

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 20. (Gen 26:1 – 35). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: Genesis chapters 25 – 36, like earlier chapters, reveal a literary structure called “ring composition.” As we continue to move through the chapters, remember that the structure points out a fairly stark contrast in Jacob’s walk with God: First, we clearly see deceit, but, second, we also find reconciliation! As we suggested in the previous lesson, perhaps this revelation may help us partially answer the question: “How could God choose such a deceitful person as Jacob to bestow His blessings on mankind?” Note the way the chapters are constructed; then enter the text in chapter 26 for discussion.

- (A) Prologue (25:19-24)
- (B) Isaac and the Canaanites: Conflict and Covenant (26)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: DECEPTION (27)
- (D) Bethel: Departure from promised land (28:10-22)
- (E) Jacob and Laban: Deception and Reconciliation (29-31)**
- (D) Mananaim: Return to promised land (32:1-2)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: RECONCILIATION (32-33)
- (B) Jacob and the Canaanites: Deception and Enmity (34)
- (A) The Edomites (36)

Read chapter 26 completely through. This is really the only detailed narrative that places Isaac on center stage. As you read, note that the promise by God, given first to Abraham (12:1-3) and then to Isaac, is reaffirmed outside the “promised land” and even expanded to include Philistine territory (26:3-5)! Note also the re-encounter with King Abimilech, the Philistine king in Gerar, by a member of Abraham’s household (shades of Abraham’s own personal journeys outside the “promised land” catalogued in chapters 12 & 20).

- **Re-read 26:1-6.** Famine (reminiscent of a similar situation about 100 years previously when Abraham first obeyed the call of God to leave all he had and knew to go to Canaan in 12:1-10) forces decisions again.
 - In this case, what does God instruct Isaac to do? Now compare Isaac’s activity to the account of Abraham’s reaction to famine in 12:10-20. What strikes you as similar or different in the accounts? Discuss.
 - What does God promise to Isaac in the land of the Philistines and what is the basis for God’s promise? What lesson do you draw for yourself and your family, if any, regarding one’s journey in faith in these verses? Discuss.
- **Re-read 26:7-11.** Previously God instructed Isaac not to go to Egypt, but “*to a land I will tell you*” (26:2). God’s promised gifts to Isaac are clearly generous and bountiful (26:3-4). But God also expects blessings to “*all nations of the earth*” (26:4) to occur in return. In verses 26:7-11, we learn that Isaac ends up in the Philistine territory of King Abimilech.
 - What takes place in these verses with regard to Isaac, his wife Rebekah, and king Abimilech? Briefly discuss.
 - Now think back roughly 75 years previously to Abraham and Sarah’s sojourn to Gerar as you re-read 20:1-18. Contrast Isaac and Rebekah’s journey to the account of Abraham’s and Sarah’s sojourn. What blessings, if any, resulted from Abraham’s trip to Egypt? What lesson do you draw regarding your own life? Discuss.
- **Re-read 26:12-22.** As Isaac remains in the territory of the Philistines, what happens to him in Gerar and what does Scripture say is the cause? What happens to other inhabitants of the area as a result of the blessings Isaac has received from God? Briefly discuss.
- **Re-read 26:23-25.** After some conflict in the Philistine territory, Isaac moves back to the region of Beersheba in God’s “promised land.” In his first night back, God appears to him and reiterates His promise “*I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham’s sake*” (26:24). Isaac responds like his father Abraham before him: he builds an altar. What do you learn about the character of Isaac in these verses?
- **Re-read 26:26-35.** The chapter closes as a delegation from the Philistines, realizing that they were blessed as a consequence of Isaac being in their territory, visit Isaac, acknowledge their blessings, and seek continued blessing and not harm. But strife continues within Isaac’s family unit.
 - What lesson do you draw regarding God’s Promise and Blessings from these verses?
 - What lesson, if any, do you draw regarding Esau’s present & past choices? Discuss.