

# Streams in the desert

*wells repaired*

We are right in the middle of the first book in the Jewish Scriptures. Sometime in the future we will come back to this book and look at it in more detail, but for now, here are a few pointers to set the scene.

- The book of Genesis is the first book in the Jewish Scriptures.
- Genesis is a theological understanding of human history covering a period from the beginning, roughly up to the end of the Bronze Age.
- Genesis breaks history into two parts:
  - 1-11 Creation stories and the Ancients, which finishes with the story of Noah.
  - 12-50 The Patriarchs, where we are introduced to Abraham and follows his descendants through to the birth of the nation of Israel.
- Genesis is not a science book.
  - It is not interested in evolution, dinosaurs or anthropology.

Even the way Genesis looks at history is different to the way modern historians understand the past. The Old Testament is more focused on the qualities of individuals in the narrative than it is in chronological and historical details of the events. The focus is always on the human relationship with God and the outcomes of that relationship.

We are picking up the story in chapter 26. Abraham has died. The question is, has the promise that God made to Abraham died with him or will it pass on to his son and heir, Isaac.

## **Read Genesis 26:1-6 & 16-31**

1. Throughout the Old Testament fresh water is seen as a blessing, why might that be?
2. So, what would the ability to dig wells and find water mean for someone with that ability?

The chapter starts with a famine and a choice for Isaac to make. Whenever the rains failed the crops failed, but Egypt always had food because it's agriculture was dependent on the Nile for its water more than the rains.

3. What would be the significance of Isaac leaving the land he was in, to go to Egypt?
4. What effect might it have had on his relationship with God?
5. What did God tell him to do and what did he promise?
6. How did Isaac respond towards the opposition he faced from the Philistines?
7. What was the result of his response?

### Looking deeper

There are some parallels in Genesis 26:7-15 with events in Abraham's life in Genesis 12:10-20. There is the question of deception here, which frustratingly is never actually addressed in either story, but look at the similarities and the different outcomes.

8. What, if anything, might Isaac have understood from the way he was treated?
9. God had promised Isaac the security and blessing Abraham had received, how might we see this in the story?

**Spoilers:** Abraham was not meant to stay in Egypt. Isaac was not meant to go to Egypt. Abraham was thrown out of that country. Isaac was allowed to stay in the land. Abraham was promised and inheritance. Isaac became very wealthy.

10. Are there parts of your life where you need to make a decision to continue to do what God called you to do?
11. If the wells are opportunities for Jesus to bless you and use you to bless others, are there wells that need to be reopened, or new wells that need to be dug in your life? What might they be?

Next Time: John 9:1-20 -- Eye opener