

# On the Beginning

## 29. Isaac and His Father's Wells

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 26

In some ways, Isaac followed in his father's steps. Genesis 26 opens with him moving to Gerar as Abraham did in Genesis 20. It's interesting that he went to escape a famine, the same reason Abraham fled to Egypt in Genesis 12 (vs. 10-20). Both in Egypt and in Gerar, Abraham told a lie about his wife to protect himself from heathen men who might want her. Isaac told the same lie in Gerar (Genesis 26:7) for the same reason, only for him it was a bald-faced, full-fledged *lie*, whereas Abraham's deception might have been called a half-truth (See Genesis 20:10-13). It is interesting to notice how traits (both good and bad) were passed down from generation to generation, Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. When bad traits were passed down, the next generation seemed to exaggerate and expand them. Let us all take a warning from these stories. Our children tend to pick up our weaknesses, and *magnify* them!

1. The **Blessing** Passed Down.  
Genesis 26:1-5 tells us that the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant were transferred to his son Isaac. Compare verses 3, 4, and 5, with Genesis 22:15-18. It was important to the Plan of Redemption that the covenant be bestowed on the chosen son (Look ahead at Chapter 27).
2. Isaac Goes **Forward**.  
Follow the narrative now through verse 14. Note especially verse 13.

*"And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great. . ."*

Isaac's secret to greatness was that he always went *forward*. Notice that this statement is made after he had made a big mistake! What do you do when you have fallen on your face? You get up, and go forward. From wherever you are now, GO FORWARD!

3. His Father's **Wells** Are Digged Again.  
Remember that Abraham had a special relationship with "Abimelech" (a royal title given to a king, like "Pharaoh" in Egypt) and the Philistines. We're told about it in Genesis 20 and 21. Now that Abraham was dead, the relationship continued with his son Isaac. In Chapter 26, we find that a problem had developed. Verse 14 says ". . . the Philistines envied him." Then we read,

*"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. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we." (verses 15-16)*

Because the Philistines had plugged up the wells his father had dug, Isaac made it his business to open them up again.

*“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.”* (verse 18)

There is a sense in which every Christian son of a godly father must redig his father’s wells. If your father dug the well of salvation and drank from it, this does not mean you are automatically saved yourself! You must open the well of salvation *for yourself*. This is true also of the well of the Word of God. Your father’s knowledge of the Bible is not yours just because you are his son. You must study the Bible (and open this well) yourself. Some must redig the wells of prayer, witnessing, holy living, self-denial, and the will of God for themselves, even if their fathers had dug them for themselves. Wells were very important to sojourners in an arid land like Abraham and Isaac. Spiritual wells are also very important to every spiritual sojourner. They must be opened by each generation.

4. The **Wells** of Strife and Reconciliation.

After opening his father’s wells, Isaac’s servants dug a new well, over which the Philistines wanted to fight. Read carefully Genesis 26:19-33. This new well was “*a well of springing water*,” an artesian well, but the Philistines claimed it because it was dug close to Gerar. Isaac could have argued about this since an agreement between them and his father allowed Abraham’s family to “*dwell where it pleased thee*,” to live wherever in the land of the Philistines they chose. But, to end the strife, Isaac backed off. When another conflict arose over the digging of another well, Isaac’s family and servants moved farther away from Gerar (v. 21). These two wells were named for the fuss over them. Esek means “quarrel” and Sitnah means “hatred.” To avoid the strife, Isaac complied with the demands of those who contended with him. Then he moved even farther away and dug a well over which there was no argument. That well was called Rehoboth, which means “enlargement,” and Isaac said, “*For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.*” Often it is wise to “back off” when unreasonable people make a fight with you. Read these New Testament admonitions about giving in for the sake of peace: Matthew 5:23-26; Matthew 5:40-42; I Corinthians 6:7; and I Corinthians 7:10-17. Then also read about the reopening of the well at Beer-sheba, and how water was found when the quarreling parties reconciled. There is so much good in avoiding or ending strife. Sometimes we must stand up for principle, but the truth is that we seldom really have to stand up for *ourselves*!



