

LIFE BIBLE STUDY

SESSION OBJECTIVE: GENESIS 26:1-35

To see how the blessing of Abraham continued through his son Isaac.

Passing the Torch

I always look forward to the Olympics. I prefer the summer games, but the winter games are also quite enjoyable to watch. The level of discipline and prestige of the athletes is nothing short of remarkable. There is a rare sense of healthy patriotism in each of the athletes as they represent their respective countries. There is



also a great amount of ceremonial tradition as the games begin and end. One of my favorite parts of the opening ceremonies is seeing the torch pass from person to person until it reaches the final torch bearer who then lights the Olympic cauldron.

Genesis 26 begins with Isaac following into the same footsteps as his father. The blessing of Abraham by God is clearly seen as being passed on to his son Isaac. The same steps that Abraham took were also taken by Isaac. Some of the same events that surrounded Abraham also surrounded Isaac. The same blessing that Abraham experienced was also experienced by Isaac. Genesis 26 describes events that are significant almost

entirely because of the similarities they share with some of the events in Abraham's life, thus proving that the torch truly passed from father to son.

Another Abimelech

Here we find, yet again, another story involving a king named Abimelech. There are several striking similarities between this part of Isaac's narrative and that of Abraham that show the correlation that is being drawn between the two. Isaac is following in his father's footsteps. How do we know? Their lives are shaping up in many of the same ways! Below is a brief outline of some key similarities and interesting details.

ABIMELECH

It's tempting to connect this figure to the same one we find in chapter 20, and yet the events here and there are roughly 90 years apart. The average life span was a little longer than our modern age, but the dates still do not make sense. It is also unlikely that "Abimelech" is a title. It has been suggested that maybe Abimelech is a title similar to that of Caesar, but this is not a well-supported hypothesis. It is likely a dynastic name that has been passed down through the family. The same is also likely true of Abimelech's commander Phicol (Gen. 21:22; 26:26). Another difference between this Abimelech and the one from chapter 21 is their title. Chapter 21's Abimelech was titled, "king of Gerar," while this Abimelech is called, "king of the Philistines." The idea here is that not only is Isaac's life similar to his fathers, but this Abimelech's is similar to his.

A FAMINE

Another similarity that we find between Abraham and Isaac's life is the presence of yet another famine in the land. In chapter 12, there was a famine in the land which led Abraham to Egypt. Again, the similarities are striking. However, the famine does not affect Isaac's blessing. While the rest of the land was suffering and unable to bring their land to produce, "Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold" (Gen. 26:12). The blessing of God on Isaac's life was identified clearly in the way Isaac thrived even in the toughest conditions. It did not come without controversy, however. The men of the land, the Philistines, became jealous such that eventually Abimelech sent Isaac and his men away from the land (Gen. 26:16).

A SISTER WIFE

One of the patterns we identified in Abraham's life was that he, at least twice, lied to those who he believed would be hostile towards him and told them that his wife was actually his sister. As we learned, it wasn't a full lie; Sarah was actually Abraham's half-sister (Gen. 20:12). However, the intention was to deceive and it worked both times he did it, with consequences coming onto those who sought to make Sarah their wife. Here, Isaac follows in his footsteps, although this is even more deceptive because Rebekah is not even his half-sister. This Abimelech of chapter 26 is experiencing the same scenario that the Abimelech in chapter 21 experienced as well. After he finds out the truth about Rebekah and Isaac's relationship, he threatens death to anyone would try and, "lay with her," noting the guilt that would be brought upon them (Gen. 26:10-11).

WELLS

Isaac then digs wells that were dug in the days of Abraham, but had been covered up by the Philistines after his death. Again, he faces opposition by the people of Gerar who almost seem to be jealous of his success. This is a repeating theme throughout the chapter that sets Isaac apart from everyone else, further emphasizing his position within God's Divine economy.

GOD SPEAKS

For the first time, God speaks clearly the blessing that Isaac is to receive. He identifies Himself as, "the God of Abraham your father" (Gen. 26:24). He tells him He will bless him by multiplying his offspring for the sake of

his father Abraham. Here, the blessing of Isaac is clearly laid out, but still attributed to the covenant that God made with his father. In response to such a revelation, Isaac builds an altar there which is reminiscent of his father and anticipates the actions of his son (Gen. 12:7; 13:18; 22:19; 33:20; 35:7).

THE PACT

Eventually Abimelech came to him with his commander Phicol. Isaac reasonably questions their motive for coming after Abimelech had sent them away, but after seeing how much success Isaac was having and how he was not hostile towards the native people there, they desired a pact with him. Isaac prepared a meal, they exchanged oaths in the morning, and they made peace, yet another similarity between Isaac and Abraham (Gen. 21:32).

Esau

The last two verses of chapter 26 seem out of place, but in reality they link the reader to the next chapter. Esau has already had conflict with his brother Jacob, and now, because he chooses to marry two women who are foreigners, he creates problems between himself and his parents. Foreign wives were not choice at this time, but certainly not as disagreeable as they would later become. It was very important for Abraham to find a wife suitable for his son Isaac that came from his people. Later in Jewish history, to marry foreign women was explicitly forbidden (Deut. 7:1-4; 1 Kings 11:1-2). The reason was that intermarriage often led to a mixing of religious practices, which inevitably led to idolatry. The Jews were even disciplined for such intermarriage in a way that ultimately led to them having to forsake their foreign wives and children (Ezra 10:3). Esau, the seemingly rebellious elder sibling that will serve the younger, typifies this kind of rebellion in who he marries.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Genesis 26:1-5. What caused Isaac to go to Gerar? Who was the king there? What did the LORD tell him to do and why? What was the basis of God blessing Isaac's offspring?

2. Read Genesis 26:6-11. Where did Isaac settle? What did he tell Abimelech regarding his wife? Was this the same Abimelech as in Genesis 21 (Hint: See notes above)?

Day Two

1. Read Genesis 26:12-16. Despite the famine, what were the results of Isaac's sowing? What was the response of the Philistines around him? Why was Isaac so successful? What did Abimelech do in response to Isaac's success?

2. Read Genesis 26:17-22. Where did Isaac settle? What did he begin doing while he was there? What was the response of the men of Gerar there?

Day Three

1. Read Genesis 26:23-25. Where did he go next? What did God say to him? What was his response?
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2. Read Genesis 26:26-33. What did Abimelech and Phicol come to Isaac to propose? What was Isaac's response? What all did the pact entail? What was the result of the pact? What did they name the place where they dug the well, and why?
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Day Four

1. Read Genesis 26:34-35. What kind of women did Esau marry? What was the implied response of Isaac and Rebekah? Why?
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2. Read Deuteronomy 7:1-4 and 1 Kings 11:1-2. What are the Israelites explicitly commanded not to do later on? What was the result of their disobedience in Ezra 10:3? Why did this matter?
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Week 20 Discussion: Jealousy

Chapter 26 shows us how the Philistines and the men of Gerar were seemingly jealous of the kind of success that Isaac had. The land was facing a great famine, and yet Isaac reaped a hundredfold of what he sowed. Every well he dug found water. During hardship, Isaac seemed to only find blessing. It's challenging to not feel jealousy when you are in a difficult position and people are succeeding around you. Talk as a group about the role jealousy plays in your life, and how you can counter the negative effects it creates.

1. Icebreaker: What things do you find yourself getting jealous about the most? Why do you think this is?
2. Have you ever felt like everyone around you was succeeding at what they were doing except for you? How did this make you feel and why?
3. Is it possible to be jealous over what you don't have and grateful for what you do have at the same time? Why or why not?
4. Read Hebrews 13:5. How does contentment in knowing God temper our jealousy?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 5:11 and Ephesians 5:5. What does the New Testament say regarding those who are covetous (jealous)? What other characteristics are named along with jealousy?
6. How does social media elevate the problem of jealousy for Christians today? What are some practical things you can do to fight against jealousy?

Takeaways:

1. Isaac follows many of the same footsteps of his father and is blessed in similar ways as well.
2. Esau intermarried with women from Canaan and it was displeasing to both Isaac and Rebekah.

PRAYER REQUESTS: