

# Genesis

## The Wells of Salvation

### *The theology of water conflict in the Biblical narrative*

#### The Wells of Salvation

“Throughout history, access to water has spawned and escalated both domestic and international conflicts. In recent decades, population growth and global warming have both played a major role in raising the demand for and availability of potable water. The U.S. government has predicted that by 2015 almost half of the world's population will be "stressed" for water. Water -- rather than oil -- could become the world's next biggest catalyst for conflict.”<sup>1</sup>

Water has always been scarce in the Middle East and therefore a source of conflict. This article will examine the theology of water conflict in the Biblical narrative – particularly in the patriarchal accounts. Genesis 21:22-34 recounts the dispute between Abraham and Abimelech and Genesis 26:12-33 between Isaac and Abimelech.

#### Duplications or literary conventions?

Genesis 26:12-33 is usually assigned to a J source (apart from verses 15 and 18 assigned to E) and Genesis 21:22-34 mostly E (apart from verses 28-30 and 33 assigned to J).<sup>2</sup> Under the documentary hypothesis these narratives (especially the sister-wife pericopes of 12:10-20;20:1-18 and 26:1-14) are considered duplications and this is explained as due to the use by J and E of two (or three) independent versions of an old folk-story; according to this theory a later reviser of the J narrative inserted an altered version of E's story into the narrative of Isaac, and introduced the anachronism of making Abimelech a Philistine king; then the final Priestly editor after the Exile allowed the different versions to stand side by side as independent episodes. However, more recently some scholars have suggested that they are literary compositions based on and presupposing the knowledge of the original source.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the inadequacy of the criteria employed for assigning the various stories to the traditional sources is coming under renewed critique –“the only reason to view the narratives as emanating from different sources is the use of different divine names.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Water Could Become Major Catalyst for Conflict* by Roman Kupchinsky

<sup>2</sup> *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, (rev. ed., M. Black and H. H. Rowley, eds. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 176 See also: <http://fontes.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/jedpjen.htm>

<sup>3</sup> For Example; while the sister-wife pericope in chap.20 was assigned to E, those of 12 and 26 were widely held to originate from J. However, Van Seters and Westermann suggest that 20 and 26 are literary compositions dependent on 12. [Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 167-91; Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 161, 318-320, 424]

<sup>4</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev, A source-critical investigation of Genesis 20:1-22:19* (paternoster press, 1997).

Robert Alter remarks: “Different repeated episodes have elicited different explanations, but the most common strategy among scholars is to attribute all ostensible duplication in the narrative to a duplication of sources, to a kind of recurrent stammer in the process of transmission, whether written or oral.”<sup>5</sup>

Alter applies a literary approach to the narratives which he terms “Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention.”<sup>6</sup> This formulaic literary device leaves the narrative open to the charge of historicized-fiction, but this is only the case if one equates *Heilsgeschichte*<sup>7</sup> with history and labors under the misconception that history only concerns itself with the mere reportage of facts.<sup>8</sup> Desmond Alexander, commenting on the sister-wife episodes, remarks that;

“While there is evidence that the later accounts have been shaped to some extent by the process of their inclusion within a larger literary work- something which might naturally be expected –it cannot be confirmed that they are merely fictional narratives based on 12:10-13:1.”<sup>9</sup>

His conclusion is as valid for the sister-wife episodes as it is for the chapters under discussion. The occurrence of supposed anachronisms to discount the historicity of the accounts is based on dubious evidence and is open to several other plausible explanations.<sup>10</sup>

## The wells of contention (Genesis 21 and Genesis 26)

All the patriarchal narratives share a common theme, namely, that of legitimacy. Who is the legitimate heir? Isaac or Ishmael? Who is the legitimate husband of Sarah (Rebekah); is it Abraham (Isaac) or Abimelech? Who has legitimate ownership of the wells; is it Abraham (Isaac) or Abimelech? Who is the legitimate recipient of the patriarchal blessings, Jacob or Esau? The theme of legitimacy is duplicated with subtle variations throughout the Genesis narrative.

The formulaic incorporation of themes that are coupled with particular type-scenes should be placed in a worldview where the medium for revelation is history itself; not necessarily history as a causal-effectual

<sup>5</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (Basic Books, 1981), pp.49-50

<sup>6</sup> Alter is at his best when challenging preconceptions by introducing the concept of “type-scenes” (recurring episodes or patterns of episodes). The “betrothal scene” is such a convention and variations of the scene are used when finding a bride for Isaac, for Jacob and for Moses who also met his wife by a well. The “type-scene” is even appropriated in the New Testament when Jesus meets the Samaritan woman by a well. Type-scenes are therefore a literary device or convention for presenting certain events (such as a betrothal scene) in a fixed format; it is the subtle variations on the standard format that alerts the reader to significant points. See the book review @ [http://www.biblaridion-online.net/pdf\\_archive/2005q4/alter.pdf](http://www.biblaridion-online.net/pdf_archive/2005q4/alter.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> A German word literally translated "salvation history". Used in OT studies in the 50s, as a theological principle, reading Scripture as the story of God's redeeming acts in history. Historical catalogues of God's saving acts are found in both Testaments.

<sup>8</sup> Alan R. Millard observes: “Let all who read remember that the patriarchal narratives are our only source for knowledge of the earliest traditions of Israel, that traditions can be correct reflections of ancient events, and that they do not pretend to be textbooks of ancient near-eastern history or archaeology.” Alan R. Millard, *Methods of Studying the Patriarchal Narratives as Ancient Texts*, A.R. Millard & D.J. Wiseman, eds., *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*. Leicester: IVP, 1980. [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/epn\\_2\\_millard.html](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/epn_2_millard.html)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, T.D. Alexander, p.51

<sup>10</sup> Philistine Phailure? Or, An Aegean Anachronism? James Patrick Holding <http://www.tektonics.org/lp/oldphilistines.html>  
Inerrant Scripture and Intentional Anachronisms James Patrick Holding <http://www.tektonics.org/af/anachronisms.html>

continuum or even a repetition (with subtle variations), but as rudiments of a larger theological pastiche – an historical harmony, whose teleology extends both forwards and backwards; and whose eschatological purpose will only be fully comprehended right at the end – and that only through divine revelation and intervention, R. Alter observes:

“The type-scene is not merely a way of formally recognizing a particular kind of narrative moment; it is also a means of attaching that moment to a larger pattern of historical and theological meaning. If Isaac and Rebekah, as the first man and woman born into the covenant God has made with Abraham and his seed, provide certain paradigmatic traits for the future historical identity of Israel, any association of later figures with the crucial junctures of that first story –the betrothal, the life-threatening trial in the wilderness, the enunciation of the blessing –will imply some connection of meaning, some further working-out of the original covenant.”<sup>11</sup>

The next section will demonstrate that the wells of Genesis 26 served as a model for covenantal relationships with the “Gentiles” during the reign of Hezekiah and that in turn this has been adapted to the needs of the NT as a paradigm for covenantal relationships.

## The wells as Paradigm for covenantal relationships

The narrative in Genesis 26 has parallels with the prophetic pronouncements of Isaiah 49 as the following table demonstrates:<sup>12</sup>

Genesis 26	Isaiah 49
Isaac’s sacrifice (Gen.22)	...and I will give thee for a covenant of the people. (v.8)
...and Rebecca lifted up her eyes when she saw Isaac (24:64) [Rebekah=to fetter or tie]	...lift up thine eyes (v.18) ...gird thyself with them, like a bride (v.18)
Isaac unblocks Abraham’s wells	...even by the springs of water shall he guide them (v.10)
<b>Esek</b> = contention <b>Sitnah</b> =enmity	I will contend with them that contend with thee (v.25)
<b>Reheboth</b> = to enlarge/broad places	...the place is too straight for me give me place that I may dwell (v.20) ...who have begotten these? ...who have brought up these?

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, Alter, p.60

<sup>12</sup> See the End Note on Isaiah 49 in the NT

As demonstrated in earlier articles, the *Sitz Im Leben* of the prophecy of Isaiah can be firmly placed in the reign of Hezekiah. The prophecy concerns the reforming king Hezekiah, who re-established covenantal relationships with *Yahweh* (unblocking Abraham's wells)<sup>13</sup> and who extended the covenant to "*Galilee of the Gentiles*",<sup>14</sup> thereby enlarging or broadening the covenant to fulfil its original intention.<sup>15</sup> Hezekiah endured the hostility of the northern tribes and the Assyrian invasion (I will contend with them, that contend with thee); the suffering-servant [Hezekiah] typified the Messiah (I will give thee for a covenant of the people) – Hezekiah, who was about to die childless<sup>16</sup> (thereby nullifying the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants) was reprieved and raised on **the third day**.<sup>17</sup> The work that he had done to establish a safe water supply for the defense of Jerusalem<sup>18</sup> became symbolic for the "wells that Isaac unblocked" and is commemorated in the "**wells of salvation**" of Isaiah 12:

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength<sup>19</sup> and song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw from the wells of salvation"(Isa.12:2- 3)

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<sup>13</sup> In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah; "*opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them*" (2 Chron. 29: 3). This was the beginning of an extended reformation and rededication..... "*now it is mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel...*" (v.10)

<sup>14</sup> 'Galilee of the nations' (Isa.9:2) this term (of contempt) is interchangeable with 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (cf.1 Mac.5:15). The northern tribes had been deported and intermingled with Gentiles long before Judah was depopulated. These tribes were issued an invitation by Hezekiah to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem (2 Chron.30:1) – those who accepted the invitation were saved from the Assyrian invasion: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Isa.9:2RV) The 'great light' refers to the 'shekinah glory' revealed at the slaying of the Assyrians (Isa.37:35-38 cf. Isa. 30:30-33). 'Galilee of the Gentiles' becomes metonymic for the 'Gentiles' expressing the expansion of the covenant to include the Gentiles (cf. Matt.4:14-16) – the prophet Isaiah warmed particularly to the theme of Gentile inclusiveness: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not..." (65:1)

<sup>15</sup> "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen.22:18).

<sup>16</sup> "Who shall declare his generation? (53:8).....he shall see of the travail of his soul [i.e., his children] and shall be satisfied..." (Isa.53:11)

<sup>17</sup> "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord on the third day?" (2 Kgs.20:8)

<sup>18</sup> Hezekiah sealed the water sources outside the city and constructed a new water tunnel (2 Chron. 32: 1-4 cf. Isa.36:1-37).

<sup>19</sup> 'Strength' is a play on the name of Hezekiah (Yah strengthens)



Siloam Inscription in Hezekiah's water tunnel

The story of Isaac becomes paradigmatic for the extension of the covenant into a new arena in the face of unrelenting hostility.

## NT usage of the patriarchal narrative

The Genesis narrative also has parallels with the Johannine account:

Gen 21 and Gen 26	John 3
Abraham reproves Abimelech over a well that was violently taken away (v.25)	For every one that doeth evil hateth the light... lest his deeds should be reproved (v.20) ...whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him (4:10-14)
Abimelech claims to know nothing about it (v.26)	...art thou a teacher in Israel and understandest not these things? (v.3)
God is with thee (v.22)	...no man can do these signs except <u>God be with him</u> (v.2)
...that it may be a witness to thee that I have digged this well (v.30)	He that receiveth his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true (v.34)
..we have found water (26:32)	..there was much water there (v.23)
Isaac's goods increase greatly (26:13)	..behold...all men come to him (v.26)

The fourth gospel commences with a pericope that parallels the Genesis “*creation account*” followed by a “*patriarchal narrative*” shaped around Jacob; even incorporating the “*betrothal convention*” as the type-scene set at ‘Jacob’s well’ in Samaria. The hostility of the Pharisees, who had “*shut up the kingdom of heaven*”, (Matt.23:13 cf. ‘He that openeth, and no man shutteth’ in Rev.3:7) mirrors that of the Philistines who had “blocked Abraham’s wells” and is ascribed in Matthew 27:18 to the same motive (envy) as the Philistines in Gen.26:14. Interestingly, the controversy with the Pharisees had repercussions for the relationship between the disciples of John the Baptist and those of Jesus. The Pharisees attempted to drive a wedge between the two parties by provoking envy (Jesus’ baptizes more disciples than the Baptist) and by questioning the efficacy of Jesus’ baptism (*questions about ‘purifying’* in John 3:25, 26). It is Jesus who opens the blocked patriarchal wells in order to draw “*living water*” (John 4:10) and who transforms the water for ‘*purifying the Jews*’ (John 2:6) – the baptism of John – into the wine of the communion (John 2:10) and the baptism of the Spirit (John 7:38), a fact graciously acknowledged by the Baptist (John 1: 33; 3:30).

## The well of the oath - Beersheba

The treaty between Abraham and Abimelech is believed by some scholars (Long and Van Seters for example) to display signs of disunity and the joining of separate traditions. There are two explanations for the name Beersheba – the ‘*Well of Seven*’ or the ‘*Well of the Oath*’ and the narrative in 21:22-32 supposedly consists of two accounts describing two separate treaties. In the first treaty Abraham and Abimelech swear to live in peace with one another; to seal this covenant Abraham gives Abimelech sheep and oxen. In the other treaty the dispute over the ownership of the well is resolved by setting aside seven ewe lambs as a witness to the fact that Abraham had dug the well. Driver, however, does not consider the double naming a problem:

“The two explanations resolve themselves into one: for the Heb. Word for ‘to swear’ (*nishba*’, the reflexive of the unused *shaba*’) seems to mean properly (as it were) ‘to seven oneself’, i.e., to pledge oneself in some way by *seven* sacred things, so that, if it might be assumed that the ‘seven lambs’ were used for this purpose, only one ceremony would be described in this passage.”<sup>20</sup>

T. D. Alexander views the entire pericope as a unity, compromising firstly of a ‘friendship’ treaty and only then a treaty over the outstanding dispute over the well (of which Abimelech was ignorant). Alexander observes;

“Once the [friendship] treaty is concluded Abraham is in a position to settle the dispute over ownership of the well. Having acted in a gracious manner towards Abimelech, Abraham now asks him to recognize his claim to the well.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Driver, *Genesis*, 215; further reading; *Ibid*, T.D. Alexander, p.72

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, T.D. Alexander, p.74

As with all the patriarchal narratives and indeed even the Exodus, the question of historicity looms large. It is not because of a lack of archeological evidence, but because of discrepancies over the dating. The dating of the finds seems to indicate, for example, that the cities conquered by Joshua did not exist at the time when Israel conquered the land (but are of a later origin). The same problem is encountered in the patriarchal narratives. The Philistines certainly existed, but according to the evidence, supposedly did not inhabit the land in the time of Abraham. Manor's comments on the well at Beersheba reflect the general consensus:

“It is not possible to determine when the well was dug, although it appears from the building that surrounded the well in stratum VII, and the fact that the well stood almost exactly in the center of the courtyard of this building, that the well existed during stratum VII. Because the stratigraphy of the well area has been disrupted in antiquity (due to the collapse of the upper walls of the shaft), it is impossible to determine stratigraphically the date of the well. The only possibility available to determine its date is to excavate to the bottom of the well, but after excavating through 28 m of accumulation without reaching bottom, it was deemed necessary to abort the operation. **On the basis of the orientation of nearby stratum IX architectural features, the excavators suggest that the well was dug in stratum IX (Herzog 1984:4-6). There is, however, no evidence to attribute any part of this well to the patriarchal period.**”<sup>22</sup>

Walter Torre, observes;

“**Gerar** (identified with **Tell Haror**) is portrayed in Genesis as a Philistine city. The Philistines arrived in Canaan ca. 1175 BCE when they make their first appearance in Egyptian records as the Pelest, one of the Sea Peoples who attempted to invade Egypt in the days of Pharaoh Rameses III. Their distinctive pottery was found at Tel Haror in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC levels which are contemporary with Beersheba's founding. Oren's article on Gerar notes that the city was founded in the Middle Bronze II era, the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE and existed in Late Bronze, Iron Age I-II and Persian times. No remains, not even pottery shards, have been found of the 21<sup>st</sup> century BCE and Abraham's world.”<sup>23</sup>

Torre cites Oren to establish his case:

“Surveys and excavations have demonstrated that Tel Haror was one of the largest Middle Bronze settlement sites in South Canaan, covering an area of ca. 40 acres...Earlier occupational strata in the 12-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE included...masses of early and late types of beautifully decorated Philistine pottery. One of the refuse pits produced a large collection of scrap iron tools and vessels, implying some processing of iron implements. The rich early Iron

<sup>22</sup> Dale W. Manor, "Beersheba," 1992, *ABD* 1.642.

<sup>23</sup> *Dating the Pentateuch, Genesis and the Archaeological Anomalies and Anachronisms* [Walter Reinhold Warttig Mattfeld y de la Torre, M.A. Ed.](#)

Age settlement at Tel Haror testifies to the dynamic eastward expansion of Philistine culture from the South coast into the Judaeian Shephelah.”<sup>24</sup>

Without being an archeologist it is difficult to comment on such anomalies, but other scholars have criticized the methodology that leads to such conclusions, they have also pointed out, for example, that in the case of Beersheba the well was never excavated to the lowest strata, that there is even uncertainty if it is the correct well (there are many wells in the vicinity), that although the patriarchal narratives name places they rarely name cities (it is possible, for example, that Beersheba and Gerar were transient settlements before cities were established) and that many of the anachronisms are difficult to prove or disprove by archeological finds as they are perishable (an example is the mention of camels in the patriarchal accounts, a supposedly late addition but notoriously difficult to ‘dig up’ as they are perishables that are often scavenged by wild animals).<sup>25</sup>

## The well of the oath - Beersheba in the NT

Luke records parallels with the Beersheba narratives in Zechariah’s hymn of praise at the birth of John the Baptist (Lk.1:67-79):

Luke 1	Genesis 26
71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.	27. Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?
73. ...the oath which he swore to Abraham our father.	18. Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father.  33. <b>Beersheba</b> –well of the oath
74. ...being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear.	24. ...fear not, for I will bless thee,
76. ...the prophet of the Most High	28. We saw plainly that the Lord was with thee
79. ...to guide our feet in the way of peace	31. ...they departed from him in peace.

<sup>24</sup> "Gerar," Eliezer D. Oren, *ABD* 2.990.

<sup>25</sup> See the following essays for a conservative commentary on methodology and evaluation of archeological finds in the patriarchal period: *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, A.R. Millard & D.J. Wiseman, eds., (Leicester: IVP, 1980);

[The Patriarchs in Scripture and History - John Goldingay](#)

[Methods of Studying the Patriarchal Narratives as Ancient Texts - Alan R. Millard](#)

[Archaeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs - John J. Bimson](#)

[Comparative Customs and the Patriarchal Age - Martin J. Selman](#)

[Abraham Reassessed - Donald J. Wiseman](#)

[The Religion of the Patriarchs - Gordon J. Wenham](#)

[Diversity and Unity in the Literary Structure of Genesis - David W. Baker](#)

The correspondences are clear, but the objection might be voiced that the terms of the hymn (and indeed the typology of Isaac), are more appropriate to the Messiah than to John the Baptist. Luke 1:69 refers to a ‘horn of salvation’ (a mighty savior) – ‘horn’, suggests the strength of a fighting animal. It is used in Ps. 132:17 of a successor to David, but the language here reflects Ps. 18:2 (see further 1 Sa.2:1, 10; Dn.7:7 f.; 1En.90:9; Shemoneh Esreh, 15; Rev.5:6; 12:3; *et al.*; W. Foerster, TDNT III, 669-671). The reference to the house (1:27 note) of David his servant (Acts 4:25; Did.9:2; Shemoneh Esreh, 18; SB IV:1, 213; J. Jeremias, TDNT V, 700) identifies the horn as the Messiah – “Since there is nothing to link John himself to the house of David, the reference here cannot be to John himself; rather Zechariah is pictured as knowing of the conception of the Messiah by Mary (Lagrange, 59). The view that the hymn as a whole reflects a messianic veneration of John is thus exposed to strong objection (Wink, 68).”<sup>26</sup> Although the hymn praises the privilege of the preparatory role played by the Baptist (vv.76-77), it recognizes that the full import of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants is in the Messianic role played by Jesus (vv.68-75; 78-79).

## Isaac and Messianic typology

It is perhaps fruitful to include Alter’s insightful commentary on the life of Isaac before investigating the typology:

“This chapter [Genesis 26] is the only one in which Isaac figures as an active protagonist. Before he was a bound victim; after, he will be seen as a bamboozled blind old man. His only other initiated act is his brief moment as intercessor on behalf of his wife in 25:21. Textual critics disagree about whether this chapter is a ‘mosaic’ of Isaac traditions or an integral literary unit, and about whether it is early or late. What is clear is that the architectonics of the larger story requires a buffer of material on Isaac between Jacob’s purchase of the birth-right and his stealing of the blessing – a buffer that focuses attention on Isaac’s right to the land and on his success in flourishing in the land. All the actions reported here, however, merely delineate him as a typological heir to Abraham. Like Abraham he goes through the sister-wife experience, is vouchsafed a covenantal promise by God, prospers in flock and field, and is involved in a quarrel over wells. He remains the pale and schematic patriarch among the three forefathers, preceded by the exemplary founder, followed by the vivid struggler.”<sup>27</sup>

Isaac is indeed the “*typological heir*” to Abraham; his Messianic foreshadowing shows him as the covenantal sacrifice and the one who “unblocks” the promises in the face of growing hostility. He resolves all the old disputes over “legitimacy” and declares a **Messianic banquet**. Interestingly, once the perpetual quarrels over wells have been eternally laid to rest his servants arrive (**the same day**) with more good news – **we**

<sup>26</sup> I Howard Marshall: *The Gospel of Luke; A Commentary on the Greek text*, (Paternoster Press, 1978/1995), p. 91

<sup>27</sup> R. Alter, *Genesis, Translation and commentary*, (W.W. Norton & Co Ltd, New York London, 1996), p. 131

*have found water* (26:32). This seems both superfluous and extraneous; superfluous because everyone now has their own legitimate claim to a water source; extraneous because Isaac's servants were digging a new well (which we are not informed about) while the negotiations were still ongoing. This new well represents the outpouring of the Spirit in the Messianic age:

**In that day** (the same day) there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness. (Zech.13:1)

The Messianic age is one where all covenantal relationships are restored, where there is room enough for everyone to live peaceably; where the nation of Israel and the Gentiles live in covenant relationship with the same God through the means of his son who "unblocked" all the wells and dwells in their midst.

### Genesis 26

### Ezekiel 37

Receives a blessing (multiply thy seed)

I will place them and multiply them...

He builds an altar

... set my sanctuary in the midst ...

Pitches his tent there

My tabernacle shall also be with them

They depart in peace

I will make a covenant of peace with them

***"Therefore with joy shall ye draw from the wells of salvation"***

## Conclusion

The patriarchal narratives, like the Bible itself, stubbornly refuse to be classified; is it history masquerading as theology, or artful literature? What are the sources and dates of composition? How can type-scene and convention reflect historical reality? In a perverse twist the same questions surround the "living word"; where did He come from? Who was His author? Who is the historical Jesus? Ultimately these are questions of faith - - and both the written and the "living word" will be shown to come from the same source- - a unique interaction between God and man through the Spirit. Scholarship should recognize limitations in understanding how God works, *"for now we see through a glass darkly"*, an appeal to scholarly humility in the face of the numinous, *"Therefore I have uttered that which I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."* Our concept of 'inspiration' is not necessarily the same as God's, nor is our understanding of history the same as the One who knows *"the beginning from the end."* What is clear, however, is that the collective experience of Israel is somehow also the individual experience of Israelites. That Abraham can be both a historical reality and at the same time act as a federal representative for the community of faith; the NT writers had no problem understanding the Levites paying 'tithes' through the loins of Abraham. Scholarship must somehow resolve its schizophrenic attitude to the Bible, attempting to force it into their agenda. The

NT authors can take the example of Isaac and shape it under the inspiration of the Spirit to reflect the historical reality surrounding the hostility towards Jesus in the first century.

Water conflict has always troubled the Middle East and will probably contribute to the next war,<sup>28</sup> but more importantly it masks a deeper enmity; a hatred born out of envy and a spiritual dispute over legitimacy and ownership. This is particularly relevant to the current claims of ownership related to the Palestinian question and appeals to being the legitimate heirs of Abraham. It also relates to Christ himself, who is claimed by the Muslims as a prophet, by the Jews as an itinerant exorcist and by the Gentiles as their God (**a claim never made by Jesus**). Water conflict in the patriarchal narratives allegorizes the covenants and typifies the Messiah as the only legitimate source of water. It is only through him that all the disputes can be resolved. At the great eschatological (Zech.14:16) “Feast of Tabernacles”, where the ceremony of water pouring (in anticipation of the blessing of rain for the next crop), was practiced with water sourced from **the Virgin spring**,<sup>29</sup> Jesus declared; “*Out of his (the believers) belly shall flow rivers of living water. [But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive]* (7:37-40). The believer would become the receptacle of the “Spirit” and it would flow forth like water in its healing and unifying effervescence.

“**These seven ewe lambs** shalt thou take out mine hand, that they may be a **witness** unto me, that I have digged this well” (Gen.21: 30).

**The faithful witness with seven churches in his hand  
(Rev.1: 5, 20)**

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#### End Note

Isaiah 49 is also used in Acts 3 as a template for the healing of the lame man:

Isaiah 49	Acts 3
3. My servant, in whom I will be glorified.	13. The God of our fathers hath glorified his servant Jesus.
5. My God shall be my strength.	16. His name...hath made this man strong

<sup>28</sup> Roman Kupchinsky observes: "Writing about the 1967 Six Day War in his 2001 memoirs, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that "While the border disputes between Syria and ourselves were of great significance, the matter of water diversion was a stark issue of life and death." "People generally regard 5 June 1967 as the day the Six Day War began," Sharon later told the BBC in 2003. "That is the official date. But, in reality, it started two-and-a-half years earlier, on the day Israel decided to act against the diversion of the Jordan [River]." See: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/09/f4c46732-8f80-46a0-8c74-afdeecc3b794.html>

<sup>29</sup> The pool of Siloam is fed by a conduit that is cut for a distance of 1,780 feet through solid rock (by Hezekiah), and which starts at the so-called **Virgin's Spring**. It was from Siloam that water was brought in a golden vessel to the Temple during the feast of Tabernacles and poured out on the altar.

[http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem\\_pool\\_of\\_siloam.html](http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem_pool_of_siloam.html)

<http://www.season-of-our-joy.com/WaterPouring.htm>

[strength is a play on the meaning of Hezekiah's name]	
6. To raise up the tribes of Jacob.	7. He raised him up.
8. For a covenant of the people	25. Children of the covenant
<b>6. My salvation to the ends of the earth.</b>	<b>25 All kindreds of the earth blessed.</b>
9, 10,13. Pastures...springs of water etc	19. Seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.
18. All these gather themselves together, and come to thee.	11. All the people ran together unto them.

Peter's choice of words (recorded by Luke) was meant to impress on the people that they were wrestling against God (like the 'lame' Jacob in Gen. 32:31) and that if they refused the healing of Christ, their great salvation would be extended to the Gentiles. Luke also stresses the inclusion of the Gentiles by drawing parallels with Isaiah 49 in Luke 2:

<b>Isaiah 49</b>	<b>Luke 2</b>
13. Comforted his people	25. The consolation of Israel
1. Called me from the womb.	23. Every male that openeth the womb...holy to the Lord.
<b>6. A light to the Gentiles.</b>	<b>31. A light to lighten the Gentiles.</b>
22. Can a woman forget her suckling child...the son of her womb?	35. Yea, a sword shall pierce thine own heart also.
23. They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.	25. Waiting for the consolation of Israel.
8. A day of salvation.	30. Thy salvation.
7. Princes shall worship, kings shall see and arise.	34. The fall and rising up of many in Israel.