

Genesis 26 -God's Promise to Isaac – Lots of Wells and one altar

Gen 26:1-2 There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then the LORD appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.

This is now the second famine that is mentioned. You remember the famine in the days of Abraham when Abraham and Lot took off for Egypt.

Why did God say that to Isaac? Well, he had an example before him of his father who had run off down to the land of Egypt. This reveals the fact that "like father, like son," sins are carried from father to son. You can talk about the generation gap all you want, but there is no generation gap of sin. It just flows right from one generation to the other. Generally, the son makes very much the same mistakes that the father did, unless something intervenes.

So God gives definite instructions to Isaac at the time of famine. And He confirms the covenant which He had made with Abraham. -McGee

Gerar was sort of a halfway house on the route to Egypt. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gen 26:3-6 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." So, Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

God told Isaac to stay temporarily in Gerar but instead Isaac dwelt there. God also reconfirmed to him the unconditional covenant that He had made with Abraham. – Believers Bible Commentary

God says to Isaac, "Don't leave this land, don't go down to Egypt. I want to confirm with you the covenant which I made with Abraham." And He repeats the threefold promise: (1) the land—"I will give unto thy seed all these countries"; (2) the nation—"I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven"; (3) the blessing—"and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

At this point God had not yet given the Mosaic Law; Abraham was not under the Mosaic system. However, the important thing is that, when God told Abraham something, he believed God and acted upon it. He demonstrated his faith by action.

We have too many folks today who complain of a lack of reality in their Christian lives. A lady came in to talk to me some time ago who said that she believed but that she just couldn't be sure and that she didn't feel anything. Such uncertainty! I didn't have to talk to her long to find out that there was no action in her life. She was just sitting in the corner, twiddling her thumbs, saying, "I believe," and then expecting some great something to take place. That just doesn't happen. When you believe God, you act upon His promises. If you would call me right now to tell me that there is a certain amount of money in a bank in downtown Los Angeles and that you have put it in there for me and I should go down to get it, do you think I would just sit right here the rest of the day? My friend, if you know me, you will know that by the time you hung up the telephone I would have my hat on my head, and I'd be going down there. Faith is what you act on. Faith is something that you step out on. Abraham believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness. God is now telling Isaac that He wants him to be that same kind of man. - McGee

Isaac and Abimelech

Gen 26:7-8 And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife.

Isaac is repeating the sin of his father. God had warned him not to go to Egypt; so he didn't go there but went to Gerar instead. In Gerar he must have seen the men casting glances toward Rebekah; so he says to her, "You tell them that you're my sister, not my wife." The difference between Abraham and Isaac is that Abraham told half a lie and Isaac told a whole lie. The one he is telling was cut out of the whole cloth. - McGee

Gen 26:9-11 *Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.' " And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."*

Isaac reacted to fear as his father had done. He misrepresented his wife as his sister to the men of Gerar. It is the sad story of a father's weakness being repeated in his son. When the deceit was exposed and rebuked, Isaac confessed. Confession leads to blessing. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gen 26:12-14 *Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So, the Philistines envied him.*

Don't miss the fact that Isaac is greatly blessed. His field brings forth a hundredfold! The impression some of us have is that Abraham was outstanding, and Jacob was also, but not Isaac. Let me say that Isaac is also outstanding.

It is significant that the life of Isaac is tied in with that of Abraham. Isaac's birth and his life are interwoven with Abraham's experiences. Although Isaac was important when he was offered there upon the altar, again it was Abraham and Isaac together. Why should it be so presented? Well, we have already seen that all these things happened unto them for examples to us. It presents a wonderful picture of the intimacy between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father. Jesus said, "... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ..." (Joh_14:9). And in the high priestly prayer of Jesus, He said, "... I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Joh_17:4). Also, He said, "... My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (Joh_5:17). Therefore, it is very proper that the story of Isaac and the story of Abraham be identified together. Now here in the chapter before us we see Isaac standing on his own two feet, and he doesn't look too attractive. He exhibits a weakness and repeats the sin of Abraham. However, the Word of God makes it clear that Isaac was a very great man in that land—McGee

Then Isaac sowed in that land—During his sojourn in that district he farmed a piece of land, which, by the blessing of God on his skill and industry, was very productive (Is 65:13; Ps 37:19); and by his plentiful returns he increased so rapidly in wealth and influence that the Philistines, afraid or envious of his prosperity, obliged him to leave the place (Pr 27:4; Ec 4:4). This may receive illustration from the fact that many Syrian shepherds at this day settle for a year or two in a place, rent some ground, in the produce of which they trade with the neighboring market, till the owners, through jealousy of their growing substance, refuse to renew their lease and compel them to remove elsewhere. - Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 30.

Gen 26:15-17 *Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth. And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we." Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.*

The Philistines had stopped up the wells which Abraham had dug—an unfriendly act signifying that the newcomers were not welcome. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gen 26:18-20 *And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them. Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar*

quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him.

Isaac cleaned out the wells. Strife ensued with the Philistines at Esek (contention) and Sitnah (enmity). – Believers Bible Commentary

This reveals the struggle that was carried on.

I feel that the water is a picture of the Word of God. We are to drink deeply of it. It is called the “water of the Word” and is for drinking purposes to slake our thirst, and it is also for washing. Jesus said that we are cleansed through the Word which He has spoken.

Water is a very necessary item in life. You can't have life without water. You can fly over the deserts of Arizona, New Mexico, and California and see plenty of arid land. Then all of a sudden you see an area of lush green and wonder what has happened down there. Water is the only explanation.

And, my friend, water is the explanation for the differences between God's children in any church—the water of the Word of God. There is a great difference in the lives of believers who study God's Word. And there will be a struggle. I think that you will always have to pay a price if you are really going to study the Word of God. The devil will permit you to do anything except get into the Word of God. - McGee

Gen 26:21-22 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also. So, he called its name Sitnah. And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

Then he calls the well Rehoboth. It means “there is room for us.” Before that he would dig a well and they would take it away from him. He'd move up, dig another one, and they would take that away from him. He would just keep moving up. This certainly reveals that Isaac is a man of peace and a man of patience. David wouldn't have done this, I can tell you that. Simon Peter wouldn't have done that. And if you want to know the truth, Vernon McGee wouldn't have done that. It is a real lesson for us here. This is especially applicable when we apply it to the study of the Word of God. - McGee

Gen 26:23-25 Then he went up from there to Beersheba. And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

He went from there to Beersheba, where the LORD reassured him with the promise of blessing, and where Isaac built an altar (worship), pitched a tent (abiding), and dug a well (refreshment). Just as water is a basic essential in the physical realm, so is the water of the Word in the spiritual. – Believers Bible Commentary

God appears to him to comfort him. God appeared to all the patriarchs with the exception of Joseph. He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He goes on again, digging wells. You can always put a well down next to Isaac. You can put an altar down next to Abraham, and you can put a tent down next to Jacob, as we shall see later on. - McGee

Gen 26:26-29 Then, Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army. And Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?" But they said, "We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.' "

Although Isaac almost seems weak in his dealing with the men of Gerar, the king of Gerar was so impressed that he followed Isaac to Beer–sheba in order to establish good relations. The influence of Isaac in that land was not that of a weak man. - McGee

Gen 26:30-33 So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water." So, he called it Shebah. Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

Concerning verses 26-31, Williams says: It is when Isaac definitely separates himself from the men of Gerar that they come to him seeking blessing from God The Christian best helps the world when living in separation from it. . . .

Isaac's servants . . . found water the same day that Isaac made a nonaggression pact with Abimelech. Abraham had previously named the place Beersheba because he made a covenant there with his contemporary, Abimelech (Gen_21:31). Now, under similar circumstances, Isaac renames it Shebah or Beersheba. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gen 26:34-35 When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

If the pious feelings of Abraham recoiled from the idea of Isaac forming a matrimonial connection with a Canaanitish woman [Ge 24:3], that devout patriarch himself would be equally opposed to such a union on the part of his children; and we may easily imagine how much his pious heart was wounded, and the family peace destroyed, when his favorite but wayward son brought no less than two idolatrous wives among them—an additional proof that Esau neither desired the blessing nor dreaded the curse of God. These wives never gained the affections of his parents, and this estrangement was overruled by God for keeping the chosen family aloof from the dangers of heathen influence. - Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 30.