

## **Abraham's Household: An Estimate**

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Abraham's rescue of Lot gives the first explicit indication of the number of servants in Abraham's household. "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan" (Gen. 14:14). Allowing for wives, children and aged parents of these warriors, the number of Abraham's servants can be conservatively estimated in the range of fifteen hundred to two thousand souls. Before the ill-advised move of Lot's household toward Sodom (Gen.13:5-13), the total number of servants in God's covenant community may well have exceeded three thousand. It is not surprising, therefore, that leaders of the neighboring nations regarded Abraham as "a mighty prince among us" (Gen. 23:6). So, we may dismiss cursory conclusions that Abraham's household numbered below one hundred.

This respect for Abraham's power restrained heathen neighbors from harassment of God's people. Indeed, in his rescue of Lot's household, Abraham's international standing enabled him to augment his mobilized servants with warriors led by his Amorite neighbors, Aner, Eschol and Mamre (Gen 14:13,24). The rescue of Lot's house is the sole recorded example of an international alliance led by Abraham. Abraham was careful not to entangle himself and his tribal nation with his heathen neighbors. When the reprobate king of Sodom offered to let him keep the spoils of battle, Abraham refused, saying, "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord , the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, . . . that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich" (Gen. 14:20-21). Later, he insisted that his head servant "swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell" (Gen. 24:3). Thus, Abraham avoided covenant relationships with heathen leaders that would corrupt the leadership of God's people.