

~BEER-SHEBA (351)

(Be'er-she'ba) [Well of the Oath, or, Well of Seven]

- The place of a well and, later, of a city in southern Judah. It lies about midway between the Mediterranean Coast and the southern end of the Dead Sea, about 45 kilometers (28 miles) Southwest of Hebron, and about the same distance Southeast of Gaza.
- **Beer-sheba** came to stand for the southernmost point in describing the length of the Promised Land, as expressed in the proverbial phrase **from Dan down to Beer-sheba**.
- Consequently all the sons of Israel went out and the assembly congregated themselves as one man, **from Dan down to Beer-sheba** along with the land of Gilead, to Yehowah at Mizpah. (Judges 20:1)
- Or, in a converse direction, **from Beer-sheba to Dan**.
- So David said to Joab and the chiefs of the people: Go, count Israel from **Beer-sheba to Dan** and bring it to me that I may know their number. (1 Chronicles 21:2)
- So they decided to have the call pass through all Israel, from **Beer-sheba to Dan**, to come and hold the Passover to Yehowah the God of Israel at Jerusalem, for it was not as a multitude that they had done so according to what is written. (2 Chronicles 30:5)
- After the division of the nation into two kingdoms, **Beer-sheba** continued to be used to indicate the southern extremity of the kingdom of Judah in the expressions **from Geba as far as Beer-sheba**
- Then he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, that he might make unfit for worship the high places where the priests had made sacrificial smoke, from **Geba as far as Beer-sheba**, and he pulled down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the chief of the city, which was at the left as a person came into the gate of the city. (2 Kings 23:8)
- And from **Beer-sheba** to the mountainous region of Ephraim, where the northern kingdom of Israel began.

- And Jehoshaphat continued dwelling in Jerusalem, and he began to go out again among the people from **Beer-sheba** to the mountainous region of Ephraim, that he might bring them back to Yehowah the God of their forefathers. (**2 Chronicles 19:4**)
- In postexilic times the expression was used in a yet more limited form to refer to the area occupied by the repatriated men of Judah, extending from **Beer-sheba** clear to the valley of Hinnom.
- And in Hazar-shual and in **Beer-sheba** and its dependent towns (**Nehemiah 11:27**)
- Zanoah, Adullam and their settlements, Lachish and its fields, Azekah and its dependent towns. And they took up camping from **Beer-sheba** clear to the valley of Hinnom. (**Nehemiah 11:30**)
- In reality, there were other towns of the Promised Land that lay to the South of **Beer-sheba**, even as there were Israelite towns North of Dan. However, both Dan and **Beer-sheba** were situated at natural frontiers of the land. In the case of **Beer-sheba**, its position was below the mountains of Judah on the edge of the desert.
- Additionally, it was one of the principal cities of Judah, along with Jerusalem and Hebron, and this was not only because it had an excellent supply of water as compared with the surrounding region, thus allowing for both farming and grazing of herds and flocks, but also because important roads converged on it from several directions.
- From Egypt an ancient route led up by the Way of the Wells through Kadesh-barnea to **Beer-sheba**, being joined by another road over which traveled the camel caravans from the Spice Kingdoms of the Arabian Peninsula, heading for Philistia or Judah.
- From Ezion-geber, at the head of the Gulf of `Aqaba, another route led up through the Arabah and then turned W, climbing the Ascent of Akrabbim to **Beer-sheba**.
- At Gaza, in the Philistine Plain, a road branching from the highway led Southeast to **Beer-sheba**. And, connecting it with the rest of Judah, a road ran from **Beer-sheba** to the Northeast, climbing the plateau up into the mountains of Judah to Jerusalem and points farther North.

- After that Abraham returned to his attendants, and they got up and went their way together to **Beersheba**, and Abraham continued to dwell at **Beersheba**. (**Genesis 22:19**)
- The site is first mentioned in connection with Hagar, who wandered with her son Ishmael in the wilderness of **Beer-sheba** when dismissed by Abraham.
- So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin water bottle and gave it to Hagar, setting it upon her shoulder, and the child, and then dismissed her. And she went her way and wandered about in the wilderness of **Beersheba**. (**Genesis 21:14**)
- Expecting her son to die of thirst, she withdrew from Ishmael, but God heard the boy and directed Hagar to a well.
- Then God opened her eyes so that she caught sight of a well of water, and she went and began to fill the skin bottle with water and to give the boy a drink. (**Genesis 21:19**)
- This may have been a well dug earlier by Abraham, but at that time still unnamed, in view of the account that follows. Some of the Philistines seized a well in this area by violence, seemingly unknown to Abimelech the king of Gerar. He and Phicol the chief of his army approached Abraham to propose a covenant of peace.
- When Abraham severely criticized Abimelech for his servants act of violence in seizing the well, Abimelech avowed his ignorance, concluded a covenant with Abraham, and accepted seven female lambs from him in evidence of Abraham's title to the well.
- That is why he called that place **Beersheba**, because there both of them had taken an oath. (**Genesis 21:31**)
- Abraham then planted a tamarisk tree there and called upon the name of Yehowah the indefinitely lasting God.
- After that he planted a tamarisk tree at **Beersheba** and called there upon the name of Yehowah the indefinitely lasting God. (**Genesis 21:33**)
- It was from **Beer-sheba** that Abraham went to Moriah to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, and he returned there to dwell.

- After that Abraham returned to his attendants, and they got up and went their way together to **Beersheba**, and Abraham continued to dwell at **Beersheba**. (**Genesis 22:19**)
- When Abraham died, the Philistines stopped up the wells he had dug, but when Isaac later took up dwelling here he began to reopen them and call them by the names that his father had given them.
- And Isaac proceeded to dig again the wells of water that they had dug in the days of Abraham his father but which the Philistines went stopping up after Abraham's death, and he resumed calling their names by the names that his father had called them. (**Genesis 26:18**)
- Opposed by the Philistines, he withdrew from place to place until he found ample room at Rehoboth, and later he went up to **Beer-sheba**.
- Later he moved away from there and dug another well, but they did not quarrel over it. Hence he called its name Rehoboth and said, It is because now Yehowah has given us ample room and has made us fruitful in the earth. (**Genesis 26:22**)
- Then he went up from there to **Beersheba**. (**Genesis 26:23**)
- While Isaac's servants were excavating a well at **Beer-sheba**, Abimelech, possibly another king of Gerar, by the same name or the same title as the one that had covenanted with Abraham, or perhaps the same one, came with Phicol the chief of his army to Isaac to propose a covenant of peace with him.
- After feasting and drinking, they arose early the next morning and made sworn statements one to the other. That same day the well produced water, and Isaac called its name Shibah, meaning **Oath**, or, **Seven** and referring to an oath or statement sworn to by seven things.
- Next morning they were early in rising and they made sworn statements one to the other. After that Isaac sent them away and they went from him in peace. (**Genesis 26:31**)
- Now on that day it occurred that the servants of Isaac proceeded to come and report to him regarding the well that they had dug, and to say to him; We have found water! (**Genesis 26:32**)

- Hence he called its name **Shibah**. That is why the name of the city is **Beersheba**, down to this day. (**Genesis 26:33**)
- By using **Shibah**, another form of the name **Sheba**, Isaac apparently was preserving the name **Beer-sheba**, given to the place by Abraham. The possibility of this being the same well previously dug by Abraham and re-excavated by Isaac's men is shown by;
- And Isaac proceeded to dig again the wells of water that they had dug in the days of Abraham his father but which the Philistines went stopping up after Abraham's death, and he resumed calling their names by the names that his father had called them. (**Genesis 26:18**)
- During the years that Isaac lived here, he blessed Jacob in place of Esau and sent him away to Haran to take a wife from the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother.
- Consequently Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and commanded him and said to him; You must not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. (**Genesis 28:1**)
- Get up, go to Paddanaram to the house of Bethuel the father of your mother and from there take yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban the brother of your mother. (**Genesis 28:2**)
- And Jacob continued on his way out from **Beersheba** and kept going to Haran. (**Genesis 28:10**)
- Later on, Jacob, now known as Israel, offered sacrifices to the God of Isaac at **Beer-sheba** on his way to join Joseph, his son, in Egypt.
- Accordingly Israel and all who were his pulled out and came to **Beersheba**, and he proceeded to sacrifice sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. (**Genesis 46:1**)
- Then God talked to Israel in visions of the night and said; Jacob, Jacob! to which he said; Here I am! (**Genesis 46:2**)
- And he went on to say; I am the true God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I shall constitute you there into a great nation. (**Genesis 46:3**)
- I myself shall go down with you to Egypt and I myself shall

surely bring you up also, and Joseph will lay his hand upon your eyes. ([Genesis 46:4](#))

- After that Jacob got up out of **Beersheba**, and the sons of Israel continued transporting Jacob their father and their little ones and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. ([Genesis 46:5](#))

See Also SHIBAH

- In the upwards of 250 years that intervened until Canaan was apportioned to the 12 tribes of Israel, a city had grown up at **Beer-sheba**
- And the cities at the extremity of the tribe of the sons of Judah toward the boundary of Edom in the south came to be Kabzeel and Eder and Jagur. ([Joshua 15:21](#))
- And Hazar-shual and **Beer-sheba** and Biziothiah. ([Joshua 15:28](#))
- Which was assigned to the tribe of Simeon as an enclave city in the territory of Judah.
- Then the second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the sons of Simeon by their families. And their inheritance came to be in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Judah. ([Joshua 19:1](#))
- And they came to have in their inheritance **Beer-sheba** with Sheba, and Moladah. ([Joshua 19:2](#))
- Here Samuel's sons officiated as judges.
- And it came about that as soon as Samuel had grown old he made appointments of his sons as judges for Israel. ([1 Samuel 8:1](#))
- Now the name of his firstborn son happened to be Joel, and the name of his second Abijah, they were judging in **Beer-sheba**. ([1 Samuel 8:2](#))
- Elijah, fleeing from Queen Jezebel's wrath, left his attendant at **Beer-sheba** and headed southward across the Negeb toward Horeb.

- And he became afraid. Consequently he rose up and began to go for his soul and came to **Beer-sheba**, which belongs to Judah. Then he left his attendant behind there. (**1 Kings 19:3**)
- Zibiah, the mother of King Jehoash of Judah, came from this place.
- In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash became king, and for forty years he reigned in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zibiah from **Beer-sheba**. (**2 Kings 12:1**)
- **Beer-sheba** was named as the terminating point of David's registering of the people throughout Israel
- O the king said to Joab the chief of the military forces who was with him: Move about, please, through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to **Beer-sheba**, and you men register the people, and I shall certainly know the number of the people. (**2 Samuel 24:2**)
- Then they came to the fortress of Tyre and all the cities of the Hivites and of the Canaanites and came to the terminating point in the Negeb of Judah at **Beer-sheba**. (**2 Samuel 24:7**)
- And the starting place of Jehoshaphat's reforms in worship.
- And Jehoshaphat continued dwelling in Jerusalem, and he began to go out again among the people from **Beer-sheba** to the mountainous region of Ephraim, that he might bring them back to Yehowah the God of their forefathers. (**2 Chronicles 19:4**)
- The references of Amos to **Beer-sheba** in his day strongly suggest that it was then a place of **unclean religious activities**.
- And do not search for Bethel, and to Gilgal you must not come, and to **Beer-sheba** you **must not pass over**, because Gilgal itself will without fail go into exile, and as regards Bethel, it will become **something uncanny**. (**Amos 5:5**)
- Those who are swearing by the guiltiness of Samaria, and who actually say; As your god is alive, O Dan! And; As the way of **Beer-sheba** is alive! And they will certainly fall, and they will rise up no more. (**Amos 8:14**)

- Perhaps associated in some way with the idolatrous northern kingdom. Figurines of the goddess Astarte have been excavated there, as in many other parts of Israel. From this time forward, except for the brief mention of the reoccupation of the city and its dependent towns after the Babylonian exile
- And in Hazar-shual and in **Beer-sheba** and its dependent towns (**Nehemiah 11:27**)
- The name disappears from the Bible record.
- The city during the period of the kings has been identified with **Tell es-Saba`**, **Tel Be'er Sheva`**, 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) East of present-day Be'er Sheva`. Secular writers of the **Fourth Century C.E.** describe **Beer-sheba** as then being a large village or town and a Roman garrison.
- Today, it retains its position as a crossroads town and an important marketplace. Though the **Beer-sheba** basin is steppeland, receiving only about 15 to 20 centimeters (6 to 8 inches) of rainfall a year, the soil is productive, and there are good farms in the area.
- Several wells are to be found there, the largest of which is nearly 4 meters (13 feet) in diameter, the lower part being cut through about 5 meters (16 feet) of solid rock.