, inheritance, and polytheistic beliefs of the Chaldeans demonstrates Abram's willingness to submit, worship, and relate with God personally. God communicated with Abram personally and repeated his promises (Gen. 15:4–5; 18:10; 21:5). There were no intermediaries between Abram and God such as prophets, kings, and priests.

The personal God of Abram became the family God, "the God of the fathers" in Mesopotamia (Gen. 26:24; 28:13; 31:5,29,42,53; 32:9; 43:23; 46:1-3; 50:17), and eventually "the God of the Israelites". Therefore, an inference can be made that Abram's upbringing was shaped by pagan cultural and religious practices (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:34).

Genesis references that Abram built altars and offered sacrifices (Gen. 12:7; 22:9) to God. Abram's religion was informal and without sanctuary. Blessings and curses also marked Abram's religion. Obedience to God's instruction was rewarded by blessings while rebellion attracted sanctions and curses (Gen. 12:3; 14:19–20). Abram received revelation from God through spoken words (Gen. 12:1–3). Wherever Abram met with God, the place received a sacred name (Gen. 13:4, 18).

Worship was considered predominantly as a personal relationship between God and humanity. The uniqueness of Abram's faith was based in his intimate fellowship with God (Lasor *et al.*, 1996:46). Vows made to God marks Abram's uncompromising form of worship (Gen. 14:22–23).

3.3.1.3 Historical background

3.3.1.3.1 Extra-biblical sources

Josephus (37 to c. 100 BCE) state that the cities of the Plain were located south of Lake Asphaltites, the Dead Sea (*Antiquities* 1.11.4) and suggests that the area of the Pentapolis (the five cities) are now submerged (*Antiquities* 1.9).

3.3.1.4 Geographical setting

The geographical setting of Genesis including the Pentateuch focuses on the physical and human geography. Physical geography focuses on the earth surface, climate, landscape, water supply, plants, and animals. On the other hand, human geography underlines how humanity is influenced by the certainties of the canonical lands, individual, and corporate responses. Human geography encompasses agriculture, politics, trade routes, economic structures, etc. Both physical and human geography influenced how writers narrated the events of the patriarchs in a certain time period and location in Scripture. The geographical milieu affected their thought patterns, belief system, and their writing styles, e.g. meeting places, causes, and location of battles. The writers of Genesis often references geographical features in speeches to artfully manipulate readers reception and emotional responses (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:253-254).

3.3.1.5 Archaeological setting

Several commentators see the record of the invasion of the four eastern kings in the time of Abram as historically inaccurate. Nevertheless, Kitchen (2003:569) posits that there are speculations that the British Museum purchased cuneiform texts called “the Chedorlaomer Texts” from the Spartoli tablets that specify the names of three kings mentioned in Genesis:1. The three kings are Chedorlaomer (Ku-dur-lah-mal) from Elam as the super-power, Arioch (Eri-ea-ku) from Mesopotamia is penned at Mari and Nuzi 18th-15th centuries, Amraphel (Amarapil) from Sumer, and Tidal (Tu-ud-hul-a.) of Hittite origin. Their names corresponds with the second millennium BCE and authentic to the geographical locations of the kings (Kitchen, 2003:319-321). The expedition is described as a police force campaign instead of a battle, and Abram’s intervention is presented as an nocturnal attack (Gen. 14:15–17) from the MT.

Gen. 10:10 indicates that Shinar was located south of Mesopotamia and composed of three major city states: Babylon (Babel), Uruk (Erech) and Aggad (Akkad). Akkad gave its name to the Semitic language of Mesopotamian writing for two thousand years (Akkadian). Hebrew records of canonical names coincides with the Akkadian texts. This suggests that the author was likely Babylonian. Kedor-Lagomer corresponds to Kudur-Lagarma which is an Akkadian transcription of Kutir-Lagamal “bearer (servant) of Lagamal”.

The following evidence of archaeological sites proposes the historical existence of patriarchs:

1. The archaeological site of the city-states of the Transjordanian were ransacked in the Middle Bronze Age or around 2084 BCE.

2. Innovations at Ebla places Abram in the Middle Bronze I or an Early Bronze period (Hamilton, 1990:79)
3. Egyptian execration texts from the same era mentions “Urusalim” as a city-state ruled by a king and priestly figure.

3.3.1.5 The dating of the passage

A precise dating of the passage is not easily deduced. Scholars are still debating the exact chronology and dating of the passage. Genesis 14 is placed in the primordial Patriarchal epoch. According to the chronology drawn from the Masoretic text, Abram's departure from Ur of the Chaldeans collapsed in 1912 BCE due to the Amorite and Elamite invasions, the arrival in Canaan are dated in 1963 BCE when Abraham was 75 years old (Gen. 12:4-5). The revolt of Transjordan kings against Chedorlaomer happened in the 13th year of his reign (Genesis 14:4).

The Hebrew canon lacks a chronological account of patriarchal period, even so, themes, religious, and cultural practices are considered. Chapter 14 is distinctive in comparison to Genesis 12–22 based on the absence of God's voice speaking to any of the characters. The uniqueness of chapter 14 is marked by the initial involvement of Abram in a military combat and the introduction of an enigmatic royal priest (Hamilton, 2012:403).

3.3.1.6 Personal view on the dating of the passage

The second millennium date is accepted on the basis of archaeological evidence. The life setting of the patriarchal narratives bears the following marks of antiquity. The geography of Canaan and Abram's travels, the dating fits the religious life known from the second millennium in contrast with the institutionalised life of the first-millennium Israel. This political setting corroborate Egyptian, Old Babylonian historicity, and sources of the First Dynasty (Mathews, 2005:57-58).

3.3.2 Literary context

Within the literary context, there is a definite connection between the separation of Lot and Abram, and the judgment of the nations at Sodom (Gen. 19:1–29). The links between Genesis 13 and the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19) can be seen in Genesis 13:10: “*before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,*” and Genesis 13:12–13: “*And Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents in Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.*” The allusion to Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 and 19 is contrasted with Abram who has undergone a name change to Abraham after his circumcision and God's unilateral covenant (Gen. 17:11). The literary devices in the passage suggest a coherent and an integrated passage (Currid, 2003:285) which fits the context of Genesis 13 and 15.

3.3.2.1 Genre

The genre of the book is a narrative with imbedded sections of poetry (Waltke & Fredericks, 2001:31). Poetry in narratives is pivotal in conveying the message and meaning of the passage theologically (Westermann, 2004:205).

Chapter 14 is descriptive, the syntax employs *waw* consecutive verbal construction as a vital distinctive feature of storytelling in the OT. The Book of Genesis does not contain fluctuating genres unrelated to the Torah (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:54). OT narratives are intended to oppose prehistoric, contemporary agnostic perspectives that challenge theological convictions (Waltke, 2007:177). References to God in Genesis contrasts mythological deities like the Canaanite Baal.

3.3.2.2 The literary function

Although Genesis 14 falls within the Abrahamic narrative, the book functions within the larger context of the OT. Genesis links the primeval history (Genesis 1–11) and the remainder of the Pentateuch (Mathews, 2005:3). When examining chapters 12–15, one observes a connection between these stories.

3.3.2.2.1. Thematic link with Genesis 12

Genesis 12:1–9 displays the three-fold elements of God's promises of seed, blessing, and land. The writer purposes that readers should receive the text in relation to its unity and continuity with the rest of the Pentateuch. Lot is primarily mentioned in chapter 12 as the one accompanying Abram. They departed to the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1–9). Genesis 14 reflects back to chapter 12 with the partial fulfilment of the theme of blessing (Gen. 14:19–20) and making Abram's name great (Gen. 12:2).

3.3.2.2.2 Thematic link between Genesis 13 and 14

Genesis 13 reflects to Genesis 12 through Abram and Lot's great possessions (Gen. 12:5; 13:6). Genesis 13 points to chapter 14 based on the capturing of Lot's family and goods. Possessions are repeated several times (Gen. 13:6; 14:11–12; 16, 21). Their רכוש in this context are connected to the contention that caused the rift between Abram and Lot herdsmen. Lot's capturing as a prisoner of war (Gen. 14:12) and his possessions acted as Abram's justification for military participation (Gen. 14:14–17). Their substance created a tension for separation thus placing the promise of the land as a threat thus creating an a-b-a structure as illustrated below:

(a) וְלֹא־נָשָׂא אֶתֶם הָאָרֶץ לְשִׁבְתִּי יַחְדָּו

a And the **land** was not able to bear them that they might dwell together

(b) כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב

b for their **substance** was great

(a) וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְשָׁבֵת יַחְדָּו

a so that they could not dwell together- in the **land** (as personal emphasis)

Genesis 13:15-17 places repeated allusions to land and descendants as a threat based on Abram's childlessness and the separation between Lot and Abram thus creating another a-b-b-a structure.

(a) ^{15a} כִּי אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה רֹאֶה לְךָ אֶתְנַנֶּה

^{15a} for all the **land** which you see I give to you **(a)**

(b) ^{15b} וְלִזְרַעְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם:

^{15b} and your **descendants** forever. **(b)**.

(b) ¹⁶ וְשָׂמַתִּי אֶת־זְרַעְךָ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר | אִם־יִוְכַל אִישׁ לִמְנוֹת אֶת־עַפְרַר הָאָרֶץ גַּם־זְרַעְךָ יִמְנָה:

¹⁶ And I will make your **descendants** as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your **descendants** also could be numbered. **(b)**

(a) ¹⁷ קוּם הִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּאָרֶץ לְאָרְכָּהּ וּלְרֵחְבָּהּ כִּי לְךָ אֶתְנַנֶּה:

¹⁷ Arise, walk in the **land** through its length and its width, for I give it to you." (NKJV) **(a)**.

The separation of Lot and Abram eliminated the threat of land and seed, and Lot becoming an heir to Abram's inheritance and blessing (Kamyau, 2016:60-61). The literary connection of chapters 13 and 14 reflects on the uniqueness of Abram's call (Gen. 12:1–9). The fulfilment of land, seed, and blessings rests on the obedience and development of Abram's faith in God.

3.3.2.2.3 Linguistic link between chapters 14 and 15

Kamyau (2016:61-63) indicates that the distinction of the king of Sodom and the contrast between him and Melchizedek implies the wickedness of Sodom that becomes pivotal in chapters 18–19. Chapter 14 gives more details on Abram's relationship with Lot (Gen. 14:12). The inferences of their relationship allow the emergence of the theme of promised blessings, curses, and the need

of an heir (Gen. 12:2–3;15:1). The MT treats Genesis 14–17 as a unit; it splits chapter 14 and 15 with a paragraph pause rather than a unit break (Goldingay, 2020:218).

3.3.2.3 Placement

The passage is placed within in the context of ANE historically and sequentially subsequent the scattering of the nations (Gen. 11:1–9). Ur of the Chaldeans is located south of Babylon in the midst of God’s judgment. Babylon and Chaldea are used interchangeable in Scripture (cf. NIV, KJV). Genesis 14:18–24 is rooted within the Abrahamic cycle (Gen. 12:1–25:11) which initiates with the call of Abram (Gen. 12:1–3). The election of Abram marks the development of God’s redemptive plan for humanity.

3.3.2.3.1 Section (Gen. 14)

Genesis 14 appears to be a unique chapter in the book of Genesis. The uniqueness is characterised by the initial allusion of priesthood, military conquest, and the giving of a tenth. The structure of the whole chapter can be divided in three separate sections which seems to be unrelated at first glance.

Section I The battle report (Gen. 14:1–16)

Section II The encounter between the king of Sodom and Abram (Gen. 17, 21–24)

Section III The meeting between Melchizedek and Abram (Gen. 18–20)

Section 1 narrates the military combat of the five Mesopotamian kings (Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (Zoar) against the four Eastern kings: Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations (Hebrew מַלְכֵי הָעַמִּים). The mention of מַלְכֵי הָעַמִּים suggests a conglomeration of Gentile nations instead of a particular region. Nine kings were involved in this war.

Section II narrates the interaction between Abram and the king of Sodom. The section alternates the inaugural dialogue between the kings’ salutations to Abram (Gen. 14:17) and Abram’s responses (Gen. 14:21–24). Still, the storyteller initiates the accolades with the king of Sodom and suspends it abruptly, then switches the attention and engages in a speech with a new character, the king of Salem (Melchizedek). Consequently, the correlation of Abram with the king of Sodom forms an external structure, and his association with Melchizedek builds the central body.

3.3.2.3.2 Book

The book of Genesis mainly introduces key canonical themes as forthcoming predictions. According to Hays *et al.* (2007:181), themes identified are grouped as follows: creation including blessings (Gen.1–2), sin (Gen. 3:1–7), exile with subsequent separation (Gen. 3:23–24), and culminating with restoration, blessing, and redemption (Gen.4–11). The pattern forms a theoretic background for vital thought-structures recurrent throughout the entire canon (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:206). The main idea is centred on God's love, grace, creation, and ownership. God and his words are authoritative (Hays *et al.*, 2007:181).

Genesis 12 introduces Abram prior his name change to Abraham (Gen.17:5). God made promises to Abram/Abraham (Gen. 12–22). The call of Abram and God's promises are directly linked to the repetition of human sin, rebellion, and failure to submit to God's commands and righteousness (Gen. 10-11). The spreading of the nations resulted from the sin of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10).

God elected Abram out of his grace and love primarily as a person, his progeny, and later the nation of Israel to spearhead the divine redemptive plan of salvation. The aim of God is focused on blessing and reaching out to all the families of the earth (Hays *et al.*, 2007:182).

3.4.2.3.3 Style and text form

Genesis contains cosmogony texts which deals with the onset of main features of the universe and unveils how theocratic institutions initiated by Moses were feasible and mandatory (Lockyer, 2017).

1. Narrative Style

The book of Genesis describes historical narratives which recounts the first segment of the creation of the cosmos and humanity (Gen. 1–11). The second unit describes patriarchal narratives commencing with Abram/Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel leading to the formation of the nation of Israel, and concluding with Joseph (Gen. 12–50). The patriarchs focuses on partial fulfilment of the promises God gave to Abram (Gen. 12:1–3).

2. *Toledoth* Structure

Genesis is constructed around genealogies to provide legacy, continuity, ancestry, topographical relationships, and form a framework for canonical stories. However, not all descents are written in Scripture. God's purpose concerning ancestry was to unify Israel as the custodian of his revelation until the Messiah comes (Douglas & Tenny, 1989:216).

3. Poetry and Symbolism

Poetic sections appear throughout the book of Genesis, especially in the creation account (Genesis 1:1-2:3) and within prophecies, using figures of speech and parallelism to convey profound meaning.

4. Phenomenon viewpoints

The writing narrates abruptly without any preparation of the readers rather than following logical methods of storytelling.

5. Theology

The style and narrative choices contribute to the book's theological purpose, exploring themes of God, humanity, creation, and the relationship between them.

6. Foundational Treatise:

In addition to its storytelling, Genesis functions as a theological treatise, establishing fundamental teachings and themes that run throughout the entire two testaments.

3.3.2.3.4 Purpose

The purpose of the book is educational and presents historical data relevant to all readers. The writer of Genesis unveils the historicity and elementary bases concerning the fellowship between God and mankind (Davis, 1975:29). God is committed to fulfilling all the promises pronounced to Abram (Hamilton, 1990:61).

3.3.2.4 Authorship

Longman III and Dillard (2006:40-42) indicate that the authorship of Genesis is undeniably interconnected with the arrangement and the origin of the Pentateuch. The name "Pentateuch" is derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew canon known as the Septuagint. Penta means five in Greek. Both the Pentateuch and the Torah refer to the first five books of OT and they were called "the Book of Moses" in the postexilic period (2 Chron. 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1). Longman III and Dillard (2006:41) accentuate that scholarly work has not yet distinguished whether Moses wrote only the late practices of "the Mosaic law" (Josh. 1:7-8) and the "Book of Moses".

The traditional view credits Moses as the authentic writer of the original form of the Pentateuch for the nation of Israel in the wilderness (cf. Exod. 24:12; 34:27-28). Moses's authorship is

ascribed to historical events (Exod. 17:14; Num. 33:2), laws and law codes sections (Exod. 24:4; 34:27f.), and one poem (Deut. 31:22). Moses' authorship is disputed and complex.

Lasor *et al.* (1996:18) state that the OT style and antique scholarly texts, especially in ANE, depicts the "author" as the preserver of historic events obliged by customary data and practices.

3.3.2.4 1 Documental hypotheses

Karl H. Graf in the 1860's and Julius Wellhausen in the 1870's propagated the documental hypothesis. They concurred that the historical and prophetic books of the OT, the priestly legislation in the Torah was unfamiliar in pre-exilic era. The documental hypothesis is the work of a late editor. Higher criticism disputes Moses's authorship based on the documental hypothesis of Karl H. Graf and Julius Wellhausen, who claims that Genesis was written from different sources known as the JEDP documents:

1. J source – Jahwist, from the common English word Jehovah, refers to God's covenant name. This theory is a Judaeon interpretation of the holy narrative (Gen. 49:8–12), possibly inscribed as early as 950 BCE in southern Israel. The material is recorded in Genesis 2–11 focusing on mankind and the earth. The scribe used the material to set the stage for the subsequent narrative of Israel, commencing with Abram in Genesis 12 (Kuntz, 1974:214). J source presents the theology of Israel's history covering the time before and after the paterfamilias events until the brink of stepping into the Promised Land was revised at a later stage (Hamilton, 1990:32).
2. E source – Elohistic theory refers to God as *אֱלֹהִים*. It was penned in 850 BCE after the downfall of the northern kingdom of Israel. It covers the same period of Israel's history as J, but begins with the patriarchs instead of the creation account (Hamilton, 1990:32). The theology of the Elohist concentrates on prophetic leadership, the fear of God, covenant, and Israel's history. Prophetic leadership is accentuated by constructing the narrative on Abraham after name change, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. These prophetic leaders received revelations from God in visions and dreams.
3. D source – Deuteronomist (621 BCE). 2 Kings 22:8 reveals the detection of "The Book of the Law," found by Hilkiyah the high priest in the house of the Lord during Josiah's reform (Josh. 22–23). The book is allegedly accredited to Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah's time to support his reform (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:44).
4. P source – Priestly code (525–400 BCE). This document is alleged to be a priestly revision of the OT, especially passages that address priestly rituals, cultic interests and regulations.

It is generally dated in the 5th century BCE. The priestly code is regarded as the backbone of the law upon which Ezra and Nehemiah constructed their reformation (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:45).

These JEDP theories have preserved materials much older than the time of their incorporation into a written work. The book of Genesis contains evidence of very ancient oral and written traditions.

3.3.3 The unique importance of the book

Scripture would be inconceivable without Genesis. The book itself attests to God's sovereignty, his wisdom, order, and the heartfelt need for fellowship with humanity. The divine calling marks salvation history and the seven promises that God made to Abram (Gen. 12:1–3) reflects the central message of the Bible (Waltke, 2007:148). Genesis focuses on the identification of God, his chosen people, and the Promised Land. Genesis sets the stage for the entire canon. The following doctrines are all spelled out in Genesis: sin, fall, and redemption. These themes, as well as the discussion of both the historical and literary context of Genesis 14, however, does not point to descriptive pre-Mosaic tithing practices.

3.4 Structure

The book of Genesis contains various structural devices. The passage under investigation falls in the bolded sections.

1. Content and style

Genesis can be divided into three subsections (Longman III *et al.*, 2013:650).

I The primeval history (Gen. 1:1–11:26)

Genesis 1–11 is set in Babylonia and provides a long historical account of creation, i.e., the origins of time, space, and early human experiences like marriage, family, sin, death, redemption, judgment, and nations until the tower of Babel (Hamilton, 2012:28-29).

II The patriarchal narrative (Gen. 11:27–36:43)

Patriarchal history takes place in Palestine. It initiates with the call of Abram (Gen. 12:1-3), God's promises to Abram of seed, blessings, and land. These promises look forward into the future on how God aims at resolving the human sin nature. The stories of the patriarchs are linked to a specific time period and physical location.

It also provides an account of how Israel was established, detailing ancestral lineage, the origins of institutions, customs, languages, various cultures, and fundamental human experiences.

III The Joseph story (Gen. 37–50)

Genesis 37–50 is set in Egypt. God reveals the life and story of Joseph from Palestine to Egypt. God continues to fulfil the covenant promises made to the patriarchs (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:61-62).

2. The *Toledoth* formulae

The Hebrew phrase *תולדות* refers to generations, family history, descendants, genealogies, and account. The book of Genesis begins with a prologue (Gen. 1:1–2:3), followed by 11 toledoth formulae. The recurring toledoth formula connects the history of Israel with the creation of the earth (Mathews, 2005:32).

The Primeval History: alternating structure

A Creation story: first beginning; divine blessing (Gen. 1:1–2:3)

B Sin of Adam: nakedness; seeing/covering nakedness; curse (Gen. 2:4–3:24)

C No descendants of murdered younger, righteous son Abel (Gen. 4:1–16)

D Descendants of sinful son Cain (Gen. 4:17–26)

E Descendants of chosen son Seth: ten generations from Adam to Noah (Gen. 5:1–32)

F Downfall: unlawful union (Gen. 6:1–4)

G Brief introduction to Noah (Gen. 6:5–8)

A' Flood story: reversal of creation; new beginning; divine blessing (Gen. 6:9–9:19)

B' Sin of Noah: nakedness, seeing/covering nakedness; curse (Gen.9 :20–29)

C' Descendants of younger, righteous son Japheth (Gen.10:1–5)

D' Descendants of sinful son Ham (Gen.10:6–20)

E' Descendants of chosen son Shem: 10 generations from Noah to Terah (Gen.10 :21–32)

F' Downfall: rebellious union (Tower of Babel) (Gen.11:1–9)

G' Brief introduction of Abraham, through whom God will bless humanity (Gen.11:27–32)

The Abraham Cycle: concentric pattern

A Genealogy of Terah (Gen.11:27–32)

B Promise of a son and start of Abraham's spiritual odyssey (Gen. 12:1–9)

C Abraham lies about Sarah; the LORD protects her in foreign palace (Gen. 12:10–20)

D Lot settles in Sodom (Gen. 13:1–18)

E Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot militarily (Gen.14: 1–24)

F Covenant with Abraham; annunciation of Ishmael (Gen.15:1–16:16)

F' Covenant with Abraham; annunciation of Isaac (Gen.17:1–18:15)

E' Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Lot in prayer (Gen.18:16–33)

D' Lot flees doomed Sodom and settles in Moab (Gen.19:1–38)

C' Abraham lies about Sarah; God protects her in foreign palace (Gen. 20:1–18)

B' Birth of son and climax of Abraham's spiritual odyssey (Gen. 21:1–22:19)

A' Genealogy of Nahor (Gen. 22:20–24)

The Jacob Cycle: concentric pattern

A Oracle sought; struggle in childbirth; Jacob born (Gen. 25:19–34)

B Interlude: Rebekah in foreign palace; pact with foreigners (Gen. 26:1–35)

C Jacob fears Esau and flees (Gen. 27:1–28:9)

D Messengers (Gen. 28:10–22)

E Arrival in Haran (Gen. 29:1–30)

F Jacob's wives are fertile (Gen. 29:31–30:24)

F' Jacob's flocks are fertile (Gen. 30:25–43)

E' Flight from Haran (Gen. 31:1–55)

D' Messengers (Gen. 32:1–32)

C' Jacob returns and fears Esau (Gen. 33:1–20)

B' Interlude: Dinah in foreign palace; pact with foreigners (Gen. 34:1–31)

A' Oracle fulfilled; struggle in childbirth; Jacob becomes Israel (Gen. 35:1–22)

The Joseph Cycle: concentric pattern

A Introduction: beginning of Joseph story (Gen. 37:2–11)

B Jacob mourns “death” of Joseph (Gen. 37:12–36)

C Interlude: Judah signified as leader (Gen. 38:1–30)

D Joseph's enslavement in Egypt (Gen. 39:1–23)

E Joseph saviour of Egypt through disrepute at Pharaoh's court (Gen. 40:1–41:57)

F Journeys of brothers to Egypt (Gen. 42:1–43:34)

G Brothers pass Joseph's test of love for brother (Gen. 44:1–34)

G' Joseph gives up his power over brothers (Gen. 45:1–28)

F' Migration of family to Egypt (Gen. 46:1–27)

E' Joseph saviour of family through favour at Pharaoh's court (Gen. 46:28–47:12)

D' Joseph's enslavement of Egyptians (Gen. 47:13–31)

C' Interlude: Judah blessed as ruler (Gen. 48:1–49:28)

B' Joseph mourns death of Jacob (Gen. 49:29–50:14)

A' Conclusion: end of Joseph story (Gen. 50:15–26)

3.4.1 Patterns

3.4.1.1 Text plan

Scene 1: Abram encounters the king of Salem (Gen. 14:18)

Scene 2: Melchizedek's exchange of blessings and Abram's tithe (Gen. 14:19–20)

Scene 3: The king of Sodom's demands and Abram's oath (14:21–24)

3.4.1.2 Plot structure

1. Setting of the stage (Gen. 14:1–3)

Chapter 14 reflects back to the fall of man in Genesis 3:15. The human corruption and sin nature progressed. The Abrahamic narrative succeeded the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:8–17). The prelude of Genesis 14 portrays Abram in a very different way from the other patriarchal stories. The mentioning of the nine kings and their conflicts forces Abram to be involved in the combat outside political influences. The narrative describes a transnational battle in the Early and Middle Bronze periods. At that time, kings controlled multiple city-states based on their suzerain and vassalage contracts in the context of ANE. When the superpower goes to war, the allies join in the combat.

2. Cause of war (Gen. 14:4)

The five Mesopotamian kings served as faithful serfs of Chedorlaomer for 12 years as a common practice in ANE. In the 13th year, they revolted against the terms and conditions of the treaty.

3. The route and invasions of the eastern kings (Gen. 14:5–7)

In the 14th year, Chedorlaomer and his league advanced their campaign against the Transjordan and South Canaan nations, ransacked the eastern side of the Jordan valley into the wilderness, and then turned and came up the valley to the Jordan plain cities.

4. The battle account (Gen. 14:8–11)

The five kings of the Jordan plain joined forces and fought against Chedorlaomer and his coalition in the King's Valley, which was full of asphalt wells. Some of the Mesopotamian kings fell into the bitumen trenches, and the survivors fled to the highlands. The eastern kings looted the Jordan plain and plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and departed.

5. Crisis (Gen. 14:12)

Lot was captured as a prisoner of war with all of his possessions when Sodom was looted by Chedorlaomer and his allies.

6. Rescue operation (Gen. 14:13–16)

A runaway informed Abram about the capturing of Lot. Abram and his allies enters the stage. Abram is described as the “Hebrew” initially, denoting that he is a non-citizen in a foreign land. Scholars are divided on the meaning of עֵבֶרִי. The phrase עֵבֶרִי is used to distinguish Israel from foreigners or one from beyond, from the other side, or from beyond the Euphrates River (Josh. 24:2–3). Abram mustered 318 trained men from his household, including his three Amorite covenant brothers. The Hebrew canon sometimes use “Amorite” as an alternative description for Canaanite. The name is derived from *Amurru*, the Akkadian expression for the land in the west (relative to Mesopotamia). Abram and his confederation launched a nocturnal attack. They routed Chedorlaomer and his federation, recovered all the seized possessions, including Lot, and members of his household.

7. The prologue of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17–18)

Abram encounters the king of Sodom and the king of Salem simultaneously. Melchizedek was not part of the combat but appears on the scene to welcome Abram enigmatically. The meeting of Abram with the king of Sodom (Gen. 14:17) is disrupted by the king of Salem (Gen. 14:18). Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן salutes Abram and offers him a royal feast. This scene sets the stage for the theme of priesthood in Scripture.

8. Doxology and Abram’s tithe (Gen. 14:19–20)

Melchizedek blesses Abram and אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן, thus affirming the legitimacy and supremacy of his priesthood. Partial fulfilment of God’s original promise of making Abram’s name great and the theme of blessings which developed in chapters 12-13 are realised God Most High is revealed as the architect of heaven and earth and the source of Abram’s conquest. Abram offers Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of war.

9. Confrontation (Gen. 14:21)

The king of Sodom demands the people and offers Abram the right to keep the goods. It was a customary practice for the warriors to keep the spoils of war. But Abram rejected the spoils and placed his faith in God. Abram refused to depend on the king of Sodom’s offer for sustenance (Waltke & Fredericks, 2001:373).

10. Abram’s oath (Gen. 14:22)

The phrase “*I have raised my hands*” equates to “I have sworn” in Hebrew understanding. Abram prayed and vowed to the Lord prior to engaging in the battle.

10. Tension created (Gen. 14:23)

Abram articulated a defiant declaration of faith and a dispute against the arrogant demand of the king of Sodom. The well-being and prosperity of Abram is not dependent on military or diplomatic intrigues, but on God's gracious incentive (Brueggemann, 1982:138).

11. Tension solved immediately (Gen. 14:24)

Abram distributed the plunder to his alliances (cf. 1 Sam. 30:26–31).

3.4.1.3 Characterisation

Characterisation in Genesis 14:18–24 appears in contrasting encounters between Abram and Melchizedek and Abram (Gen. 14:18–24) with the King of Sodom (Gen. 14:21–24). Their role in this passage is judged on their relationship with each other. The principal style of their description is based on their distinct characters, dialogues and deeds.

1. The encounter between Melchizedek and Abram

Melchizedek is introduced differently from other biblical characters. Melchizedek reveals the nature and character of God as “creator of heaven and earth” in contrast to the Canaanite deities. Melchizedek and Abram worship the one-true God in contrast to the Canaanite pantheon. Melchizedek acted as God's representative for recognition, bestowal of blessings upon Abram, and the first priest in Scripture.

The sudden appearance of Melchizedek is pivotal, as it underscores a unique priesthood based on God's election. Melchizedek never participated in the military combat. He existed the scene similar to his entrance. The text does not inform the readers about his exit and whereabouts. It took 1000 years period prior his second appearance to establish God's irrevocable priesthood “after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4). The Davidic prophecy of the Melchizedekian priesthood was also enigmatic as it links with ancient Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18). The Levitical priesthood was still functioning under the Mosaic regulation and was terminated age and death. The nature of Melchizedek and his dual offices brought about various unscriptural speculations and theories.

Abram is characterised by generosity, gratitude, ethical integrity, worship, and his honest reliance on God. His charitable act of giving one tenth functions as an act of worshiping God with personal possessions, the establishment of the Mosaic tithing Law, acknowledging God's provision, deriving theological lessons, and tithing debates.

2. The encounter between the king of Sodom and Abram

The king of Sodom demanded his people back in contrast to the prevailing custom regarding prisoners of war. Abram separated himself from ungodly worldly riches by rejecting the King of Sodom's offer as a common war practice (Belcher, 2012:119). Abram focused on God's providence in contrast to king of Sodom.

3.4.2 Stylistic and rhetorical literary devices

3.4.2.1 Repetition and paronomasia

The verb בָּרוּךְ is repeated three times in verses 19–20. This repetition serves as an additional example of paronomastic reference to Abram's name in verses 17–18 (Wenham, 1987:368). It also resonates the fulfilment of the blessings that God promised Abram (Gen. 12:1–3). The poetic lines directed by בָּרוּךְ communicate the main idea of the passage.

3.4.2.2 Contrast

Currid (2003:285) indicates that Melchizedek is presented as a contrast to the King of Sodom. Verse 18 emphasises the difference in the sentence order. The usual Hebrew word order of a sentence is verb, followed by subject then object. But verse 18 opens by stating Melchizedek as the subject, followed by the verb "brought out" and ending by listing the object. The disarrangement of the normal word order accentuates Melchizedek as the subject and differentiates him from the wicked king of Sodom.

Wenham (1987:367-368) postulates that the resentful approach of the king of Sodom toward Abram (Gen. 14:21) contrasts Melchizedek's royal reception of Abram from defeating Chedorlaomer and his allies. According to (Hamilton, 1990:399), Melchizedek and Salem were not affected by the combat as were the other nine kings. Although Melchizedek was not liable to Abram, he came to offer Abram a royal reception, refresh exhausted warriors and bless him (Gen. 14:18–20). Additionally, the contrast is observed when Abram exercised his kindness by returning all the prisoners of war and the goods to the king of Sodom except what was consumed by his allies (Gen. 14:22–24).

Melchizedek and Abram submit to God's sovereignty and received genuine strength and triumph over enemies. The characteristic of Melchizedek as a king of righteousness and a king of peace is in contrast the king of Sodom. Abram's oath establishes his own personal devotion of submitting to God (Emadi, 2019:66-67).

3.4.2.3 Hyperbole

Abram's reference to a "thread", "sandal", and a "thong" (Gen. 14:23) is a hyperbolic idiom representing the minute element belonging to the king of Sodom (Judg. 9:13; Isa. 5:7; Amos 2:6; 8:6). By his oath Abram refuses to be indebted in any way to the foreign king for his success and prosperity.

3.4.2.4 Merism and synecdoche

Bread undoubtedly refers to "food" (Waltke & Fredericks, 2001:387). The grouping of bread and wine is a merism for a complete ceremonial dinner, a noble feast commemorating the heroic subjugation (2 Sam. 17:27–29; Prov. 9:5).

Abram's rejection of the spoils of war is a strong announcement and commitment that he does not desire any association with the king of Sodom. As a result, Abram pledges his faithfulness to אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָם (Currid, 2003:288).

3.4.2.5 Metonymy

Currid (2003:287) claims that the action of "raising one's hand" is a metonymy confirming biblical vows (Exod. 6:8; Ps. 106:26). The verb "I raise" is in the perfect tense, which denoted an event happening simultaneously with the presented statement. To this end, Abram retorts the scornful offer of the king of Sodom with an oath to God.

The title "creator of heaven and earth" is also a metonymy for God as the source of everything that exists. A similar expression occurs in Pss. 24:1; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; and 146:6, which speak not just of God as the originator of creation but also of God being intimately involved in this present reality.

3.4.2.6 Inclusio

The reference to the king of Sodom in (Gen. 14:21–24) creates a literary inclusio with the first allusion to the king of Sodom named Bera (Gen. 14:2) to establish the unity of chapter 14 (Waltke & Fredericks, 2001:225-226). Melchizedek's blessing is enclosed between Melchizedek's giving of bread and wine and Abram's tithe giving.

A Melchizedek gives Abram bread and wine (18–19a)

X Melchizedek blesses Abram (19b–20a)

A' Abram gives Melchizedek a tithe (20b)

3.4.2.7 Word play

Mathews (2005:157) observes a Hebrew word play between הַעֲשִׂרְתִּי from the root verb עָשַׂר meaning “to make rich” (Gen. 14:23) and מַעֲשֵׂר from the root עָשַׂר (Gen. 14:20). Abram identified אֱלֹהֵי אֲלֵינוּ as the source of his wealth. Prosperity is often credited to God in the OT (Deut. 8:18; 1 Sam. 2:7; Prov. 10:22; Eccl. 5:19), but placing one’s confidence in riches leads to futility (Deut. 8:17; Ps. 49:6–20; 52:7; Prov. 11:4; Eccl. 5:10,13).

3.4.2.8 Janus

The passage of Genesis 14:18–20 fits the poetic style of reflecting backwards and forward to connect the elements of preceding and succeeding chapters. Abram’s blessing reflects God’s blessing on Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28) and God’s promised blessings on Abram (Gen. 12:2–3). God’s blessings signify generational generosity and success.

3.5 Leitwörter

The identification and discussion of important keywords can help the researcher to understand the passage better.

3.5.1 בָּרַךְ

בָּרַךְ is derived from the root word בָּרַךְ which means “to bless”, “to kneel” (Brown *et al.*, 1977:138). בָּרַךְ appears three times in the blessing ceremony. The three-fold repetition of the phrase “blessed” in the ME forms an inclusio of the blessing ceremony, underscores the significance, character traits of God Most High, and the king-priest offices of Melchizedek (Kaiser Jr, 2003:75).

The grace of God concerning salvation and pronounced blessings on Abram and his family is extended to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:2–3). God’s blessings signifies increased generosity, victorious outcomes, deliverance, preservation, and faithfulness to Abram’s progeny (Waltke, 2007:316). The keyword connected to “blessing” is מָגַן derived from the root verb מָגַן meaning “to cover”, “to protect”, “deliver up” or “to give up”, thus continuing the events of Genesis 14 to chapter 15 to future generations.

3.5.2 אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Melchizedek initially describes God as אֱלֹהֵינוּ four times in the Hebrew canon (Gen. 14:18–20). The epithet can be used wholly or disconnected to indicate isolated deities. אֱלֹהֵינוּ will be examined initially, followed by אֱלֹהֵינוּ, and concluding with אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

Van der Toorn *et al.* (1999:274) assert that אֱלֹהִים appears 230 times in the Hebrew Scriptures as an archaic truncated generic name for אֱלֹהִים employed by the *paterfamilias* to refer to God (Gen. 33:20; 46:1–6). According to Holladay (1971:15), אֱלֹהִים appears as a masculine noun in the Hebrew canon and feminine gender in Semitic languages. Biblical authors occasionally use אֱלֹהִים as a common designation of a divine deity instead of Israel's one true God (Deut. 33:26; 2 Sam. 22:32; Ps. 22:1).

On the other hand, the Canaanites regard אֱלֹהִים to be a deity with a grandson called עֲלִיָּוִן, denoting dual isolated deities. According to ancient Israel, the application of אֱלֹהִים in Scripture was in comparison with the Ugaritic and Canaanite gods. The Canaanite אֱלֹהִים was regarded as the “creator of the earth” and the Ugaritic אֱלֹהִים was commonly known as the “creator of created things” (Van der Toorn *et al.*, 1999:208). The phrase אֱלֹהִים עֲלִיָּוִן articulates the exalted status and the supremacy of a deity over others (Deut. 26:19; 28:1; 2 Kgs. 15:35; 18:17). Davis (1975:181) points out that the title אֱלֹהִים עֲלִיָּוִן distinguishes God from the pagan deities and underlines God's incomparable might and sovereignty.

The Phoenician writings of Karatepe of the 9th and 8th century BCE in Cilicia recognise אֱלֹהִים as the god of creation. The origin and descent of gods is allied with אֱלֹהִים, excluding a theory of the foundation of the universe (Hamilton, 1990:413).

Although אֱלֹהִים may refer either to God (Gen. 1:1) or to a Canaanite deity, including Ba'al (Walton, 2001:430), the context in Genesis 14 evidently suggests that God is the proposed referent (Van der Toorn *et al.*, 1999:296).

According to , עֲלִיָּוִן can also appear discretely without אֱלֹהִים (Isa. 14:14) or be fused with additional godly designations, e.g., El Roi (Gen. 16:13), El Shaddai (Gen. 17:1), El Olam (Gen. 21:23), etc. עֲלִיָּוִן may also take ordinary relevance indicating the location of things (Gen. 40:17; Ezek. 42:5). states:

“God reveals himself through human languages. For much of the OT period, God reveals himself through the Canaanite dialect that eventually became Biblical Hebrew. To employ a language means to employ also its metaphors, imageries, and terminology”.

On the other hand, Sarna (1989:657) postulates that it is evident that the expression of אֱלֹהִים עֲלִיָּוִן fits the prevalent liturgical practice of the ANE, which Israel later integrated and adapted to monotheism. According to Hamilton (1990:410), Abram and Melchizedek acknowledged God as אֱלֹהִים עֲלִיָּוִן (Gen. 14:18–22).

3.5.3 קִנְיָה שְׂמִיָּם וְאַרְצָה

Genesis 14:19b and 22b renders the phrase קִנְיָה as “possessor” (NKJV, NASB, ESV), “creator” (NJB, NLT, NIV), and “maker” (GWT, JPS, NRSV) of אֲרָצָה וְשָׂמַיָּם. The doxology underscores God as both the architect of the universe and saviour (Mathews, 2005:150). The Hebrew phrase קִנְיָה means to “possess”, “to buy”, and “to bring forth”. God is referred in Genesis 14:19;22 as the subject of creation (Holladay, 1971:320).

Remarkably, Genesis 14 elevates possessions to something pivotal, hence the confiscation of Lot’s possessions, five cities of the Jordan Plain, Abram’s tenth giving, and the relinquishing of the Sodomites goods. Therefore, earthly and heavenly possessions belong to God. Specific people are chosen by God to steward possessions at their disposal. Van der Toorn *et al.* (1999:209-210) argue that the formula was prevalent in liturgical practices of the ANE ascribed to their deities, which Israel embraced and revised. The phraseology אֲרָצָה וְשָׂמַיָּם קִנְיָה is incomparable, because “heaven” is never mentioned in any known extra-biblical instances (Della Vida, 1944:4).

3.6 The identity of Melchizedek

The introduction of Melchizedek subsequent Abram’s military victory is astonishing in Scripture. The character appears from silence without genealogical record as a king of Salem and priest of God Most High (Gen. 14:18). The fusion of priesthood and kingship incorporates sacred and diplomatic authority was forbidden in religious circles (1 Sam. 8:15–17; Chron. 26:16–21). At that age, Salem was a Canaanite city and known for its pagan religion. However, Melchizedek emanates from that region. This suggests that there were other people who served and worshiped God prior Abram’s calling. Melchizedek’s priesthood is not based on lineage and preceded Levitical priesthood in the Mosaic Law. The Jews never comprehended the possibility of an eternal priesthood.

3.6.1 The meaning of the name מֶלְכִי־צְדִיק

Hamilton (1990:412) indicates that Melchizedek is composed of two words with a hyphen in the MT. מֶלְכִי translates as “my king” and צְדִיק means “righteous” meaning “my king is righteous”. The suffix in the name indicates a possessive correlation.

Mathews (2005:148) suggests that the comparison between Melchizedek and Salem connects Melchizedek and Abram to “righteousness” and “peace”. The Hebrew phrase שָׁלֵם derived from the root שָׁלַם means “to be complete” or “to be at peace”. These attributes are commonly linked in the Hebrew canon (Ps. 85:10; Isa. 32:17; 48:18; 60:17).

3.6.2 Extra-Biblical and Second Temple literature

3.6.2.1. 11QMelchizedek (11Q13)

According to Van der Toorn *et al.* (1999:933) and Mathews (2005:151), Melchizedek is presented as a divine resemblance of an angel who transcended and acquired a new eschatological function of offering. Melchizedek is depicted as the messenger of peace and salvation.

3.6.2.2 1QapGen (Genesis Apocryphon)

The presentation of Melchizedek in 1QapGen is equivalent to the ME in Genesis 14. Abram met Melchizedek at the Kings valley, and Melchizedek brought out food instead of bread, and drink instead of wine for Abram and for his men. Melchizedek blessed Abram, and Abram responded by giving Melchizedek a tenth of everything. The priesthood of Melchizedek in Salem is omitted. Additional distinctions between Genesis 14 and 1QapGen are that Salem is referred to as Jerusalem and the Kings valley is called “the Valley of *Beit haKerem*”, meaning the Valley of the House of the Vineyard located west of Jerusalem in the First and Second Temple periods (Martinez & Tigchelaar, 1999:47). The account does not reveal anything new about the identity of Melchizedek.

3.7 Genesis 14 in the OT Pseudepigrapha

3.7.1 Jubilees 13:22–27

The Book of Jubilees describes Genesis 14 in its own distinctive manner. The offering of Abram’s tenth to Melchizedek is referenced as a lasting ordinance of the law of tithing (*Jub. 13:25-27*). The passage contrasts the context of Abram’s tithe to Melchizedek in (Gen. 14:20) as it alludes to general priesthood instead of Melchizedek. The progressive description of tithing in Jubilees is similar to the Mosaic Deuteronomistic tithing practices.

3.7.2 Jewish interpretation

Philo (*Alleg. Inter. III 79–82*) states that the historical Melchizedek received his priesthood inherently because God made him king by his own will. מֶלֶךְ־יְהוָה means king, צַדִּיק means righteous and שָׁלוֹם denoting peaceful. Philo’s interpretation was allegorical in nature. Based on this allegorical interpretation, Melchizedek earned the title of becoming the כֹּהֵן לְאֵל עֶלְיוֹן. Philo continues to describe Melchizedek as the “Logos” because he was a peaceful king in contrast with a dictator.

Philo maintains that Melchizedek was an anointed high priest serving at the heavenly sanctuary before אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן and making atonement for the “Sons of Light” on the Day of Atonement (Philo, *Abr.* 235; *Tgs. Onq., Neof.*). The Jews did not acknowledge Melchizedek as a priest because of his absence of blood connection with the Aaronic priesthood. It was forbidden in Jewish tradition to link Melchizedek with the Christian belief that the Messiah’s priesthood is of the order of Melchizedek. Kings descended from the tribe of Judah and priest descended from the Levitical descend of Aaron (*Tgs. Onq. 89-91, Ps-J. 58*)

On the other hand, Mathews (2005:152) provides sources of this conjectures in the Palestinian targums of the Pentateuch (*Pirke R. El. 8; Gen. Rab. 44.7*). The Talmud (*b. Ned. 32b*) contends that Melchizedek transferred his priestly role to Abram.

The Targums view Melchizedek as Shem son of Noah, as priest of the Most High God who refreshed Abram with bread and wine (*Gen. Rab., Pirke R. El. 9A. 1; Talmud, Tr. Ned. 32, Tg. Neof. I, Tg. Ps.-J.*). Shem lived from before the flood to within 25 years of Abraham’s death. Conversely, Hughes (1977:244) argues that Melchizedek and Shem are two different personalities. These theories lacks canonical references but based on Jewish interpretation.

3.8 Verse by verse analysis

3.8.1 Verse 18

וּמֶלֶךְ-צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וַיֵּין וְהוּא כֹהֵן לְאֵל עֵלְיוֹן:

¹⁸ *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was priest of God Most High.*

Melchizedek appears briefly (Gen. 14:18) and disappears from the scene. Melchizedek’s abrupt emergence contributes to the development of Abram’s faith, advancement of God’s redemptive plan of salvation, and the promises of blessings, progeny, and land (Gen. 12:1-9). The Promised land was threatened by the military superpowers from the East. Subsequent Abram’s battle conquest, the land was saved.

3.8.1.1 מֶלֶךְ

Abram’s role in Genesis 14 is analogous to kingship. Abram is portrayed in relation to Melchizedek and Abram (Gen. 14:18–20) and their relationship with אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן. The relationship of Abram and the different kings (Gen. 14:1–17) positions Abram as a liberator (Gen. 12:10–20; 14:20) and as an intermediary (Gen. 18:16–33; 20:1–18; 21:22–34). God promised Abram and David that kings would come from their loins (Gen. 17:6; 2 Sam. 7:12–13). These promises draw a similarity

between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (1 Sam. 13:14; 2 Sam. 7:1–17; 1 Chron. 17:4–14; 28:5; Ps. 132:12). Kingship is also link to מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים as the ultimate king who provided victory to Abram.

3.8.1.2 שָׁלֵם

Genesis references שָׁלֵם initially in Genesis 14:18. According to Longman III *et al.* (2013:913) the precise location is unclear. Hamilton (1990:412) indicates that Salem is a truncated name for Jerusalem. Hypocorism or the practice of shortening a name by removing the first syllable was uncommon in ancient Israel. The most prevalent method of truncating a compound name was through the removal of the last syllable.

Despite this practice, Israel practiced apocoptation as the method of abbreviating compound names by cutting off the last syllable, sound, or the middle portion of a name. The primary element for Jerusalem is “yeru-” from Sumero Akkadian origin without the “J” sound. Therefore, Jerusalem is an ancient name prior the Davidic dynasty (Hamilton, 1990:412).

3.8.1.3 מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק

The text reveals Melchizedek as the priest of אֱלֹהֵי מֶלֶךְ which developed later priesthood clearly under the Levitical priesthood (Num. 6:22–27). The priestly function of Melchizedek predates the Aaronic priesthood. Likewise, the patriarchs adopted the priestly function of bestowing blessings upon the succeeding generations (Gen. 27:27–29; 28:1; 49:28).

3.8.1.4 לֶחֶם וְיַיִן and יַיִן

The Hebrew phrase לֶחֶם וְיַיִן means food, bread, grain and יַיִן means wine or intoxication. The welcoming of warriors and provision of refreshments relates to ANE traditions. Walton (2001:63) asserts that the offering of bread and wine demonstrates hospitality, prosperity, distinction, and bounty (Ruth 2:14; Ps. 104:15). The common meal to refresh warriors at that age was believed bread and water rather than bread and wine. Bread and wine is a merism for a covenantal meal, covenantal relationship (Gen. 26:26–27; 31:43–54; Exo. 24:1–11; Jos. 9:14) or a heroic feast (2 Sam. 17:27–29; Prov. 9:5). Bread was regarded as a basic food for sustenance. On the other hand, wine denoted joyous celebration, abundance, and marked divine moments. Occasionally, God used bread and wine for blessing covenant obedience (Deut. 7:13) or pronouncement of curses for rebellion (Hos. 2:9). Ultimately, bread and wine are tokens for Israel’s eschatological expectation (Isa. 25:6–8; 55:1–2; Jer. 31:12; Amos 9:13).

3.8.2 Verse 19

וַיְבָרֶכֶהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֶלְיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

¹⁹ *And he blessed him, and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth*

Melchizedek blesses Abram primarily in his supreme priestly office. The blessing reveals God's universal authority, his titles, and the ownership (Gen. 1; Ps. 24:1). The nature of God contradicts ANE deities. The doctrinal statement of "maker of heaven and earth" summons his creation to receive his redemptive plan of salvation and worship (Longman III *et al.*, 2013:374).

Blessings forms part of the themes in the book of Genesis. According to Mitchell (1987:167), Melchizedek's blessings serve as a ceremony of welcoming and commemorating Abram and his allies. The bestowal of blessings positions Melchizedek as superior to Abram. Melchizedek's identifies Abram as belonging to God Most High. In other words, Melchizedek and Abram serve and worship the same God (Gen. 14:18–19).

3.8.3 Verse 20

וַבְּרוּךְ אֵל עֶלְיוֹן אֲשֶׁר־מָגַן צָרֶיךָ בַּיָּדָךְ וַיִּתֶּן־לּוֹ מֵעֵשֶׂר מִכָּל:

²⁰ *and blessed be God the Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.' And he gave him a tenth of all.*

Melchizedek's second vertical blessing is directed at God. These blessings reflect back on God's divine promises to Abram (Gen. 12:1–3) and the onset of salvation history (Hays & Duvall, 2011:48). Blessings contain a didactic function of reminding mankind to offer praises, thanksgiving, worship, and reverence to God (Mathews, 2005:149). Blessings are connected to worship, praises, gratitude, and points to God as the source of victory in difficulties.

Abram responded to Melchizedek's blessings by giving a tithe of all as an act of worship and gratitude. Abram tithed spontaneously without obeying any existing law. His offering denote that Abram submitted to Melchizedek's spiritual authority.

3.8.4 Verse 21

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־סֹדֹם אֶל־אַבְרָם תֵּן־לִי הַנְּפֹשׁ וְהַרְגֵשׁ קַח־לָךְ:

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram: 'Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.'

The king of Sodom acknowledged Abram's right to the spoils of war, but demanded the Sodomites instead of negotiating with Abram. Abram rejected the offer based on the oath made to God. Lawfully, Abram has a right to keep the spoils and prisoners of war (Deut. 20:14; (Num. 31:25-27; 1 Sam. 30:21–25).

3.8.5 Verse 22

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־מֶלֶךְ סֹדִם הֲרִימֹתִי יָדִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

²² *And Abram said to the king of Sodom: 'I have lifted up my hand unto the LORD, God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth,*

Abram identifies God as "LORD", the Hebraic covenant name known as YHWH (Exod. 3). The "lifting up of the hand" serve as a didactic aspect of pursuing complete reliance on God. Abram submitted to God's will and guidance (Brueggemann, 1982:289).

3.8.6 Verse 23

אִם מִחוּט וְעַד שְׂרוּךְ נֶעַל וְאִם אֶקַּח מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֵעֵשְׂתִּי אֶת אַבְרָם:

²³ *that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say: I have made Abram rich;*

Abram's response is full of wisdom as he anticipated the outcome of war through a solemn oath beforehand. His response coThe theological significance of this text instructs readers to submit their plans completely to God alone for divine intervention.

Abram's refusal of the spoils and prisoners of war displays significant spiritual discernment, integrity, and divine providence against worldly riches. Abram refused to share the glory of God with pagans and honoured God. This understanding suggests that Abram attained spiritual maturity contrary his previous encounter with Pharaoh (Gen. 12:14–20). The patriarch sets a precedence for seeking pure ethical claim on personal assets (Sarna, 1989:239). Consecration is a timeless pivotal aspect for serving God (Hays & Duvall, 2011:49).

3.8.7 Verse 24

בִּלְעֲדֵי רֶק אֲשֶׁר אָכְלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וְחֵלֶק הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הִלְכּוּ אִתִּי עִנְרָה אֲשֶׁל וּמִמָּרָא הֵם יִקְחוּ חֵלֶק:

²⁴ *save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, let them take their portion.'*

The distribution of the spoils of war among Abram's allied brothers is legitimate (cf. Num, 31: 25–27, Deut. 20:14, 1 Sam. 30:21–25). Spoils of war forms a theme of divine supply and blessing through military conquest. Abram accentuated his righteousness and expressed his generosity by sharing the booty (Waltke & Fredericks, 2001:390).

3.9 Intertextuality

3.9.1 Introduction

Intertextuality focuses on the interrelationships between canonical texts cited in the progression of God's redemptive plan and salvation for humanity in Scripture. The purpose of intertextuality is to bridge the gap of ancient texts to meet the realities of the present and future (Eccl.1:9; 3:15). Intertextuality incorporates types, shadows, copies, patterns, figures, or models of ancient texts. The OT reference to a historical event is regarded as a type, while a subsequent, corresponding event is identified as an "antitype" that mirrors, fulfils, or surpasses the original type (Vanhoozer *et al.*, 2005:383-384).

3.9.2 References and links within the OT

3.9.2.1 Salem

The identification of "Salem" with Jerusalem. The association points to Jerusalem as the impending capital city of Israel, the place of corporate worship for the one true God prior the Davidic kingdom.

Scripturally, Salem is linked with Jerusalem and Zion (cf. Ps. 76:1–2; 110:2) as the dwelling place of the name of the one-true God. In ancient Israel: the dwelling place of a deity was emblematic. The presence of God Most High was exemplified by the Ark of the Lord which resided in the tabernacle and later in the Jerusalem Temple (Exo. 25). The presence of God in the Jerusalem temple forms a major theme in prophetic books. King David spearheaded the bringing of the Ark of the covenant of the Lord (2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. 15:1–16) and the building of the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 6–8; 2 Chr. 3:1–17). Conversely, idolatrous shrines in Bethel and Gilgal hosted golden calves as objects of worship (1 Kings 12:31–33; Amos 4:4–5; 5:5).

According to Hays *et al.* (2007:226), Salem is usually described as the Jebusite fortress of ancient Jerusalem. David seized Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:6–10) and apprehended the citadel of Zion, which later became known as the "City of David" (2 Sam. 5:6–10; Ps. 2:6; Isa. 24:23). The OT prophets treated Jerusalem as a synecdoche denoting the "city of God" .

Zion points to the whole city of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:21; Ps. 48; 69:35; 133:3; Isa. 1:8). Mount Zion represents the Davidic kingship, priesthood, and God's covenant promises .

3.9.2.2 Royal priesthood (Ps. 110:1–4)

Melchizedek's fusion of kingship and priesthood offices in Genesis 14 is closely linked with the royal messianic prophecy attributed to David (Ps. 110:4). The enigmatic figure of Melchizedek often leads to claims that upholds the absence of ancestry based on lack of biblical data. Yet, Genesis 14 does not justify the absence of Melchizedek's lineage. Melchizedek in Genesis 14 is historical and presented as a type of the prophetic Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4). Since the allusion of historical Melchizedek, a span of 1000 years passed prior its second allusion (Ps. 110:4).

The priesthood of the Davidic king is in the order (pattern, type, model, example) of Melchizedek and God's irrevocable oath. The Hebrew phrase *נֶאֱמַר* means "to swear", and it is connected with oaths and covenants. The oath is further strengthened by the Hebrew phrase *אֲנִי אֵלֹהִים* meaning "to relent". God affirms that he will not alter his declaration (Num. 19:23) or change his heart (Holladay, 1971:234).

The latter priesthood is a unique, perpetual, and instituted by God. It is distinct from the Aaronic priesthood which was limited by time, age, and death. David's Lord will possess the prohibited dual offices of kingship and priesthood in the OT similar to the historical Melchizedek.

Vanhoozer *et al.* (2005:383--384) highlights that typologies brings about continuity, unity, credibility of later writings, and theological significance. Psalm 110:1–4 demonstrates the vital connection between kingship, priesthood, battle accounts, and the judgement of rebellious nations reminiscent to Genesis 14.

The ME (Gen. 14:18–20) is referred as an "inner-biblical exegesis" of Psalm 110. Emadi (2019:61-62) underlines the Davidic king as a conduit of bestowing heavenly blessing to Abram and his progeny. Psalm 110 develops God's redemptive plan through David, idyllic kingship, and eschatological justice to the Melchizedekian priesthood.

3.10 Theology of the passage

Genesis 14:18–24 is primarily a theological passage. The theological intentions and judgements set the stage for several theological themes recorded in the Hebrew canon. Verses 18–24 place more emphasis on the themes of God's supremacy, priesthood, creation, and kindship. observes a purposeful progression of God's plan of salvation, deliverance, and redemption of humanity. God's reign is seen over the religious, political, and war accounts

Abram's determination to rescue Lot (Gen. 14:1–16) as an anticipated heir is obsolete. The events of Genesis 14:18–24 led to the establishment and progression of God's unilateral covenant (Gen. 15–17) with Abram representing all the families on earth.

3.12. The way forward

Now that it has been determined what Genesis 14:18–24 reveals about tithing by means of an exegetical analysis, the question of how Genesis 14:18–24 fits into the bigger biblical practice of tithing should be investigated. This is done in the next chapter by tracing references to tithing throughout the OT.

CHAPTER 4: GENESIS 14:18–24 WITHIN THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF TITHING IN THE OT

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focused on determining what Genesis 14:18–24 reveals about tithing by subjecting the passage to an exegetical analysis using the grammatical-historical exegetical methodology of Stuart (2009:9).

The current chapter investigates how Genesis 14:18–24 fits into the overall biblical picture of tithing in the OT. Tithing in the Torah spans different time periods: starting with different types of offerings, proceeding to tithing before the giving of the law, followed by tithing practices in the Torah, historical books, poetic and wisdom books, and prophetic literature.

4.2. Tithing before the giving of the law

4.2.1 Introduction

Scripture records some offerings, sacrifices, and tithes before the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

4.2.1.1 Genesis 4:1–5: Cain and Abel's offerings

Immediately after the fall of man, Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:1–24). Eve conceived and gave birth to Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer and Abel a shepherd (Gen. 4:1–2).

Cain and Abel gave varying offerings to the Lord “in the process of time.” Cain presented produce from his crops, whereas Abel gave the firstborn of his flock along with their fat portions. The text does not indicate if these offerings were tithes, required, or free-will. Cain did not offer the first and choicest harvest in contrast to Abel's firstlings referred as בכורים in Hebrew meaning a gift, tribute, or sacrifice (Holladay, 1971:202). A gift is given freely, while a tribute is offered out of reverence or submission. Abel demonstrated sincere devotion with his valuable sacrifices, unlike Cain's ordinary offerings. God accepted Abel's offering over Cain's (Gen. 4:5). Cain ignored the inherent awareness of his ethical conduct, rebelled against God's warning, and killed his brother.

The text observes that the first documented murder and worship arose from a dispute between two brothers. Sin corrupts a person's cognisance, terminates fellowship between God and worshiper .

states that “Sacrifices are either pleasing or displeasing according to the spiritual state of the worshiper”. The brothers’ offerings exposed their inner spiritual state and hidden attitudes of their hearts. Cain and Abel’s **בְּכֹרִים** originated from God; their offerings were appreciating God’s provision, goodness, and gratitude. God desires the purity of hearts in all forms of worship.

4.2.1.2 Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:1–19)

God commanded Abraham subsequent a name change (Gen. 17:5) to offer his beloved son as a burnt offering rendered as **עֹלָה** on Mount Moria (Gen. 22:1–2). The name change affirms God’s promises and marks a new era in Abraham’s life and uniqueness. Abraham built an altar of wood there (Gen. 22:9). Longman III *et al.* (2013:51) alludes that the Hebrew phrase for altar is **מִזְבֵּחַ** meaning a place of sacrifice, God’s presence, and protection. Sacrifices were burned wholly on the altar by fire and the ascending smoke symbolised God’s supremacy.

The sacrifice of Isaac serves as God’s first prescribed offering to Abraham canonically. The purpose of **עֹלָה** was to test Abraham’s faith in God. highlights that God seems to be contradicting “the norms of emotion, reason, and ethics”. Abraham’s reverence for God is confirmed by his unwavering faith in full obedience to God’s directives (Hamilton, 2012:31). As a result, God spared Isaac and provided a ram as a substitute and “kept his promise of mediating his blessings through Isaac” . The didactic function of the text instructs believers that God owns everything, and believers serve as God’s faithful stewards.

4.2.1.3 Jacob flees from Esau (Gen. 28:1–15)

4.2.1.3.1 Immediate context

Jacob defrauded Esau of the legacy of the firstborn son (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:1–40). Then Jacob’s father Isaac, sent him to Padan Aram in Mesopotamia to find a Hebrew wife from his mother’s lineage (Gen. 28:1–5). Jacob was in anguish and ran from his brother Esau. He rested at a certain “place” at twilight, and encountered God in a nocturnal vision. The Lord revealed Jacob’s destiny, offered him comfort, hope for the future, and reiterated the five covenant promises made to Abram and Isaac (Gen. 28:13b–15).

4.2.1.3.2 Jacob’s vowed tithe (Gen. 28:20–22)

Jacob’s vow in Hebrew **נִדַּר** is the first sacred, wilful commitment made to God in a stressful situation and awaited the fulfilment of God’s promises (Gen. 28:13–15). At first glance the “if” may indicate elements of doubt, fear, and condition (Gen. 28:20). However, in this context “if” can be translated “since” (cf. Num. 20:2; Judg. 11:30–31).

The vow was undertaken during the absence of the temple and Levitical priesthood for receiving the tithe. Jacob acted autonomously, without reference to any prevailing law and name change (cf. Gen. 32:28).

The vow suggests Jacob's transformation (Gen. 22:21) and the progression of God's redemptive plan for Israel. The allusion to bread and clothing may symbolises spiritual provision and sustenance in the wilderness (Goldingay, 2020:392). The Hebrew phrase "וְשָׁלוֹם" meaning peace conveying a sense of contentment and completeness for Jacob's descendants.

4.2.1.4 Conclusions

Tithing is not explicitly stated prior Genesis 14:20, instead unprescribed offerings, first fruits, and sacrifices. Abram gave a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20) and Jacob pledged a tenth to God (Gen. 28: 20–22). Tithing in these contexts serve as an act of worship given out of deep gratitude, acknowledgment of God as the source, and provider.

4.2.2 Tithing in the rest of the Torah

4.2.2.1 Introduction of the establishment of the Old Covenant / OT

Following the Egyptian exodus, God appointed Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage through the wilderness and guide them towards the Promised Land (Exod. 12:40). God entered into a covenant with the 12 tribes of Israel at Mount Sinai (Exo. 24:3–8). The terms of the covenant relationship with Israel, aligns with the seven-fold promises made to Abram (Gen. 12:1–3). Mount Sinai is presented as a prototype for the tabernacle and a model for Israel's liturgical regulations .

The OT, OC, and the Law of Moses are used interchangeable in Scripture. The OT begins in the book of Exodus when Moses sprinkled the Israelites and the Book of the Covenant with the blood of calves, water, scarlet wool, and hyssop (Exo. 24:6–8). The expansion of the OC intensifies in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Israel's worship practices included various physical elements reflecting the unified presence of spirit, soul, and body.

4.2 2.1.1 Offerings in Exodus

God prompted the Egyptians to give the Israelites gold, silver, and clothing before their departure (Exod. 11:2), though the text does not specify their purpose at this point. Phillips (2012:61) suggest this offering compensates for 430 years of bondage and fulfils future laws about freeing slaves (cf. Deut. 15:13–15). While Exodus does not mention tithing (Exod. 22:29), it lays groundwork for Israel's worship practices in Canaan (Exod. 19–40).

4.2.2.1.2 Offerings for constructing the tabernacle (Exod. 25:1–7)

God instructed Moses to collect offerings from the Israelites to build a sanctuary. These offerings were meant for worship, service, submission, and communion with God. points out that the earthly tent of meeting synchronically represented the design of the spiritual heavenly sanctuary as the dwelling place of God diachronically (Exod. 25:9).

4.2.2 1.3 Offerings and appointment artisans (Exod. 35:4–35)

God instructed Moses to collect offerings similar to Exodus 25:1–8, with some additions. God endowed Bezalel and Oholiab with skills to build the tabernacle. The passage explains the need for articles requested from the Egyptians (Exod. 11:2) and counters claims to prosper the Israelites prospered.

4.2.2 1.4 Conclusion

The offerings in Exodus focused on the construction of the wilderness tabernacle. The function of Israel's liturgy was consecration and protection (Exo. 19–40). points out that the earthly tent of meeting synchronically represented the design of the spiritual heavenly sanctuary as the dwelling place of God diachronically (Exod. 25:9). The Mosaic covenant upheld Israel's liturgy and ethical standards at all levels of the community.

4.2.2.2 Offerings in Leviticus

Leviticus begins with five types of offerings that brought people closer to God. Below is a summary of these offerings.

4.2.2.2.1 Burnt offerings (Lev. 1:3–17)

Burnt offerings in Hebrew עֹלָה involved the killing of a male, flawless animal or bird by the offeror. The sacrifice was subsequently presented to the Aaronic priest to burn it entirely on the altar. The burnt offering ascended as a sweet-smelling aroma, pleasing, and acceptable to God. Such offerings provided atonement for unintentional transgressions, reaffirmed the covenant with God, and acted as sacred acts of worship.

4.2.2.2.2 Grain offerings (Lev. 2:1–16)

Grain offerings included fine flour, oil, and frankincense (Lev. 2:1), with a portion burned for God and the rest given to priests (Lev. 2:2–3, 9–10). Leaven and honey were forbidden to preserve purity (Lev. 2:11–12), and salt was required (Exod. 19:3–8). These offerings expressed thanksgiving, provision, and devotion to God.

4.2.2.2.3 Peace or fellowship offerings (Lev. 3:1–17; 7:11–27)

Peace offerings included vow and free-will offerings, and unblemished animals whether male or female (cattle, sheep, and goat). This is the only offering that God allowed the worshipers to eat. Additionally, God instructed the worshipers not to eat blood and fat as a timeless prescription. The aim of peace offerings is to eat a covenant meal in fellowship with God and for thanksgiving.

4.2.2.2.4 Sin or purification offerings (Lev. 4:1–35)

Leviticus 4 outlines sacrifices for unintentional sins by four groups: priests (flawless bull), the congregation (young bull), rulers (male goat), and common people (female goat or lamb). Fat was burnt as an offering, blood was applied to the altar's horns and base, and these rituals aimed to atone for unintentional sin through confession, forgiveness, and purification.

4.2.2.2.5 Trespass or guilt offerings (Lev. 5:1–19; 6:1–7)

Trespass offerings were required for intentional sins against God's holy things (Lev. 5:14–19), along with restitution of one-fifth extra. Gane (2012:94) notes that guilt offerings addressed failures like not testifying when called, neglecting purification rituals, or breaking oaths (Lev. 5:1–4). Required sacrifices included a female lamb, goat, or two turtledoves and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour without oil or frankincense for the destitutes. Trespasses against a neighbour demanded a flawless male ram plus 20% restitution.

4.2.2.3 Tithing in the book of Leviticus

4.2.2.3.1 Immediate context of Leviticus 27

Leviticus 27 discusses vows and rules for tithes, stating that all land tithes are sacred and belong to God. Tithes include crops and livestock from the Promised Land.

4.2.2.3.2 Leviticus 27:30–33

Based on Leviticus 27:30–33, two categories of tithes were prescribed as holy to the Lord. The first tithe constituted grain from the soil and fruit from trees (v. 30). The second category included tithe of herds, flocks, and every tenth animal passing under the shepherd's rod (v. 32).

Hartley (1992:485) indicates that the tenth-counted animal whether clean or unclean, was marked with a red dye stripe across its back. Divine Law banned replacement but permitted redemption of the first animal with an added fifth of its value in silver, after which both animals were declared holy. Redemption of crops and fruits was not allowed (Lev. 27:33). The passage only highlights the tithes' holiness to God, without mentioning other functions. (Gane, 2012:347).

4.2.2.3.3 Conclusion

The Promised Land serves as a gift for Israel (Exod. 4:22). As a result, “Israel was expected to give back to Yahweh a *pars pro toto* of the produce and wealth of the land” (Moretsi, 2009:400).

4.2.2.4 Tithing in the book Numbers

4.2.2.4.1 Introduction

Tithing in Numbers is tied to the priesthood and sanctuary, unlike Abram’s voluntary tithe to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20). The Mosaic Law required a fixed tithe of crops and livestock, given to priests as their reward and inheritance (Num. 18:25–32), while God was Abram’s shield and reward (Gen. 15:1). Priests descended from Aaron and functioned as mediators between the people and God.

4.2.2.4.2 Election of Levitical priests and their functions

At Mount Sinai, God appointed Aaron and his descendants to serve as priests in the tabernacle (see Exod. 28:1, 44; 30:30; 40:13–15; Num. 3:3). While all priests were members of the tribe of Levi, not every Levite held the priesthood. The Levites were set apart for God, symbolically representing the firstborn son (see Exod. 13:2, 12, 13; 22:29; 34:19, 20; Lev. 27:26; Num. 3:12, 13, 41, 45; 8:14–17; 18:15; Deut. 15:19). The Levites were divided into three groups—Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites ((Num. 3:25–26; Num. 3:31; Num. 3:35–36). God designated the nation of Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:5–6; Lev. 20:26; Deut. 14:2),

4.2.2.4.3 The first tithe, מַעֲשֵׂר ראשון (Num. 18:21–24)

God gave the מַעֲשֵׂר of the 11 tribes of Israel to the Levites as an inheritance for tabernacle and later temple services. In contrast, God prohibited the Israelites from performing priestly functions except the Levitical priests. Rebellion against this prescription resulted in death (Num. 18:22–23). Tithes collected from the Israelites were offered as תְּרוּמָה to the Lord and legacy for the Aaronic priests (Num. 18:24).

4.2.2.4.4 Tithe of the tithe (Num. 18:25–32)

Subsequent the reception of tithes, the Levites were to take one-tenth of tithe and give it to the Aaronic priests. The priestly tithe had to be the best of what the Levites had been given.

God likened the Levitical מַעֲשֵׂר מִן הַמַּעֲשֵׂר to the threshing floor produce and the new wine (Num. 18:29–32) and spiritual elevation of the Aaronic priests. The Aaronic priests were then allowed

to eat the *מַעֲשֵׂר מִן הַמַּעֲשֵׂר* with their households wherever they desired. God constantly warned the Levites to abstain from desecrating Israel's sacred offerings lest they perish (Num. 18:32).

4.2.2.4.5 Conclusion

According to Moretsi (2004:15), the Levitical tithes serve as a fundamental part of the social structure of the Mosaic covenant.

4.2.2.5 Tithing in the book of Deuteronomy

4.2.2.5.1 Introduction.

Tithing in the book of Deuteronomy will focus on the following:

1. Tithe and offerings (Deut. 12:1–7, 10–12, 17–19, 28)
2. The annual or second tithe (Deut. 14:22–27)
3. The third or charity tithe (Deut. 14:28–29)
4. The tithe declaration (Deut. 26:12–15)

4.2.2.5.2 The first tithe (Deut. 12:1–19)

Deuteronomy 12 initiates God's prescription which divides into three key components. The first part focuses on the central place worship: the Canaanite pagan places of worship are to be utterly destroyed, and the Israelites are instructed to avoid assimilation with the Canaanite's style of worship custom in multiple shrines. Instead, the Israelites are directed to confine their sacrificial worship to a single site designated by God (Deut.12: 2–7).

The second section outlines the limitation of sacrificial practices to a single chosen place of worship and assigns the consequences of this restriction (Deut. 12:8–28). The final section extends the concept of avoiding Canaanite pagan worship customs, specifically highlighting the abomination child sacrifice (Deut. 12:29–32).

God prescribed the regulation of Israel's worship and the giving of *מַעֲשֵׂר* to a centralised place of worship (Deut. 12:5, 11, 18). Worshippers were mandated to eat *מַעֲשֵׂר* with the members of their families (Deut. 12:12, 17, 18). The Levites were allowed to consume tithes because God prevented them from owning land and doing secular work (Deut. 12:12, 18,19). The 12 tribes of Israel, foreigners, the poor, and widows formed part of this joyful celebration. God reciprocated Israel's obedience with the blessings of the land. The constituents of the tithe was grain, wine, oil, and the firstborn male of all their herds and flocks (Deut. 12:17).

4.2.2.5.3 The *מעשר שני*, second or festival tithe (Deut. 14:22–27)

God prescribed the separation of Israel's tenth from the land's produce yearly (Deut. 14:22) and that they should eat the *מעשר* in a designated place. The didactic function and inference of the festival tithe aimed to promote national unity, fellowship, and worship of God (MacArthur, 2000:107).

God allowed redemption of tithes to silver if the place was distant or it was impossible to carry the *מעשר* (Deut. 14:24–25). The worshipers were allowed to purchase whatever they desired to consume with their households in an ecstatic mood during the festival. The separated *מעשר* included grain, wine, and meat from the firstlings of their herds and flocks. God persistently cautioned Israel not to neglect the Levites in their celebration. The Israelites reciprocated God's grace for deliverance, salvation, election, the blessing of the land, and its produce.

God divided Israel's calendar into 77 cycles, the seventh year was set aside as a sabbatical year. The celebration was held on the first, second, fourth, and fifth year on each cycle. The land had to observe a sabbath rest on the seventh year, fields were not ploughed (Lev. 25:3–4). Whatever grew spontaneously in the seventh year was not harvested, but became food for all the people, livestock, and beasts of the land (Lev. 25:5–7).

4.2.2.5.4 The *מעשר עני*, third or charity tithe (Deut. 14:28–29)

The charity tithe is the extension of the festival tithe, so the constituents of *מעשר* remained unchanged (Deut. 14:23). The tithe was given at the end of every third and sixth year in a sabbatical year. Subsequent harvest, a portion of the field was deliberately left unharvested, allowing the poor to glean the crops for personal use (Lev. 23:22). According to Breneman (2012:434), the charity tithe advocates for the well-being of the community, corporate worship, equality, and accountability to the land. Consequently, God bestowed blessings upon the nation of Israel.

4.2.2.5.5 The tithe declaration (Deut. 26:12–15)

The worshipers were obliged to make a declaration at the designated place of worship or Jerusalem temple. The pronouncement is repeated at the end of the third and sixth year. The seventh year is a Sabbatical year of rest where the land is to remain fallow.

This tithe was consumed in local towns (Deut. 26:12). This prescription is reminiscent of the requirements in Numbers 18:21. The repetition implies that God demands obedience, love, and cares for humanity regardless of social status.

4.2.2.5.6 Conclusion

The Mosaic tithing prescriptions elevated Israelites' social justice, national corporate worship, and faithful stewardship (England, 2011:83).

4.2.3 Tithing in the historical books

4.2.3.1 Introduction: Israel demands a king (1 Sam. 8:1–14)

Samuel, the first prophet and last judge of Israel, appointed his sons Joel and Abijah to be judges in Beersheba. However, Samuel's sons were disobedient to the law of God and the elders of Israel rejected their rulership. The elders of Israel summoned Samuel at Ramah and demanded a king to rule over them (1 Sam. 8:1–6). Samuel sought God's guidance through prayer, and the Lord told Samuel to heed the elders' request as they were rejecting God's royal reign.

4.2.3.2 Samuel warns Israel about burdens of kingship (1 Sam. 8:15, 17)

The king will enslave the Israelites by collecting a tenth of grain, vineyards, livestock, flocks and give it to his nobles (1 Sam. 15,17) and defy the Mosaic Law tithing practices (1 Sam. 8:15, 17). The royal tithes tallies with royal taxes commonly demanded by ANE kings from their subjects (Murray, 2001:81). During monarchy, there was no separation between the state and the temple. Monarchs administrated and maintained imperial and temple wealth similarly (1 Kgs. 15:18; 2 Kgs. 12:19, 18:15; 1 Chron. 26:20; 28:12; Ezek. 45:17).

4.2.3.3 The consequence of kingship

The monarchy will cause national lament and God will remain silent (1 Sam. 8:18). Israel abandoned God's kingship, divine election, and national separation. God granted Israel their request as a form of punishment (1 Sam. 9).

4.2.3.4 Conclusion

The imposition of royal oppression and taxation stood in contrast to the Mosaic tithing prescriptions. Kings and prophets were appointed by God. Prophets supervised the monarchy and Israel's liturgy

4.2.3.5 Postexilic tithing in 2 Chronicles 31

4.2.3.5.1 Introduction

2 Chronicles narrates the religious history of the Davidic dynasty of Judah from a priestly and spiritual perspective (Hays & Duvall, 2011:213). King Hezekiah reigned in Jerusalem during the divided monarchy and national apostasy. Hezekiah “did what was right in the sight of God” (2 Chron. 29:3) by restoring the Mosaic covenant (2 Chron. 29:3–19) and temple worship (2 Chron. 29:20–36). Hezekiah reinstated Levitical support, priestly wages (Num. 18:21), temple services (Deut. 14: 22–27), and the welfare of the destitutes (Deut:14:28–29).

4.2.3.5.2 Chronicles 31:2–10

King Hezekiah commanded the Judeans and the Israelites to bring portions set aside for the Levites, Aaronic priests, and restored temple services. The king also participated by offering his personal assets for burnt offerings and celebration of the Lord’s appointed feasts (2 Chron. 1–4). The people responded by giving abundantly. Hezekiah organised and supervised the collection and storing of tithes and tribute, and the distribution (2 Chr. 31:5–8). Hezekiah organised and supervised the collection and storing of tithes and tribute, and the distribution. The king exercised clear evidence by recording responsible officials and benefactors (Chron. 31:12–19). Then Hezekiah blessed the Lord and the people for their willing obedience. Thus, Hezekiah was successful in his religious reforms (2 Chron. 31:20–21).

4.2.3.6 Tithing in the book of Nehemiah

The Persian policy under Cyrus permitted the Judeans to return to Judah in 538 BCE . Jerusalem and its sanctuary was the main centre of national worship. Nehemiah led the third wave of the faithful Judean remnants, marking the outset of the post-exilic age (Hays & Duvall, 2011:218). The post-exilic circumstances brought about changes in the Mosaic tithing prescriptions.

4.2.3.6.1 Immediate context

Nehemiah, the king’s cupbearer, received a devastating report about the broken walls of the city of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:1–3). Nehemiah humbled himself in fasting and prayer and entreated Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, for authorisation to reconstruct the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 3:1–6) to propose a local independent administration based on God’s covenant. The remnants sought to participate in the salvation history of Israel and the Abrahamic covenant . God’s covenant was renewed and sealed with an oath that they will not forsake the house of God (Neh. 9:38; 10:29).

4.2.3.6.2 Nehemiah 10:35–39

Nehemiah restored the proper worship of God, priestly temple services, and some of the Mosaic tithing prescriptions (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:23–32). Nehemiah considered the Mosaic tithing prescriptions to be for the temple workers, Aaronic priests, and Levites. So, the implication is that the Mosaic tithing practices were considered relevant in pre- and post-exilic communities. The prescribed portions were stored in the chambers of the sanctuary and later distributed to relevant recipients (Neh. 10:37).

4.2.3.6.3. Nehemiah 13:4–15.

During Nehemiah's leave of absence, a corrupt priest named Eliashib broke God's law by allowing Tobiah, the cursed Ammonite, to occupy the storeroom of the temple (Deut. 23:3; Neh. 13:1–3). The Levites resorted to farming to support their families, national worship ceased, and Nehemiah rebuked the leaders and restored tithing in Judah. Israel continued to spiral down and break God's law (Neh. 13:10–13).

Nehemiah's reformation restored the Jerusalem temple services, the Mosaic tithing prescriptions, and Israel's covenant relationship with God. However, the prescription was honoured during the presence of Nehemiah (Neh. 13:6–15). According to Israel's setting, Law (2007:138) argues that the temple was more than a centre of worship in ancient Israel, but served as a government, and the kingdom of God.

4.2.3.6.4 Conclusion

Hezekiah organised and supervised the collection and storing of tithes and tribute (2 Chr. 31:4–6). Nehemiah's reformation restored the Jerusalem temple services, the Mosaic tithing prescriptions, and Israel's liturgy (Waltke, 2007:156-157).

4.2.4 Tithing in the poetical and wisdom literature

4.2.4.1 Introduction

These books do not refer to tithing directly but contain references to the management of financial matters. God provides for the needs of all creation (Ps. 104:10–18), including the earth (Ps. 68:9), humanity, animals, and the needy (Ps. 35:10). God delights in the prosperity of his servants (Job 1:9–10; Ps. 35:27; 112:1–3; 119:72; 128 :1–2; Prov. 8:17–18; 10:22). Poetic and wisdom books underline the significance of applying Godly wisdom in financial matters (Eccl. 7:12).

4.2.4.2 The source of wealth

Scripture teaches that God owns creation and all its resources (Ps. 24:1). Spiritual wealth and all material possessions originate from God (Job 1:10; Ps. 50:12). The management of wealth according to God's principles serves as a blessing. Wealth and divine blessings are linked to righteousness, generosity, the fear of God, divine wisdom, and the worship of the one true God. Wealth is a gift from God (Job 1:10; Prov. 8:18–21; Eccl. 5:19–20) that carries an avalanche of responsibilities.

4.2.4.3 Stewardship

Theologically, the faith community becomes a channel for distributing material and spiritual gifts to the needy. Proverbs 31, which praises the attributes of the virtuous woman, serves as a model for wealth management. The passage indicates that God's people should develop a heart-to-heart relationship with God, take care of household needs, produce fruits of righteousness, be compassionate, create a good work ethic, engage in business ventures, use resources wisely, be generous, reach out to the needy, make ethical investments, and honour God (Prov. 31:10–31). Biblical stewardship requires feasible ways of condemning social injustice towards the vulnerable. God's people must worship God with the first fruits of their wealth (Prov. 3:9–10).

4.2.4.4 Spiritual dangers linked to wealth and poverty

Agur attaches wealth to the temptation of trusting riches and rebelling against God. Riches may lead to boasting (Job 31:4; Ps. 49:6–7; Prov. 11:4) and idolatry (Ps. 52:7; Eccl. 5:15). On the contrary, poverty leads to the temptation of stealing, which violates God's law (Prov. 30:8–9). People must avoid unnecessary debts (Prov. 22:7; 22:26–27; Ps. 37:21). Riches predisposes people to ethical and moral decay through exploitation of the poor, foreigners, widows, and the needy (Prov. 22:16). The quest for riches as life's priority results in emptiness and suffering (Eccl. 6:2). Riches are unreliable (Job 1:13–19; Prov. 27:24). The unjust use of wealth leads to spiritual decay and death.

4.2.4.5 Providing the needs of the poor

The love of God in humanity is expressed as extended hands of mercy to the marginalised. The poor can be helped by supporting the cause, providing for their needs, and seeking their justice (Job 29:12; 31:16; Ps. 113:7; Prov. 13:25; Eccl. 5:8). God blesses those who care for the poor (Ps. 41:1–3; Prov. 22:9) and sanctions those who mistreats them (Prov. 21:13; 28:27).

4.2.4.6 Conclusion

Scripture warns believers about the love of money and encourages righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness. Prosperity is a gift from God to his people (Eccl. 5:19). Money is not evil; the problem is the evil way of attaining and administering it. The lifelong pursuit of hoarding riches is meaningless, futile, and a chasing after the wind (Hays & Duvall, 2011:301). Agur articulates a longing to avoid both riches and poverty (Prov. 30:8b).

4.2.5 Tithing in the prophetic literature

4.2.5.1 Introduction

Amongst others, the book of Amos addresses the rebellious leaders and violation of the Deuteronomistic tithing prescriptions (Deut. 12:1–14) “through judgement speeches”. Amos foretold his indictments during the reign of Rehoboam II (786–746 BCE) in the northern kingdom of Israel .

4.2.5.2 Amos 4:4

Amos 4:4 repeats Israel’s accusations of social injustice and worship of idols through sarcasm and irony. He mocks Israel’s corrupted form of worship. The Israelites appointed non-Levitical priests, and adhered to unprescribed tithing practices at the idolatrous shrines in Bethel and Gilgal (1 Kings 12:28–33). The Mosaic law prescribed that sacrifices must be carried to the Jerusalem temple once a year instead of every morning. Likewise, tithes were offered in the third year (Deut. 14:22, 28–29) instead of three days.

At first glance, this outward religious activity seems perfect, but sacrifices were offered in the morning and evening (Exod. 29:38–39; Num. 28:3–4; 1 Chron. 16:39–40; 2 Chron. 13:11; 31:3). The Israelite elite class were showing off their abundant wealth deceitfully instead of drawing close to God. Amos warned the Israelites about God’s looming judgement.

4.2.5.3 Amos 4:5

According to Amos 4:5, the Israelites revised the prescribed ceremony (Lev. 2:11; 7:12) and were guilty of adding and subtracting Scripture (Deut. 4:2). The Mosaic law prohibited leaven meal or grain offerings burned by fire except the offering of two leavened breads. Leavening was only accepted in peace offerings. These offerings were unprescribed and violated the Mosaic tithing prescriptions. This practice serve as rebellion to Numbers 18 regarding tithes for the support of the Levites. God seeks obedience instead of boastful sacrifices (Lev. 10:1–7; Num. 16–17; 1 Sam. 15:22). Israel’s frequent sacrifices and tithes, and devotion were meaningless. Despite Amos’ warning, Israel refused God’s correction (Amos 4:6–13). As a result, the worshipers earned

God's judgment and self-inflicted curses instead of God's blessings. Amos mentioned tithes based on free-will offerings (Lev. 27:26,27,32,33).

4.2.5.4 Tithing in the book of Malachi

4.2.5.4.1 Introduction

Malachi is the last postexilic prophet to convey a message of judgement to a nation that was plagued by wicked priests. His contemporaries were Haggai, Zechariah and possibly Nehemiah. The city of Jerusalem and its sanctuary were still under the Gentile Persian administration. Malachi addressed recurrent apostasy, abandonment of the temple service, corrupted priesthood, and liturgy. The Israelites violated the Mosaic prescriptions pertaining to tithing and embraced idolatry .

4.2.5.4.2 Malachi 3:6–12

Malachi's disputation (Mal. 3:6–12) reminds Judah and Israel about God's immutable attribute expressed through his unconditional love. Malachi preaches against the corrupt form of worship, profane sacrifices, withholding tithes, and social injustice.

God portrays Israel's callousness with the Mosaic law prescriptions from the period of the patriarchs. He calls the entire nation of Israel to repent and return to their first love. The people's response underscores the unwillingness to return to God (Mal. 3:7b). God provided corrective measures for repentance and a return to him (cf. Deut. 4:30–31).

God charged Israel for defrauding him in tithes, which resulted in depriving the Levitical priests, orphans, widows, foreigners, and the temple workers their portions. The abandonment of tithes and offerings deserved the penalty of a national curse (Deut. 11:29). In Malachi's time, God reiterated the curses (Mal. 3:9).

Malachi 3:8–9 synchronises with Nehemiah 13:10–12. God provided corrective measures in Malachi 3:10. This instruction unpacks the reality of Israel's transgression of bringing unlawful and incomplete tithes. God in his mercy commanded the Israelites to "test" him and promised to lift the curse (Mal. 3:10–12).

4.3 Tithing during the intertestamental period (c. 433–435 BCE)

4.3.1 Introduction

The Intertestamental Period refers to the 400 years between the book of Malachi and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple 70 AD. The epoch was launched during the reign of Cyrus

the Persian ruler in the OT, approximately 537 BCE onwards (Gundry, 2012:38). The prophetic word of God was absent and the people longed for the word of God. The era brought about political instability, Jewish writing, religious sects, and spiritual decline of the Jews.

Daniel's prophecy of cosmic superpowers was fulfilled (Dan. 7). The developments set the stage for the birth and ministry of the promised Messiah (Gal. 4.4). Judea was under the Roman political oppression. The Jews anticipated the soon coming King to release them from political and spiritual bondage. The Second Jerusalem temple worship continued daily sacrifices and feast celebration (Deut. 16:16). Various religious groups emerged within the Jewish community. The Pharisees and scribes embraced formalism and legalism to the Mosaic tithing regulations.

4.3.2 Tithing system

Tithing developed to a structured practice that influenced the religious life of the Second Temple Judaism. Tithes were used to support the priesthood, temple services, fund festivals, aid the poor, and often misused by religious leaders. Rabbinic rituals refined the Mosaic tithing practices. Religious leaders extended the requirements of the Mosaic Law to include minute garden herbs like mint, dill, and cum (Matt. 23:23). The focus shifted from joyful giving to detailed, formalised tithing compliance. Subsequent the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (70 AD), the second tithe could no longer be carried to the temple to be consumed.

4.3.2 Jewish writings on tithing

4.3.2 1 Antiquities of the Jews

Josephus views tithing as part of the OT tithing Law for supporting the priesthood and the needy within the Jewish theocracy. Tithing was not limited to Jewish religious life but also functioned as a tax system for civil, educational, and social needs in ancient Israel (*Ant.* IV.4.3).

4.3.2 2 The Book of Tobit

Tobit's view on tithing is grounded entirely on the Mosaic Law. Tobit advocates for devoted charitable, generous, and sacrificial giving parallel to first fruits and the Deuteronomic tithe legislation. The poor tithe was employed as a form of worship during the Second Temple Judaism (1:6).

4.3.2.2 The works of Philo

Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, interpreted the Jewish tithing practices of the Pentateuch as a voluntary act of worship, gratitude to God's sovereignty, and his provision.

Philo equated tithing to first fruits as a divine act of precedence to a religious life marked by faith, justice, and mercy.

4.4 Conclusion

Abram's tithe to Melchizedek functions as the first biblical allusion to tithing, followed by Jacob's vowed tithe to God. These instances address spontaneous instances of tithing prior to the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. These tithing references established a precedent later in the Mosaic Law. The patriarchs were simply acknowledging God as their source and provider. As a result they responded by either giving or vowing one-tenth as an act of worship and showing gratitude to the one-true God.

On the other hand, tithing in the entire Hebrew canon was God's holy requirement for the nation of Israel (Lev. 27:30–31; Num. 18–24; Deut. 14:28–29) – and only them. Their tithes supported the priesthood, temple services, and the impoverished. Israel's tithes were based on agricultural produce and livestock only. Even though the Israelites rebelled against the Mosaic Law in exile, God sent stern warnings through his prophets. As a result, Israel's apostasy and their unwillingness to repent "brought about divine wrath and judgement" through Amos and Malachi (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:431-432).

Now that the place and function of Genesis 14:18–24 within the bigger biblical practice of tithing has been determined, chapter 5 will investigate how tithing is understood in the NT in relation to the Old Covenant.

CHAPTER 5: HOW IS TITHING UNDERSTOOD IN THE NT IN RELATION TO THE OLD COVENANT

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 demonstrated how Genesis 14:18–24 fits into the overall biblical picture of tithing in the Hebrew canon until the intertestamental permanent.

The current chapter will determine how tithing should be understood in the NC in relation to the Mosaic tithing prescriptions (cf. Lev. 27:30–33; Num. 18:21–28; Deut. 14:22–29). The Mosaic Law was based upon the God’s covenant with the nation of Israel, land, temple, and worship (Exod. 19–24). Vanhoozer *et al.* (2005:373-379) mentions that NT believers need a background knowledge and understanding of the Jewish context of Christianity. Second Temple Judaism developed in difficult political turmoil without ownership of the land. Jews assimilated with paganism. Theology was grounded on monotheism, covenant election, the Pentateuch, and the Second temple. The identity of the Jews in Israel and the diaspora was intertwined with the temple as the epicentre of their religion. The Jewish background is essential for the interpretation of the NT.

5.2 Tithing in the Gospels

The allusion of tithing in the gospels falls within the OC. Jesus commended the practice of tithing as prescribed by the Mosaic Law and placed emphasis on core ethical matters (justice, mercy and faithfulness).

5.3.1 Tithing in the gospels (Matt. 23:23, Luke 11:42; 18:12)

The references of tithing falls within Jesus’s declaration of “woes” against the religious leaders. A “woe” is an expression of judgement on others (Thayer, 2017:461). The experts of the law staged public religious performances while neglecting pivotal heart issues (cf. Matt. 5:22; 23:33; 8:10; 9:13). As a result, Jesus cautioned his followers about their hypocrisy, misinterpretation of the Torah (Luke 11:52), and their exploitation of ordinary people (Keener, 1999:628).

Jesus condemned the Pharisees’ claims of self-righteousness and rigid legalistic tithing practices (Luke 18:12). Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets throughout his ministry until his death (Matt. 5:18; Luke 24:44).

5.3.2 Principles governing giving in the gospels

5.3.2.1 Anonymous giving (Matt. 6:1–4)

Jesus ordered that giving should be done privately. Scripture prohibits broadcasting acts of piety, hence giving ought to be practiced privately with the aim of worshiping God. God judges the attitude of the heart, instead of the offering (Matt. 6:31).

5.3.2.2 Sacrificial giving (Matt. 19:21; Mark 12:41–44; 21:1–3)

These passages presents how giving is perceived by wealthy people in contrast to the poor. The young rich ruler based his faith in keeping the Law whilst neglecting the destitute. Jesus commended the offering of the poor widow to condemn exploitation of the wealthy and religious leaders. The widow's offering superseded all offerings because she gave her all. Her sacrificial offering reflects the unadulterated worship that God desires (John 4:20–24). Jesus commended the purity of the widow's heart (Hays & Duvall, 2011:592, 638) in contrast to worldly riches. The widow's offering contradicts the Law of tithing in OT. Widows, foreigner, and the poor were exempted from tithing.

5.3.2.3 Free-will giving (Matt. 10:8b)

The foundational theological concept for leading a blessed life involves practicing generosity during times of need (Matt. 10:8). Showing mercy to others is an act of service to the unseen God (Matt. 25:40; Luke 6:30–31; 10:30–37). Since Jesus Christ is closely connected to those in need, people are often blessed or judged based on how they treat the destitute. Free-will offerings relates to the charity tithe (Deut. 14:28–29).

5.3.2.4 Giving to support God's ministers

Ministerial support bears the resemblance of the first tithe under the Mosaic Law ((Num. 18:21–24). Sacrificial giving serves as an expression of love, gratitude, and worship to God (Matt. 26:6–13; 28:5–7; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50, 8:1–3; 23:28, 49; 24:1–12; John 12:1–8). Jesus's followers required financial, material, and nutritional support to advance God's kingdom (Luke 10:7).

The gospels cites few women who supported Jesus's ministry and his disciples with their resources (Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1–3). Their support is unrelated to the OT law of giving ten percent (Lev. 27:30) but expressed stewardship, generosity, gratitude for their healing, and deliverance from unclean spirits.

At that time, women were not allowed to serve in religious circles. However, Jesus broke socio-cultural barriers, gender inequality in worship, giving, and ministerial functions. The women became harbingers to break gender barriers in Christianity and became active partners of Jesus's ministry. As a result, women support faith communities with their resources and finances to date. Jesus elevated the status of women globally and liberated them to serve God freely without limitations.

5.3.2.5 Conclusions

Tithing in the gospels reflects OC practices, while New Testament giving underlines generosity, willingness, and sacrifice from a transformed heart without a prescribed percentage. Jesus did not abolish tithing but allowed its practice pending the installation of the New Covenant. Giving is meant to show unconditional love and support the expansion of God's kingdom across all levels of society. Tithing in the gospels does not establish a dogmatic principle for claiming prosperity in an unlawful manner (Utley, 2013:239)

5.4 Tithing in the book of Acts

5.4.1 Introduction

The book of Acts does not mention tithing, demonstrates how the early church practiced communal living and selfless giving. The early church did not practice legalistic tithing. Communal living corresponds with the social welfare of religious Israel.

5.4.2 Acts 2:44–45

Believers described in Acts 2 continued to participate in temple rituals, including the presentation of various offerings. After Peter's sermon, some were converted, water baptised, received the Holy Spirit, and adhered to the Apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:14–43). They exhibited a joyful attitude in their willingness to give. According to Pao (2012:1174), the early church fulfilled "the Hellenistic ideal of a utopian community and the Jewish ideal of the sabbatical/Jubilee era (Deut. 15:4)." Their spiritual unity superseded their individual assets (Gundry, 2012:88) and the church grew rapidly.

5.4.3 Acts 4:32–37

Unity and generosity persisted as mentioned in Acts 2. A Levite named Barnabas, sold his property and laid all the proceeds at the apostle's feet. In the NT, Levites owned property, unlike the OT (Acts 4:36–37). The believers' needs were met regardless of social status similar to the tithe declaration (Deut. 26:12–15).

5.4.4 Acts 5:1–11

After Barnabas sold his property, Ananias and Sapphira sold theirs but secretly kept part of the proceeds. Their dishonesty disrupted communal lifestyle. Peter first addressed Ananias regarding the sum of money (Acts 5:3–6), and subsequently questioned Sapphira (Acts 5:7–10). The couple hid their wrongdoing together and were sentenced to death, marking the first recorded judgement on giving in the NT. A profound sense of fear spread throughout the whole church. God requires faithfulness and honesty in all forms of worship privately and publicly, hence the tithe pronouncement (Deut. 26:12–15).

5.4.5 Non-monetary offerings in Acts

5.4.5.1 Peter heals a lame beggar

Peter and John encountered a lame beggar at the temple's Beautiful Gate during prayer time (Acts 3:1–2). At that time, it was customary to give money to beggars; however, Peter addressed the underlying issue and responded unexpectedly (Acts. 3:6). The beggar was miraculously healed and gave thanks to God (see Acts 9:32–35).

5.4.5.2 Daily food distribution (Acts 6:1–7)

The early church was culturally diverse, and Hellenistic members reported that Greek-speaking widows were neglected in daily food distribution. In response, the apostles chose spirit-filled men to handle this task so they could focus on preaching. Giving should not be influenced by ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

5.4.5.3 Spiritual gifts for personal enrichment (Acts 8:9, 13, 18–24)

Simon the sorcerer corrupted his spiritual conversion with jealousy following the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Simon offered Peter monetary offer to purchase spiritual gifts. This incident is unrelated to OT tithing practices but warns spiritual leaders to guard against such wicked practice in faith communities.

5.4.5.4 Charitable giving (Acts 9:36–43)

Dorcas was known for her charity and helping those in need. When she died, Peter was called; moved by the widows' gratitude for Dorcas's work, he prayed and brought her back to life. Her resurrection led many to become followers of Christ (Acts 11:27–30; 16:15; 28:1–2).

5.4.5.5 Conclusion

Tithing in the early church contrasts the binding OT tithing system. Tithing transformed from a legalistic requirement to a sacrificial, heartfelt generosity, and stewardship. Believers worshipped God and promoted unity within the community by selling and sharing their assets (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37). Their communal living supported the underprivileged and advanced the preaching of the gospel (Acts 6:1-7; 9:32-43). The OT tithing practices and social welfare structure is reflected in the early church (Acts 2: 7, 42-45). T

5.5 Tithing in the Pauline Epistles

5.5.1 Introduction

Despite Paul's background as a devout Pharisee, OT tithing practices is not referenced in his letters. Giving is extensively advocated as a spiritual gift of service to God (Rom. 12:3-8). Paul encourages proportional, intentional, and joyful giving based on individual's grace and means.

5.5.2 Sacrificial offering (Rom. 12:1-3)

Paul sets the stage for believers to primarily self-sacrifice in serving God. Scripture identifies believers as living sacrifices in relation to the worldly people. God requires living spiritual beings with a transformed mindset. Spiritual matters and earthly standards are always in conflict. A renewed mindset focuses on God while a carnal mind entertain worldly desires (Rom. 8:1-8). Sacrificial offerings of believers relates to the five mandatory Levitical offerings (Lev. 1-6).

5.5.3 Serving God with Spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8)

Spiritual gifts function as special abilities endowed by God upon certain believers for ministry and service to God. Christians are encouraged to use their gifts and resources to serve God and fellow-humans. Giving is influenced by God's grace and love (Carson & Moo, 2005:392).

5.5.4 Collection for the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26-27)

The saints in Jerusalem were greatly affected by famine, likely predicted by Agabus during the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius (Acts 11:29-30). As a result, Paul was prompted to request a voluntary generous collection from the Gentile believers to assist the Jewish saints.

The Greek phrase *κοινωνία* means contribution, fellowship, or participation. According to Jackson (2011:707), the Greco-Roman society used *κοινωνία* in religious circles, familial, and social contexts symbolising heartfelt intimacy, partnership, and unity. The Romans were cautioned against self-exaltation and mockery (Rom.11:17-32; 14:1-23).

The Grecian believers received Paul's message with joy and wilfully participated in the act of giving. Paul's teaching promoted justification by faith as the bedrock for Christian unity (Rom. 11:17–18; 15:26). The contribution broke the wall of hostility between the Gentile and Jerusalem assemblies.

5.5.5 Financial support for ministers and workers

Resources should be distributed to provide support for both part-time and full-time Christian staff, as well as individuals in need (1 Cor. 9:13–14; Gal. 2:10; Phil. 4:15–19). On the contrary, some workers may reject the offer based on personal preferences (1 Cor. 9:15–18).

Paul inspired the Galatians to partner, support teachers of the word, and fellow believers, (Gal. 6:6). The apostle indicates that Spirit-led giving yields spiritual harvest leading to eternal life (Gal 6:7–10; Phil. 4:17). Moreover, Paul indicates that spirit-led believers are liberated from the law (Gal. 5:18). Based on this declaration, the researcher argues that Christians are liberated from ancient Israel tithing practices.

5.5.6 The NT temple (1 Cor. 6:19–20)

The OT tithes were carried to the temple and later storehouses. Conversely, the NT lacks a physical temple similar to the Jerusalem which served as God's dwelling place of the presence of God. Believer's physical bodies are consecrate to God, holy, and serve as the dwelling place of God. As the Jerusalem temple manifested God's presence, believers should manifest God's presence and glory to the fallen world.

5.6.7 The principles of giving 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15)

The sections will be analysed as doublet as they both address the collection for the Jerusalem saints.

5.6.7.1 Generosity of the Grecian believers (2 Cor. 8:1–5; 9:1–4)

Paul employed the model of generosity of the Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, and the Bereans) to encourage the Corinthians to complete the outstanding proposal (2 Cor. 8:1). They gave joyfully under severe oppression and intense poverty (2 Cor. 8:2). They initially gave themselves to Christ as an expression of their love, commitment, and willingness (2 Cor. 8:5). Their attitude compelled Paul to receive their contribution with urgency (2 Cor. 8:3–4).

According to Richards (2011:798), this offering in Greek is referred to as a λογεία, denoting a unique or one time collection. In this context, διακονία means service (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1), χάρις implies a gift (2 Cor. 8:4), and εὐλογία indicates a generous gift (2 Cor. 9:5).

Certainly, these churches were not commanded to give. Their generosity illustrates the grace of God at work (Davis, 2012:1318).

The Corinthians possessed abundance of gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–11; 2 Cor. 8:7; 9:8) to enable them to excel in the grace of giving. Paul promotes generosity as a theological anchor of giving sacrificially, and willingly to reflect Christ's sacrifice for humanity. God remains the perfect epitome of Christian giving. According to Coetzee (1995:300), Paul mentioned the paradox of abundance and poverty seven times (2 Cor. 8:2, 7, 9, 14; 9:6, 8, 11), the "willingness" of offering the "gift" twelve times, and "in love" six times (2 Cor. 8:1–9:15).

5.6.7.2 Theological principles of giving (2 Cor. 8:14; 9:6–15)

Hays and Duvall (2011:811–812) indicate that Paul established a number of theological principles.

1. The "echo" principle

The principle alludes to a metaphorical concept which resonates one's actions with its outcomes. It is commonly referred to as the "Law of cause and effect" in the OC (Gen. 2:16–17) or "sowing and reaping" (2 Cor. 9:6) in the NC. Paul indicates that the measure of giving (negative or positive) applied to others will always back to the sender (2 Cor. 9:6).

2. The principle of "deliberate choice"

Paul encourages cheerful giving contrary to obligation (2 Cor. 9:7). Believers are expected to let Scripture guide their decisions, actions, and words toward themselves and others. The choices made by believers reflect their love for God and for other people (1 Cor. 13: 4–8). Giving should be grounded in faith and hope, but love surpasses them.

3. The principle of "more than enough"

Paul urges believers to rely on God's unlimited resources rather than their own limitations. Giving starts with the small gifts God provides, which multiply through generosity to meet ministry and community needs. Like a planted seed, this leads to a plentiful harvest. God (2 Cor. 9:8–10).

4. The principle of "end result"

The act of giving demonstrated through the obedience of believers, result in an abundance of gratitude and praise to God. Likewise, God's unearned grace abundantly blesses the generosity of saints (2 Cor. 9:11–14).

5. The principle of the “ultimate sacrifice of Jesus”

Generous giving points to Jesus as the source and prototype of generous giving. This is a greatest testimony that the magnificent gift of Christ is the source. "indefinable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

5.6.7.3 Financial accountability (2 Cor. 8:16–24; 9:3–5)

Paul advocates for honesty and transparency in handling church funds. Titus and the trusted brother administrated the contributions responsibly before God and believers (2 Cor. 8:12; 9:3–5).

5.7.7.4 Conclusions

Tithing in Pauline letters shifts from a legalistic 10% to Christian generosity and stewardship which unites believers across social boundaries to advance God’s Kingdom.

5.8 Tithing in General Epistles

Tithing evolves from the OT obligation to voluntary, generous, and sacrificial giving influenced by grace instead of Law.

5.8.1 Financial support for dedicated ministers

Paul indicates that ecclesiastical service deserves appreciation and financial compensation. Appreciating spiritual leaders attracts earthly and heavenly blessings. The imagery of an “ox treading grain without being muzzled” is a metaphor for allowing spiritual leaders to benefit from their ministerial functions. This underscores the continuity between the Old and New Testaments ways of rewarding temple and church services(1 Tim. 5:17–18).

5.8.2 Spiritual pitfalls of riches.

Believers’ wealth should be governed by Scripture. Riches are temporary, unreliable, and may trigger self-exaltation, egoism, and self-adequacy. Wealthy Christians should recognise God as the source and provider. God provides human needs for enjoyment resulting in gratitude and contentment. Recognizing. Paul underscores the theological framework of generosity and sharing is accentuated (1Tim. 6:17–19).

Believers should reciprocate God's provision of good gifts by offering generous acts of kindness to fellow humans (Jam. 1:17–18).

5.8.3 God's chosen people (1 Pet. 2:9–10)

Tithing in the OT was centred around the hereditary Levitical priesthood. On the contrary, the NT introduces a distinct priesthood for today's church bestowed upon believers after their spiritual conversion. Peter introduces a new identity for Christians as "God's chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..." comparable to the nation of Israel (Exod. 19:6). The Levites were appointed as priests following their deliverance from Egyptian slavery (Exod. 12–14). On the other hand, believers are delivered from the bondage of sin and darkness. God elects believers as royal priests similar to the historical and prophetic Melchizedek's dual offices. Believers are elevated to a higher status of becoming God's representatives in the fallen world. As a result, Christians should worship and serve God with reverence to advance God's kingdom.

5.8.4 Warning against deceivers

Love expresses itself in sacrificial giving. Faith movements attracts false teachers who are greedy for money. As a result, John warns the body of Christ to test the authenticity of gospel prosperity and anti-Christ preachers (1 John 3:16–17). Love and ecclesiastical support requires discernment. Believers are urged to refrain from offering support and hospitality to false teachers (1 John 4:1–3, 15); 2 John 1:10–11; 3 John).

5.9 Tithing in the book of Hebrews

The allusion of tithing in the Book of Hebrews is not a prescription for giving 10% of one's income or resources. Tithing in Hebrews highlights the theological viewpoint regarding the supremacy of Jesus' priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek".

5.9.1 The connection between the OT and NT Melchizedek

Hebrews 7:1–10 expounds on the Genesis encounter of Abram and Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20). The author employs the absence of data in the Genesis account to describe Melchizedek's qualities. The allusion to Melchizedek receiving tithes from Abram (Heb. 7:2) does not prescribe tithing for contemporary Christians, but makes an argument about the supremacy of Melchizedek's priesthood (Carson & Moo, 2005:599).

Melchizedek foreshadows the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ "as the Son of God" in contrast to the Levitical priests (Gundry, 2012:510). The greatness of Melchizedek was demonstrated by the bestowal of blessings and the reception of tithes from the patriarch (Heb. 7:4).

Hebrews 7:8 is used as a proof text by tithe proponents in the NT to support the continuity of tithing for believers today. The mention of “tithes” refers to the tithe that Abram gave to Melchizedek, not the NT church paying tithes to Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. The fulfilment is always realised in the person and work of Jesus Christ after his resurrection in the NT. Jesus Christ is not mentioned in verses 1–10, but the writer is comparing the relationship between the events of the OT with the NT concerning priesthood.

The death of Jesus Christ brought about a priestly transformation; the old Levitical priesthood under the Mosaic covenant was revoked. Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah, and nothing was said concerning priesthood. His priesthood is divinely appointed by God through an oath (Ps. 110:4).

5.9.2 The change of the Priesthood (Heb. 7:12–13)

The first Covenant had to be changed (Heb. 7:12, 15) because of its weakness and failure to achieve perfection (Heb. 7:18–19). God’s oath (Ps. 104:4) and covenant promises to Abram (Gen. 12:1–3) are “two immutable things” which are fulfilled in Christ after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:18–20). God’s divine plan of perfect salvation and redemption are embedded in the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. The Levitical priesthood and the Jerusalem temple were foreshadowing the new covenant (Heb. 8:1–12). As a result, Jesus becomes a guarantor of a better covenant in contrast to the Mosaic tithe covenant. The announcement of the new covenant made the Mosaic covenant to be outmoded (Heb. 8:13).

5.9.3 Conclusion

The allusion of tithing in Hebrews does not advocate for the continuity of tithing in the NT, but illustrates the weakness of the Levitical priesthood. The NC underscores the eternal priesthood of Christ “after the order of Melchizedek”.

5.10 Tithing in the Apocalypse

There are no scriptural references of tithing found in the book of Revelation. OC tithing can be linked to God’s grace, provision, worship. The earthly Jerusalem temple is replaced by the New Jerusalem temple (Rev. 21:18–22). The worshipers in the heavenly temple (Rev. 4–5) refers to nations and Gentiles whose name are written in book of life (Rev.21:24–27). Their worship relates with the spirit of generous giving. Tithing in the Apocalypse witnesses that that Jesus Christ is source and provider of OC tithes and NC giving through his love and grace.

5.11 Conclusion

Jesus was born and raised under the Jewish Law. His ministry brought about some changes, established new laws, and nullified the Mosaic tithing practices. The NT events recorded prior Jesus' death falls within the OC. Jesus's death and resurrection brought about the ultimate fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). The OC tithing practice evolved to the principles of free-will, generous, proportionate, and joyful stewardship (2 Cor. 8–9) based on personal means. The early church elders and apostles have set a standard for believers to follow.

The Jerusalem council did not command the Gentile believers to keep the Jewish law of tithing (Acts 15:23–29). Spiritual leaders and believers should draw lessons relevant for Christian communities from the OT tithing as part of Scripture (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16). Giving in the NT is influenced by God's grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit instead of a legal requirement.

In conclusion, Chapter 5 demonstrated how tithing should be understood in the NT in relation to the OC tithing Law. Chapter 6 will synthesise the findings of the previous chapters and provide the unique contribution and legitimate use of Genesis 14:18–24 in the debate on tithing.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, the researcher investigated whether the practice of tithing as recorded in Genesis 14:18–24 is still applicable to contemporary Christians. The current chapter provides a brief condensation of the findings of each chapter and concludes with the unique contribution and legitimate use of Genesis 14:18–24 in the debate on tithing.

6.2 Summary of previous chapters

Chapter 2 presented an overview of various interpretations of Genesis 14:18–24 in relation to its implications for tithing. It identified scholars who view the passage as prescriptive and still binding for Christians and those who regard it as merely descriptive (Table 2.4).

Chapter 3 conducted a detailed exegetical analysis of Genesis 14:18–24 to determine what the passage says and does not say about tithing. The historical, cultural, literary context, and linguistic relations unearthed the meaning and theology of the passage for the original audience.

Chapter 4 situated Genesis 14:18–24 within the larger biblical practice of tithing in the Hebrew canon. It examined the development of tithing prior to the giving of the law, in the Torah, the historical books, the poetical and wisdom literature, the prophetic literature, and the intertestamental period. In the OT, tithing functions as a covenantal obligation within God’s redemptive plan of salvation and deliverance for the nation of Israel. It serves as an expression of love, national unity, joyful worship, responsible stewardship, acknowledgment of God’s ownership, and the role of the divinely appointed priesthood.

Chapter 5 demonstrated how tithing is understood in the New Testament in relation to the Old Covenant. It examined tithing in the Gospels, Acts, Pauline epistles, General Epistles, Hebrews and the book of Revelation. In the NT, OT tithing is understood as fulfilled and transformed by the “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Accordingly, the NC emphasises voluntary, Spirit-led giving characterised by generosity, stewardship and joyful worship.

6.3 Conclusion: The unique contribution of Genesis 14:18–24 on the debate about tithing

Genesis 14:18–24 makes a unique contribution to the debate on tithing by presenting the first recorded instance of tithing in Scripture. Abram willingly gave a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek. The passage lays a foundation for the theological development of priesthood outside the Levitical lineage, pointing forward to Jesus Christ’s eternal priesthood “after the order

of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7). Both OT tithing and NT giving support communal living and faith communities in advancing God’s kingdom. However, the text does not prescribe tithing as a binding principle for contemporary Christians.

The legitimate use of Genesis 14:18–24 lies in its historical and theological significance: it highlights God’s providence and the priority of worship over legalism. In contexts where tithing is over-emphasised, this passage reminds Christians that true giving flows from a grateful heart prompted by God’s grace. Believers are called to respond to God’s provision by living out the realities of the new covenant. This study contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation by clarifying that Genesis 14:18–24 does not mandate tithing for Christians today, but points to the greater reality fulfilled in Christ.

REFERENCE LIST

Uncategorized References

- Anon. 2006. *NIV cultural backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to life the ancient world of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Barnwell, R. 2012. *More excellent giving: financial principles in the Kingdom of God. A Study manual*. In: *Kingdom economics series. Part 1*. Durban: Eternal Publishing.
- Belcher, R.P.J. 2012. *Genesis: The beginning of God's plan of salvation*. Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications.
- Breneman, M. 2012. Ezra-Nehemiah. In: Burge, G.M. & Hill, A.E., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. pp. 423-439.
- Brown, F., Driver, S.R. & Briggs, C.A. 1977. *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Brueggemann, W.B. 1982. *Genesis. Interpretation: a Bible commentary for preaching and teaching*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.
- Carson, D.A. & Moo, D.J. 2005. *An introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic.
- Coetzee, J.C. 1995. NTES 211 Reader pdf. Potchefstroom.
- Currid, J.D. 2003. *A study commentary on Genesis: Genesis 1:1 - 25:18* 1. USA, NY: Evangelical Press.
- Davis, A. 2012. 1-2 Corinthians. In: Burge, G.M. & Hill, A.E., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary*. 1274-1326. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group.
- Davis, G.B. 1987. Are Christians supposed to tithe. *Criswell Theological Review*, 2(1):85-97.
- Davis, J.J. 1975. *Paradise to prison: studies in Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- De Gray Birch, R. 2007. God's tithe: a Biblical overview. *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology*.1-14.
- Della Vida, G.L. 1944. El 'Elyon in Genesis 14:18-20. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 63(1):1-9. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3262503>
- Douglas, J.D. & Tenny, M.C. 1989. *NIV dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins.
- Emadi, M. 2019. You are priest forever: Psalm 110 and the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 23(1):57-84.
- England, A. 2011. The sacrifices. In: Hayes, J.D. & Duval, J.S., eds. *The illustrated Bible handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. p 83.
- Fagan, A.R. 1992. *What the Bible says about stewardship*. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press.
- Gane, R.E. 2012. Leviticus. In: Burge, G.M. & Hill, A.E., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group.
- Goldingay, J. 2002. Jubilee tithe. *Transformation*, 19(3):198-205.
- Goldingay, J. 2020. *Genesis. Baker commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Gundry, R.H. 2012. *A survey of the New Testament*. 5th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Hamilton, V.P. 1990. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*. MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Hamilton, V.P. 2012. Genesis. In: Burge, G.M. & Hill, A.E., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Books.
- Hartley, J.E. 1992. *Leviticus: Word Bible commentary*. Thomas Nelson.
- Hays, J.D. & Duvall, J.S. 2011. *The Baker illustrated Bible handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group.
- Hays, J.D., Duvall, J.S. & Pate, C.M. 2007. *An A-to-Z guide to Biblical prophecy and the end times*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Holladay, W.L. 1971. *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hughes, P.E. 1977. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Jackson, S. 2011. Luke's use of Koinonia. In: Hays, J.D. & Duval, J.S., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. p 707.
- Jenson, P.P. 1977. In. אֶשֶׁר ('ešer). In. VanGemeren, W., ed. *New International dictionary of Old Testament theology and exegesis*. Vol 3: Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. pp. 552-554.
- Kaiser Jr, W.C. 2003. *Preaching and teaching from the Old Testament: a guide for the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic
- Kamyau, C.A. 2016. *Melchizedek Passages in the Bible: A literary and discourse analysis of Genesis 14*. De Gruyter.
- Keener, C.S. 1999. *A commentary on the gospel of Matthew*. www.pdfdrive.com Date of access: 16 Sept. 2024.
- Kelly, R.E. 2007. *Should the church teach tithing*. Lincoln: Writers Club Press.
- Kendall, R. 1983. *Tithing: Discover the Freedom of Biblical Giving*. Zondervan.
- Kidner, D. 2008. *Genesis: An introduction and commentary. Volume 1 of Tyndale Old Testament commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Kitchen, K.A. 2003. *On the reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Kuntz, J.K. 1974. *The People of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Old Testament Literature, History, and Thought*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Landsdell, H. 1992. *The Sacred Tenth: studies in tithe giving, ancient and modern*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Lasor, W.S., Hubbard, D.A. & Bush, F.W. 1996. *Old Testament survey: the message, form, and background of the Old Testament*. 2nd Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Lockyer, H. 2017. *The gospel in the Pentateuch*. Whitaker House.
- Longman III, T. & Dillard, R.B. 2006. *An introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Longman III, T., Enns, P. & Strauss, M. 2013. *The Baker illustrated Bible dictionary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group.
- MacArthur, J.F. 2000. *Whose money is it anyway?: a Biblical guide to using God's wealth*. Thomas Nelson.
- Martinez, F.G. & Tigchelaar, E.J.C. 1999. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition: vol 1: 1Q1-4Q273*. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Mathews, K.A. 2005. *The new American commentary: Genesis 11:27-50:26*. 1B. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Mitchell, C.W. 1987. *The meaning of BRK "to bless" in the Old Testament*. Society of Biblical Literature.
- Moretsi, L. 2009. Tithing : an evaluation of the Biblical background. *In die Skriflig*, 43(2):397-411. doi:10.10520/EJC108403
- Moretsi, L.H. 2004. *An exegetical study of Malachi 3:6-12 with special reference to tithing*. Potchefstroom: North-West University. (Thesis - MTh).
- Murray, S. 2001. *Beyond tithing*. Cumbria, U.K Paternoster Press.
- Murray, S. 2011. *Beyond tithing*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers.
- North, G. 1994. *Tithing and the Church*. Institute for Christian Economics.
- North, G. 2011. *The Covenantal Tithe*. American Vision.
- Otabil, M. 2019. *Tithes, offerings & first fruits: timeless principles for Christian stewardship*. Kairos.
- Pao, D.W. 2012. Acts. In: Burge, G.M. & Hill, A.E., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. pp. 1165-1219.
- Parker, D.M. 2012. Tithing: instruction or instructive. *A Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21(2):201-220. doi:10.1163/17455251-02102003
- Phillips, E. 2012. Exodus. In: Burge, G.M. & Hill, A.E., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Books. pp. 50-86.
- Pink, A.W. 2006. *Tithing*. Part 1. www.pbministries.org Date of access: 01. Apr. 2006.
- Pohlmann, M.H. 2003. Your Ministry of Giving In: Ihlenfeldt, P.R., ed. *Discipleship in the 21st Century: Stewardship*: Roodepoort: Baptist House.

- Price, P.A. 2006. *The prophet's dictionary: the ultimate guide to the supernatural wisdom*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.
- Pryce, G. 2000. *The principle of giving and the practice of tithing* (Working paper). <http://www.gwilympryce.co.uk/religious/Tithing%20Feb> Date of access: 22 Feb.
- Quiggle, J.D. 2009. *Why Christians should not tithe: a history of tithing and a Biblical paradigm for Christian giving*. Wipf & Stock Publishers.
- Richards, E.R. 2011. Jerusalem offering. In: Hays, J.D. & Duval, J.S., eds. *The Baker illustrated Bible handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. p 798.
- Sarna, N.M. 1989. *The JPS Torah commentary: Genesis*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Snoeberger, M.A. 2000. *The pre-Mosaic tithe: issues and implications*. *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, 5:71-95.
- Stevens, M.E. 2006. *Temples, tithes. and temples: the temple and the economic Life of Ancient Israel*. Baker Academic.
- Stuart, D. 2009. *Old Testament exegesis: a handbook for students and pastors*. 4th ed. Louisville, KY: John Knox.
- Thayer, J.H. 2017. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Utlely, B. 2013. *The first Christian primer: Matthew*. www.freebiblecommentary.org Date of access: 25 Oct. 2024.
- Van der Toorn, K., Bob Becking, B. & Van der Horst, P.W. 1999. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. 2nd. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Erdmans.
- Vanhoozer, K.J., Bartholomew, C.G., Treier, D.J. & Wright, N.T. 2005. *Dictionary for theological interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI:: Baker Academic.
- Vine, W.E. 1996. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- Von Rad, G. 1972. *Genesis: a commentary*. Philadelphia, PA:: The Westminster Press.
- Waltke, B.K. 2007. *An Old Testament theology: an exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic.
- Waltke, B.K. & Fredericks, C.J. 2001. *Genesis: a commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic.
- Walton, J.H. 2001. *The NIV Application Commentary*. HarperCollins Christian Publishing.
- Walton, J.H. & Keener, G.S. 2016. *NIV cultural backgrounds study Bible*. Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan.
- Wenham, G.J. 1987. *Genesis 1-15. Word Biblical Commentary series*. Waco: Word Book. . Waco: Word Book.
- Westermann, C. 2004. *Genesis 12-36: a commentary*. T&T Clark International.