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Tsiyon News

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The Good Way

Genesis 26



The Good Way



Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth ..Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father

had given them. Gen 26:15-18

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Tsiyon News

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 **Slovakian Translation at Tsiyon** - Our Tsiyon Partners in Slovakia have kindly provided us content in Slovakian, now available from our Tsiyon.org website. This is very helpful, not only for Slovakian visitors, but visitors reading other Eastern European languages as well, including Russian, can also read Slovakian. Thanks a bunch, Katka!

Abraham's Well - Beersheba is the largest city in the Negev desert of southern Israel and is often referred to as the "Capital of the Negev."

Modern Beersheba is a city on the rise. It is home to the main campus of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and many high-tech companies are headquartered in the region. There are construction cranes in use across the city and the Jewish National Fund's Blueprint Negev Project is helping fund new projects including an eco-friendly riverfront district, and of course,



new shopping malls.

A new visitor center is constructed at Abraham's Well. This is believed to be the place that Abraham dug a well and made an oath of non-aggression with Abimelech - the leader of the Philistines. Isaac later reopened the well and renewed the pact. Beersheba (Well of the Oath) is named after the pact. The well has been prettied up a bit for the visitor center and now the site includes a new feature that Abraham and Isaac might well have enjoyed - namely, a *Domino's Pizza* literally right next to Abraham's Well.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - Real People

Listener Contributed - A hundred years ago, many Bible critics claimed that stories of the patriarchs were nothing more than religious fiction. The "silence of history" concerning the patriarchs, upon which these critics based their claims, was shattered with the discovery of ancient tablets at Mari (in southeast Syria) and Nuzi (in modern-day Iraq).

These tablets, although not directly mentioning the patriarchs, still constituted such valuable testimony about their life-styles that the late Professor William F. Albright (the then-acknowledged "dean" of Palestinian archaeologists) concluded that "the narratives of Genesis dealing with Abram may now be integrated into the life and history of the time [the second millennium B.C.] in such surprisingly consistent ways that there can be little doubt about their substantial historicity" (*Biblical Archaeologist*, July 1973, p. 10). Professor Albright's conclusion was based on the following evidence from the Mari and Nuzi tablets:

1. Names like Abraham and Jacob were in common use among the Amorites in northern Mesopotamia about 2000 B.C. and later.
2. Mari was the center of a vast network of trade routes ranging from Crete to Elam, from Cappadocia to Megiddo. Merchants constantly traveled these routes from one end to the other. Seen in this context, Abraham's journey from Ur to Haran, then to Canaan and Egypt, is not as improbable as the critics once thought.
3. Abraham's relationship with Hagar (Genesis 16) and Jacob's with Bilhah (Genesis 30) can be better understood by a comparison with a marriage contract from Nuzi, in which the wife was required, if she proved to be barren, to provide a substitute for her husband.
4. Abraham's reluctance to drive out Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16:6) is understandable in the light of Nuzi customs governing such relationships.
5. Another Nuzi tablet revealed the adoption by a childless couple of a servant born in their house. He became the heir if he cared for them in their old age (see Genesis 15:2-3).
6. Jacob's relationship with Laban (Genesis 29) becomes more understandable when compared to other tablets from Nuzi.

Overall, the patriarchs' way of life conforms so closely to the cultural world described by these tablets that there is no reason to doubt that they were real people.

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From Eliyahu

This Sabbath is the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a time when Israel remembers the hasty Exodus of our forefathers from Egypt. This feast, as with much of our spiritual heritage, depends upon remembering and reestablishing the ancient paths of our fathers. Our latest Midrash looks at how Isaac reestablished the paths of his father, Abraham, and in doing so, left a pattern for all of us to follow. There is much to think about in this discussion, that I believe you will find to be very timely on this last day of Unleavened Bread, year 6013.

Blessings and Shalom!

Eliyahu ben David
www.tsiyon.org

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