

## Isaac and Abimelech Made a Treaty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop fellowship with the Lord and not just have knowledge of God. We saw in an earlier topic that Abimelech had asked Isaac to leave their area. In this topic, we will see that Abimelech now wanted to make a treaty with Isaac.

In Genesis 26:26-29, we read, “Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army. And Isaac said to them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?’ But they said, ‘We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you. So we said, “Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You *are* now the blessed of the Lord.”’” Abimelech and his people had sent away Isaac from their land because they saw that the Lord was blessing him. His servants had also had conflict with the servants of Isaac about two of the wells that Isaac had dug. Here, we see that suddenly Abimelech, his friend, and the commander of his army came to Isaac and wanted to talk to him.

Isaac immediately questioned why they had come to visit him and asked them, “Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?” This was a good question after the way that Isaac felt about how they had treated him. Now, he wanted to know why they had come. The rest of the statement gives two reasons why he questioned the fact that they had come to visit him. He felt Abimelech and his people had shown, by the way that they treated him and his servants, that they hated Isaac. Here, we see that our actions speak much louder than our words. Abimelech and the Philistines showed that they were so envious of the blessing of Isaac that it caused them to show hate by their actions, especially as they took the two wells that the servants of Isaac had re-dug that had been originally dug by Abraham.

Second, they had shown that their envy had turned to hate by the fact that they had sent Isaac away from their region and told him he could not live in that area. As a result, Isaac had a reason to ask those men why they had come to visit him. They replied, “We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you.” Isaac could have fought for the first two wells he had re-dug. Instead, Isaac had allowed the servants of Abimelech to take those wells. 1 Peter 3:8-9 says, “Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” Isaac did not know these verses because they were not yet written, but he was being led by the Lord and practiced them. God blessed Isaac as a result. Abimelech and his people could see that the Lord was blessing him and that is why they now wanted to make an oath and a covenant with Isaac.

Then, Abimelech explained what they wanted to include in the covenant. They wanted a covenant that Isaac would do them no harm. This statement shows that they were actually controlled by fear. They also recognized, by the fact that Isaac said they hated him, that Isaac felt he had been sent away with a lack of respect. They feared that such an attitude could eventually cause Isaac to attack them if he became more powerful. As a result, they tried to explain to Isaac that they did not hate him. They reminded Isaac that they had not touched him. Isaac had said that Rebekah was his sister because he had feared that one of the men of that place would kill him so he could take Rebekah as his wife. Abimelech had warned his people not to touch or hurt either Isaac or Rebekah. Abimelech

was reminding Isaac that he had no hate for Isaac.

Abimelech then went on to tell Isaac, “We have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace.” Here, we see that Abimelech felt he and his people had treated Isaac with kindness. Apparently, he did not know, or at least did not mention, that the wells his servants were claiming water from were wells that the servants of Isaac had dug. Genesis 26:20-21 says, “But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, ‘The water *is* ours.’ So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that *one* also. So he called its name Sitnah.” It was due to what had happened at these wells that Isaac thought he was hated by Abimelech and the people of Gerar. Our feelings can often deceive us.

Abimelech had told Isaac, in Genesis 26:16, “And Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.’” Abimelech thought that what he said at that time was a message of peace. He felt that he had asked Isaac to leave in peace. In fact, Abimelech had recognized that Isaac was blessed by the Lord and not that he was sending him away because he hated Isaac. Here, we see an example of the fact that people can have very different meanings by the words they use when they talk with each other. Now, Isaac was able to understand that Abimelech wanted to have peace with him, not conflict. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” That was what both men wanted and now they understood that was also the desire of the other person.

Genesis 26:30-33 goes on to say, “So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. It came to pass the same day that Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, ‘We have found water.’ So he called it Shebah. Therefore the name of the city *is* Beersheba to this day.” Isaac then prepared a feast to celebrate the oath and make the covenant of peace with Abimelech. Early the next morning, Abimelech and the two men with him left to return to their own homes. Now, instead of having future conflict about water, Isaac and Abimelech separated from one another with a covenant of peace.

Later that day, the servants of Isaac came to tell him about the well that they had dug. They shared the good news that they had found water, so Isaac called the name of the well “Shebah,” which means *an oath*. This was the same place where Abraham and an earlier Abimelech had made a covenant nearly one hundred years earlier.

Genesis 21:30-32 tells us what Abraham Said, when those verses say, “And he said, ‘You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.’ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines.” By these verses, we see that Isaac and Abimelech were actually making a renewal of the covenant that had been made by their fathers nearly one hundred years earlier. The reason for that earlier covenant was to recognize that the well and the water in it belonged to Abraham. As a result, this covenant actually renewed the covenant made by their fathers regarding the water in the area of Beersheba. When Moses wrote the book of Genesis several hundred years later, the name of that city was still Beersheba.

We go on to read, in Genesis 26:34-35, “When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.” In these verses, we see that Esau decided it was time to develop his own family. Esau did not ask his parents for counsel when he decided to marry. In contrast,

Abraham had told his servant, in Genesis 24:3, “and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.” Esau decided to marry two women, both from the Hittites, and descendants of Canaan. The name “Hittite” means *descendent of Heth*. Genesis 10:15-18 says, “Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.” In Genesis 9:25, we read, “Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’” As a result, we see that the wives of Esau were descendants of Canaan, who had been cursed by Noah.

We also read that these wives of Esau were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. The word translated “grief” is used in the sense of *disappointment*. The word translated “mind” is most commonly translated *spirit, wind, or breath*. This choice by Esau to choose a wife from the Canaanites brought great grief to the spirits of Isaac and Rebekah. As a result, Genesis 27:46 says, “And Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?’” The next verses, in Genesis 28:1-2, go on to say, “Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.’” Here, we see that they encouraged Jacob to get a wife the same way Isaac had received his wife.

Long before children even begin to think of marriage, we want to help our physical children begin to understand the importance of choosing a godly partner for a husband or wife. The same is true with spiritual sons and daughters because the choices that they make will greatly affect the rest of their lives and the lives of all future generations in their families. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children realize the importance of choosing a godly husband or wife to marry.