





Echoes of Isaac – Genesis 26

GENESIS 26:1-11

The chapter starts out by telling us that there was a famine in the land. Within the context of the Bible, we see that famines often symbolize times of testing and spiritual scarcity, as well as opportunities for growth and reliance on God. They can and have served as catalysts for change, compelling people to move to new places or to make significant life decisions. A few examples of famines include,

1. **Famine in Canaan** (Genesis 12): Led Abram to Egypt.
2. **Seven-Year Famine** (Genesis 41): Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, leading to Egypt's preparation and becoming a refuge for nations, including his own family.
3. **Famine in the Days of David** (2 Samuel 21): Lasted three years, resolved by addressing the bloodguilt against the Gibeonites.
4. **Famine During Elijah's Time** (1 Kings 17): Led to miraculous provisions for Elijah, the widow at Zarephath, and the defeat of Baal prophets.

5. **Famine in the Book of Ruth:** Naomi and her family moved to Moab, setting the stage for Ruth's story and lineage to King David and Jesus.

An interesting point to note here is that the events in this chapter bear a striking resemblance to those found in Genesis 12 and Genesis 20-21. The parallels between Isaac and Abraham, particularly in their episodes of lying about their wives, underscore a key message: despite human imperfection, God's faithfulness remains constant.

Like Abraham, Isaac encountered a famine prompting him to leave home, but in this chapter, God instructs Isaac, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you." (v. 2)

If we look at this in a spiritual sense, we're reminded to stay close to God in times of suffering. To trust that He will be with us and that we'll be blessed for our perseverance. This direction to not 'go down' or 'descend' can metaphorically suggest avoiding a regression to previous sinful behaviors. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining faith and reliance on God in the face of adversity.

The urge to 'return to Egypt' can be tempting at times. In fact, the Israelites felt that way themselves many times. "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt!" They said, "There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted." (Exodus 16:3)

In moments of suffering, it's easier to choose what feels good rather than that which we know to be good. To trade the long lasting blessings that come with staying the course for a fleeting moment of pleasure. Everyone's 'return to Egypt'—that pull back to old patterns of sin—will look different. For one person, it might be losing your temper in the heat of an argument. For someone else, it could mean allowing pride to stand in the way of forgiveness. And yet for another, it might be giving in to temptation at the expense of your marriage.



The Bible tells us, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." (1 Peter 5:10)

This promise mirrors the process of enduring hardship with faith, and emerging stronger on the other side.

❓ Genesis 12 and 26 parallel events in the lives of Isaac and Abraham, particularly concerning the response to famine and deception about their wives. What are some of the parallels there and what can these situations teach us about the nature of human fear and God's faithfulness?

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❓ Considering the numerous famines mentioned in the Bible and their outcomes, how do these stories collectively prepare us to understand and cope with spiritual and physical scarcities in our own lives?

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❓ Everyone has their own "Egypt" they are tempted to return to during challenging times. What is your "Egypt," and how do you resist the pull to return to it?

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GENESIS 26:12-34

Before we talk about the wells in this chapter, let's look at this verse from the New Testament where Jesus addressed the crowd at the Feast of Tabernacles:

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

—John 7:37–39, NIV

During the Feast of Tabernacles, there was a daily ceremony in which the priests would pour out water that had been drawn from the Pool of Siloam onto the altar. On the last day of the festival, however, this water-pouring ceremony was particularly significant and elaborate, which is why John

referred to it as the "last and greatest day of the festival." In this passage, the "rivers of living water" are identified as the Holy Spirit, which flows from within believers.

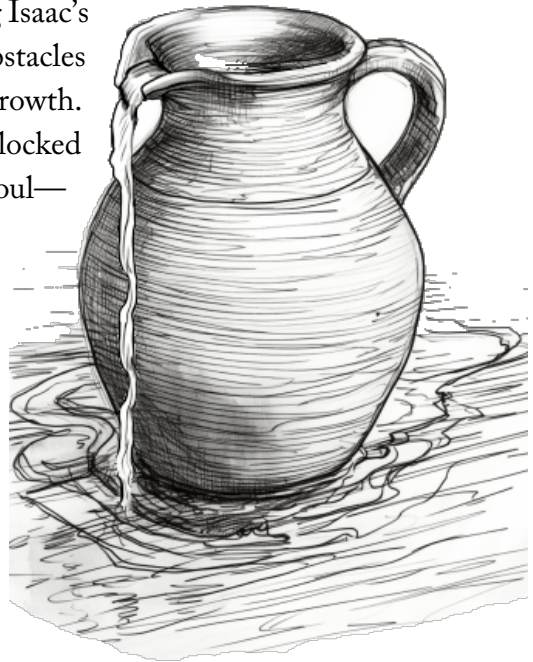
This imagery can also be related to wells of water in the sense that a well provides a continuous supply of water, much like the Holy Spirit continually fills and refreshes the believer.

*Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.
The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my
defense; he has become my salvation. With joy you will
draw water from the wells of salvation.*
—Isaiah 12:2–3, NIV

When I read about the Philistines filling Isaac's wells with earth, I'm reminded of obstacles that threaten to disrupt our spiritual growth. These wells might symbolize blocked pathways to resources that nourish the soul—like prayer, community, and Scripture.

Isaac's action of reopening the wells can then be seen as an act of spiritual restoration. It's like clearing away doubts, fears, or harmful influences that can fill our lives and block us from accessing God's presence and promises. In essence, Isaac digging out the wells previously dug by his father is a picture of someone working to maintain their connection with God and uphold the legacy of faith they've received.

As we look at the names of the wells we can see reflections of our spiritual journey:



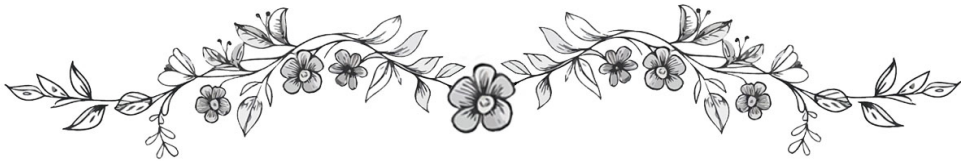
1. **Esek (Genesis 26:20)** - This well's name means "dispute." Isaac's servants dug this well, but the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled over it, claiming it as their own. In our lives, "Esek" might symbolize the conflicts and quarrels that arise and how they can prevent us from accessing peace and spiritual nourishment if we don't handle them wisely.
2. **Sitnah (Genesis 26:21)** - This name means "opposition" or "accusation." After the dispute over Esek, Isaac's servants dug another well which was also argued over by the herdsmen of Gerar. This can represent the adversity and opposition we face in life, which can either discourage us or strengthen our resolve, depending on our response.
3. **Rehoboth (Genesis 26:22)** - This name means "room" or "open-spaces." Isaac moved on from Sitnah and dug another well. This time there was no dispute, and he saw it as a sign that God had made room for them. "Rehoboth" might represent the peace and provision we find when we move past conflict and rely on God's provision in our lives.
4. **Beersheba (Genesis 26:23-25)** - The name means "well of the oath" or "well of seven." Isaac's reaffirmation of the covenant with Abimelech here underlines a commitment to peace and God's faithfulness. In our lives, "Beersheba" may symbolize the renewals or reaffirmations of faith that strengthen our commitments to God and to living in harmony with others.



These wells can be viewed as a metaphor for the challenges and the provision we encounter in our spiritual journey. Each well represents an event or phase where we either face opposition or find God's provision and blessing. They serve as reminders that, despite the disputes and opposition we may encounter, God's faithfulness remains, leading us to places where we can flourish and grow without contention.

As we go further into our study of Jacob, it's interesting to note how each of these wells symbolize struggles or situations that he encounters. Here's how each one corresponds to Jacob's experiences:

1. **Esek/Dispute (Genesis 26:20)** - As Isaac faced disputes over Esek, Jacob similarly encounters conflicts with Laban over wages and treatment. This phase symbolizes ongoing struggles and the necessity to resolve conflicts assertively. **(Genesis 31:1-7)**
2. **Sitnah/Opposition (Genesis 26:21)** - Reflecting the opposition Isaac experienced at Sitnah, Jacob faces deception and direct opposition from Laban. This period in Jacob's life tests his endurance and ability to handle deceit and opposition. **(Genesis 31:41-42)**
3. **Rehoboth/Expansion (Genesis 26:22)** - Just as Isaac found space and prosperity at Rehoboth, Jacob experiences a significant turning point after separating from Laban, marking a time of personal and financial growth. **(Genesis 30:43 - 31:3)**
4. **Bethel/Covenant (Genesis 28:19; 35:1-15)** - Bethel is where God first reveals Himself to Jacob, promising blessings and divine presence, and later, where Jacob returns to reaffirm his commitment to God, mirroring moments of spiritual awakening and commitment renewal. **(Genesis 28:19; 35:1-15)**



“THE BELIEVER IS NOT THE MAN WHOSE DAYS ARE WEARY FOR LACK OF COMFORT AND WHOSE NIGHTS ARE LONG ON ACCOUNT OF THE ABSENCE OF HEART-CHEERING THOUGHT. THE BELIEVER FINDS IN FAITH SUCH A SPRING OF JOY, SUCH A FOUNTAIN OF CONSOLATION THAT HE IS CONTENT AND HAPPY. PUT HIM IN A DUNGEON, AND HE WILL FIND GOOD COMPANY; PLACE HIM IN A BARREN WILDERNESS, AND HE WILL EAT THE BREAD OF HEAVEN; DRIVE HIM AWAY FROM FRIENDSHIP, AND HE WILL MEET THE “FRIEND WHO STICKS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.”

— CHARLES SPURGEON

? Compare the function of the Pool of Siloam in the Feast of Tabernacles with the wells in Genesis 26. What do these sources of water symbolize, and how do they enhance our understanding of God’s provision?

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❓ Reflecting on Isaac's experience with the Philistines filling the wells, what modern-day "earth" has filled your wells in the past, if any?

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❓ Isaac reopened the wells his father Abraham had dug, clearing them of obstructions. How can we apply this determined action to reviving our own faith?

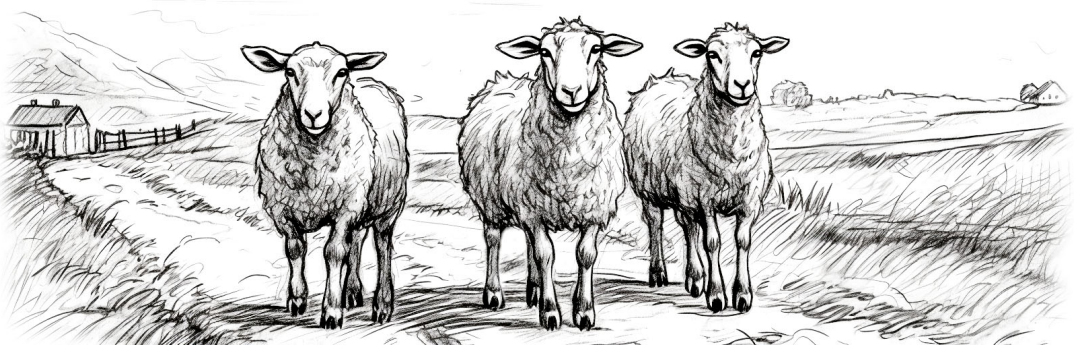
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Answer Key

Chapter 2 – Genesis 26

GENESIS 26:1-11

Genesis 12 and 26 parallel events in the lives of Isaac and Abraham, particularly concerning the response to famine and deception about their wives. What are some of the parallels there and what can these situations teach us about the nature of human fear and God's faithfulness?

In Genesis 12 and 26, both Abraham and Isaac face famine and respond by deceiving others about their wives, claiming them as sisters. These parallels reveal the fact that fear was driving their decisions. In both instances, God intervened to protect Sarah and Rebekah, demonstrating His faithfulness and sovereignty.

Their experiences teach us about the frailty of human nature and the reliability of God's protective grace. They also encourage us to trust in God's provision rather than choosing fear-driven actions.

Considering the numerous famines mentioned in the Bible and their outcomes, how do these stories collectively prepare us to understand and cope with spiritual and physical scarcities in our own lives?

These stories help us to see that spiritual and physical scarcities are opportunities to deepen our reliance on God's faithfulness. They teach us that God is our ultimate provider and protector, who equips us to face hardships with wisdom and faith. Through their examples, we learn to trust in God's timing and provision.

Everyone has their own "Egypt" they are tempted to return to during challenging times. What is your "Egypt," and how do you resist the pull to return to it?

(This answer will be different for everyone)

GENESIS 26:12-34

Compare the function of the Pool of Siloam in the Feast of Tabernacles with the wells in Genesis 26. What do these sources of water symbolize, and how do they enhance our understanding of God's provision?

The Pool of Siloam symbolizes God's spiritual provision through the Holy Spirit. In contrast, the wells in Genesis 26 represent the need for persistent faithfulness to access and maintain the resources God provides, like prayer and scripture, emphasizing our role in reclaiming and upholding spiritual blessings.

Reflecting on Isaac's experience with the Philistines filling the wells, what modern-day "earth" has filled your wells in the past, if any?

(This answer will be different for everyone)

Isaac reopened the wells his father Abraham had dug, clearing them of obstructions. How can we apply this determined action to reviving our own faith?

Just as Isaac cleared the wells to access the life-giving water beneath, we must remove the obstacles of doubt, complacency, and sin that block the flow of spiritual vitality in our lives. By actively engaging in prayer, studying the Word, and participating in church worship, we can revive our faith.