



Genesis – 26:1-26:35
Blessed by Yahweh!
(Lesson #35)

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Outline for this week:

- Isaac and Rebekah go to Gerar (26:1-6)
- Isaac Lies About Rebekah (25:7)
- Abimelech learns about Rebekah and warns his people (25:8-11)
- God blesses Isaac (25:12-15)
- Abimelech asks Isaac to leave Gerar (25:16-19)
- Abimelech and Isaac's servants quarrel over wells (25:20-22)
- Yahweh appears to Isaac (25:23-25)
- Isaac makes a covenant with Abimelech (25:26-33)
- Esau makes life hard for Isaac and Rebekah (25:34-35)

26:1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And 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; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.

Vs 1 - The ESV study Bible says that these events likely occurred after the death of Abraham: If that is true, Isaac is at least 75.

This famine was a different famine than the one that happened to Abraham, Moses tell us this, I am guessing to make it clear he understands what he is writing about and this is a separate and distinct famine from what happened in the days of Abraham.

That famine, if you remember had right after Abraham left Mesopotamia and entered the Promised land:

"Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land." (Ge 12:10 ESV)

Abraham was 75 when he left Mesopotamia. He was **160** when Jacob and Esau were born, so this famine we are reading about here is **over 85 years after the famine in Genesis 12**. If it is after Abraham died it is at least **100 years later**.

In the famine with Abraham, he initially went to Egypt. Sorta, tuck that away for a second.

But we can imagine, this famine, at least in part has the goal of testing Isaac's faith, just like it did when it happened to his dad 85 years (or more) prior!

Vs 1b – So although Isaac was very wealthy, with many servants, the need to secure food began likely began to stretch his ability and he goes to Abimelech, the king of the Philistines.

We ran into Abimelech before, when Abraham moved to Gerar:

"1 ¶ From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah." (Ge 20:1-2 ESV)

If you remember then I told you that Abimelech is a title (pharaoh, king, president, or prime minister) it is a **dynastic title** and not a personal name, it means: "**Melek is father**" or "**my father is king**."

This event with Abraham and Abimelech happened around 1 year before the birth of Isaac (Abraham was 99). If this is after Abraham's death this is 76 years later. It is VERY UNLIKELY this is the same "Abimelech."

Vs 2 - As this **famine is getting worse**, and likely creating a **huge demand on Isaac** and his ability to take care of his family and servants. **Yahweh appears** to Isaac.

This is the same word that is used in **Gen 12:7, 17:1, 18:1** when the Bible tells us Yahweh appeared to Abraham.

In this appearing, Yahweh provides a clear "do not" command to Isaac: *"Do not go down to Egypt."* Then it is followed by a clear "do this" command to Isaac: *"dwell in the land of which I shall tell you."*

It is at least interesting that God would **protect the nation of Israel in Egypt**, and **God would protect the Messiah in Egypt**, but here He tells Isaac not to go to Egypt, **but to stay in the land.**

Vs 3 - Here God specifies seven provisions:

- 1) I will be with you
- 2) I will bless you
- 3) I will give this land to you and your offspring (Isaac)
- 4) I will establish the covenant that I swore to your father Abraham.

APPLICATION: Isaac entered into the Abrahamic covenant by faith. You and I enter into the new covenant by faith.

It is in Christ, that God will be with us (Mat 1:23), it is in Christ that God will bless us (Eph 1:3), it is in Christ that we will receive the ultimate Promised Land (Heaven) (Heb 12:23).

4 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

- Vs 4** –
- 5) I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven.
 - 6) I will give the land to your offspring.
 - 7) In your offspring, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed!
 - a. Here it is, the scarlet thread, first announced to Abraham, now promised to Isaac.

I said it last week, the Abrahamic covenant will be **established** and **maintained** in Isaac, we are seeing that play out here in the life of Isaac! Now these promises should seem familiar (Gen 12:1-3 and Gen 22:17-18).

Vs 5 - I (Yahweh) entered into a covenant with your father Abraham (Gen 15), and I (the God who cannot lie) fully intend to keep my word.

Faith that leads to good works has always been the case:

"21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" — and he was called a friend of God." (Jas 2:21-23 ESV)

But, the **scarlet thread**, is a **for sure, done deal**.

6 So Isaac settled in Gerar. 7 When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he feared to say, "My wife," thinking, "lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah,"

because she was attractive in appearance. 8 When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife.

Vs 6 - Isaac settled in Gerar, under the protection of the King Abimelech. He has obeyed God and not moved out of the Promised Land.

Vs 7 - Clearly Rebekah is beautiful, for the men of the city are inquiring about her, but we already knew that for when the servant went to Mesopotamia we were told in Gen 24:16 that she was “very attractive in appearance.”

But when men begin to ask Isaac about Rebekah. He said: *“she is my sister...”*

Now this is the exact same thing his father had done both in Egypt (Gen 12:10-12) and here in Gerar (Gen 20:1-18) many years earlier. The EXACT same thing. One BIG difference of course.

When Abraham did it he told a half-truth, here, Isaac is lying! Where did Isaac learn this behavior?

APPLCIATION:

“8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices” (Col 3:8-9 ESV)

Isaac was afraid of men because his wife is so beautiful. He thinks that the men will kill him to get his wife. To put this simply, he feared men. Isaac had essentially the same fear that Abraham had:

“10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you see, that you did this thing?” 11 Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’” (Ge 20:10-11 ESV)

But at the end of the day, it was the fear of man!

APPLICATION: We have talked about this, but the Bible says this hundreds of times:

“And do not fear those who kill the body (man) but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Mt 10:28 ESV)

“fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isa 41:10 ESV)

“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (2Ti 1:7 ESV)

When God calls us to step out, we can be afraid. But the spirit of fear is the **antithesis of faith**.

Vs 8 - Isaac dwelt in Gerar, a **“long time.”** We cannot be sure how long, but we should imagine at **least months if not years.**

Abimelech looked out a palace window and he saw Isaac **“laughing”** with Rebekah his wife. In the Hebrew Moses is choosing a **play on words** for Isaac’s name means **“he laughs.”**

He laughs, is **laughing it up** with Rebekah.

He saw them playing around together and he recognized this was not a brother and a sister. Isaac is **caught in his lie!** His sin has found him out!

APPLCIATION: Ours will too!

9 So Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, ‘She is my sister?’” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘Lest I die because of her.’” 10 Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon

us." 11 So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

Vs 9 - Having seen this, Abimelech sends for Isaac and says: *"Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, 'She is my sister'?"*

Abimelech makes a declaration, followed by two direct and probing questions, and then an obvious conclusion.

First the declaration: Whatever he saw, he saw **right through Isaac's lie**. He was clear, you are not brother and sister, you are husband and wife.

Question #1: How could you say that she is **"my" sister**? Likely, he did not even allow time for Isaac to answer.

Vs 10 - Question #2: *What is this you have done to us?"*

Conclusion: Your lie could have easily led to someone having sex with your wife, and your actions would have brought guilt upon my people and my kingdom.

THE IRONY: A pagan king is correcting a patriarch for his **sinful behavior!**

Vs 11 - Then Abimelech, issues a decree: *"Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."*

Why was Abimelech so fearful? It is likely that Isaac was powerful, and Abimelech already saw the hand of God in Isaac's life. Also, we should conclude that in spite of Isaac's folly God is watching out for Isaac and **protecting the Abrahamic Covenant!**

12 And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, 13 and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. 14 He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. 15 (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.) 16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we."

Vs 12 - Isaac opts to farm through the famine. Up until now Abraham and Isaac were herdsman, they were keepers of animals. He sows and he reaps that year a **hundred fold!**

We have the passing statement "Yahweh blessed Him." The **blessings** have transferred from Abraham to Isaac!

- He blessed him as part of the covenant.
- He blessed him as he stayed in the promised land.
- God blessed him during a famine!

Vs 13-14 - We do not know how much of the wealth remained from Abraham, but we do not know **Isaac's riches grew**. He gained more and more until he became **"very wealthy!"**

I have said this on multiple occasions, but it deserves repeating. You and I are RICH too!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," (Eph 1:3 ESV)

Further we are told that like Abraham, Isaac had possessions of flocks and herds, he had many servants, and the Philistines of the land began to **"envy"** him. The locals became **jealous** of the blessings that he was enjoying at the hand of Yahweh, and as we know **envy and jealousy** can often lead to **anger and violence**.

Vs 15 - Because **jealousy** often works out in **aggressive behavior**. We read that the Philistines backfilled wells that Abraham's servants had dug during his lifetime. We are not told how many, but it was multiple wells.

Now water is critical for survival, so this was not a childish prank, this was an act of aggression, because of their envy. Envy and jealousy caused them to do something that was against their own self-interest.

During a famine, they are backfilling wells in the surrounding land of Gerar, simply because they were connected to Abraham and Isaac!

Remember: *"31 Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath. 32 So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines." (Ge 21:31-32 ESV)*

So we are probably right to imagine, Beersheba, the **well of the seven fold oath**, is **one of the wells that the Philistines filled in**.

Vs 16 - Abimelech, recognizing that this is escalating, and he is probably not sure he has the wherewithal to defeat Isaac's servants. Abimelech tells Isaac to **go away from his land** for he has become, notice it, much **mightier than the Philistines**.

So does he mean mighty in number, mighty in strength, or both. I suspect both. He has become a concern for Abimelech, especially now that the Philistines are doing things to provoke Isaac!

So how will Isaac respond? It seems he has the power to take the city.

17 So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. 18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them. 19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water,

Vs 17 - Isaac without fuss or fight takes his massive family and all his servants and leaves the city of Gerar and goes to live in the valley of Gerar, there he settles.

APPLICATION: *"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."* (Heb 12:14 ESV)

Vs 18 - Isaac's servants again dig wells that had existed in the days of Abraham. Here we learn an interesting piece of information, after Abraham died, the Philistines had stopped up multiple wells.

Isaac's servants dig these wells, and he **renames them the names his father had given them**. Isaac is likely dwelling in the same region that Abraham dwelt in when he left the city of Gerar in **Gen 20:15**.

Because water is so critical in a desert it is likely his father had passed down a map with where these wells were located and their names.

Vs 19 - Here we are told that Isaac's servants dug in the valley of Gerar and found a well of **"living water."** This was likely what we would call an **artesian well**.

THOUGHT: John uses this term in the Greek **"living water"** to refer to the perpetual work of the Holy Spirit!

You see when we place faith in Jesus Christ, we have this living water springing up in us (Joh 7:37-39)!

20 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 contended with him. **21** Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah. **22** And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

Vs 20 - The herdsmen of Gerar, quarreled over this well. You can see their claim: this water is ours!

Thus, Isaac called the name of this well עֶשֶׂק ('Eseq), which means **contention**. This is the **only place** in the Hebrew bible where this word is used.

We have every reason to suspect that Isaac could have taken this well by force. He could have declared that a prior Abimelech has allowed Abraham to dig these wells. Instead, Isaac moved further down the valley.

Vs 21 - His men dig another well and again, **they quarrel** with the people of the valley about it and Isaac calls it Sitnah, שִׁטְנָה (Sitnah) this Hebrew word means "strife" and it is only used here in the Hebrew bible.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes: "the name of it was sitnah, which means enmity or adversary, having the same root as the name 'Satan.'" It seems that Isaac felt he had an **adversary!**

APPLICATION: "10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:10-12 ESV)

Vs 22 - He moves once again, apparently further down the valley, once again his servants dig another well, and there is no quarrelling over it. Isaac names this well רְחֹבוֹת (R'chobowth) this Hebrew word means "wide places" or "wide streets", this word is used four other times in the Hebrew bible.

Isaac concludes: Now Yahweh has made room for us in the land, here we shall be fruitful!

APPLICATION: There is room at the cross for you! Truth is, there is more than enough room for you! The same way that Yahweh made room for Isaac, He has made room for each of us.

23 From there he went up to Beersheba. **24** And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake." **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.

Vs 23 - He was in Gerar and the area or the valley of Gerar and headed towards Beersheba.

Vs 24 - As Yahweh had appeared to Isaac in **26:2**, Yahweh appears to Isaac once again! I know we can get **jealous** and **wish** that God would appear to us and speak.

But do not forget: "16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2Ti 3:16-17 ESV)

Also: "I ¶ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1:1-2 ESV)

Back to our story - It appears that Yahweh appeared to Isaac the **same night** he moved to Beersheba.

This is a **reaffirmation** of the **Abrahamic covenant**. Let's quickly walk through the parts of this declaration:

- 1) I am the God of your father, the unchanging God (immutability)

- 2) Do not fear!
- 3) Reason: I am with you.
- 4) I will bless you.
- 5) I will multiply your offspring.
- 6) I will do this for the sake of my servant Abraham.

APPLICATION: God could repeat almost all of this to you and I today, as Christians.

Vs 25 - Catch these four action verbs in Isaac's response: He **built**, he **called**, he **pitched**, and his **servants dug**...

- 1) **Built** - Altars in the Old Testament are places of worship. Isaac responds to God's truth and he worships Yahweh.

The last altar we saw built by Abraham was in Genesis 22. It was the altar that Abraham built on **Mount Moriah**, it was the altar that he laid his son (Isaac) on.

- 2) **Called** - And, it was there, that he **called upon the name of Yahweh**. This is likely the moment when Isaac went from being a **seeker to a follower**.

Remember what Abraham did in Genesis 12:8: *7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD."* (Ge 12:7-8 ESV)

- 3) **Pitched** - Isaac, with his massive caravan, pitched his tent there.
- 4) **Servants dug!** We also see his servants dug another well.

APPLICATION: What **action verb** is **God calling you to** in response to His love for you?

26 ¶ When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army, 27 Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" 28 They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and 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."

Vs 26 - All of a sudden, the **story jumps back to Gerar**, back to **Abimelech**. Here we are told that Abimelech went from Gerar to where Isaac and his caravan were living, where they had pitched their tents.

He was accompanied by Ahuzzath (who was his advisor) and Phicol who was the commander of his army.

Ahuzzath is likely a title also, for it means "friend of Abimelech." **Phicol** is also likely a title, first the word means "strong", and second Abraham ran into a general called Phicol many years earlier.

Vs 27 - Upon their arrival, you see what Isaac asks: *"Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?"* So whatever we made of the sending away, it did not sit well with Isaac.

APPLICATION: Do not be surprised if while walking with God the world does not run to your side and praise you, but rather, just the opposite!

"18 If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (Joh 15:18-19 ESV)

Vs 28-29 Here there declaration, we plainly see that **Yahweh has been with you.**

APPLICATION: *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” (Ac 4:13 ESV)*

It has been said; for some people, **we** are the only Jesus they will ever see, we are the only Bible they will ever read.

The gospel and time with Jesus changes us. People will see that change. Lost and saved will see that difference.

Vs 28b-29 - As we have thought about this, we conferred and decided that we desire to enter into a **pact with you**, a **sworn pact of peace** between us and you, that we enter into a **covenant of peace**, a non-aggression treaty!

INTERESTING: This is exactly what happened with one of the previous Abimelech’s and his general:

“22 ¶ At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do. 23 Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.”” (Ge 21:22-23 ESV)

This current administration is observing how God is with Isaac, and they come, desiring a covenant of peace.

Notice what they said to Isaac: **You are now blessed** by, and then he uses God’s name: **Yahweh!**

30 So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. 31 In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. 32 That same day Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, “We have found water.” 33 He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

Vs 30 - They held a feast and ate and drank together, and then in the morning, they rose up early and exchanged vows, they took an oath of peace.

Isaac sent them on their way, the idea seems to be with his blessing and Abimelech, Ahuzzath, and Phichol all departed from the tent city of Isaac, in peace.

Vs 32 - We see that as this is happening, Isaac gets word that his servants once again struck water.

Vs 33 - Isaac names this well – Shibah, (an oath). Therefore the name of the city, near this well is **Beersheba**. This well too, like one that Abraham’s servants dug is near the city of Beersheba.

34 ¶ When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, 35 and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

Vs 34 - Here we are told when Esau was 40 and Isaac was 100, we are told that Esau married two Hittites, two Canaanite women: First, **Judith** the daughter of Beeri. Her name means **“praised.”** Second, **Basemath** the daughter of Elon. Her name means **“spice.”** These are **descendants of the Canaanites. People cursed for their wickedness (Lev 18)!**

Vs 35 - They for sure Judith and Basemath, but likely Esau as well, made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah!
