

Genesis 26 – Isaac and Abimelech

v1-5 – A time of famine, and God's renewal of the promise

There was a famine, as there had been before. But God told Isaac not to leave the land. He told him that all the promises given to Abraham were given to him. He would be his God, as he had been his father's God. God's promises and plans do not grow old and perish. He will be faithful to his people from generation to generation; they must be *obedient*.

v6-11 – Isaac, Abimelech and Rebekah

Isaac feared to let people know that Rebekah was his wife – just as Abraham had feared before (12:11-13, 20:2). But his lie was discovered. In fact, the Philistine king feared God more than Isaac knew, and kept the covenant made before (or maybe by his father) with Abraham (chapter 20). God can give us peace and safety even in a foreign land.

v12-16 – Departing from Abimelech

Though there had been famine in Canaan, now in Gerar God blessed Isaac. What we need is God's presence above all things. But the earthly wealth also brought him trouble – the people envied him, hated him, and chased him away. Wealth is a very mixed blessing in this world.

v17-22 – Arguments over wells

Trouble continued. Isaac had to work hard even to bring back blessings that had been enjoyed before, but lost. There is little peace in a world of wickedness. But at last God brought him through these struggles. We should not despair, but keep working and trusting.

v23-25 – God's promise confirmed again

After all these troubles God appeared again and confirmed his promise. God's promises do not grow old and wear out. Isaac had to be tested, just like his father was tested. New strength from God is what we need.

v26-35 – Peace with Abimelech; and the marriages of Esau

Abimelech came again, and requested peace. Isaac rebuked him for his peoples' unfaithfulness and wickedness. Abimelech was ready to receive the rebuke and make peace. Isaac had not fought evil with evil, but overcame it with good. His life of light made even his enemies to recognise the presence of the Lord with him. But Esau, his son, continued his godless life. He married two cursed Canaanites. He did not desire God's blessing or fear his curse. We must teach our children the ways of God, and not indulge them in foolish ways. Often ungodly children have been a sore trial for godly parents. Yet still, God's purposes were going forward and his plans could not be defeated; Isaac and Rebekah had to keep trusting him.