

## The Lord Told Isaac Not to Go to Egypt

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Esau chose to reject the spiritual leadership of his family and gladly sold that spiritual leadership for a bowl of stew. In this topic, we will see why the Lord told Isaac not to go down into Egypt.

In Genesis 26:1-5, we read, “There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then, the Lord appeared to him and said: ‘Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’” In these verses, we see that Isaac was told by the Lord not to go down to Egypt because of the famine. As a result, Isaac chose to move to the land of the Philistines instead.

When the Lord told Isaac not to go to Egypt, we see that the Lord gave Isaac some promises if he would be obedient. First, the Lord said He would be with Isaac. The Lord gives every Christian a similar promise today. As Hebrews 13:5 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*” We can also count on the fact that the Lord will not leave us.

Second, God promised, “I will...bless you.” The Lord had earlier told Abraham, in Genesis 12:2-3, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Here, we see that the Lord gave Isaac a promise similar to the promise He had given to Abraham.

Third, the Lord promised Isaac the land in which he was living as the Lord said, “...for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.” God will always keep His Word. The Lord had told Abraham in Genesis 12:7, “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.” The Lord now repeated this same promise twice to Isaac. Fourth, the Lord promised that He would multiply the descendants of Isaac as the stars of heaven. God had told Abraham in Genesis 22:17, “...blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

Fifth, and most important of all of the promises, the Lord told Isaac that through his seed all of the nations would be blessed. Galatians 3:16 says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” This is a clear statement to Isaac that the promise made to Abraham about Christ coming from his family would be passed on through the line of Isaac. This was part of the blessing that would come on Isaac because of the obedience of Abraham. The fact that Isaac was obedient to

God and did not go down to Egypt did not mean that he was perfect in his obedience to God.

We go on read that Isaac lied about the fact that Rebekah was his wife. Genesis 26:6-9 says, “So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, ‘She *is* my sister’; for he was afraid to say, ‘*She is* my wife,’ *because he thought*, ‘lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she *is* beautiful to behold.’ Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, ‘Quite obviously she *is* your wife; so how could you say, “She *is* my sister?”’ Isaac said to him, ‘Because I said, “Lest I die on account of her.”’” Here, we see that Isaac became guilty of the same sin that Abraham committed and lied about his wife. Abraham committed this lie first in Egypt and then again among the Philistines. Isaac committed this sin among the same Philistines.

We see that the men in Gerar asked Isaac if Rebekah was his wife. Isaac was controlled by fear and answered that question in his own strength. Because of that fear, he said, “She is my sister,” instead of saying, “She is my wife.” Here, we see that Isaac did that same thing that Abraham had earlier done in Gerar and for the same reason. Isaac was more concerned about his own life than he was about what happened to his wife. He was afraid that the men of the place would kill him in order to get Rebekah as their wife because she was very beautiful.

Notice that Abraham said exactly the same thing. Genesis 20:10-11 says, “Then Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?’ And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife.’” Abimelech was a title similar to pharaoh or king, so it was probably not the same Abimelech. Isaac was not yet born when Abraham told this same lie. Now the sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, were already grown. This would mean this happened nearly one hundred years later.

This generation of the people of Gerar did not make the same choice that Abimelech had made during the time of Abraham. We read that Isaac and Rebekah lived in Gerar for a long time and none of the men tried to take her to become their wife. One day, Abimelech looked out through his window and saw that Isaac was showing endearment to his wife. This meant that Isaac was giving caresses to Rebekah that indicated that she was his wife and not his sister, which led Abimelech to rebuke Isaac, just as an earlier Abimelech had rebuked Abraham. Abimelech said it was obvious that Rebekah was his wife, not his sister. Then, he began his rebuke in the form of a question, “How could you say, ‘She is my sister?’” The lie of Isaac had been exposed and Isaac had to admit that the reason he had lied was due to the fact that he feared for his own life.

We go on to see that Isaac was then given a strong rebuke for his lie. Genesis 26:10-14 says, “And Abimelech said, ‘What *is* this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.’ So Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, ‘He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.’ Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.” Abimelech quickly reminded Isaac of what could have happened to his wife because of his lie. Many times, people do not think about the consequences of their lies. That was probably true of Isaac.

Abimelech pointed out the possible consequences of the lie of Isaac and told how that lie could have affected his whole nation. That same thing had happened when Abraham had told the same lie. Genesis 20:9 says, “And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, ‘What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.’” The lie of Abraham had affected the whole nation of Gerar. We see the consequences of that lie when Abraham repented and prayed for the kingdom of Gerar. Genesis 20:17-18 says, “So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore *children*; for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.” The Lord had made it impossible for all of the women of Gerar to get pregnant as a consequence of the original lie of Abraham. Now, Isaac had told the same lie and the king realized that his lie could have affected the entire nation again. To prevent consequences because of the lie, Abimelech warned his nation that anyone who touched Isaac or Rebekah would be put to death.

Once Isaac repented of his sin, the Lord could bless him again. The same is true for us today. 1 John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We see that Isaac planted crops of grain that year and God caused his crops to produce a hundred times as much as he had planted. That was a very good harvest and happened because Isaac had confessed his sin and the Lord chose to bless Isaac as a result. In fact, we see that from that time on, Isaac began to prosper. Through the years, the Lord caused Isaac to continue to prosper until he became very wealthy. We see that he had large flocks of sheep and goats and he had large herds of cattle. He also had a great number of servants to care for his flocks and herds as well as the crops that he planted.

However, we see that the Philistines envied him. The word translated “envied” means *to become jealous of or to provoke to jealous anger*. In the next topic, we will see what the Philistines did because of this envy. The Bible gives us many warnings about the danger of envy. Proverbs 24:19-20 says, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked; for there will be no prospect for the evil *man*; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.” In contrast, Proverbs 23:17-18 says, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but *be zealous* for the fear of the Lord all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.” Here, we see the importance of choosing the fear of the Lord instead of choosing to envy others. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others why they have chosen to follow the Lord instead of envying the things that others have on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children, by your example, and teach them how to warn others of the dangers of envy.