GENESIS 26

Isaac Deceives Abimelech

1 Then there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham.[i] So Isaac went to Abimelech,[ii] king of the Philistines, at Gerar. **2** But Yahveh appeared to him. He said, "Do not go down to Egypt. Live in the land that I will tell you about. **3** Live as a foreigner[iii] in this covenant[iv] land. I will be with you. I will bless you. I will fulfill[v] the oath that I promised to Abraham, your father. I will give[vi] all these countries to you and all your descendants. **4** I will make your descendants as the stars of heaven.[vii] I will give your descendants all these countries. I will bless all the nations[viii] of the earth through your Descendant.[ix] **5** I will bless you because Abraham obeyed My voice and did what I said. He kept My commandments, statutes, and laws."

6 So Isaac lived in Gerar. **7** When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said,[x] "She is my sister."

He was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he was thought,[xi] "The men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is very beautiful."[xii] **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 Isaac embracing[xiii] his wife Rebekah.

9 Then Abimelech called Isaac, and said, "Look. She is surely your wife. Why did you say,

'She is my sister?' "

And Isaac said to him, "I thought I might[xiv] die because of her."

10 And Abimelech said, "What is this violation of covenant trust[xv] that you have done to us? One of the men might easily have had sex with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us."

11 Then Abimelech charged all his people. He said, "Whoever touches this man or his wife will surely be put to death."

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land and reaped 100 times as much that same year. Yahveh blessed him. **13** And the man became great, and continued to grow even greater, until he became very[xvi] great. **14** He had many possessions of flocks and herds. The servants of the Philistines envied[xvii] him. **15** They stopped all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham by filling them with dirt.

16 Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us. You are much[xviii] mightier than we are."

17 So Isaac left from there. He pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar and lived there.

Fighting Over Wells

18 Then Isaac once again dug the wells of water, which they had dug in the days of his father Abraham. This was because the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham. He called their names after the names by which his father had called them. **19** Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found a well of springing water. **20** But the herdsmen of Gerar fought with Isaac's herdsmen. They said, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well, "Esek,"[xix] because they fought with him.

21 So they dug another well and fought over that one too. So he called its name "Sitnah."[xx]

22 Then he moved from there and dug another well. When there was no quarreling over that well, he called its name "Rehoboth."[xxi] He said, "Now Yahveh has made room for us. We will prosper[xxii] in the land."

23 And he went up from there to Beer Sheba. **24** Then Yahveh appeared to him that night. He said, "I AM the Elohim of Abraham your father. Do not be afraid. I AM with you and will bless you. I will give you many descendants for My servant Abraham's sake."

25 So he built an altar there and called on the name of Yahveh. He pitched his tent there and his servants dug a well.

Covenant with Abimelech

26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath (one of his friends) and Phichol (the chief captain of his army).[xxiii]

27 Then Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me? You hated me, and sent me away from you."

28 But they said, "We see[xxiv] that Yahveh is certainly with you. We want to make an oath with you, between us and you. Let us make a covenant with you. **29** Promise that you will do us no harm, just as we have not troubled you, and just as we have done you only good. We sent you[xxv] away in peace. Yahveh is[xxvi] now blessing you."

30 So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. **31** They rose up early in the morning and swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them away and they left him in peace. **32** Now it came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came, and told him about the well which they had dug. They told him, "We found water." **33** So he called it "Shebah."[xxvii] That is why the name of the city is "Beer Sheba"[xxviii] to this day.

34 Now Esau was 40 years old when he married Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite. **35** They were a source of sorrow[xxix] for Isaac and Rebekah.

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i Genesis 12:10.

ii Abimelech means "my father is king." It is a title of a king. This is not likely to be the Abimelech of Genesis 21.

iii The Hebrew גּוּר (*goor*) means "to sojourn" or "to dwell temporarily" as a non-native. It reflects the condition of living as a dependent or vulnerable outsider, often without legal rights or permanent settlement. It is closely related to the noun גֵּר (*geyr*), meaning "sojourner" or "resident alien."

iv The Hebrew זֹאת is a Zayin-**Aleph**-**Tav**. This word by itself has no red underline because it is not the 2-letter **Aleph**-**Tav**. Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely renders this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

v Hebrew קוּם (*koom*) means "to arise, perform, stand, be established." It also describes the legal confirmation or establishment of property ownership. In transactional contexts it refers to property being legally secured or transferred to a new owner. Here the term indicates that the field was formally established as Abraham's possession following the negotiated payment.

vi The Hebrew אֶתֵּן is an **Aleph**-**Tav**-Nun. It refers to giving when referring to an oath, covenant, or promise. God is giving Abraham the land in terms of a one-sided covenant. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

vii Acts 3:25.

viii The word גּוֹי (*goy*) refers to a nation, often Gentile. It highlights collective rebellion against Yahveh. Unlike גֵּר (*geyr*), a foreigner protected under Israel's law, or תּוֹשָׁב (*to-shawv*), a resident alien with limited rights, נָכְרִי (*nawch-ree*) and זוּר (*zoor*) imply foreigners more distant or hostile to Israel's covenant.

ix The Hebrew is לְזַרְעֲךָ. It is a masculine singular noun. Wordplays are impossible to translate with few words. It applies to the one nation of Israel and to the one King Jesus who will rule the earth during the Millennium. The reader should see both national Israel and King Jesus at the one same time. Gen 3:5, 12:7, 18:18, 22:18, 28:14; Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8.

x Son, like father, said the same thing (Gen 12:13, 20:2).

xi The words "he was thinking" go with the text in the next clause which uses a first-person pronoun.

xii Genesis 24:16.

[xiii] This is not necessarily sex. This is clearly intimacy beyond sibling behavior. It is a public action between a husband and wife. It is an act of physical closeness that would be grossly inappropriate with another person. Abimelech instantly knows that she is Isaac's wife.

[xiv] The Hebrew particle פֶּן (*peyn*) with the imperfect verb form introduces a preventative warning about what could happen if no restraint is shown. In English, this nuance can be expressed by "may" or "might," as opposed to the more definite "will." See also Exo 19:24, Deut 4:9, Josh 24:27, 1 Sam 31:4, Psa 59:11, Prov 30:9, and Isa 36:18 for other examples.

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[xvi] The Hebrew מְאֹד (*m^{e}-od*) means vehemently. Synonyms include very, greatly, exceedingly, fervently, passionately, violently, intensely, much, mightily, and vigorously.

[xvii] The Hebrew קַנָּא means zealous. Synonyms include jealous, passionate, intense, envious, envy, anger, and watchful.

[xviii] The Hebrew מְאֹד (*m^{e}-od*) means vehemently. Synonyms include very, greatly, exceedingly, fervently, passionately, violently, intensely, much, mightily, and vigorously.

[xix] "Contention."

[xx] "Strife."

[xxi] "Wide places or streets."

[xxii] The Hebrew רָבָה (*raw-vawh*) usually means "to multiply" or "to increase." In certain contexts, especially covenant blessings or promises, it carries a broader sense of flourishing, prospering, or thriving, encompassing well-being, success, and abundance, not only numerical growth.

[xxiii] They wanted to secure the previous alliance that Abraham made with the previous king (Gen 21:22-32).

[xxiv] The Hebrew verbs רָאֹה ("see") and הָיָה ("to be") are Qal Perfects. The Perfect normally expresses a completed act. But it frequently denotes a present, continuing condition with a stative verb, especially in direct speech. Here it expresses a recognized reality: Yahveh has been — and is now with – Isaac. This is far more than a completed past action.

[xxv] The Hebrew שָׁלַח means to send away. Synonyms include bring on the way, cast out, reach out, set, shoot out and escort.

[xxvi] The Hebrew אַתָּה עַתָּה בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה means "you – now – the blessed – of Yahveh." The Hebrew בָּרוּךְ ("to bless") is a Qal Perfect. The Perfect normally expresses a completed act. But it frequently denotes a present, continuing condition with a stative verb, especially in direct speech. Here it expresses a recognized reality: Yahveh has been — and is now — blessing Isaac. This is far more than some completed past act.

[xxvii] "An oath."

[xxviii] "Well of the sevenfold oath."

[xxix] Bitterness or grief.