

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

11-13-19

Genesis 26

Isaac and Abimelek - Verses 1-11

Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. ² The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. ³ Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions." ⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar. ⁷ When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful." ⁸ When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹ So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her."¹⁰ Then Abimelek said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." ¹¹ So Abimelek gave orders to all the people: "Anyone who harms this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

26:1 The Philistines would become some of Israel's fiercest enemies. Philistine means "sea people," for they originally 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 that would plague Israel during the time of Joshua, the judges, and David. This King Abimelek was not the same Abimelek that Abraham encountered (chapters 20-21). Abimelek, which means "my father is king," was likely a dynastic name used by the Philistine rulers.

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 12:10-13 and 20:1-5). 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?

Isaac and Abimelek - Verses 12-25

¹² Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. ¹³ The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵ So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth. ¹⁶ Then Abimelek said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us." ¹⁷ So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. ¹⁸ Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them. ¹⁹ Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. ²⁰ But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. ²² He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land." ²³ From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴ That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." ²⁵ Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

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 filled his wells with dirt 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?

26:17-18 The desolate Gerar area was located on the edge of a dry wilderness. Water was as precious as gold. A person who dug a well was staking a claim to the land. Some wells had locks to keep thieves from stealing the water. To stop up someone's well with dirt 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, yet he chose to keep the peace. In the end, the Philistines respected him for his patience.

26:17-22 Three times Isaac and his men dug new wells. When the first two disputes arose, Isaac moved on. Finally room was available 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.

The Agreement between Isaac and Abimelech - Verses 26-33

²⁶ Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. ²⁷ Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?" ²⁸ They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us'—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you ²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the LORD." ³⁰ Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹ Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they went away peacefully. ³² That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" ³³ He called it Shibah, and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.

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.

Esau's Foreign Wives - Verses 34-36

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵ They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

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.