

Genesis

Chapter 26



**Michael Fronczak
Bible Study Resource Center
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

Biblestudyresourcecenter.com

Copyright © 2005, 2007

Theme: God reaffirms His covenant to Isaac; Isaac misrepresents Rebekah; Isaac in Gerar; Isaac goes to Beer-sheba

McGee: When I was a much younger preacher, this chapter did not seem to be very exciting. It is quite colorless and uninteresting, which is especially noticeable after we have studied a man like Abraham and an exciting man like Jacob who is to follow. This chapter is about Isaac. In fact, it is the only chapter that is really about Isaac, and it just isn't very thrilling. All he does is dig wells. However, in later years I've come to examine these chapters and have found that God has a message for us in this also. In fact, it is a very important message, and Paul stated it quite accurately: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). This is a chapter that teaches patience, and some of us need that—certainly I am in that category. Yet, we would not have you get the impression that patience is all that God wants of us. The Lord also had men like Abraham, like Jacob, and like David, men who were real go-getters and who were aggressive. God can use that also. But the life of Isaac has a great message for many of us. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16–17). With that in mind, let us come to this chapter.

Isaac, the beloved son, has the covenant confirmed to him. Then we find him dropping into the same sin of unbelief as his father Abraham had done. Finally, we see him digging wells in the land of Gerar. This doesn't seem to be very exciting but there is a message here for us; so let us not miss it.¹

Torah Class: Patterns. We see patterns, here in Genesis 26, that we've seen in earlier chapters. And, some of these patterns are built-upon and further developed in the narrative of Genesis 26. We've talked about patterns quite a bit in this class, because they are crucial in understanding Scripture. Because God has created a Universe and system of life that emulates Himself, it is of course orderly and not chaotic. Secular humanists know instinctively that if our Universe and the system of life on our planet are NOT chaotic and random, then it DOES have order. And, if it has order, who or what has created that order?

Relatively new theories of physics..... which, by the way, are now the generally accepted theories..... have shown that 1) many more dimensions of existence than the 4 we are familiar with (length, width, height, and time) are a mathematical reality, and 2) our Universe and system of life IS orderly and not random or chaotic. It is full of patterns and cycles that seem to repeat infinitely.

Therefore, faced with the inevitable conclusion that if the Universe has been ordered, by definition there MUST be a central order-er. Yet, the same scientific community that subscribes to these new theories cannot bring themselves to use the term "God"; so, they have coined the term "Intelligent Design".....refusing to discuss just WHO the intelligent designer might be.

¹McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

Unfortunately for the scientific community, using the rather detached and neutral terminology of Intelligent Design has not allowed them to avoid the controversy their findings have caused. A school in Pennsylvania has been teaching its students about the decade old (or so) finding of intelligent design of the Universe in it's science classes...along, of course, with the obligatory theory of evolution; the result is a huge court battle over whether the students can even be told of the intelligent design discoveries. Keep an eye on this battle and read what you can about it. You will be astounded at the twisted claims and mental gymnastics that those who brought the lawsuit are alleging. You will be astounded at the institutions and people who you might never have associated with atheism and vehement secular humanism. Even more you will learn just how much of a minority you (as a Believer) are in our nation and our world, and to what extent the spirit of the Anti-Christ now dominates mankind's thinking.

I point this out to you, because most of us have been taught to read and study the Bible using secular humanist methods....it's just that we don't realize it. That is, it is required that for every lesson, or principle, or law, or happening in Scripture, we MUST ask WHY? And, we are required to draw our conclusions based on the scientific method. If there are not good and largely complete answers as to "why", then the Biblical lesson, or principle, or law, or happening is discarded as myth, legend, and fantasy.

The Bible is not a secular humanist document, and it does not present the material in a scientific way. Therefore, the search for "why" when studying Scripture can lead us down dead-end trails, in the same way that the rapidly-becoming-obsolete field of physics called Quantum Mechanics has led scientists down a road to a dead end that has amounted to nothing. The Quantum Mechanics approach to physics is to try to rationalize chaos; to try and find mathematical formulas able to PREDICT the unpredictable, and to explain how randomness can eventually produce order. The theoretical principles of chaos and randomness are the foundation of atheism and secular humanism. And, after more than 4 decades, the Quantum Mechanics approach to the operation of the Universe has proved utterly futile.

We are a Universe and life system of patterns....because we are Universe and life system of order; we see patterns because God's principles of order are rock-solid and they never change. This produces repetitions and predictable cycles...and I call these Biblical repetition, patterns.

Let's read Genesis 26, now, uncover some more patterns, and watch history, even at this early date, repeat itself.²

Jewish Study Bible: In comparison with the two larger-than-life figures who are his father (Abraham) and his son (Jacob), there is remarkably little narrative about Isaac. Indeed, he generally appears passive and, in places even comic. Gen 26:1-33 is the only collection of biblical narrative centrally devoted to the middle patriarch.³

Genesis 26:1

² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

³ The Jewish Study Bible, Jewish Publication Society, Tanakh Translation, Oxford University Press

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.

[Abimelech] The Abimelech in this verse is probably not the same Abimelech as in Chapter 20, for the events were about 90 years apart. The name may have been a dynastic name of the rulers in Philistia; a title (like Pharaoh or Caesar). Achish (1 Sam. 21:10) was also known as Abimelech.

Ramban: “to Abimelech, King of the Philistines” It is not known whether this is the same Abimelech who lived in the days of Abraham or whether every Philistine king was so called, for in the time of David he was also called Abimelech. Onkelos, however, is of the opinion that the Abimelech with whom Isaac dealt was a son [of the one mentioned in the account of Abraham].

The reason that Isaac went to Abimelech was that he intended to go down to Egypt, so he went to Abimelech, his father’s confederate, in the hope that perhaps he would deal kindly with him in the days of the famine, thus making it unnecessary for him to go down to Egypt. Now Abimelech, on account of his covenant with Abraham, did not harm him or his family at all. However, the men of the place asked Isaac, in mere quest, concerning his wife, and he said, She is my sister. Even so, neither the king nor any of his men touched her for they remembered the affair of Abraham. Hence Abimelech said, One of the people might lightly have lain, meaning to say, “I Abimelech did not touch her, and I was careful concerning her, but one of the men of the land might easily have stumbled, and then you would have made us incur guilt, as we sinned in the matter of your father.”⁴

[famine] This is now the second famine that is mentioned. The first famine in the days of Abraham was when Abraham and Lot took off for Egypt.

Dake: Thirteen Famines in Scripture

1. In Canaan in Abraham's day (Genesis 12:10)
2. In Canaan in Isaac's day (Genesis 26:1)
3. In Canaan in Jacob's day (Genesis 41:54-57)
4. In Canaan during the judges (Ruth 1:1)
5. In Canaan in David's day (2 Samuel 21:1)
6. In Canaan in Elijah's day (1 Kings 17:1)
7. In Canaan in Elisha's day (2 Kings 4:38)
8. In Samaria in Elisha's day (2 Kings 6:25)
9. In Canaan in Elisha's day (2 Kings 8:1)
10. In Jerusalem in Zedekiah's day (2 Kings 25:3; Jeremiah 14)
11. In Canaan in Nehemiah's day (Neh. 5:3)
12. In an unknown land (Luke 15:14)
13. In the Roman Empire in Paul's day (Acts 11:28)⁵

⁴ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁵ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

Famines are and were considered judgments of God. They are mentioned elsewhere in connection with judgments (2 Samuel 24:13; Psalm 105:16; Isaiah 51:19; Jeremiah 14:15; Jeremiah 15:2; Jeremiah 24:10; Jeremiah 27:8; Ezekiel 5:12; Ezekiel 12:16), and foretold as a sign of the second coming of Christ (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11). Promises during famine (2 Chron. 32:11; Psalm 33:19; Psalm 37:19; Romans 8:35).⁶

Ramban: “the first famine” Perhaps there was no famine in the world until the days of Abraham. This is why Scripture counts from it, for otherwise, what need is there to mention it? In my opinion the correct reason why Scripture mentions it is to tell us that people remembered the first famine, mentioning that on account of it Abraham went down to Egypt and there God did him great honor. It was for this reason that Isaac wanted to go in his father’s footsteps by descending into Egypt until it was said to him, *Go not down into Egypt*. The reason for the prohibition has been stated by our Rabbis: “You [Isaac] are a perfect burnt-offering and residence outside of the Land of Israel does not befit you.”

In my opinion, there is also included in this subject a reference to the future. Abraham’s exile into Egypt on account of the famine is an allusion to the exile of his children there. His going to Abimelech however was not an exile for he resided there of his own volition, But Isaac’s going [to the land of Abimelech, as recorded here in this verse, *And Isaac went unto Abimelech*] on account of the famine, does allude to an exile since he left his place against his will and went to another land. Now Isaac’s exile was from his own place to the land of the Philistines, which was the land in which his father had resided. This alludes to the Babylonian Exile, which took place in the land in which their ancestors had resided, namely, Ur of the Chaldees.⁷

Philistines in Palestine. Large numbers of Philistines entered Canaan after the invasion of the Sea Peoples (1200 B.C.) broke Egyptian control over the area. In this context they are mentioned in the records of Ramses III (1182-1151 B.C.). They established a pentapolis of five major city-states (Gaza, Gath, Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon) along the southern coastal plain and quickly gained political control over nearby regions as well (Judges 15:11). Their mention in Genesis may reflect an earlier group that settled in Canaan prior to 1200 B.C., or it may be an anachronism based on their presence in the Gerar region in later periods (see Genesis 21:32), earlier people of the vicinity being referred to by the name known to later readers. Archaeological evidence of their presence is found in the introduction of new pottery types, grave goods (such as the sarcophagi with human features) and new architectural designs.⁸

The Philistine tribe would become one of Israel’s fiercest enemies. The Philistines were one group of a number of migrating sea peoples from the Aegean Sea who settled in Palestine. They arrived by way of Crete and Cyprus and were used as mercenaries by Canaanite rulers. These people, living along the southwest coast, were few but ferocious in battle. Although friendly to Isaac, this small group was the forerunner of the nation

⁶ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

⁷ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁸ Bible Background Commentary

that would plague Israel during the time of Joshua, the judges, and David. This King Abimelech was not the same Abimelech that Abraham encountered (Genesis 22). *Abimelech* may have been a dynastic name of the Philistine rulers.⁹

An earlier famine occurred during the **days of Abraham** and led to Abraham going to Egypt (12:10–20). Abraham later had a similar misadventure in Gerar (ch. 20), a story that amazingly was repeated in some ways in the life of his son in the present narrative. The **Philistines** came to the coastland of Canaan following their defeat by the Egyptians around 1200 B.C. The Egyptians called them the “Sea Peoples.” The Philistines were apparently Greek peoples who migrated eastward (see 1 Sam. 4:1; 2 Sam. 5:17).¹⁰

McGee: 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.¹¹

Torah Class: The fickle weather of Canaan had once again plunged the land into a state of hunger such that Isaac was forced to move on. Apparently, remembering his father, Abraham’s, similar plight and resulting sojourn into Egypt, Isaac was about to do the same. His route to Egypt took him into the territory of the Philistines, because the well-established trade route between Canaan and Egypt ran directly through the Philistine’s land. Even more, as verse 1 states, he went to the royal city of Gerar, because it was a known stores-city; that is, it was a place where the king resided, so the city had warehouses with food storage. It was common practice throughout the known world in that era to have both emergency and regular food warehouses AT THE CITY where the king of that region lived....obviously so the king could keep his eye on them and so he would have first shot at the best food as he wanted it.

This system of stores-cities and warehouses existed primarily because the “taxes” every king extracted from his people came....for the most part..... in the form of grain or some other kind of produce. So, huge amounts of wheat and barley brought in as taxes had to be stored and controlled by the king’s men, under the king’s watchful eye. The result was the need for enormous warehouses and underground silos for safekeeping the king’s property.¹²

⁹ Life Application Notes

¹⁰ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

¹¹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:109). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

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:

Isaac was on the verge of deciding to move on to Egypt to seek more plentiful food and pasturage, when Jehovah appeared to him in a special theophany.

The LORD appeared to Isaac for the first time on record. Interestingly, God had already spoken to Rebekah (see 25:22, 23). Even though Egypt's conditions may have been hospitable, the Lord prohibited Isaac from going **to Egypt** as his father had during the earlier famine (12:10).¹³

Torah Class: There, Yahweh appeared to Isaac and told him NOT to go down to Egypt, but rather to stay right where he was! In other words, despite what his eyes told him.....despite the fact that all his human instincts told him they must go elsewhere or perish from starvation, God told him to stay in the land God had set aside for Abraham and his descendants. That God would take him THROUGH the trouble, not out of it. How often we choose to do just what Isaac was about to do.....cut and run, instead of listening to, and trusting, God to take us through the hard times and challenges of our lives.

This was no easy decision for Isaac; he was an owner of flocks and herds. He, by now, had an enormous clan to oversee and care for. To choose to stay in an area that was now under a famine was a most serious one; it could mean the end of his clan. One can only imagine the shock and disbelief of his clan members at this decision. This was to be a test of faith in his father's God.

Let's do a little housekeeping. First, the timing of chapter 26 necessarily occurs BEFORE chapter 25. So, the twins Esau and Jacob had not *yet* been born to Isaac's wife, Rivka. We can know this because there is no mention of them, AND, the king of the Philistines never would have inquired about Rivka if he knew she was married; children being the dead giveaway that she WAS married.

Let's also talk for a moment about the first words of verse 2, where it says, "The Lord appeared to him....", referring to Isaac. What does this mean, "the Lord appeared"? Does this indicate a theophany? Did God make a PHYSICAL appearance before Isaac? BTW, as in most cases in the OT, the word translated as "lord" is actually Y-H-W-H....God's personal name.

The Hebrew word used here, and normally translated as appearance, is *va-yerah'*; and this word IS indicative of divine revelation. Another Hebrew word for a kind of divine intervention is very similar: *va-yo'mer*. *Va-yomer* invariably is referring ONLY to divine *speech*....words, something audible. *Va-yerah* is most commonly used in the Bible in reference to the Patriarchs....Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is indicative of a more direct and intense receiving of communication from God. It is a communication with the Lord that is not questioned. Visions, another form of communication with Yahweh, are often questioned; was it God or just a dream? Do I understand correctly what He said? What does it all mean? The word form *va-yerah'*, on the other hand, indicates an

¹³ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

unquestionable, unmistakable contact with God that includes a crystal clear message. . . . that could, but does not necessarily, include a visual experience. So, the word “*appearance*” should not be taken to mean that the Lord, in some way, made Himself visible; it’s more of an expression of near-ness of a human to God’s presence.

Final piece of housekeeping: the Abimelech that we see here is NOT the same Abimelech that Abraham encountered. Abimelech means “father-king”, or “my father the king”. It is an epithet, and a title. It was probably a name that many Philistine kings chose for themselves. We really shouldn’t have to wonder about this: we find modern Catholic Popes choosing names for themselves of past Popes. We find kings of England and France doing the same thing: Henry the 8th was called that because there were 7 royal Henrys before him. Same idea here.¹⁴

Genesis 26:3

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 swore unto Abraham thy father;

Sojourn in this land—In Gerar, whither he had gone, Genesis 26:1, and where we find he settled, Genesis 26:6, though the land of Canaan in general might be here intended. That there were serious and important reasons why Isaac should not go to Egypt, we may be fully assured, though they be not assigned here; it is probable that even Isaac himself was not informed why he should not go down to Egypt. I have already supposed that God saw trials in his way which he might not have been able to bear. While a man acknowledges God in all his ways, he will direct all his steps, though he may not choose to give him the reasons of the workings of his providence. Abraham might go safely to Egypt, Isaac might not; in firmness and decision of character there was a wide difference between the two men.¹⁵

bless you: The Lord fulfilled His promise to Abraham concerning Isaac (17:19). He established His everlasting covenant with Isaac, just as He had with Abraham.¹⁶

Chumash: Classic Questions: Why did god tell Isaac not to go to Egypt?

Rashi: He had in mind to go down to Egypt, like his father had gone down in the days of the famine. God said to him “Do not go down to Egypt! You are a perfect burnt offering and being outside the Land [of Israel] is not fitting for you.

Midrash: The verse states, “Settle in this land”. Rabbi Hoshiyah said, “[Isaac had the sanctity of] a perfect burnt offering. Just like a burnt offering is invalidated if it is taken outside its prescribed area, likewise, if you go outside the Land [of Israel] you will be invalidated (Bereishis Rabah 64:3).

¹⁴ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

¹⁵ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

¹⁶ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

Toras Menachem: While, Rashi and the Midrash seem to be making similar points, there are nevertheless two important differences between them: a.) The Midrash bases itself on verse 3, “settle in this Land,” a positive statement, whereas Rashi’s comment is based on the negative verse 2, “do not go down to Egypt” b.) The Midrash stresses that leaving the Land of Israel would render Isaac “invalidated.” Rashi merely writes, “being outside the Land [of Israel] is not fitting for you.”

These two points are connected: The Midrash sees the Land of Israel as being the appropriate place for a “perfect burnt offering.” Therefore it cites the positive verse, “settle in the Land.” Rashi however stresses the negative qualities of the Diaspora (“being outside the Land is not fitting for you”) so he quotes the negative verse, “do not go down to Egypt.”

At first glance, one might presume that, according to the Midrash, Isaac was prohibited by God from leaving the Land of Israel because of its holiness, i.e. a positive quality. Rashi on the other hand was of the opinion that the land did not possess any holiness during the time of the patriarchs, so he merely stressed the negative qualities of the Diaspora.¹⁷

Ramban: “And I will fulfill the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father.” There is no need for the Holy One, blessed by He, to assure Isaac that He will not violate the oath which He swore to his father, for He is not a man, that he should repent. Abraham had not other seed upon whom a covenant had been established with God except Isaac. The oath, moreover, was not given on condition. In the case of Jacob, it was necessary that he be given such assurance on account of his brother Esau. He was thus saying that in him [Jacob] and his seed will the covenant be fulfilled, not in Esau. [But in the case of Isaac, why was it necessary that he be given such a promise?]

Now it was the desire of the Holy One, blessed be He, to swear to each one of the patriarchs to let it be known that each one was worthy of the covenant being made with him alone, and that the merit of each one stands before Him together with their seed. Even though the previous one suffices, it is an additional merit and honor to them. It is for this reason He said, Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land, since all of them had the distinction of God having made a covenant with them.¹⁸

Genesis 26:4

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;

The obedience of one man brought blessings to his descendants. The Lord *confirmed* the Abrahamic promises to Isaac (God’s presence, His blessing, possession of *the land*, and posterity as numerous as the stars; cf. 12:2-3; 15:5-8; 17:3-8; 22:15-18; 28:13-14).

¹⁷ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

¹⁸ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

McGee: 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.”¹⁹

The Seven "I Will's" of God to Isaac

1. I will be with you (Genesis 26:3).
2. I will bless you (Genesis 26:3).
3. I will give you all these countries (Genesis 26:3).
4. I will perform the oath made to Abraham (Genesis 26:3).
5. I will multiply your seed as the stars (Genesis 26:4).
6. I will give all these countries to your seed (Genesis 26:4).
7. I will bless you and multiply you for Abraham's sake (Genesis 26:24).²⁰

God promised to make Isaac’s descendants innumerable **as the stars** because of His covenant with Abraham (22:17). God promised to bless the entire world, **all the nations**, through Abraham’s descendants (12:3; 22:18; 28:14).²¹

Justin Martyr: “The same promise to Isaac” By our similar faith we have become children of Abraham. For, just as he believed the voice of God and was justified thereby, so have we believed the voice of God (which was spoken again to us by the prophets and the apostles of Christ) and have renounced even to death all worldly things. Thus God promised Abraham, a religious and righteous nation of similar faith and a delight to the Father; but it is not you, “in whom there is no faith.”

Notice how he makes the same promises to Isaac and Jacob. Here are God’s words to Isaac: “In your seed shall all the nations be blessed.” And to Jacob “In you and in your seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed.” But God does not address this blessing to Esau, or to Reuben or to any other but only to them from whom Christ was to come through the Virgin Mary in accordance with the divine plan of our redemption. If you were to think over the blessing of Judah, you would see what I mean. For the seed is divided after Jacob and comes down through Judah and Perez and Jesse and David. Now this was a sign that some of you Jews would be certainly children of Abraham and at the same time would share in the lot of Christ.²²

Genesis 26:5

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

¹⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:109). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁰ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

²¹ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

²² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

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.

The Fivefold Obedience of Abraham

1. You obeyed My voice.
2. You kept My charge.
3. You kept My commandments.
4. You kept My statutes.
5. You kept My laws.

Because of this, God blessed his sons.²³

Christian Ethics, Obedience—Biblical ethics is founded in a covenant relationship God initiated with His people. He promises salvation and expects obedience. The faithfulness of one generation leads to the renewal of the covenant with the next.²⁴

McGee: 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 folk 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 would 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.²⁵

Ramban: "and he kept my charge." Rashi comments "As a reward that Abraham hearkened to My voice when I tested him. And he kept My charge – these are the precautionary decrees instituted by the Sages, which are intended to make us avoid the violation of Biblical laws, such as Second Degrees of forbidden marriages and certain prohibited acts on the Sabbath. My commandments – these are precepts which, had they not been written in the Torah, were requisite to have been written, such as robbery and murder. My statutes – these are matters against which the evil inclination and the heathen

²³ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

²⁴ Disciple's Study Bible Notes

²⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:109). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

nations argue, such as the prohibitions against eating the swine and the wearing of garments woven of wool and linen, there being no apparent rationale for them except that they are decrees of the King imposed on His subjects. And My laws – the plural is intended to include, [besides the Written Law], the Oral Law as well as those rules given to Moses from Sinai.” [Thus far the words of Rashi.]

Perhaps then we should say that My charge refers to the Second Degree of marriages which were forbidden to the Sons of Noah; My commandments applies to robbery and murder; My statutes refers to the laws against eating a limb torn of from a live animal, as well as breeding mixed kinds of cattle or grafting together different species of trees; and My laws refer to civil statutes and the prohibitions against idol worship. The Sons of Noah were commanded concerning all of these matters, and Abraham observed and fulfilled the Will of his Creator, observing even the details and the strictures of their commandments, even as the Sages mentioned: “The tractate of idolatry of our father Abraham contained four hundred chapters”.

Now it appears to me from a study of the opinions of our Rabbis that Abraham our father learned the entire Torah by Ruach Hakodesh (*Holy Spirit*) and occupied himself with its study and the reason for its commandments and its secrets, and he observed it in its entirety as “one who is not commanded but nevertheless observes it.”²⁶

Genesis 26:6

And Isaac dwelt in Gerar:

Gerar was better for farming than the arid regions of the Negev.

Torah Class: So, beginning in verse 3, God renewed the covenant promises He had made with Abraham, with Isaac. Let us never forget, all the Bible characters were real human beings; Isaac would naturally wonder, over extended periods of time, if God was still with him. He’d look at his circumstances, as we all do, and question whether he fully understood what God had told him.....because little, if any, of those covenant promises seemed to be coming to pass. And, the one promise that was so valuable to a clan, in that era.....land.....certainly hadn’t materialized. Isaac NEEDED the reaffirmation from the Lord, so he got it.

We must not just quickly skip by what is said towards the end of verse 4, though it seems we have heard it before. In fact, the form of the promise “so that all the nations of the earth shall BLESS THEMSELVES by your heirs.....” ADDS a small nuance from the earlier promise that “all the nations of the earth will be blessed by you”. The idea is that ALL humanity will have their hopes and well being somehow organically connected to Israel. General mankind’s fate is dependent on Israel’s fate.

What, exactly, does that mean? Well, even though we are so far along in the process of God’s plan of redemption that we have a greater picture and understanding of how this is all playing out than those who came before us.....much of it is still to come, and therefore much is still a mystery. When we get to Genesis 48, 49, and 50, more information is

²⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

added that both sheds light AND adds to the mystery of just HOW all the nations of the earth will be blessed by Abraham's descendants. And, remember, the word "**nations**", in Bible speak, is referring more to PEOPLE than to territory. Don't necessarily equate the words nation and country; in our modern vocabulary, we use the words nation and country interchangeably. But, that is NOT the case in the Bible. Nations, for the most part, means definable groups of people along with their government....their leaders.²⁷

Genesis 26:7

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.*

Isaac in Gerar, like his father, deceived Abimelech and was rebuked by the pagan king who knew that the penalty for adultery was death (vv. 10-11). This legal note also would remind Israel of the importance of preserving marriage for the future of their nation. When that mainstay goes, a society crumbles (if Isaac's marriage would have ended, there would have been no Israelite society).

Parallels to Abraham

- A famine 12:10
- A plan to go to Egypt 12:11
- The stay in Gerar 20:1
- Calling his wife his "sister" 12:12-13; 20:2,11
- The wife's beauty 12:11,14
- Abimelech's concern about committing adultery 20:4-7
- Abimelech's rebuke 20:9-10

McGee: 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.²⁸

[She is my sister] Isaac followed in the footsteps of Abraham the wrong way (Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 20:1-17). Both failed God in faith, because it was impossible for either to be killed if God's word about their seed was to be fulfilled. It is doubtful that Abraham ever told his son of his own weakness on this point, so Isaac wasn't prepared to guard against such temptation. The statement was true regarding Abraham and his wife, but Rebekah was only Isaac's cousin.²⁹

²⁷ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

²⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:109). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁹ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

He said, She is my sister—It is very strange that in the same place, and in similar circumstances, Isaac should have denied his wife, precisely as his father had done before him! It is natural to ask, Did Abraham never mention this circumstance to his son? Probably he did not, as he was justly ashamed of his weakness on the occasion—the only blot in his character; the son, therefore, not being forewarned, was not armed against the temptation. It may not be well in general for parents to tell their children of their former failings or vices, as this might lessen their authority or respect, and the children might make a bad use of it in extenuation of their own sins. But there are certain cases, which, from the nature of their circumstances, may often occur, where a candid acknowledgment, with suitable advice, may prevent those children from repeating the evil; but this should be done with great delicacy and caution, lest even the advice itself should serve as an incentive to the evil. I had not known lust, says St. Paul, if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet. Isaac could not say of Rebekah, as Abraham had done of Sarah, She is my sister; in the case of Abraham this was literally true; it was not so in the case of Isaac, for Rebekah was only his cousin. Besides, though relatives, in the Jewish forms of speaking, are often called brothers and sisters, and the thing may be perfectly proper when this use of the terms is generally known and allowed, yet nothing of this kind can be pleaded here in behalf of Isaac; for he intended that the Gerarites should understand him in the proper sense of the term, and consequently have no suspicion that she was his wife. We have already seen that the proper definition of a lie is any word spoken with the intention to deceive. See Genesis 20:12.³⁰

Ramban: “And he said: she is my sister” They did not ask concerning the children for he would say, “They are my children from another woman.”³¹

Genesis 26:8

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.

[**sporting**] Hebrew: *tsachaq* (H6711), to laugh outright, play, make sport. Isaac was expressing love to Rebekah in a way that wasn't lawful for brothers and sisters (strong sexual connotation). It is possible that Abraham's case was still remembered (Genesis 20). No excuse can be made for either Abraham or Isaac (cp. Psalm 31:5; Numbers 32:23). (Gen 20:9 Ishmael and Isaac; Gen 39:14 Joseph and Potiphar's wife)

Genesis 26:9

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.

³⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

³¹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 26:10

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.

[brought guiltiness upon us] Abimelech and his people were God-fearing. Death was the penalty for adultery in Israel and some of the other nations, even before Moses (Genesis 38:24). Isaac had put these people in danger of committing a sin.

Genesis 26:11

And Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

26:7-11 Isaac was afraid that the men in Gerar would kill him to get his beautiful wife, Rebekah. So he lied, claiming that Rebekah was his sister. Where did he learn that trick? He may have known about the actions of his father, Abraham (see Genesis 12:10-14 and Genesis 20:1-4). Parents help shape the world's future by the way they shape their children's values. The first step toward helping children live rightly is for the parents to live rightly. Your actions are often copied by those closest to you. What kind of example are you setting for your children?³²

McGee: Abimelech became a very good friend of Isaac's. Isaac had the respect of the community just as Abraham had had. Both of them were outstanding men. I mention that here because from the rest of the chapter we might not get the impression that Isaac is an outstanding man.³³

Genesis 26:12

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.

[sowed] First instance, of sowing (cp. Genesis 47:23; Matthew 13:4).

[hundredfold] A mark of great increase (Psalm 67:6; Zech. 8:12; Matthew 13:23; Galatians 6:7-8; Matthew 19:29).

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 (Isaiah 65:13; Psalm 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 (Proverbs 27:4; Eccles. 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

³² Life Application Notes

³³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:110). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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.³⁴

McGee: God is with him, you see. That is the blessing that God promised to these people from the day He called Abraham. It was an earthly blessing. Later on when God put them into that land, He told them He would bless them in their basket; that is, it would be filled with foodstuff. God made that promise good when they were walking in fellowship with Him.

We must remember that He is not promising *us* that blessing. He has promised *spiritual* blessings to us. We are told that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, and that is our portion today. But that blessing is on the same terms. It depends on our walk with God. If you will permit Him, He wants to bless you abundantly in your spiritual life. We find here that Isaac is greatly blessed

Don't miss the fact that Isaac is greatly blessed. His field brings forth an *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 ..." (John 14:9). And in the high priestly prayer of Jesus, He said, "... I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Also, He said, "... My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 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 land³⁵

Torah Class: Isaac obeyed; like his father, Abraham, he listened to God and did what He was bid to do. But, Isaac carried in him a trait similar to his father: fear. Now in the midst of famine, and currently residing upon a people he didn't particularly trust, he felt insecure. And, as a result, here we find Isaac sporting *another* familiar family trait.....a problem with being truthful.....especially when it comes to his wife. No doubt Isaac had heard the tales of his father Abraham's trip into Egypt, and so he now mimics Abraham's behavior by telling the city folk of G'rar that Rivka is his sister.

One day, Abimelech looks out his window and spots Isaac caressing his lovely wife Rebecca; having heard the scuttlebutt that Rivka was Isaac's sister, what he witnessed says otherwise, and so Abimelech figures out the deceit and confronts Isaac. Isaac admits his lie, and the furious Abimelech warns his people that nobody is to touch her, or they'll die. A lesson he had likely learned from HIS father.

³⁴ JFB Commentary

³⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:110). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now, although there are many obvious patterns playing out here that we saw with Isaac's father Abraham, the outcomes are quite different. Abraham encountered famine, determined to go to Egypt to ride it out, and did so. Isaac encountered famine, determined to go to Egypt to ride it out, but did NOT go.

The king of the Philistines spotted Abraham's wife, Sarah, was told she was Abraham's sister, and so he more or less kidnapped her for his harem. The king of the Philistines spotted Isaac's wife, Rivka, had been told she was his sister, BUT NOTICED that she obviously was not, and so did NOT take her. In fact, he warned his people against doing anything as regards Rivka.

It is quite interesting to me, that whenever this king of the Philistines makes reference to Isaac's God, He calls Him by name; that's right, the original Hebrew doesn't have Abimelech referring to Isaac's God as "Lord", as most of our Bibles do; rather, each time Y-H-W-H is present. Abimelech obviously had familiarity with Isaac's God, and had fear and respect for him. And, in fact, it was the fear of the God of the Hebrews that drove Abimelech's decisions in the way he dealt with Isaac and his clan.³⁶

Genesis 26:13

And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

God's special work for Abraham was extended to the son. The Lord blessed him so much that he became very prosperous and the envy of his neighbors.

Genesis 26:14

For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

[envied] Riches are always a source of envy (Genesis 31:1; Psalm 37:7; Psalm 49:16; Psalm 73:3; 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Cor. 13:4).

Genesis 26:15

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.

Isaac sojourned in the land, enjoying divine prosperity (his crops flourished and he became rich). But the Philistines, envious of his wealth, filled Isaac's wells with dirt. Again wells provide a dominant motif: they are tangible evidence of divine blessing (cf. Abraham's dispute with the Philistines over a well, 21:25, 30).

[wells which his father's servants had digged] In the East digging wells was proof of title to surrounding unoccupied lands. Isaac inherited the lands where Abraham had dug

³⁶ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

wells. To fill wells was a declaration of war, or at least a hostile act (2 Kings 3:19,25). To avert war Isaac gave up the wells.³⁷

Genesis 26:16

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

[Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we] This was a strange way to say, You have become wealthy in our midst and my people are envious. It could literally mean that Isaac had become mightier than all the Philistines.

Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we—This is the first instance on record of what was termed among the Greeks ostracism; i.e., the banishment of a person from the state, of whose power, influence, or riches, the people were jealous. There is a remarkable saying of Bacon on this subject, which seems to intimate that he had this very circumstance under his eye: “Public envy is an ostracism that eclipseth men when they grow too great.” On this same principle Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites. The Philistines appear to have been jealous of Isaac’s growing prosperity, and to have considered it, not as a due reward of his industry and holiness, but as their individual loss, as though his gain was at their expense; therefore they resolved to drive him out, and take his well-cultivated ground, etc., to themselves, and compelled Abimelech to dismiss him, who gave this reason for it, Thou hast obtained much wealth among us, and my people are envious of thee. Is not this the better translation? for it can hardly be supposed that Isaac was “mightier” than the king of whole tribes.³⁸

26:12-16 God kept his promise to bless Isaac. The neighboring Philistines grew jealous because everything Isaac did seemed to go right. So they plugged his wells and tried to get rid of him. Jealousy is a dividing force strong enough to tear apart the mightiest of nations or the closest of friends. It forces you to separate yourself from what you were longing for in the first place. When you find yourself becoming jealous of others, try thanking God for their good fortune. Before striking out in anger, consider what you could lose—a friend, a job, a spouse?³⁹

Stewardship, Rewards—In the Old Testament period, people often identified faithfulness to God and personal prosperity. Wealth was considered a reward for faithfulness. Job discovered the deeper truth that we cannot judge a person’s religion by a bank account. God does bless His faithful people, but His blessings are not always in material form. Isaac’s prosperity provoked anger and envy from those living around him, as is often the case today.⁴⁰

³⁷ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

³⁸ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

³⁹ Life Application Notes

⁴⁰ Disciple’s Study Bible

Genesis 26:17

And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

[**departed thence**] Isaac, like Abraham before him, departed when he wasn't wanted, to keep peace (Genesis 13:5-13).

Genesis 26:18

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.

No matter where Isaac dug, and no matter how often the Philistines stopped up the wells, he reopened old dirt-filled wells (26:17). God's blessing on Isaac could not be hindered.

26:17-18 The desolate Gerar area was located on the edge of a desert. Water was as precious as gold. If someone dug a well, he was staking a claim to the land. Some wells had locks to keep thieves from stealing the water. To "stop" or plug up someone's well was an act of war; it was one of the most serious crimes in the land. Isaac had every right to fight back when the Philistines ruined his wells, and yet he chose to keep the peace. In the end, the Philistines respected him for his patience.⁴¹

Torah Class: We find in verse 13, that apparently the extended famine caused Isaac to decide to plant crops to supplement, and likely to feed, his herds, flocks, and family. Ancient historical records prove the truth of this. Often keepers of flocks and herds would plant the equivalent of a large garden so as to have grain and herbs for their families. And, there is also record of shepherds growing crops to supplement their food supply in hard times, so this act of Isaac doing so is completely consistent with both his culture and profession; in no way does planting crops indicate an intent to settle down and stay in a spot permanently.

God blessed Isaac for trusting Him to stay in Canaan, by causing the crops to produce 100 times what was sowed. In that day, planting methods were primitive and the yield of the seed was small; generally, something on the order of 25 times the amount of seed sown became harvestable. A great year was 50 times, and 75 was extraordinary. 100 times yield was only possible supernaturally. We're told in V13 that Isaac's wealth kept compounding, and the local Philistines became bitterly jealous. And, from Abimelech's instructions to Isaac, we can also understand that there was fear coupled to that jealousy by the Philistine people of both Isaac's God, and of the already sizeable number of people that formed Isaac's clan. Isaac was a threat, as the Philistines saw it.

This is a scenario that will be played out time and time again with the Israelites, and then the Jews, as God's blessing upon them with plentiful food, longevity, fertility, and wealth also served as a cause for envy and then persecution by whatever peoples they

⁴¹ Life Application Notes

lived among. The P'lishtim, the Philistines, showed their anger and frustration by filling in water wells so vital to Isaac's clan's well being. Abraham had dug these wells years earlier.

So, Isaac's clan had grown so large and powerful, that they represented a threat to the Philistines, and Abimelech asked them to leave his land. Yet, we must understand that we have the weaker asking the stronger to leave. Isaac could have refused, and a war might have resulted with Isaac the likely winner. In those days, as now, however, Abimelech knowing that he could not have defeated Isaac, would have made some type of power and wealth sharing pact with Isaac. Isaac well knew this; but, instead, chose to comply and so he gathered his clan left, moving to the bank of the G'rar River (Vadi, or Wadi, means "river"), and began unclogging some the water wells that had been filled with dirt by the Philistines. When the water began flowing again, the Philistines claimed it was their water, and the conflict started anew.⁴²

Genesis 26:19

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

[**springing water**] Literally, living water, or an unfailing spring (cp. Leviticus 14:5,50; Leviticus 15:13; Numbers 19:17; Song 4:15; Rev. 21:6; Rev. 22:1).

Genesis 26:20

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.

[**Esek**] Meaning contention or strife.

Genesis 26:21

And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

Driven away by the Philistines, Isaac encamped in the Valley of Gerar, and continued his search for water. He faced opposition there too; the Gerarites claimed that the water from two of the three wells Isaac dug was theirs.

[**Sitnah**] Meaning opposition, accusation. *Sitnah* is related to the Hebrew term for "Satan."

They dug another well—Never did any man more implicitly follow the Divine command, Resist not evil, than Isaac; whenever he found that his work was likely to be a

⁴² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

subject of strife and contention, he gave place, and rather chose to suffer wrong than to have his own peace of mind disturbed. Thus he overcame evil with good.

Genesis 26:22

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.

[Rehoboth] Meaning wide places. It was about twenty miles southwest of Beersheba, in a fertile valley. The site is marked by extensive ruins and deep wells.

The names he gave the three wells reflect not only his struggle but also his triumph: Esek (“contention”) and Sitnah (“hatred or opposition”) reflect the conflict over two wells, and Rehoboth represents the room provided by the Lord. Isaac refused to fight back. He continued to relinquish one well after another until the Philistines in frustration let him alone.

26:17-22 Three times Isaac and his men dug new wells. When the first two disputes arose, Isaac moved on. Finally there was enough room for everyone. Rather than start a huge conflict, Isaac compromised for the sake of peace. Would you be willing to forsake an important position or valuable possession to keep peace? Ask God for the wisdom to know when to withdraw and when to stand and fight.⁴³

Chumash: Classic Questions: “Why does the Torah inform us that Isaac dug three wells?”

Ramban: This account does not appear to have much significance at the literal level. However there is a hidden meaning here, that the three wells hint to the three Holy Temples. The first well, named *Esek* (“argument”) alludes to the First Temple, which was contested by the nations, who oppressed the Jewish people with wars, until they destroyed it. The second well, *Sitnah* (“harassment”), is a name actually used by scripture to refer to the Second Temple (see Ezra 4:6). The third well was called *Rehovos* (“spacious”), alluding to the future Third Temple which will be built without quarrel or feud, when God will expand our borders, speedily, in our days.⁴⁴

Chumash; Sparks of Chasidus: According to Ramban, the three wells dug by Isaac allude to the three Holy Temples. The analogy of digging a well precisely describes the process of building the Temple: First there is a phase of intense physical effort to dig the well, followed by the actual filling of the well with water which does not require any direct effort – it simply floods in. Similarly, the building of the Temple requires tremendous human effort, but the indwelling of the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) – which is the very purpose of building the Temple – is an effortless consequence of the Temple’s construction.

⁴³ Life Application Notes

⁴⁴ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

This analogy appears to break down however in the case of the Third Temple which, according to the *Zohar*, will be built by God, and not by man. It seems at first glance, that Ramban's analogy for the Third temple of digging a well is inappropriate.

However, even according to the *Zohar*, the Third Temple is built through human effort too. Not through the physical effort of working with stones, and mortar, but rather, by the dedicated acts of super-rational *mitzvah* observance by Jewish people, in defiance of the challenges of exile. The cumulative effects of these acts are thus described by the *Zohar* as a "building made by God," though in fact, it is a building made by human *mitzvah* acts that are totally dedicated to God.

Thus, the building process of the Third Temple consists of *mitzvos* performed out of simple obedience to God. Therefore, they are eternal.⁴⁵

Genesis 26:23

And he went up from thence to Beersheba.

[Beer-sheba] Well of the sevenfold oath. The southernmost city in Canaan (Genesis 21:31; Genesis 46:1; Judges 20:1).

Christian Ethics, War and Peace—The human struggle over limited natural resources leads to conflict and, at times, to war. Compromise and refusal to demand one's rights can lead to peace.⁴⁶

Genesis 26:24

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.

[the LORD appeared unto him] God appeared to encourage him in view of the wrong suffered by the Philistines filling the wells of his father (Genesis 26:15), the insult of being asked to leave (Genesis 26:16), and the further wrong by their claiming wells that he had made (Genesis 26:17-22). He could have been tempted to go to war, but he held himself steady and proved his godliness.

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.

[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] The 35th prophecy in Genesis (Genesis 26:24, fulfilled). Next, *Genesis 27:28. The second prophecy concerning Isaac's seed.

⁴⁵ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

⁴⁶ Disciple's Study Bible Notes

[fear not] The third of 75 occurrences of "fear not." Used generally when man is being quieted because of the presence of God (Genesis 15:1; Genesis 21:17; Judges 6:23; Jeremiah 46:27; Daniel 10:12,19; Zech. 8:13; Acts 27:24; Rev. 1:17).

[Abraham's sake] The doctrine that God does things only for His own sake is disproved here and in Genesis 39:5; 2 Samuel 5:12; 1 Kings 11:12-13,32,34; 1 Kings 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Kings 19:34; 2 Kings 20:6; Psalm 132:10; Isaiah 37:35; Isaiah 45:4.

Genesis 26:25

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.

After Isaac moved to Beersheba, God appeared to him, confirming again the Abrahamic Covenant. Isaac responded as did his father, by building an altar and proclaiming Yahweh's name (cf. 12:7-8; 21:33).

[builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD] He didn't fall away from true worship in times of prosperity as many today. Isaac followed the practice of his father (see 12:8). He made an altar and called on the name of the LORD: At this altar Isaac not only prayed to the Lord, he also affirmed the reality of the living God in this special land (12:8; 21:33).

McGee: 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.⁴⁷

Genesis 26:26

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

[Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army] One Targum reads, "Abimelech and Phichol and a company of their friends," not considering Ahuzzath a proper name. It could be that Phichol was the title of the commander of the Philistines' army as Abimelech was the title of their king.

Abimelech came to end the animosity between his people and Isaac's family because he recognized God's blessing on Isaac (v. 28, 29). **Ahuzzath ... and Phichol:** These associates of Abimelech would witness the agreement.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:111). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴⁸ The Nelson Study Bible

Genesis 26:27

And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

Genesis 26:28

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;

Once the conflict over the wells was settled, Abimelech requested that he and Isaac make a treaty. Just as an earlier Abimelech acknowledged that God was with Abraham (21:22), so this Abimelech acknowledged that God was with Isaac. Isaac named the well there Shibah (“oath” or “seven”) for they made a treaty by an oath similar to the earlier treaty Abraham made when he named the city Beersheba (21:23-24, 31). That treaty was necessarily renewed with Isaac. God’s blessing was on the seed of Abraham; Isaac was the rightful heir.

[the LORD is with you] This was God’s design. He wanted to bless Abraham’s family because Abraham and his family followed Him. Then, God’s extraordinary blessing on His people would attract others to Himself (12:2, 3). The **covenant** formally bound both parties. The covenant here was as between two equals (for similar covenants, see Abraham and Abimelech in 21:2–34; Laban and Jacob in 31:43–55). The covenant between God and Abraham was of a different type—a covenant between a king and a servant (15:18).⁴⁹

Genesis 26:29

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.

[we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace] These assertions were false in five ways, because they had:

1. Manifested envy (Genesis 26:14,27)
2. Filled the wells of Abraham (Genesis 26:15,18)
3. Insulted him (Genesis 26:16)
4. Stolen his spring (Genesis 26:20)
5. Stolen his well (Genesis 26:21)⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

⁵⁰ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

Ramban: It is possible that Abraham was very great and mighty in power, having in his household three hundred men that drew sword, and also many confederates; and he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, and he chased after four powerful kings and subdued them. When they saw Abraham's success which clearly was from God, the king of the Philistines was then fearful of him lest he conquer his kingdom, since this would be easier than the war against the four kings. Perhaps the king of the Philistines had also heard the matter of God having given the land to Abraham. Hence he made a covenant with him, making him swear that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son, it being considered an act of falsehood if Abraham were to rebel against the king, and considering it possible that Abraham might live until his grandson will rule, [he also mentioned my son's son]. And as the fathers are so are the sons. Isaac was as great as his father, and the king therefore feared lest Isaac war against him because he had driven him from his land.⁵¹

Genesis 26:30

And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

[they did eat and drink] A token of friendship and covenant. This ceremonial meal expressed the new relationship and memorialized the alliance (27:3, 4; 31:46, 54).

Genesis 26:31

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.

26:26-31 With his enemies wanting to make a peace treaty, Isaac was quick to respond, turning the occasion into a celebration. We should be just as receptive to those who want to make peace with us. When God's influence in our lives attracts people—even enemies—we must take the opportunity to reach out to them with God's love.⁵²

[peace] The Hebrew term *shalom* suggests that things were as they ought to be between the two contracting parties.

Torah Class: So, Isaac took his tribe and moved further away to Be'er-Sheva. Abimelech, an able politician, knew it was wise to try and mend fences with this growing clan that could, if it wished, come back and overrun his land. So, he renewed the pact that he had made so many years earlier with Abraham.

Beer-Sheva means well of the seven. And, recall, it was a place well known to Isaac, because it where Abraham moved after Isaac had his near-death experience on the altar at Mt. Moriah. So, Isaac was simply going back to comfortable familiarity. Also, we must understand that this was simply an oasis. There was no city, there. It would be long into

⁵¹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁵² Life Application Notes

the future before a city was established at that spot, and the city's name was taken from the ancient name Abraham had given it.

Beginning in verse 23, upon Isaac taking his large clan to Be'er-Sheva, God again comes to Isaac....the text says Y-H-W-H "*appears*" to Isaac, and it uses the same Hebrew word *va-yera'*, that is common in describing many of the Patriarch's communications with the Lord. Isaac had just come through a pretty troubling time. He may have felt like he failed, because he left an area of land, without putting up a fight, that God said would go to Abraham's descendants. And, Yahweh comes to Isaac as a comforter; he says, "fear not". Why fear not? Because Isaac was fearful.....

Emulating his father, Isaac builds an altar, sacrifices to Yahweh, and has his men start digging a new well; something he was sure to need. And, during the process of digging the well, Abimelech shows up along with his chief of staff, Ahuzzath, and the general of his army, Phicol. Isaac is annoyed. His statement to Abimelech is something on the order of "what now!..... I did everything you asked in order to maintain peace between us, and here you are again."

But, Abimelech has not come to make trouble; he is coming with his hat in hand. He wants a peace treaty with Isaac. Isaac is setting up shop right on the border of Abimelech's influence. He feels he has pushed Isaac as far away as he can get away with, but he still feels insecure. I suspect that Isaac knew full well why Abimelech was there, simply by who came with him. If Abimelech were there to make war, he would not have had his civilian chief of staff with him. No, this was the usual entourage necessary for two nations to make a pact.

And, the nature of the pact is spelled out in verses 28 and 30; it is to live side-by-side, peaceably. The pact is concluded in the usual manner, with a ceremonial meal, and some oaths in the name of the gods each worships are spoken; Abimelech and his men depart. The same day, the men digging the water well struck water. This was always interpreted as a good sign.....a sign of blessing..... and I have no doubt that is exactly as God intended it.

Peace and prosperity, and room to grow were now Isaac's; life was good. But, trouble was brewing; his unwise, petulant son Esau did the VERY thing Isaac and Rebecca most dreaded: he took two Hittite women as his wives. God knew what He was doing when, 40 years earlier; He had assigned the first-born birthright to Esau's twin brother Jacob, while they both were yet in their mother's womb.⁵³

Genesis 26:32

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.

Either a brand-new well or a redigging of Abraham's well at that location (21:30, 31). The discovery of water was regarded as a blessing from God on their actions.

⁵³ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Genesis 26:33

And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beersheba unto this day.

[**Shebah**] Hebrew: *shib'ah* (H7655), seven. The well was called the well of the sevenfold oath, referring to the seven lambs that were a witness of the covenant made at that place between Abraham and Abimelech (Genesis 21:22-33). The name is a wordplay on the Hebrew words that mean “swear” (v. 31) and “seven.” The name Beersheba may mean either “Well of the Oath” or “Well of the Seven.”

[**Beer-sheba unto this day**] Beersheba still exists, and retains its ancient name in a slightly modified form. It is said the old wells are still there; they're very deep and highly valued by surrounding Arabs.

folk etymology of town names. Beersheba was named earlier by Abraham (in Genesis 21:31). The designation of significance to a name is not necessarily a suggestion that the name originated at that time. Just as people's names can be reinterpreted (for instance, Jacob in Genesis 27:36), so a place name can be reinterpreted. The ancients were less concerned with the origin of a name than they were with the significance the name acquired. This town at the southern extreme of the land becomes the home base for Isaac. The site identified by archaeologists as Beersheba has no remains prior to the Judges period (Iron Age, 1200), but there is no suggestion in the story of Isaac that there was a town on the site in his day, so this is not a problem.⁵⁴

Election, Righteousness—Because of Abraham's faithful obedience to God, He renewed His covenant with Isaac. The covenant assured Isaac God would be with him, his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, possess much land, and be the source of blessings for all nations. For Isaac, blessing was clearly evident (v. 13). Election may lead to worldly possessions but does not necessarily do so. The necessary result of election is God's presence.⁵⁵

Genesis 26:34

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:

Esau's marriages to two Hittite women (Judith and Basemath) were a grief to his parents. This note demonstrates how unfit Esau was for God's blessing, and how foolish was Isaac's later attempt to bless Esau (27:1-40). [Marrying a Canaanite was forbidden in the Torah (Deut 7:3).] Esau later married a third wife, Mahalath (28:9).

[**Judith**] It seems that both Judith and Beeri had other names (Genesis 36:2,5,13).

⁵⁴ Bible Background Commentary

⁵⁵ Disciple's Study Bible Notes

Esau . . . took to wife—If the pious feelings of Abraham recoiled from the idea of Isaac forming a matrimonial connection with a Canaanitish woman [Genesis 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.⁵⁶

Esau married Hittite women, who believed in many different gods. His parents wanted him to marry a woman who worshiped the living God (27:46; 28:8; 36:1–8). The name **Judith** is related to the word that means “praise.” She is not mentioned among the wives of Esau in ch. 36. Perhaps, the marriage did not last. The name **Basemath** means “Fragrant.”⁵⁷

Chumash: The Last Word: “Esau Despised the Birthright..” Even though Esau’s moral and spiritual standing was extremely low, to the extent that he, “despised (the whole idea of serving God which came with) the birthright,” and his very disposition indicated that he was a murderous person (Rashi to 25:25); nevertheless, we still find later on that Jacob sent messengers (“angels”) to inform Esau tht he was at peace with him and sought his affection (see Vayishlach 32:4, Rashi to v. 6 *ibid.*)

From this we can learn a powerful lesson: We should “reach out” and “send messengers” even to those Jews who appear to be on the level of Esau. Even such a Jew is your “brother,” who needs to be treated in a pleasant and peace-loving manner, with love and affection. He needs to be drawn closer to the Torah with “ropes of love” (Tanya ch. 32).⁵⁸

Genesis 26:35

Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

[grief of mind] Hebrew: bitterness of spirit (Genesis 27:46; Genesis 28:2-9). The Targums say these women quarreled with Isaac and Rebekah and rebelled against their religious instructions.

26:34-35 Esau married pagan women, and this upset his parents greatly. Most parents can be a storehouse of good advice, because they have a lifetime of insight into their children’s character. You may not agree with everything your parents say, but at least talk with them and listen carefully. This will help avoid the hard feelings Esau experienced.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ JFB Commentary

⁵⁷ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

⁵⁸ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

⁵⁹ Life Application Notes

Esau married two heathen women, additional evidence of his spiritual dullness. Later he took a third wife (28:9).⁶⁰

Gleanings in Genesis; Pink:

The following is Chapter 27 out of Pink's Book, Gleanings In Genesis:

THE MAN ISAAC

GENESIS 26

IN our last two articles we have been occupied more particularly with the *person* of Isaac, now we are to review his *history*. It is noticeable that though Isaac lived the longest of the four great patriarchs yet less is recorded of him than of the others: some twelve chapters are devoted to the biography of Abraham, and a similar number each to Jacob and Joseph, but excepting for one or two brief mentionings, before and after, the *history* of Isaac is condensed into a single chapter. Contrasting his character with those of his father and son, we may remark that of Isaac there is noted less of Abraham's triumphs of faith and less of Jacob's failures.

As we have seen in our previous studies Isaac, typically, represents *sonship*. In perfect consonance with this we may note how he was appointed *heir* of all things. Said Eliazer to Bethuel, "And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: *and unto him hath he given all that he hath*" (24:36). Observe how this is repeated for sake of emphasis in 25:5—"And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac." In the type this pointed first to Abraham's greater Son, "Whom He (God) hath appointed Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2). But it is equally true of all those who are through faith the children of Abraham and the children of God—"And if children, *then heirs*: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). As with Isaac, so with us: all the wealth of the Father's house is ours! But Isaac not only represented the believer's sonship and heirship, but he also foreshadowed *our heavenly calling*. As is well known to most of our readers, the land of Canaan typified the Heavens where is our citizenship (Phil. 3:20) and our spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12). Hence it was that Isaac alone of the patriarchs *is never seen outside the Land*. This is the more noticeable and striking when we remember how that Abraham, Jacob and Joseph each did leave the Land, for a time at least.

Having looked at Isaac *mystically* we shall now consider him *morally*. The first thing we read about him after the remarkable scene pictured in Gen. 22 is that "Isaac came from the way of the well *Lahai-roi*; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate (or pray) in the field at the eventide" (24:62, 63). This gives us a good insight into Isaac's character. He was of the quiet and retiring order. He had not the positive, active, aggressive disposition of his eminent father, but was gentle and retiring and unresisting. In One only do we find *all* the Divine graces and perfections.

Isaac was essentially the man of the well. Abraham was markedly the man of the altar, Jacob specially the man of the tent but that which was most prominent in connection with Isaac was the "well." The first thing said of Isaac after he was bound to

⁶⁰ The Ryrie Study Bible Notes

the altar (Gen. 22) is, “Isaac came from the way of the well *Lahai-roi*” (24:62). This is very striking coming as *the neat* mention of Isaac after we have seen Christ typically slain, resurrected and ascended (compare our last article on Gen. 22). Hence that which follows here in the type is the figure of *the Holy Spirit’s operations*—as succeeding Christ’s Ascension! But returning to Isaac and the well. The next time he is referred to we are told, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well *Lahai-roi*” (25:11). And again we read, “And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. 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” (26:18, 19). For further references see Gen. 26:20, 21, 22, 25. It is very striking and significant that the name of Isaac is associated with “wells” just *seven* times, not less, not more. Undoubtedly there is some important lesson to be gathered from this.

A well differs from a cistern, in that it is the place of *running* water. What a marvelous hint of the *typical* meaning of Isaac’s well is that found in 26:19!—“And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of *springing* water,” the margin gives, “of *living* water!” Water is imperative for the maintenance of the natural life; so, too, is it with the spiritual. The first need of the believer is the “living water,” that is, the Spirit acting through the Word. “The way that water ministers to life and growth is indeed a beautiful type of the Spirit’s action. Without water a plant will die in the midst of abundance of food in actual contact with its roots. Its office is to make food to be assimilated by the organism, and to give power to the system itself to take it up” (F. W. G.).

The *first* well by which Isaac is seen is that of *Lahai-roi*; (24:62; 25:11), the meaning of which is, “Him that liveth and seeth me” (See Ge 16:14, 16:14). It told of the unflinching care of the everliving and everpresent God. And where is such a “well” to be found today? Where is it we are brought to *realize* the presence of this One? Where but in the Holy Scriptures! The Word of God ministered to us by the power and blessing of the Spirit is that which reveals to us the presence of God. The “well,” then, typifies the place to which the son is brought—into the presence of God. His *remaining* there, practically, depends upon his use of and obedience to the Word.

We have just looked at Isaac by the Well of Lahairoi; did he *remain* there? What do you suppose is the answer, reader? Could you not supply it from your own experience! “And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac *went unto Abimelech*, king of the Philistines unto Gerar” (26:1). Isaac’s departure from the well Lahairoi to Gerar typifies the *failure* of the son (the believer) to maintain his standing in the presence of God and his enjoyment of Divine fellowship. But is it not blessed to read next, “And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. 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 sware unto Abraham thy father” (26:2, 3). Apparently, Isaac was on his way to *Egypt*, like his father before him in time of famine, and would have gone there had not the Lord appeared to him and arrested his steps. In passing, we would remark that here we have a striking illustration of the *sovereign ways* of God. To Isaac the Lord appeared and stayed him from going down to Egypt, yet under precisely similar circumstances He appeared not unto Abraham!

“And Isaac dwelt in Gerar” (26:6. Gerar was the *borderland* midway between Canaan and Egypt. Note that God had said to Isaac, “*Sojourn* in this land” (v. 3), but Isaac “*dwelt*” there (v. 6), and that “a *long time*” (v. 8). Mark now the *consequence* of Isaac settling down in Gerar—type of the believer *out of communion*. He *sinned* there! “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” (26:7). Isaac thus repeated the sin of Abraham (Gen. 20:1, 2). What are we to learn from Isaac thus following the evil example of his father? From others we select two thoughts. First, the readiness with which Isaac followed in the way of Abraham suggests that it is much easier for children to imitate the vices and weaknesses of their parents than it is to emulate their virtues, and that the sins of the parents are frequently perpetuated in their children. Solemn thought this! But, second, Abraham and Isaac were men of vastly different temperament, yet each succumbed to the same temptation. When famine arose each *fled to man* for help. When in the land of Abimelech each was afraid to own his wife as such. Are we not to gather from this that no matter what our natural temperament may be, unless the grace of God supports and sustains us we shall inevitably fall! What a warning!

“Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundred-fold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great” (26:12, 13). Most of the commentators have had difficulty with these verses and have resorted to various ingenuities to explain this prosperity of Isaac while he was out of communion with God. But the difficulty vanishes if we look at the above statement in the light of v. 3, where the Lord had said, “I will bless thee”—a promise given *before* Isaac had practiced this deception upon Abimelech. That this is the true interpretation appears from the word “bless.” God had said, “I will bless thee” (v. 3), and v. 12 records the fulfillment of God’s promise, for here we read, “And the Lord *blessed* him.” The failure of Isaac between the time when God made promise and its fulfillment only affords us a striking illustration of that blessed word, “He is *faithful* that promised” (Heb. 10:23)! Yes, blessed be His name, even “if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: he cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

Next we are told, “And Abimelech said unto Isaac, *Go from us*; for thou art much mightier than we” (26:16). Was not this *God* speaking to Isaac, speaking at a *distance* (through Abimelech) and not yet directly!

“And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. 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” (26:17, 18). In digging again these wells of Abraham which had been stopped up by the Philistines, Isaac appears to typify Christ who, at the beginning of the New Testament, dispensation reopened the Well of Living Water which had, virtually, been blocked up by the traditions and ceremonialism of the Pharisees.

“And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdsmen of Gerar did *strive* with Isaac’s headmen, saying, The water is ours... And they digged another well and strove for that also... And he *removed* from thence and digged an other well” (26:19–22). Again we would ask, Was not this “strife” God’s way of leading his child back to Him self again! But note also the lovely moral trait seen here

in Isaac, namely, his nonresistance of evil. Instead of standing up for his “rights,” instead of contending for the wells which he had dug, he quietly “removed” to another place. In this he beautifully points out the path which the Christian should follow: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, ye suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Pet. 2:19, 20). We need hardly remind the reader that the attitude displayed by Isaac, as above, was that of the Saviour who “when He was reviled, reviled not again.”

“End he went up from thence *to Beersheba*” (26:23). Mark here the topographical reference which symbolized Isaac’s moral ascent and return to the place of communion, for “Beersheba” means the Well of the Oath. In full accord with this behold the blessed sequel—“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” (26:24). On the very night of Isaac’s return to Beersheba the Lord “appeared unto” him!

“And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac digged a well” (26:25). Mark how the “altar” is mentioned before the “tent”—there was no mention of any altar in Gerar! How striking, too, that next we read, “Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahurzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army” (26:26). Personal blessings from the Lord was not the only result of his return to Beersheba. Abimelech seeks him out, not now to distress him (we no longer read of any “striving” for *this* last well), but to ask a favor. And they said, “We certainly saw 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” (26:28). Now that our patriarch has entered again the path of God’s will, those who formerly were his enemies seek him and bear witness to the presence of God with him. An illustration is this that “when a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Pro. 16:7).

“And he (Isaac) made them a *feast*, and they did eat and drink. 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” (26:30, 31). Above we called attention to how meekly Isaac suffered wrong when the Philistine strove for his wells but here we may mark his failure to manifest another grace which ought always to accompany meekness. There is a meekness which is according to nature, but usually this degenerates into weakness. The meekness which is of the Spirit will not set aside the requirements of righteousness, but will maintain the claims of God. And here Isaac failed. To forgive is Christian, but with that there must be faithfulness in its season. “If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke* him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). Abimelech had clearly wronged him, but instead of dealing with Abimelech’s conscience, Isaac made him a “feast.” This was amiable, no doubt, but it was not upholding the claims of righteousness. Contrast the conduct of Abraham under similar circumstances—“And Abraham *reproved* Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech’s servants had violently taken away” (Gen. 21:25)!

“And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith, the daughter of Beer *the Hittite*, and Bashemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a *grief* of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah” (26:34 and 35). This is sad, and points a solemn warning to us.

Marriage is a momentous undertaking, and for one of the Lord's people to unite with a worldling is to court disaster as well as to dishonor Christ. Jehovah's instructions to Israel were very pointed: under no circumstances must they marry a Canaanite (Deut. 7:3). In the times covered by the book of Genesis, though apparently no divine law had been given respecting it, yet the mind of God was clearly understood. This is evident from the care which Abraham took to secure Isaac a wife from among his own people (Gen. 24). Thus did he prevent Isaac from marrying a daughter of Canaan. But Isaac was careless about this matter. He failed to watch over his children so as to anticipate mischief. Esau married a daughter of the Hittites. God could not say of Isaac as he had of his father, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19). However, that Isaac had within him a righteous soul to be "vexed" is clear from the words, "which were a *grief of mind* unto Isaac and to Rebekah" (26:35).

We reserve for our next article a detailed examination of Genesis 27. Suffice it now to refer barely to the incident which is well known to our readers. Isaac was one hundred and forty years old and was fearful that death might soon overtake him. He therefore prepares to perform the last religious act of a patriarchal priest and bestow blessing upon his sons. But mark how that instead of seeking guidance from God in prayer his mind is occupied with a feast of venison. Not only so, but he seeks to reverse the expressed will of God and bestow upon Esau what the Lord had reserved for Jacob. But whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap. Isaac acts in the energy of the flesh, and Rebekah and Jacob deal with him on the same low level. And here the history of Isaac terminates! After charging Jacob not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan (28:1) he disappears from the scene and nothing further is recorded of him save his death and burial (35:27–29). As another has said, "instead of wearing out, Isaac rusted out," rusted out as a vessel no longer fit for the master's use.

"Was Isaac, I ask, a vessel marred on the wheel? Was he a vessel laid aside as not fit for the Master's use? or at least not fit for it any longer? His history seems to tell us this. Abraham had not been such an one. All the distinguishing features of 'the stranger here,' all the proper fruits of that energy that quickened him at the outset, were borne in him and by him to the very end. We have looked at this already in the walk of Abraham. Abraham's leaf did not wither. He brought forth fruit in old age. So was it with Moses, with David, and with Paul. They die with their harness on, at the plough or in the battle. Mistakes and more than mistakes they made by the way, or in their cause, or at their work; but they are never laid aside. Moses is counselling the camp near the banks of the Jordan; David is ordering the conditions of the Kingdom, and putting it (in its beauty and strength) into the hand of Solomon; Paul has his armour on, his loins girded. When, as I may say, the time of their departure was at hand, the Master, as we may read in Luke 12, found them 'so doing,' as servants should be found. But thus was it not with Isaac. Isaac is laid aside. For forty long years we know nothing of him; he had been, as it were, decaying away and wasting. The vessel was rusting till it rusted out."

"There is surely meaning in all this, meaning for our admonition. And yet—such is the fruitfulness and instruction of the testimonies of God—there are others in Scripture, of other generations, who have still more solemn lessons and warnings for us. It is humbling to be *laid aside* as no longer fit for use; but it is sad to be left merely to *recover ourselves*, and it is terrible to remain to *defile ourselves*. And illustrations of all this moral

variety we get in the testimonies of God. *Jacob*, in his closing days in Egypt, is not as a vessel laid aside, but he is there recovering himself. I know there are some truly precious things connected with him during those seventeen years that he spent in that land, and we could not spare the lesson which the Spirit reads to us out of the life of Jacob in Egypt. But still, the moral of it is this—a saint, who had been under holy discipline, recovering himself, and yielding fruit, meet for recovery. And when we think of it a little, that is but a poor thing. But *Solomon* is a still worse case. He lives to defile himself; sad and terrible to tell it. This was neither Isaac nor Jacob—it was not a saint simply laid aside, nor a saint left to recover himself. Isaac was, in the great moral sense, blameless to the end, and Jacob’s last days were his best days; but of Solomon we read, ‘It came to pass, *when Solomon was old*, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods,’ and this has made the writing over his name, the tablet to his memory, equivocal, and hard to be deciphered to this day.”

“Such lessons do Isaac and Jacob and Solomon, in these ways, read for us, beloved—such are the minute and various instructions left for our souls in the fruitful and living pages of the oracles of God. They give us to see, in the house of God, vessels fit for use and kept in use even to the end—vessels laid aside, to rust out rather than to wear out—vessels whose best service is to get themselves clean again—and vessels whose dishonor it is, at the end of their service, to contract some fresh defilement.” (J. G. Bellett, “The Patriarchs.”)⁶¹

The Book of Jasher: Chapter 28

28:1 And in those days, after the death of Abraham, in that year the Lord brought a heavy famine in the land, and whilst the famine was raging in the land of Canaan, Isaac rose up to go down to Egypt on account of the famine, as his father Abraham had done.

2 And the Lord appeared that night to Isaac and he said to him, Do not go down to Egypt but rise and go to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines, and remain there till the famine shall cease.

3 And Isaac rose up and went to Gerar, as the Lord commanded him, and he remained there a full year.

4 And when Isaac came to Gerar, the people of the land saw that Rebecca his wife was of a beautiful appearance, and the people of Gerar asked Isaac concerning his wife, and he said, She is my sister, for he was afraid to say she was his wife lest the people of the land should slay him on account of her.

5 And the princes of Abimelech went and praised the woman to the king, but he answered them not, neither did he attend to their words.

6 But he heard them say that Isaac declared her to be his sister, so the king reserved this within himself.

7 And when Isaac had remained three months in the land, Abimelech looked out at the window, and he saw, and behold Isaac was sporting with Rebecca his wife, for Isaac dwelt in the outer house belonging to the king, so that the house of Isaac was opposite the house of the king.

⁶¹Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (228). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

8 And the king said unto Isaac, What is this thou hast done to us in saying of thy wife, She is my sister? how easily might one of the great men of the people have lain with her, and thou wouldst then have brought guilt upon us.

9 And Isaac said unto Abimelech, Because I was afraid lest I die on account of my wife, therefore I said, She is my sister.

10 At that time Abimelech gave orders to all his princes and great men, and they took Isaac and Rebecca his wife and brought them before the king.

11 And the king commanded that they should dress them in princely garments, and make them ride through the streets of the city, and proclaim before them throughout the land, saying, This is the man and this is his wife; whoever toucheth this man or his wife shall surely die. And Isaac returned with his wife to the king's house, and the Lord was with Isaac and he continued to wax great and lacked nothing.

12 And the Lord caused Isaac to find favor in the sight of Abimelech, and in the sight of all his subjects, and Abimelech acted well with Isaac, for Abimelech remembered the oath and the covenant that existed between his father and Abraham.

13 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Behold the whole earth is before thee; dwell wherever it may seem good in thy sight until thou shalt return to thy land; and Abimelech gave Isaac fields and vineyards and the best part of the land of Gerar, to sow and reap and eat the fruits of the ground until the days of the famine should have passed by.

14 And Isaac sowed in that land, and received a hundred-fold in the same year, and the Lord blessed him.

15 And the man waxed great, and he had possession of flocks and possession of herds and great store of servants.

16 And when the days of the famine had passed away the Lord appeared to Isaac and said unto him, Rise up, go forth from this place and return to thy land, to the land of Canaan; and Isaac rose up and returned to Hebron which is in the land of Canaan, he and all belonging to him as the Lord commanded him.

17 And after this Shelach the son at Arpachshad died in that year, which is the eighteenth year of the lives of Jacob and Esau; and all the days that Shelach lived were four hundred and thirty-three years and he died.

18 At that time Isaac sent his younger son Jacob to the house of Shem and Eber, and he learned the instructions of the Lord, and Jacob remained in the house of Shem and Eber for thirty-two years, and Esau his brother did not go, for he was not willing to go, and he remained in his father's house in the land of Canaan.

19 And Esau was continually hunting in the fields to bring home what he could get, so did Esau all the days.

20 And Esau was a designing and deceitful man, one who hunted after the hearts of men and inveigled them, and Esau was a valiant man in the field, and in the course of time went as usual to hunt; and he came as far as the field of Seir, the same is Edom.

21 And he remained in the land of Seir hunting in the field a year and four months.

22 And Esau there saw in the land of Seir the daughter of a man of Canaan, and her name was Jehudith, the daughter of Beeri, son of Ephraim, from the families of Heth the son of Canaan.

23 And Esau took her for a wife, and he came unto her; forty years old was Esau when he took her, and he brought her to Hebron, the land of his father's dwelling place, and he dwelt there.

24 And it came to pass in those days, in the hundred and tenth year of the life of Isaac, that is in the fiftieth year of the life of Jacob, in that year died Shem the son of Noah; Shem was six hundred years old at his death.

25 And when Shem died Jacob returned to his father to Hebron which is in the land of Canaan.

26 And in the fifty-sixth year of the life of Jacob, people came from Haran, and Rebecca was told concerning her brother Laban the son of Bethuel.

27 For the wife of Laban was barren in those days, and bare no children, and also all his handmaids bare none to him.

28 And the Lord afterward remembered Adinah the wife of Laban, and she conceived and bare twin daughters, and Laban called the names of his daughters, the name of the elder Leah, and the name of the younger Rachel.

29 And those people came and told these things to Rebecca, and Rebecca rejoiced greatly that the Lord had visited her brother and that he had got children.⁶²

⁶² The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT