

Genesis

Chapter Twenty-Six

- Isaac Settles in Gerar
- Argument over the Wells
- Covenant with Abimelech

Isaac Settles in Gerar

Verses 1-17

Verses 1-6

“Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.² And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you.³ Live for a time in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.⁴ I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,⁵ because Abraham obeyed Me and fulfilled *his* duty to Me, and kept My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”⁶ So Isaac lived in Gerar.”

Ever have déjà vu? It seems like we are reliving Genesis 12 all over again. In fact, Moses makes it a point to say this famine is a different one than the one Abraham experienced eighty years earlier. We know how close the father (Abraham) and son (Isaac) were so the question becomes, will the son learn from his father’s teaching or repeat his father’s mistakes? Because God knows all, we may assume Isaac, to escape the famine, was heading down to Egypt where the Nile River would feed him and water his flocks. How can we assume Isaac was heading south to Egypt? Because God intervened and told him NOT to go to Egypt, but he was to stay in the land. This would require trust because this was a regional famine, meaning the land God told Isaac to stay in (Gerar) was also under famine conditions.

For the first time we are told God speaks directly to Isaac and confirms the covenant He made with Abraham, the land he was in would someday be his and his descendant’s forever. Currently the Philistines controlled land so Isaac goes to Abimelech, which is a title not a proper name (this would be a son or grandson of the Abimelech of Abraham’s day). To his credit, Isaac does not leave the land but out of obedience to the Lord, stays in Gerar. The son of promise was not to leave the land of promise.

God’s covenant with Abraham, which He confirms here with Isaac, includes three elements:

- A land – the promised land.
- A nation – descendants who will be as many as the stars or the sand.
- A blessing – from you all nations will be blessed.

Verses 7-11

“⁷ When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say, “my wife,” thinking, “the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, since she is beautiful.”⁸ Now it came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down through a window, and saw *them*, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah.⁹ Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she certainly is your wife! So how is it that you said, ‘She is my sister’?” And Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘otherwise I might be killed on account of her.’”¹⁰ And Abimelech said, “What is this that you have done to us? One of the people

might easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”¹¹ So Abimelech commanded all the people, saying, “He who touches this man or his wife will certainly be put to death.”

This is deja vu! Remember Isaac had just experienced a meeting with the Lord. Going from a mountaintop experience as that, he quickly sunk deep into the valley (1 Corinthians 10:12). Just like his father did, Isaac lies to the king about his wife claiming that she is his sister. How long this deception went on we are not told, but God did bring the truth to light. We are told they were in the land deceiving people “*for a long time.*” When the king sees Isaac touching Rebecca as a husband would not as a brother would, the king immediately calls them out and demands an explanation. Like his father, Isaac, after being rebuked by a pagan king, only tells the truth because his lie had been found out not because it was the right thing to do (20:10). Like the Pharaoh in Egypt, this king has a moral sense and commands the couple to stop this deceit before disaster comes upon the people. Any man attracted to this childless woman, who was unaware that she was a married woman, could bring disaster upon this whole pagan community. What is worse is that Isaac did this with the knowledge that his father twice used the same deceitful tactic. It showed selfishness and faithlessness, whereas it was the pagan king who ended up protecting Rebekah.

Romans 2:24

“*For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”*

1 Timothy 6:1

“*All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be [a]spoken against.”*

Verses 12-17

“¹² Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundred times *as much.* And the LORD blessed him,¹³ and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy;¹⁴ for he had possessions of flocks and herds, and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.¹⁵ Now all the wells which his father’s servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with dirt.¹⁶ Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us.”¹⁷ So Isaac departed from there and camped in the Valley of Gerar, and settled there.”

Like his father, Isaac obeyed God. Like his father, Isaac became wealthy. In the midst of a great famine, Isaac still prospered. Because he had much wealth in livestock, Abraham had his servants build wells to keep his flocks watered (21:30). Isaac knew where the wells were and kept his flocks close to them until it came to the point that the Philistines became angry and envious and rebelled against Isaac filling the wells with dirt making them useless. Because water is needed to sustain life, wells were very valuable but difficult and expensive to dig. Attacking them was a significant sign of aggression and disrespect.

**Argument over the Wells
Verses 18-25**

Verses 18-22

“Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.¹⁹ But when Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water,²⁰ the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, “The water is ours!” So he named the well Esek, because they argued with him.²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah.²² Then he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, “At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”

Isaac was able to find places to build fresh wells, not ones his father had previously built. The well at Esek, which means “dispute” or “contention”, caused more jealousy and tension. The well at Sitnah, which means “opposition”, continued to cause friction. Going further from the center of the Philistine territory he built yet another well. This one he named Rehoboth which means “room”.

Verses 23-25

“²³ And he went up from there to Beersheba.²⁴ 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 the sake of My servant Abraham.”
²⁵ So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.”

Once again, the city of Beersheba enters Isaac’s life. This was the spot that his father had agreed to a covenant with Abimelech and this was the site where the Lord met with Hagar and Ishmael and promised him a future. Now at this site, Isaac has a meeting with the Lord and God reconfirms His promise He made to Abraham and Abraham’s descendants. Isaac believed that God was with him. We know this because of how he responds. In like manner as his father, Isaac built an altar to the Lord and worshipped God. Living in a tent and building an altar to the Lord represented Isaac’s trust as tents and altars represent a life of worship and trust.

Covenant with Abimelech

Verses 26-35

Verses 26-29

“²⁶ Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath, and Phicol the commander of his army.²⁷ Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?”²⁸ They said, “We have seen plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we said, ‘An oath must now be taken by us,’ that is, by you and us. So let us make a covenant with you,²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good, and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.”

Deja vu! Isaac asks the king a logical question, “*Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?*” The king gives a surprising response; he could see Yahweh’s blessing and protection on Isaac. In verse 3, God told Isaac that He “*will be with you*” (future) and in verse 24 God said, “*I am with you*” (present). These two interactions/promises with the Lord (which are still available to you today) gave Isaac the peace he needed to be obedient and faithful.

Somehow, probably by divine intervention, the king Abimelech realized vandalizing Isaac’s wells, confronting him and intimidating him did not stop this Hebrew from being blessed and increasing in wealth. If they were going to be unable to stop this man from increasing in power, a different action was necessary. It was time to offer a peace treaty so that if Isaac’s wealth and power continued to grow the Philistines would not remain natural enemies. Just as their fathers did, at this same location, the king and Isaac agree to a covenant of peace.

Verses 30-33

“³⁰ Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. ³¹ In the morning they got up early and exchanged oaths; then Isaac sent them away, and they left him in peace. ³² Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac’s servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, “We have found water.” ³³ So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.”

Deja vu!

- Isaac makes a covenant of peace with king Abimelech.
- His servants dig a well.
- The well is called Sibah which means “seven.”
- The city is named Beersheba even to this day.

This chapter opened with Isaac experiencing famine; it closes with him finding new water. God was with him!

Verses 34-35

“³⁴ When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; ³⁵ and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.”

Just as his brother had, Esau also married at age forty. Unlike his brother Esau married two women, both Hittites, descendants of Ham, going against his father’s wishes (24:3-4). This reveals a part of Esau’s character. These two verses set the stage for the transition to the next chapter. The wicked Canaanites will continue to be a thorn in the side of Abram’s descendants (Israel).

Genesis
Chapter Twenty-Seven

- Jacob's Deception
- The Stolen Blessing

Jacob's Deception

Verses 1-29

Verses 1-4

“Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.” And he said to him, “Here I am.”² Then Isaac said, “Behold now, I am old *and I do not know the day of my death.*³ Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; ⁴ and prepare a delicious meal for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.”

In this scene Isaac seems to be at death's door, however he lived to be 180 years old (Genesis 35:28), which means he lived another 43 years. Isaac's brother Ishmael died at age 137 (25:17), which may be why he believed he too was close to death. Scholar's such as Martin Luther believe that Isaac was 137 years old when he made this request of Esau, which would mean he lived another 43 years. How do they get age 137 for Isaac here in chapter 27?

- Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born (25:26)
- Jacob would have been 77 when his mother Rebekah told him to flee to Haran, to her brother Laban (27:43).
- Isaac was 60 when he fathered Jacob and Esau. Jacob was 77 when this scene caused Rebekah to send him away which means Isaac would have been 137 years old.
- Jacob had worked for Laban for 14 years when Rachel gave birth to Joseph (30:25) which meant Jacob worked for Laban from age 77 to 91 confirming Jacob was 91 when he fathered Joseph and 77 when he left for Haran.
- Joseph was 39 when his father (Jacob) came down to Egypt (45:6) which again confirms Jacob was 91 when he fathered Joseph because Jacob was 130 when he met Pharaoh (47:9).
- Jacob met Pharaoh at age 130 (47:9) fifty-three years after his mother sent him away from his father's house, and ten years after his father's death at 180.
- Jacob lived in Egypt 17 years and died at the age of 147 (47:28).

Based on how chapter 26 ended, Esau's behavior and character made him unfit to receive God's blessing, which makes Isaac's willingness to offer such a blessing foolish.

As a father, Abraham was forced to face a difficult and painful decision. He had to yield to God's will and decide which of his two sons, Ishmael or Isaac, was to be the heir of the promise. Isaac is faced with a similar decision: which of his two sons Jacob or Esau would receive his blessing. As with Abraham and Isaac, God had already made the decision, Jacob was to receive the blessing and the older, Esau, was to serve the younger. I find it interesting that Esau's skill and love of hunting, makes him a counterpart of Ishmael.

Verses 5-13

“⁵ Now Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring *home*, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷ ‘Bring me *some* game and prepare a delicious meal for me, so that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before

my death.’⁸ So now, my son, listen to me as I command you. ⁹ Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, so that I may prepare them *as* a delicious meal for your father, such as he loves.¹⁰ Then you shall bring *it* to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.”¹¹ But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, “Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am a smooth man.¹² Perhaps my father will touch me, then I will be like a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.”¹³ But his mother said to him, “Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *the goats* for me.”

Tent walls are thin. Rebekah heard Isaacs’s conversation with Esau which caused her to put her own plan in place. Instead of trusting what God had said in 25:23, she used manipulation, inserting her own desire to accomplish what she thought was God’s plan. Rebekah knew her husband and what his tastes were so she created a meal just as Esau would have, only it was not going to be Esau who would offer Isaac the meal. Interestingly Jacob was concerned with deception leading to a curse not a blessing, yet when he thought he could get away with the deception, he went full stream ahead.

Verses 14-25

“¹⁴ So he went and got *them*, and brought *them* to his mother; and his mother made a delicious meal such as his father loved.¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob.¹⁶ And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.¹⁷ She also gave the delicious meal and the bread which she had made to her son Jacob.¹⁸ Then he came to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?”¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Come now, sit and eat of my game, so that you may bless me.”²⁰ Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have *it* so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God made *it* come to me.”²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come close, so that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.”²² So Jacob came close to his father Isaac, and he touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”²³ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him.²⁴ And he said, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he said, “I am.”²⁵ So he said, “Bring *it* to me, and I will eat of my son’s game, that I may bless you.” And he brought *it* to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank.”

Jacob seemed to have gotten over the fear of being caught. All the parties involved in this plot acted in the flesh. None of the four, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob or Esau trusted the other nor did they trust or turn to the Lord. They schemed against each other and plotted against God - not a winning strategy! Either in ignorance or rebellion all four seemed to see the father’s blessing detached from God. A father may pronounce a blessing over his son, but it only matters if the God of heaven honors the father’s request, which in this case could not have happened because they were going against what God said was to be. The older was to serve the younger; the blessing was Jacob’s not Esau’s.

Sometimes it is difficult to discern when someone is lying. Often all one can rely on is one's intent. In this situation Jacob included and spoke on behalf of God, bringing the Lord into the lie. When asked how he was able to catch and prepare a meal so quickly Jacob responded, "*the LORD your God made it come to me.*" Jacob knew he was lying. In fact, in this short encounter he lied three times. Jacob knew God did not have a hand in this. This is how low the human heart and flesh can go. One must wonder if Jacob and Rebekah thought what they were doing was all right because after all they were only trying to fulfill what God had intended which was Jacob receiving the birth right. Pathetically Jacob could have assumed what he was doing was ultimately for a righteous cause. It is never right to use sin as a means of fulfilling God's promise. Why did Isaac believe Jacob? He had doubts, perhaps he did not believe his own son would lie so thoroughly to him.

Verses 26-29

**“²⁶Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come close and kiss me, my son.” ²⁷So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, “See, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed;
²⁸Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine;
²⁹May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you;
Be master of your brothers, And may your mother’s sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you.”**

As the spiritual head of the family Isaac blessed Jacob. This meant Jacob would then be able to pass the blessing on to his sons. The blessing was one of passion. It included the "*smell of the field*", which was the fulfilling of the Promised Land, land which would provide an abundance of resources to sustain life. The blessing included the "*dew of heaven*," the dew represented God's provision and blessing. The morning dew was the main source of water especially during the rainless summer months. As Isaac spoke words of prosperity and blessing, words such as "*dew, fatness, and abundance*", this was a promise of material blessing. The spiritual blessing echoed some of the words God gave Abraham, "*Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you*" (12:3). As soon as the blessing was finished, Esau returned home.

The Stolen Blessing Verses 30-46

Verses 30-35

“³⁰Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, that his brother Esau came in from his hunting. ³¹Then he also made a delicious meal, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, “Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that you may bless me.” ³²His father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.” ³³Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, “Who then was he who hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate from all *of it* before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he

shall be blessed.”³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me, me as well, my father!”³⁵ And he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.”

Isaac was greatly troubled; one can wonder if Isaac was more troubled because his plan to bless his son had gone wrong or because he knew his plan to go against God was exposed? Esau was greatly disturbed, but why? In chapter 25 he was easily willing to give up the birthright for some bread and a bowl of lentil stew, but now he is agonizing over the loss of it. Why? Based on his character, Esau was probably more concerned about the physical, material blessing he would have received and probably had little concern for the spiritual blessing (the most important part of the blessing) attached to the birthright.

Verses 36-40

“³⁶ Then Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has betrayed me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”³⁷ But Isaac replied to Esau, “Behold, I have made him your master, and I have given to him all his relatives as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?”³⁸ Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, me as well, my father.” So Esau raised his voice and wept.³⁹ Then his father Isaac answered and said to him, “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above.⁴⁰ And by your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you will break his yoke from your neck.”

Esau accused Jacob of twice betraying him over the birthright but is that true? The first time Esau disposed of the birthright (25:34) selling it for a bowl of stew. Jacob did not steal it away; Esau gave it away. Esau’s emotional outburst was not due to a need of repentance; it was due to his selfishness.

Hebrew 12:15-17

“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.”

Jacob’s blessing for Esau may sound harsh. It did not include dew and fatness. His father’s words prophesied that Esau would live as a nomad in the wilderness (*dwelling away from the fertility of the earth*). That he will have to hunt for his food and that his life would not be easy (*away from the dew of heaven*). The older will serve the younger but eventually he would be free from that (*you will break his yoke from your neck*).

Verses 41-44

“⁴¹ So Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then

I will kill my brother Jacob.”⁴² Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent *word* and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, “Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by *planning* to kill you.⁴³ Now then, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! ⁴⁴ Stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury subsides,⁴⁵ until your brother’s anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send *word* and get you from there. Why should I lose you both in one day?”⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth like these from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

In Esau’s heart, anger turned to bitterness, bitterness turned to hatred. Once Isaac died, Esau’s revenge would be to kill his brother. Rebekah’s response to Esau’s plan was to send Jacob away for “*a few days*.” Those few days turned into years (we are never told that Rebekah ever sees her son again). God’s plan was still accomplished. The sad aspect of this story is that all the human participants who worked against God’s purpose suffered. Instead of bowing their knee to God, they each worked against God. However as 2 Timothy 2:13 says, “*when we are faithless, God remains faithful.*” Our failures do not destroy God’s promises.