

Abimelech Came to Isaac and said: Let Us Make a Treaty With You

26: 26-33

DIG: What seems to be the problem between Isaac and Abimelech? What do you learn about each man from the way they settle their dispute and reconcile?

REFLECT: How do you treat those who have been hostile towards you, but now want peace? Do you bring them into your spiritual family? Are even your enemies at peace with you? Can people see Christ in you?

While the well digging was underway at Beersheba, Isaac got a surprise visit from the Philistine king. Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces (26:26). Their approach to Isaac (Hebrew: Yitz'chak) clearly shows that they feared him. But now that he was out of their land, they decided it was wise to stay on good terms with him.

Isaac challenged them saying: Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away (26:27)? It never occurs to Isaac that maybe Abimelech had reasonable grounds for his behavior, given how Yitz'chak acted in Gerar (26:6-11). Nevertheless, Abimelech begins his conversation more diplomatically than Isaac when he says: We saw clearly that ADONAI was with you. The men of Gerar recognize God's blessing on Isaac and they sought to join themselves to him.⁴²⁴ So they say: There ought to be a sworn agreement between us, between us and you. Then almost pleading they said: Let us make a treaty with you that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD (26:28-29). This is very similar to the treaty that Abraham and the earlier Abimelech had made at Beersheba nearly a century before. Now that Isaac was back in fellowship with God, those who formerly were his enemies sought him out and bear witness to the presence of the LORD in his life. For when a man's ways are pleasing to ADONAI, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him (Proverbs 16:7).⁴²⁵

As long as Isaac was in or near Gerar, he did not experience much happiness. He was envied, thwarted, and opposed by the jealous Philistine settlers. He not only lacked happiness but also lacked power, for it was not until he returned to Beersheba that Abimelech came to him because he believed that God was with Isaac and blessing him. Thus

for happiness, comfort and power with others, separation from the world is an absolute necessity. There is no greater mistake possible than to imagine that we can be one with the world and yet influence them for Christ. We can't swim in the toilet and come up smelling like a rose. Lot found this out the hard way, and so it has been ever since. Separation from the world, paradoxical as it may seem, is the only true way of influencing the world for the Messiah. We must be **in the world** but **not of the world** (John 17:13-19).⁴²⁶

Isaac agreed, **then made a ceremonial feast for them and they ate and drank** that night. The meal is not simply a courtesy extended by **Yitz'chak** to **Abimelech** as his guest. It is, rather, an important part of the covenant-making process. In a sense, the one offering the meals admits the other person to his family circle.⁴²⁷ **Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace (26:30-31).** As soon as they left, a new well was discovered with abundant water.

That day that the treaty was made, Isaac's servants, who seem to be very skillful at finding water, **came and told him about another well they had dug. Yitz'chak called it Shibah,** which means *to swear or oath*, **and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba, the Well of the Oath (26:32-33).** But that was the secondary source for the name. The primary source of the name **Beersheba** comes from *Be'er Sheva*, which literally means *the Well of the Seven (21:22-34)*. The emphasis in **Chapter 21** was the number seven, but here the emphasis is on the oath. The Hebrew word for swearing, oath and seven is often the same Hebrew root.

Before this chapter, **Isaac** was mentioned only in conjunction with **Abraham**; from this point on, **he** is only mentioned in conjunction with Jacob. This is the only chapter where the spotlight was on **him**. **He** lived one hundred and eighty years, so **he** lived the longest of the three patriarchs. But **his** life is the least eventful. **Nevertheless, he is a type of Christ.**