

Genesis Chapter 26 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Chapter 26 Overview:

We start to see lots of similarities between the life of Abraham and Isaac. The chapter can be divided into three sections: (1) The Abrahamic Covenant is confirmed to Isaac in verses 1-5. (2) Isaac falls into the same deception of his father in verses 6-16. And (3) The well digging of Isaac and the problems associated with it are recorded in verses 17-35.

Genesis 26 : 1 - And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

- History tends to repeat itself.
- As in the days of his father Abraham, when times got tough, Isaac contemplated leaving the place where God had put him (Remember Abraham when to Egypt)
- Another famine (like the one in Abraham's day) developed in the land.
- Therefore, Isaac packed up and "***went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.***"
- Gerar was on the Philistine plain in the southwestern portion of Palestine and is known as Gaza today.
- Though occupied by Philistine peoples, it still was a part of the land God had promised Abraham.
- The term ***Abimelech*** may be as much a title as it is a name.
- It literally means '**my father is king.**'
- It is possible this is the same Abimelech which had met Abraham about one hundred years earlier, however, it is unlikely.
- In the events which soon unfold which are strikingly similar to what Abraham had done, Abimelech seemed unaware that Abraham had done the same thing.
- This was most likely not the same Abimelech.

Genesis 26 : 2 - And, the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of.

- God here confirmed to Isaac the covenant He had made to Abraham.
- He began by commanding Isaac not to go to Egypt as his father had done when discouraged.

Genesis 26 : 3-4 – 3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father. 4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

- Rather, He instructed Isaac to stay in the land.
- God went on to promise the region to Isaac even as He had to Abraham.
- God thus reiterated His promise to multiply Abraham's seed as the stars of heaven.
- God confirmed that the blessing of Abraham would remain on Isaac.

Genesis 26 : 5 - *Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

- God's blessing even to Isaac was linked to the obedience of Abraham.
- Indeed, God's blessing to this day is linked to the obedience of God's people.
- Think about what this means, our obedience can lead to blessings for not only us but for our kids!!
- **Revelation 1 : 3 - *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.***
- The primary charge God made to Isaac was to stay put.
- He promised to be with him and bless him.
- Abraham clearly had obeyed God in the many matters such as: departing Ur and then Haran or in offering Isaac.
- Less clear are ***God's charge, commandments, statutes, and laws.***
- These are terms are the Law of Moses which was still centuries in the future.
- They hadn't even been written yet, but still Abraham knew them!
- Evidently Abraham was aware of God's ways from his fellowship with God.
- We too can only better understand God's ways through fellowship with God through prayer, the preaching and teaching of God's Word and reading the finished Word of God
- The bottom line is Abraham was consistently obedient to the will and Word of God.
- As a direct result, God blessed him and promised to bless him and his children!!

Genesis 26 : 6 - *And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.*

- Isaac therefore stopped and stayed in Gerar.
- However, in so doing, he had gone halfway to Egypt.
- Remember Egypt represents the world as well.
- When God's people to this day go halfway into the world, they get into trouble.
- This was also the case for Isaac.

Genesis 26 : 7-11 – *7 And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. 8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her. 10 And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. 11 And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.*

- Like father like son, Isaac while in Gerar proceeded to pull the same stunt his father while in Egypt.
- He tried to pass off his wife as his sister fearing someone would want her and kill him to have her.
- Rebekah like her mother-in-law, Sarah, evidently was a very attractive woman

- It is noteworthy that this deception was accomplished for “**a long time.**”
- In other words they pulled off the deception for some time before getting caught
- However, one day, Abimelech looked out his window and saw Isaac “*sporting with Rebekah his wife.*”
- The word translated as **sporting** (qxu *tsachaq*) has the idea of ‘**playing.**’
- It is evident the ‘**playing**’ was suggestive of that which a man and wife would do in distinction to a brother and sister.
- Abimelech suspected the same and confronted them.
- He rebuked them that some man could have taken her and *lien* with her (**slept with her**) thus bringing guilt upon his people.
- Abimelech was genuinely concerned with such a travesty having taken place and the blame that would have placed upon his people.
- His morality was sure different than what is prevalent in today’s world
- Therefore, he ordered that no one to touch either Isaac or Rebekah with the consequence being death for anyone that did.

Genesis 26 : 12-16 - *12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. 13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: 14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. 15 For all the wells which his father’s servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. 16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.*

- Isaac sowed in that land the Lord continued to bless him
- Though he had inherited all from Abraham, he now “*waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great.*”
- His prosperity became so obvious that “*the Philistines envied him.*”
- All the wells which Abraham had dug had been filled by the Philistines.
- In envy, the Philistines had stopped the valuable wells, perhaps hoping to pressure Isaac to move away.
- In fact, Abimelech asked Isaac to leave the area. “*Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.*”

Genesis 26 : 17-22 – *17 And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. 18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19 And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac’s herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. 21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.*

- Isaac moved, but not far.
- He still remained in the valley of Gerar.

- His servants began to reopen the valuable wells.
- Some dated back to the time of Abraham.
- Some were more recent.
- They also found new wells.
- One, in the valley of Gerar, was “*a well of springing water.*”
- The Philistine herdsmen of the area immediately asserted, “*the water is our’s.*”
- From the ancient past to the present, water has been at a premium in the Middle East.
- Therefore, Isaac called the well “*Esek; because they strove with him.*”
- They dug another well and there was controversy over that well as well.
- He called that one **Sitnah** which also implies **strife**.
- Therefore, “*he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not.*”
- Isaac’s servants named this well **Rehoboth** which literally means “**a wide or large place**”.
- Isaac learned his lesson.
- It was not until he separated from the world’s influence in Gerar that he finally had peace.

Genesis 26 : 23-25 – 23 And he went up from thence to Beersheba. 24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake. 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac’s servants digged a well.

- Isaac whereupon “*went up from thence to Beersheba.*”
- That same night, the Lord appeared to him and reconfirmed again to him the covenant He had made with Abraham.
- Once again, God promised Isaac, I will “*bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake.*”
- There Isaac built an altar “*and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there.*”
- The implication is that Isaac made a point to worship God, praising and thanking Him for His blessing.
- He also dug new wells in that area.

Genesis 26 : 26-29 - 26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. 27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28 And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; 29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

- Abimelech and two associates came to visit Isaac at Beersheba.
- Isaac was suspicious of them and asked them what they wanted.
- They told him that it was obvious the Lord was with him and they desired to therefore make a peace covenant with him.

- No further motive is noted other than they realized God has blessed Isaac.

Genesis 26 : 30-31 - *30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. 31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.*

- Isaac agreed to make an oath (i.e., agreement) with them and made a feast for his guests.
- They swore to peace amongst themselves.
- Abimelech and his party then left.
- The word translated as **rose up betimes** (Mkv *shakam*) simply means to ‘**get up early.**’

Genesis 26 : 32-33 - *32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac’s servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. 33 And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beersheba unto this day.*

- Meanwhile, Isaac’s servants came and reported that they had dug another well.
- Isaac therefore called it **Shebah**.
- Though Abraham had apparently named the same place years earlier (**Beersheba**)
- Isaac either did not recognize the place or may have even been unaware of the name.
- The entire incident is strikingly similar to Abraham’s episode there a century earlier.
- See Genesis 21:22-33.
- The place in any event came to be known as Beer-sheba (**the well of seven**) as noted in Genesis 21:31.
- It remains to this day.

Genesis 26 : 34-35 - *34 And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35 Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah*

- When Esau turned forty, he married two wives: “**Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.**”
- However, Isaac and Rebekah were not happy with his son’s marriages.
- In fact they “**were a grief of mind**” unto them.
- The primary reason for their grief is that Esau had married Canaanite women in violation of the principle of separation Abraham had so clearly established.
- In effect, Esau had gone out and married unsaved girls from the world.
- Their grief was not so much at his polygamy which was sociably acceptable at the time.
- Rather, they were grieved that he had entered into an unequal yoke with unbelievers.
- Their new daughters-in-law were women of the world and they knew it.
- Their sorrow was therefore spiritual.