



Tel Sheva Fact Sheet

Location: In northern Negev Desert, 25 mi southwest of Hebron and 25 mi east of the Gaza Strip.



Meaning of Name: “well of the oath”; “seventh well”

Bible References: 34x

- *Gen 21:14-19* – Hagar & Ishmael find well
- *Gen 21:30-31* – Abraham makes an oath with Abimelech
- *Gen 26:32-33* – Isaac’s servants find water
- *Gen 46:1* – Israel offered sacrifices
- *1 Sam 8:1-5* – Samuel’s ungodly sons
- *1 Kings 19:1-4* – Elijah flees from Jezebel
- *Amos 8:11-14* – Beersheba ends with bad reputation

History: Beersheba played a significant role in the lives of the patriarchs, serving as a place where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob visited in their various journeys. It’s location on the route between Hebron and Egypt made it an oft-frequented location. Later in the biblical record, Beersheba goes from being a place of blessing and provision to a place of cursing and idolatry.

The first settlement was made here as early as 4000 BC, with the Israelites occupying the city from approximately 1100 BC – 700 BC, when the Assyrians came and destroyed Beersheba. Ownership of the city changed hands many times in the first 1,000 years after the birth of Christ, with everyone



Southern section of the ancient city



from the Persians to the Romans making use of the city. It was largely dormant from the period of Arab occupation in the 7th century AD until the early 1900's, when the Turkish army used the location for military purposes. A significant battle occurred in November of 1917, in which allied forces led by an Australian regiment captured Beersheba from the Ottomans; this was considered a crucial victory and a turning point in this theater of WWI. Lord Balfour, perhaps influenced by the changing tide of the war at this point, issued the famous Balfour Declaration calling for a Jewish state in Palestine just two days after the battle of Beersheba.

Today, Be'er Sheva is called "the Capitol of the Negev", and is the 8th most populous city in Israel with over 200,000 inhabitants. It was always seen as a necessary place of habitation by the founding fathers of the modern State of Israel, and continues to be the focus of expansion for industry and immigration.

Archaeological Significance: The ancient "tel" (mound) is located just east of the modern city of Be'er Sheva, nestled between two streams which provided sustenance and natural protection for the city. The majority of the structures remaining have been dated back to the time of Israelite occupation in the 8th Century BC. A replica of the four-horned altar stands in the visitor's center; the original was moved to the

Jerusalem museum. Also of note, a 70m deep well was found on the southeastern part of the city. While the well is certainly not from the times of the patriarchs, it serves as a great visual to



Stairwell down shaft of water reservoir

the many wells that Beersheba was known for. A vast underground water system can be seen in the northeastern section of the city, with stairs descending 17m down the shaft into an underground reservoir. This was used to collect floodwater and rainwater, and had a capacity of 184,000 gallons. This system was a crucial part of surviving the harsh summers in the Negev desert.



Replica of altar



Aerial view of Tel Sheva

Consider This:

- Beersheba is a picture of backsliding in scripture, going from a place of sustenance, salvation, and sacrifice to a place of rejection and running.
- “From Dan to Beersheba” is a phrase mentioned in scripture 9x to describe the length of the land of Israel; interestingly, both places were known for their lofty status and idolatrous practices.