

## Meeting With God At Beersheba

Intro: This morning we journey south from Hebron, the city of giants, to the Negev. The word “Negev” originally meant “dry” or “parched.” This is a good description of the land that made up Israel’s southern border. It was/is a dry, parched, and barren expanse of rocky and sandy terrain. In reality it was a desert. **Show on the MAP!** Do you see the Negev on the map? It is the area that lies to the south and west of the Dead Sea. Of particular interest to our study this morning is the small oasis called Beersheba. It is located about 20 miles southwest of Hebron, and lies about midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Do you see it here on the **MAP?**

**Derivation of Beersheba:** Beer-sheba is actually a compound Hebrew word. **Beer** in Hebrew means “cistern,” “pit,” or “well.” **Sheba** is derived from a Hebrew word meaning “the place of the seven lambs,” or “the place of the oath” or “covenant.”

Beersheba came to be known as “the place of swearing an oath by seven lambs.” You will see why as we progress in our study.

The expression “*From Dan to Beersheba*” is often used in the Bible to describe all the territory of Israel. Dan designates Israel’s northern-most border, and Beersheba designates Israel’s southern-most border.

Beersheba is of particular interest to me because it is a place in the Old Testament where God chose to meet with people who needed a word from Him. He revealed Himself to Hagar, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The LORD made and reaffirmed His promises to each of these individuals at Beersheba. Beersheba is a place where God meets with men, and in Hagar’s case, with a woman. I don’t know about you, but I need a Beersheba experience in my life. As believers, we need to know God intimately. We need to grow in our knowledge and understanding of who He is and what He desires of each of us. This is the primary reason I introduced the mini-series on the Attributes of God a couple of months ago. When we begin to comprehend who God truly is, and what He has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ, it will revolutionize our Christian lives. We need to discover what God wants to accomplish in and through each of our lives. So, come with me this morning to Beersheba, and let’s ask God to reveal Himself to us this morning.

## I. God Meets Hagar At Beersheba (Genesis 21)

The first mention of Beersheba in the Old Testament is found in **Genesis 21**. Abraham was living in Gerar in the land of the Philistines. We read in verse 1, of chapter 21, “Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. 2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.” Abraham was 100 years old when Sarah bore Isaac (v. 5).

Now, you may recall, Hagar, Sarah’s handmaid, had born Abraham a son named Ishmael 13 years earlier. We read in **Genesis 21:8** that on the day Isaac was weaned, Abraham made a great feast. *Isaac would have been weaned when he turned two or three.* **v. 9** Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking and making fun of little Isaac. Ishmael would have been around 16 years of age at this time.

Sarah was furious, and we read in **verse 10**, that she demanded that Abraham “Throw her maid and her son out of her house. For the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.” According to v. 11, “the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.” As Abraham was contemplating what to do God spoke to him, **v. 12**—He told him don’t be stressed out because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named” (see Galatians 4:22-31).

**v. 13**—God promises Abraham that he will make the son of his maid, a great nation also because he was his descendant. This promise stems from God’s earlier promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 15 that He would bless and prosper Abraham’s descendants.

We read in **verse 14** that “Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.” Here it is, the first occurrence of Beersheba. The fact that Hagar and Ishmael wandered about in the wilderness would imply that they had lost their way. I am certain that Hagar was in a state of total disbelief and shock. I mean, just put yourself in her place. Abraham had sent her and Ishmael out with a little bread and only one skin of water.

We read in **verse 15** “And the water in the skin was used up, and she left the boy under one of the bushes.” For some inexplicable reason Ishmael was near the point of death. Perhaps he suffered from sun-stroke. Hagar, overcome with

grief and knowing that her son was at the point of death, sat him down under a shrub tree. **v. 16** she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away and lifted up her voice and wept.

I am certain that some of you here this morning can identify with Hagar's plight. You too have faced some horrible difficulty all on your own, with no one to turn to. Let me assure you this morning dear Christian that God has not forgotten you. He loves and cares for you very much. He wants us to cry out to Him for help.

Well, it is clear from our story that Hagar has reached the end of her self. She has nowhere to turn and no one to help her out of her situation. She is emotionally and physically spent, and what is worse, her beloved son Ishmael is at the point of death. It is at this critical time that **God makes Himself known to Hagar. We read in verse 17,**

**17** And God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. **18** "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand; for I will make a great nation of him." **19** "Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

Now, well I can't prove it, I believe this *well of water* would later become known as Beersheba, **the well of the oath**. God would keep His oath to Hagar. We read in the very next verse **20** And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness, and became an archer. **21** And he lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

This is actually the second time God appeared to Hagar. Turn back with me if you will to **Genesis 16**. We read here in **Genesis 16, verse 3**, that when it became clear to Sarah that she could not conceive a child, she took Hagar, her Egyptian maid, and gave her to Abraham as his wife. **v. 4** And Hagar conceived, and when she learned that she had conceived she despised her mistress. Sarah takes it out on Abraham, and he tells her to do with her as she wishes. So, Sarah treats Hagar harshly and she runs away. We read in **verse 7**, Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. **8** And he said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." **9** Then the angel of the LORD said to

her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.” 10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count.” 11 The angel of the LORD said to her further, “Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. 12 “And he will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand *will be* against everyone, And everyone’s hand *will be* against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers.” 13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “Thou art a God who sees”; for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?”

Hagar called the name of God “El Roi” meaning “The God who sees.” God kept His promise to Hagar. She bore Ishmael, and after being driven out of Abraham’s household, God provided and cared

God is indeed the God who sees, El Roi, and he is concerned about all of our afflictions and problems. We can draw near to God because He sees us, loves us, and is deeply concerned about us.

The next person that God meets with at Beersheba is Abraham. Turn back with me if you will to Genesis 21, verses 22-34.

## II. God Meets Abraham At Beersheba (Genesis 21:22-34)

Abraham had been living in Gerar, a territory controlled by Abimelech. Now Gerar was about 10 miles south of Gaza. Abimelech had come to respect and to fear Abraham because God was with him in all that he did. He comes to Abraham and proposes that they make a non-aggression covenant between themselves. Abraham agrees in v. 24, and then follows up with a complaint in **verse 25**. Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. 26 And Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; neither did you tell me, nor did I hear of it until today.” 27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them to Abimelech; and the two of them made a covenant.

**28** Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. **29** And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?” **30** And he said, “You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand in order that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.” **31** Therefore he called that place **Beersheba**; because there the two

of them took an oath. **32** So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned home to the land of the Philistines.

This is where the true meaning behind **Beer-sheba** comes from. Abraham gave Abimelech 7 ewe lambs as a pledge that the well belonged to him. In effect he ratified the oath or the covenant that the two of them had just made. From this day forward, the well became known as **Beersheba**, “**the place of swearing an oath by seven lambs.**”

**We read in verse 33**, that following Abimelech’s departure, Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

The tamarisk tree served as a symbol of God’s everlasting nature, and the promise He had made to bless and care for Abraham and his descendants forever. God is indeed El Olam, the eternal God. He always has been, is, and always shall be. He is eternal God. He will never change. We can rest assured in the fact that He controls every circumstance in our lives. We can trust Him to meet our needs tomorrow, just as He always has in the past. I think of the song *He’s always been faithful to me*. He has promised to never leave us or forsake us. We can trust Him because He is the eternal God.

Let me just say, the only way you will ever be able to trust God, is if you get to know God. We get to know God by meeting with Him through His Word. Do you want to experience the peace of God, then meet with Him through His Word. Spend time talking to Him in prayer. If you begin to meet daily with God at the well of His Word you will learn to trust Him. If you begin to meet daily with God at the well of His Word you will experience the peace of God, which surpasses human comprehension. Meet with God at the well of His Word, and get to know Him as El Olam, the Everlasting God.

### **III. God Meets Isaac At Beersheba (Genesis 26)**

The next person God met with at Beersheba was Abraham’s son Isaac. We read his story in Genesis 26. Like his father Abraham, Isaac settles in Gerar, the land of the Philistines. And like his father, he lied about his wife Rebekah, saying she was his sister. God protected Rebekah, and blessed Isaac so that he became very rich. This caused the Philistines he lived among to envy him. We read in Genesis 26, verse 15 that they began to stop up his wells with earth,

and Abimelech asked Isaac, to move away because he had become too powerful. Isaac moved to Gerar, and dug the same wells his father Abraham had dug, for the Philistines had stopped them up. **v. 20**—Each time Isaac dug a well, the herdsman of Gerar quarreled with the herdsman of Isaac, saying, “The water is ours!” Isaac kept moving east until, **v. 23** He finally arrives at Beersheba. At this point in our message, we are not surprised to learn that God meets with Isaac at Beersheba. **v. 24** and the LORD appeared to him the same night and said,

“I am the God of Abraham your father;  
Do not fear, for I am with you.  
I will bless you, and multiply your descendants,  
For the sake of My servant Abraham.”

**v. 25** So he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants began to dig a well.

Isaac needed this revelation from God. He had been pushed around by the Philistines, and had to move from well to well. He needed to be reassured that God would be with him, and He would fulfill the promises He had made to his father Abraham. God in His grace revealed Himself to Isaac that very night and reaffirmed the covenant He had made with his father Abraham. Isaac embraced God as the covenant-keeping God.

Have you been down in the dumps this week? Have you been doubting God’s promise to care for you? The remedy my friends is to meet with God at the well of His Word. We need to spend time in God’s Word, and permit Him to reveal Himself to us through His Word. As Paul tells us in Romans 10:11, “For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Now, right after God reveals Himself to Isaac, Abimelech came to him at Beersheba (Genesis 26:26). And just as he had done with his father Abraham, Abimelech proposes a non-aggression peace covenant with Isaac. Well, Isaac is happy to make the agreement. As soon as Abimelech makes the agreement he leaves. No sooner had Abimelech left, than Isaac’s servants come to him, I am reading in Genesis 26, verses 32: that Isaac’s servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, “We have found water.” **33** So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day. Isaac names the well Sheba to symbolize the covenant he had made with Abimelech, but more importantly to serve as a reminder of God’s

covenant promises to his father Abraham (Gen. 12 and 15), which have been passed on to him. Like Hagar and Abraham before him, Isaac had come to know God at the well of Beersheba.

If you want to get to know God as the Promise Keeping God, you will have to spend time at the well of His Word. There is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey His Word.

#### **IV. God Meets Jacob At Beersheba (Genesis 37–46)**

The last person to meet with God at Beersheba is Jacob. He actually spent his early years here in Beersheba. It was here that Jacob stole his brother Esau's birthright and blessing. Jacob, fearing Esau's threat to kill him, left Beersheba and fled north, northeast to Haran.

When Jacob returned from his uncle Laban's twenty years later, he found his father had moved from Beersheba to Hebron. Jacob settled down in Hebron, making it his new home. It was here, as we learned last Sunday morning, that the tragic events in Jacob's life transpired. He lost his son Joseph, and refused to be comforted by his remaining children. It was here that he spent so many useless years in grief, over the loss of his beloved son Joseph. It was here that Jacob's sons brought him back word from Egypt that Joseph was still alive, and he wanted his father to come join him in Egypt.

Joseph's invitation for his father Jacob to come join him in Egypt presented Jacob with a very difficult decision. Would it be ok with God if he went down to Egypt. He reasoned, and rightly so, that God had promised Abraham's descendants Canaan and not the land of Egypt. What would become of the promises God had made to his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac? Jacob didn't know what to do. Should he go or not go. Jacob longed to see his son Joseph again, but more importantly, he wanted to do the will of God. Jacob finally decided to go down to Egypt.

We pick up our story in Genesis 46—We read in verse 1 So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Jacob needed a word from God, so he came to Beersheba.

**2** And God spoke to Israel, that is Jacob, in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” **3** And He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a

great nation there. **4** “I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.”

God met with Jacob at Beersheba and assured him that it was alright for him to go down to Egypt. He promised to go with him, and to make of him a great nation, and He promised that He would surely bring him back up to Canaan. His beloved Joseph would close his eyes when he died, but God would bring him and his descendant back to the promised land of Canaan.

**5** Then Jacob arose from Beersheba and . . . **v. 6** Jacob came to Egypt, and all his descendants with him.

### Conclusion

God is El Roi, the God who sees and cares for our every need. God is El Olam, the Everlasting or Eternal God. God is a promise keeping God. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom He bound Himself through an eternal covenant.

Closing Prayer:

Closing Song: *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*