

Chapter Fourteen

Chedorlaomer

In the city of Elam the musicians of King Chedorlaomer's great army gathered on top of the ramparts of the wall. The blasting notes of their horns signaled the beginning of the procession of slaves entering through the gates. Thousands of people crowded the streets. Their cheering and screaming drowned out the beseeching words of the slaves. Tiny children, sitting on top of their fathers' shoulders, waved happily as the whips struck the naked backs of the haggard men and women. Unmercifully, the escorts forced the captured people to march up the steep slopes.

Behind them dozens of large oxen, dressed with gold ropes, pulled the strong wagons that carried tons of barley grains and figs and cedar planks. The oxen trampled the dry dirt, creating potholes in the streets into which the following, inattentive old women tripped over.

A procession of mighty soldiers closed the rear ranks of the last group of slaves. Over their shoulders they carried a fitting tribute: swords and spears and war axes. Long-handled slicing sickles rested at their sides.

Between the banners and horses, commissioned scribes noted the conquered inventory. Artists also joined the important guests of the day. They were there to observe and commemorate the victory for the king's heirs.

"All we have! All we control!" a general boasted.

Chedorlaomer forced a slight smile, then firmly patted the supreme military commander on his shoulder, patronizing him. He walked to the zenith of the ziggurat and marveled at the lush, verdant forests that impregnated the rolling landscape. He controlled a land rich in natural resources. A land that had hundreds of natural and man-made waterways. A land, however, that seemed forever thirsty. A land whose appetite for water never ceased. Chedorlaomer nodded in self-approval and regret at not having more of what he wanted to attain for himself.

His country had tall mountains that always provided him with enough water. To be certain, however, that his land received its required quench, Chedorlaomer placed tens of thousands of men to work on the irrigation canals. On any given day he would contentedly watch them cut paths into the earth. He enjoyed watching their bent shoulders struggling with the weight of the stones. He observed every placement of the foundation stones for the dams that he had personally designed to control the water's flow.

The time finally came when the building work satisfied him. "We have no need for more canals," he pronounced.

"Where do we place these slaves?"

"Let them build walls. I want them a minimum of fifty, no, seventy feet high!"

"Our armies are our walls," the general boasted again.

"We will need the walls. I may decide to war against Egypt."