

Family Tree – June 2022 - Isaac

Story of having my first child – Liza

world turned upside down – felt like my life was taken from me – I had post-partum – I was so lonely and I was never alone – I felt like I had lost control of my life and I was grappling to figure out how to get it back – so I could be happy – I remember thinking – maybe we should just move – or maybe should go back to work sooner – maybe if I just moved this here and rearranged this over here – then I would be ok – then I took a walk in our neighborhood where I knew no one really – just Liza and me – and I was walking and kind of feeling sorry for myself – and kind of letting God know what I wish he would do to make it better for me – I was trying to control and or change all the things around me to make me feel better – to bring me joy – I was sharing with God all that I wanted/needed him to do for me to make my life better – and he spoke to me in that moment – on my walk – and said something that I remember to this day

we'll come back to that in a bit

Because I believe what God was saying to me was something that Isaac – our hero of the faith that we are looking at today – came to understand.

We are 3 weeks into our series “Family Tree” that has us looking at some of the Biblical pillars of our faith and moments in their lives when God met them in profound ways. And the heritage of faith that they have passed on to us. And we are looking in a moment at the life of Isaac.

The only son of Abraham and Sarah – he is the one that God asks Abraham to sacrifice – he is father to Esau and Jacob and grandfather to the 12 tribes of Israel

Interestingly – there is only one chapter of genesis devoted entirely to Isaac – and it is the chapter we will look at today ch 26

It’s placement is interesting because it comes in between stories about his sons – Esau and Jacob – before ch 26 is the account of Jacob exploiting his brother and the ch after is the story of Jacob deceiving his father, Isaac – so why story this about Isaac in the middle of 2 stories about his sons that probably happened sequentially – both ch 26 and 27 are stories have a theme of deceit – Isaac is the deceiver in 26 and then is deceived in ch 27

What happens with Isaac in ch 26 has many parallels to events that happen to his father, Abraham, in Genesis ch 20

Some critics and commentators see little historical or theological importance to Isaac’s story – viewing

as just a rerun of Abraham's story – but I believe it has significance – that God has something more – something different to show us in this story of Isaac – so let's dig in –

Genesis ch 26

Hey to those online

lots of verses and it is packed with info and connections to other passages in the OT and NT – we could truly spend an hour each verse, but we won't

Isaac Deceives Abimelech

26 A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So, Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived. ² The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. ³ Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants,^[a] just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴ I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. ⁵ I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions."⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

There is a famine just as there was for Abraham

He goes to Gerar just like Abraham

Abimelech is the name of the king of gerar – same name as the one Abraham encountered in Ch 20 – not the same person

Fun fact: This is not the same Abimelech as in the Abraham story. The Abimelech of chapter 20 and of chapter 26 are separated by at least 75 years. We should not look at the term king as being a lofty title. The leaders of small city-states and even clan groups were called kings.

God appears to Isaac just as he did to Abraham

He wants Isaac to stay in Gerar – the land of blessing – to stay there and rely on God's care – don't go to Egypt to find security

And God promises the same things to Isaac that he did to Abraham in Genesis 13,15,17,21 and 22 –

I will give all these lands to you and your descendants,

I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands.

And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

God is clear that he is doing this for Isaac because of the promise to his father.

⁵ I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions.

God was faithful to Abraham – he will be faithful to Isaac, and he is declaring that directly to Isaac

But God says something else to Isaac – he says

I will be with you and bless you.

God was certainly with Abraham – and Isaac had seen this - but God never expressed it to Abraham the way he did to Isaac – he never expressed it in a promise to Abraham. he promises it directly to Isaac

I will be with you.

The Isaac Promise.

It is one that will be repeated but it starts off as the Isaac promise.

And this promise doesn't just mean that Isaac has a sense of God being there – in the bible God's being there makes a practical difference in the way things

work out – when external circumstances seem to be or are working against you – God’s being with you will issue a blessing

God commits to blessing Isaac because of Abraham’s commitment to God when he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac. God was also blessing Isaac in that moment – the blessing had been there since the beginning

God makes this beautiful promise to Isaac – I’ll be with you – I am faithful – trust me – so what does Isaac do – let’s look at verse 7

⁷ When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, “She is my sister.” He was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “They will kill me to get her, because she is so beautiful.” ⁸ But sometime later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah.

Why on earth would Isaac turn around and do this? It’s exactly what his dad did in ch 20 but in this instance these men have not indicated any evil intentions toward Rebekah – in Abraham’s case the ruler had taken Sarah into his control – here Isaac is fearful for no reason. And he uses his wife in his idiotic plan – he puts her in danger. And he carries this lie on for quite some time – verse 8

But sometime later

The fact they were there for quite awhile – means there was no danger to Rebekah - he mimics his father from ch 12 and 20 – but Sarah was taken – Rebekah was not – so this was deceitful and unnecessary – Abimelech discovers the truth by accident – where Sarah’s discoveries were divine intervention – a plague and a dream – but this time Abimelech just stumbles upon it – Isaac is kind of dumb – why is he caressing her in public -

⁹ Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, “She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?”

“Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me,” Isaac replied.

¹⁰ “How could you do this to us?” Abimelech exclaimed. “One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin.”

This could have been really bad – guilty here is actually translated into retribution – this could have resulted in death if someone had been with Rebekah- I think Abimelech is stunned

How could you do this to us?

We have taken you in and cared for you and you put our lives in danger because of fear for your own – somewhat unwarranted fear for your own - Isaac actually put their lives in danger with his deceit and he had no reason to distrust his wife – she had never been unfaithful – and he had been taken in by Abimelech and the philistines for quite awhile – so why was he scared they’d kill him – this shows such lack of trust in the people around him but more than that Isaac’s lack of trust in God – even after God’s promise to him verse 3

Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you.

He did not have faith that God was with him and would bless him – he took matters into his own hands – took control – tried to manage his circumstances and in the process deceived and hurt people that were being kind to him – people that God had instructed him to stay with – he did not trust that God would keep him safe – how does Abimelech respond? Verse 11

¹¹ Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: “Anyone who touches this man, or his wife will be put to death!”

How does Abimelech respond?

He protects them.

God protects them.

God is with them.

God is with Isaac and Rebekah. Just as He promised. Even when Isaac takes the situation into his own hands – uses deceit – takes control – God is still with him – he still blesses him. And God continues to pour out the blessings – verse 12

¹² When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him. ¹³ He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. ¹⁴ He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him.

God's blessing on Isaac again – he not only protected him thru Abimelech but then allows him to reap a bountiful crop – remember there is a famine just a few miles away in Canaan and Isaac is prospering – in one translation the word rich is translated to magnified

Rich = Magnified

Verse 13 - He became a magnified man – you can become rich on your own – but God’s blessing is where you are magnified

and the Philistines - I’m sure they’re mad at him – here he deceives us and now he’s rich. What do the philistines do? Verse 15

¹⁵ So the Philistines filled up all of Isaac’s wells with dirt. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

This was a big deal – they didn’t steal these wells – they filled them with dirt – this would have taken great effort and would have hurt everyone around them – water was life – but they filled in the wells – Abraham’s wells – that were rightfully Isaac’s – this is how angry the philistines were – they couldn’t hurt him – Abimelech’s orders – Abimelech knows what he has to do – verse 16

¹⁶ Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. “Go somewhere else,” he said, “for you have become too powerful for us.”

He orders Isaac out – kind of an order – go somewhere else – and then pleading – you are too powerful – so

Fun fact: It is Isaac's prosperity that makes Abimelech get rid of him not his lying and deception. When God blesses Isaac, he becomes annoying to Abimelech.

¹⁷ So Isaac moved away to the Gerar Valley, where he set up their tents and settled down. ¹⁸ He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.

Circumstances were not good for Isaac in this part of Gerar – no one likes him – and he is ordered to leave – so he goes to another part of Gerar – he is still an outsider in this land – but he goes about quietly redigging and reopening his father's wells – he doesn't get angry – he just gets to work

we might say that the wells of *peace*, of *power*, of *grace*, of *wisdom*, of *transformation* are all available for the believer today as they were for previous generations. The question is whether a present generation will have the faith, the work, and the commitment to dig the wells again.

Verse 19

¹⁹ Isaac's servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. ²⁰ But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it

with Isaac’s herdsmen. So Isaac named the well Esek (which means “argument”).²¹ Isaac’s men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. So Isaac named it Sitnah (which means “hostility”).²² Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means “open space”), for he said, “At last the LORD has created enough space for us to prosper in this land.”

In addition to opening up Abraham’s wells – Isaac’s servants open 3 new wells - Even here – Isaac runs into opposition – his servants are met with conflict when digging the wells

These wells produce fresh water – springs of water – running water – constant supply of water - these wells would have been sought after – Isaac names them

He called the name of the well Esek - contention

The first well was named *contention*, because it made others jealous. It seems that though Isaac called these wells by the names Abraham had previously given ([Genesis 26:18](#)), he also named them in light of his present circumstances.

He called its name Sitnah - opposition

The second well was named *opposition* for the same reason.

Again circumstances were not in Isaac's favor – he keeps trying but is met again and again with opposition – finally the third well

He called its name Rehoboth - roominess

The third well was named *roominess*, because it was far enough to not be a problem. Isaac saw this as a testimony to God's faithfulness and blessing (**now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land**).

Isaac saw these wells as they rightly were: the blessing of God. He saw them more as God's gracious blessing than the result of his hard work. Isaac moved around from place to place basically for 2 reasons:

To avoid conflict – with the Philistines and the herdsman wanting his wells

To obtain water – for survival

He moved around based on his circumstances

Finally a well was dug that brought about no opposition. I would imagine that this was due somewhat to the distance Isaac had traveled from the Philistines. This well was named "Rehoboth," signifying the hope Isaac had that this was the place God had designated for him to stay.

Fun fact: The parallel between Isaac's life and that of his father is again evident in this account of the

disputes over the wells and Isaac's response. Due to their prosperity Abraham and Isaac needed much room for their flocks and a source of water.

Prosperity brought contention between Lot's herdsmen and those of Abraham ([Genesis 13:5](#)) just as it did between Isaac's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Gerar. Isaac, like his father, chose to keep the peace by giving preference to the other party.

And finally, he has what he needs – in verse 22 – Isaac says:

“At last the LORD has created enough space for us to prosper in this land.”

So why in the very next verse does he move to Beersheba?

²³ From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, ²⁴ where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. “I am the God of your father, Abraham,” he said. “Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant.” ²⁵ Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

Something changes here. Prior to his move to Beersheba Isaac moved around to avoid conflict and

to obtain water – but he goes to Beersheba for no explained reason – he had every reason to stay where he was – where there was enough space for him to prosper.

Something had changed in Isaac – in the way he was thinking.

Circumstances had previously shaped most of his decisions, but now something deeper and more noble seems to be giving direction in his life. Beersheba was the first place that Abraham had gone with Isaac after they came down from the “sacrifice” on Mount Moriah ([Genesis 22:19](#)). Isaac knew that God had promised to give him the land promised to his father Abraham (26:3-5). I believe he had finally come to see that through all the opposition over the wells he had dug, God had been guiding him back to the land of promise, back to those places where Abraham had walked in fellowship with God. Personally, I believe that Isaac went up to Beersheba because he sensed in his spirit that this was where God wanted him to be. If God had previously been “driving” or pushing Isaac through opposition, now Isaac was willing to be led. The decision was shown to be the right one, for God immediately spoke words of reassurance:

And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham” ([Genesis 26:24](#)).

That same night – God spoke to Isaac

Do not fear.

He is speaking in the present and in the future

Do not fear – fear not – why

For I am with you.

I have been with you – look at where I’ve brought you and I will continue to be with you, and I will

I will bless you.

I make the same promises to you Isaac as I did to your father – Abraham

I make the same promises to you (state your name) as I did to Isaac and Abraham.

Notice then in verse 25 – what Isaac does - the order of things here:

Builds an altar

Calls upon the Lord

Pitches his tent

Digs wells

Before this - Isaac stayed wherever he dug a well, found sufficient water, and was not opposed. But in this verse, it's the reverse. First Isaac builds an altar; then he worships, then he pitches his tent. Finally, he digs a well.

I believe this is a lesson in faith and guidance. The place for God's people is the place of God's presence. The place of intimacy, worship, and communion with God is the place to abide. Isaac built the altar first – the place of worship – of connection with God – most altars were built spontaneously – except for Jacob in ch 36 where God commands him All the rest seem to simply be a response to the action of God. Only once in chapter 22 during the binding of Isaac story is a sacrifice mentioned. These altars seem to be places of worship, of remembrance; places the Patriarch's called on the name of the Lord – a phrase which speaks far more of communication with God and worship than sacrifice. - There we should dwell, and there we may be assured of God's provision for our needs.

Have you built your altar?

The best place to be - the only place to live is in God's presence - a place of intimacy worship and communion with Him

We can try to take control - we can pursue the things we “think” will give us life but when we finally give up - rest in Him - abide in Him - there we will find true life and full provision

**The LORD will guide you continually,
giving you water when you are dry
and restoring your strength.**

**You will be like a well-watered garden,
like an ever-flowing spring. Isaiah 58:11**

**Like living water – springing up from a well
Jesus says this**

**Seek the Kingdom of God^[a] above all else, and live
righteously, and he will give you everything you
need. Matthew 6:33**

**On that walk with Liza –stop – right where you are -
God said changing your circumstances will not make
you happy – will not bring you the joy you seek –
taking control will not make it all better – God said:
I am with you right here and right now.
I was with you back there at that well
And I was with you at that well over there – even
after they filled it with dirt
And I was with you even when you lied and deceived
others**

**I have been with you, and I am still with you
And I have been faithful
And that will never change**

**I will satisfy you I will bring you joy and hope and joy
and contentment and purpose
I will make your life full and rich and blessed
Do you trust that – do you believe that**

Build your altar.

**Right here – right now
Abide in me - adhere to me - live in my presence
Live in the midst of me**

**“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who
remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.
For apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5**

**There is nothing out there for you
There is nothing for you outside of me
You can look and search and try to take control and
change your circumstances, but you will never find
what you’re looking for - it will always be me - I’m
right here - ready for relationship - I will show you
where to go - what to do - how to be
I will lead you and guide you and direct you
I am faithful
I am good**

I am trustworthy

I am here

You will know my blessings - because when you abide in me - what you want is what I want - what I want is what you want

Isaac knew where to go next - because he trusted - he had faith

The place of blessing is wherever God is - wherever he is working in your life

You don't have to change everything around you - you don't have to take control - you don't have to change the circumstances - just build your altar

I have been with you before - I am with you now - I will continue to be with you - I am faithful - I am good

Do you trust his promises?

- trust in me - know me - worship me -abide

Build your altar right where God has you

Pray