

Genesis 16:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

Analysis

And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

תָּמָא אֵת מֶלֶא כָּל יְהוָה עַל בַּעַת יְמִים
found her And the angel of the LORD by a fountain of water
H4672 H4397 H3068 H5921 H5869 H4325

בְּמִדְבָּר עַל בַּעַת יְמִים בְּדַרְךָ שׂוּר:
in the wilderness by a fountain in the way to Shur
H4057 H5921 H5869 H1870 H7793

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 15:22 (Parallel theme): So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

Genesis 25:18 (Parallel theme): And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

Genesis 21:17 (Parallel theme): And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Proverbs 15:3 (References Lord): The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Genesis 22:15 (References Lord): And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

Genesis 31:11 (Parallel theme): And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

Genesis 20:1 (Parallel theme): And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

Genesis 22:11 (References Lord): And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

1 Samuel 15:7 (Parallel theme): And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.