

## PART THIRTY-EIGHT

### THE STORY OF ISAAC: HIS SOJOURN IN PHILISTIA

(Gen. 26:1-34)

#### *The Biblical Record*

1 *And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines, unto Gerar.*  
2 *And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of;*  
3 *sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;*  
4 *and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;*  
5 *because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*  
6 *And Isaac dwelt in Gerar:*  
7 *and the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, My wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.*  
8 *And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.*  
9 *And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die because of her.*  
10 *And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might easily have lain with thy wife, and thou wouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.*  
11 *And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.*

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12 And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and Jehovah blessed him. 13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great: 14 and he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him. 15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. 16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. 17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar; and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20 And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. 21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. 24 And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Abuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host. 27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore are ye come unto

me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28 And they said, We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee: and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee, 29 that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of Jehovah. 30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. 31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. 32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. 33 And he called it Shibab: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

34 And when Esau was forty years old he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35 and they were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

1. Isaac's Migration to Gerar (vv. 1-6). It will be recalled that Isaac was "tenting" in the vicinity of Beer-lahai-roi ("the well of the Living One who sees me," cf. 16:14) at the time of his marriage to Rebekah (24:62). Later, he journeyed to Hebron where he and Ishmael buried their father, Abraham, in the cave of Machpelah (25:9). Isaac then returned, we are told, and continued to dwell "by Beer-lahai-roi" (25:11); evidently it was here that the twins were born and Esau sold his birthright (25:11, 19-26, 27-34). This is obviously where we find him at the beginning of the account in ch. 26, prior to his removal to Gerar. But "there was a famine in the land" (26:1), a second famine, long after the first, which was the one "that was in the days of Abraham." In time of famine, people of Palestine were accustomed to migrate

to Egypt or to the fertile Philistine maritime plain (about 50 miles long and 15 miles wide) extending along the Mediterranean Sea from what in our time is Joppa at the north to some distance below Gaza at the south. All Semitic peoples seem to have done this: the Egyptian records are full of accounts of such migrations for the purpose of obtaining food. (Cf. for example, Abraham, Gen. 12:10; Jacob and his sons, chs. 45, 46; Elimelech and his family, in Moab, Ruth 1:1).

"And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, unto Gerar." The presence of the Philistines in this region in patriarchal times has been dubbed an anachronism by the critics. This view, however, is expressly refuted by evidence now available. In Scripture, the Philistines are said to have come from Caphtor (Amos 9:7, Jer. 47:4, Deut. 2:23; cf. Gen. 10:14—here the sentence, "hence went forth the Philistines," is commonly viewed today as misplaced by a copyist and to belong after the name "Caphtorim."). The monuments indicate that the Peleste or Philistines invaded Palestine with other "sea peoples" around 1200 B.C. In time they became amalgamated with other inhabitants of Canaan, but the name "Palestine" (Philistia) continued to bear witness to their presence. It is further evident that the Philistines had established themselves in this region in smaller numbers long before 1500 B.C. The region around Gerar and Beer-sheba was occupied by them as early as the patriarchal age (Gen. 21:32, 26:1) and before the Mosaic era settlers from Crete had driven out or destroyed the original inhabitants of the region of Gaza and settled there (Deut. 2:23). The consensus of archaeological evidence in our day almost without exception identifies these "sea peoples" as spreading out over the Eastern Mediterranean world from Crete: at its height in the third and second millenia, Minoan Crete controlled a large part of the Aegean Sea. "C. H. Gordon and I. Grinz consider that these early

Philistines of Gerar came from a previous migration of sea people from the Aegean and Minoan sphere, including Crete, which is called Caphtor in the Bible and Ugarit tablets, and Caphtorian is the Canaanite name for Minoan" (Cornfeld, AtD, 72). "Biblical notices, which are commonly viewed as anachronistic by critics, place scattered groups of these people in S. W. Palestine centuries before the arrival of the main body in the first quarter of the 12th century B.C." (UBD, 859). Recently an Israeli archaeologist, D. Alon, surveyed the site of Gerar and "found evidence from potsherds that the city had enjoyed a period of prosperity during the Middle Bronze Age, the period of the Biblical patriarchs" (DWDBA, 251). "The early Caphtorian migration was one of a long series that had established various Caphtorian folk on the shores of Canaan before 1500 B.C.E. They had become Canaanitized, and apparently spoke the same language as Abraham and Isaac. They generally behaved peacefully, unlike the Philistines of a later day, who fought and molested the Israelites. They were recognized in Canaan as masters of arts and crafts, including metallurgy" (Cornfeld, AtD, 72). The word "Philistine" is said to have meant "stranger," "sojourner" (sea peoples?). These people gave their name to the country where they settled, "Philistia" (Joel 3:4; cf. Amos 1:6-8, Zech. 9:5-7); from this name the Greek name "Palestine" was derived in turn. The five cities of the Philistines in Palestine were Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. Gerar, though not one of the five great urban centers, was the seat of the royal iron smelting operations producing iron swords, spearheads, daggers, and arrowheads (1 Sam. 13:19-22). (See my *Genesis*, Vol. III, pp. 387-390).

2. *Abimelech*. Cf. the incident in Abraham's life, 20:1-20. The name means "father-king" in pure Hebrew; apparently it was the customary *title*, rather than personal name, of the kings of Gerar, as *Pharaoh* was of the kings

of Egypt, as *Agar* was of the kings of the Amalekites (1 Sam., ch. 15), or as *Ceasar* was in later times, of the Roman emperors (cf. also *Kaiser* or *Czar*, etc.). Since some seventy or eighty years intervened between the accounts in chs. 20 and 26, we must conclude that the Abimelech of ch. 26 was the successor to the Abimelech of ch. 20. Leupold (EG, 717): "The common assumption that Abimelech was a standing designation of all Philistine kings, like Pharaoh for the Egyptian, finds definite support in the heading of Psalm 34, where Abimelech is used as a title for the man who in 1 Sam. 21:10-15 appears as Achish. 'Gerar' appears to be identical with *Umm-Jerar*, about ten miles south of Gaza." (Achish was the personal name of the king of Gath, also a Philistine city). (For a discussion of the Abimelechs of these two chapters, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 390-396). For a discussion of the similarities of the stories in Gen. 12:10-20, 20:1-18, and 26:6-11, and also of the striking differences, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 396-401, and especially 405-406. We conclude that these are not three variant accounts of the same event, as claimed by some of the critics, but three different accounts respectively of three different originals).

3. *The Divine Communication to Isaac* (vv. 2-5). The situation seems to be sufficiently important to call for Divine intervention. God appeared to Isaac as well as to Abraham, but twice only to the former (here and in v. 24). The wording of Scripture here surely indicates that Isaac was contemplating a journey into Egypt such as his father Abraham had made under the same circumstances, *i.e.* a famine in the land. Evidently Yahweh interfered to prevent such a move. Probably his original purpose in going to Abimelech was to request permission to leave for Egypt or he may have gone to the king of Gerar to make special arrangements that would avert the necessity of his going there. At any rate, Yahweh intervened, and in doing so *reaffirmed the Abrahamic Promise*. V. 2, "You were

consecrated as a sacrifice to God and must therefore not leave the Holy Land. Set up your shepherd's tent here and do not fear for lack of pasture" (SC, 144). The Oath, v. 3, was made directly and separately with each of the patriarchs. "By remaining in the country you will take possession of it, to be able to transmit it to your children, and thus My oath will be confirmed" (SC, 143). "It had been previously announced to Abraham that Isaac was to be his sole heir; and now that, on the death of his father, he had succeeded to the patrimonial inheritance, he was to receive also a renewal of the Divine promise which guaranteed special blessings of inestimable value to him and his posterity. The covenant securing these blessings originated entirely in Divine grace; but it was suspended on the condition that Abraham should walk before God and be perfect (17:1); and since he had, through the grace which had enabled him to attain an extraordinary strength of faith, fully met that condition by an obedience honored with the strongest expression of Divine approval—Isaac, his son, was now assured that the covenant would progressively take effect, the assurance being made doubly sure to him by a reference to the oath sworn to Abraham (22:16). The first instalment of this promise was the possession of Canaan, here designated 'all these countries,' from the numerous subdivisions amongst the petty tribes which then occupied the land (15:19-21); and in prospect of this promissory tenure of the land, Isaac was prohibited leaving it. . . . At all events, now that the Abrahamic covenant had to be executed, the elect family were not henceforth allowed to go into Egypt, except with the special sanction and under the immediate superintendence of an overruling Providence" (CECG, 191). V. 5—"my commandments" ("particular injunctions, specific enactments, express or occasional orders," cf. 2 Chron. 35:16), "my statutes" (permanent ordinances, such as the Passover, 'literally, that which is graven on tables or monuments,

cf. Exo. 12:14'), "*and my laws*" ("which refer to the great doctrines of moral obligations"). "The three terms express the contents of the Divine observances which Abraham obeyed" (PCG, 324-325).

"Remarkable is the scope of divine blessings that are mediated through faithful Abraham. In order to make prominent the thought that Abraham conscientiously did all that God asked, *the various forms of divine commandments are enumerated*; sometimes, of course, a divine word would fall under several of these categories. They are a 'charge' or 'observance' if they are to be observed. . . . They are 'commandments' when regarded from the angle of having been divinely *commanded*. They are 'statutes' when thought of as immutable, and 'laws' insofar as they involve divine instruction or teaching. Under these headings would come the 'commandment' to leave home (ch. 12); the 'statute' of circumcision, the instruction to sacrifice Isaac, or to do any particular thing such as (15:8) to sacrifice Isaac, or (13:17, 18) to walk through the land, as well as all other individual acts as they are implied in his attitude toward Jehovah, his faithful God. By the use of these terms Moses, who purposes to use them all very frequently in his later books, indicates that 'laws, commandments, charges and statutes' are nothing new but were already involved in patriarchal religion. Criticism, of course, unable to appreciate such valuable and suggestive thoughts, or thinking Moses, at least, incapable of having them, here decrees that these words come from another source, for though J wrote the chapter, J, according to the lists they have compiled, does not have these words in his vocabulary, and so the device, so frequently resorted to, is employed here of claiming to discern traces of a late hand, a redactor" (Leupold, EG, 719-720). (The hypothetical redactor is, of course, an indispensable factum for Biblical critics). Speiser translates v. 5 as follows: "All because Abraham heeded my call and kept my



mandate: my commandments, my laws, and my teachings." "Mandate" he defines as "something to be scrupulously observed," adding, "the three nouns that follow spell out the contents" (ABG, 198, 201). Note that the same Promise, in its various details, which was originally given to Abraham, is here renewed to Isaac (cf. 12:3, 22:17, 18). Cf. v. 24: that is, "not for the sake of Abraham's merit, but from respect to the covenant made with him, 12:2, 3; 15:8, 17:6, 7" (SIBG, 257). Cf. v. 6—Abraham's obedience was not perfect, as we know, but it was unreserved, and as it flows from a living faith, is thus honored of God" (Gosman, in Lange, CDHCG, 505).

4. *The Threat to Rebekah's Honor* (vv. 6-11). Because Gerar was situated in the Judean foothills south of Gaza and likely controlled the inland caravan route to Egypt, no doubt it was a commercial city. Therefore Isaac's needs during the famine were here supplied. "The men of the place" were attracted to Rebekah "because she was fair to look upon." Isaac, apprehensive of personal danger on account of his wife's beauty, followed the same deceptive course that his father had adopted (12:13, 20:2) of passing his wife off as his sister. At that time Rebekah was at least thirty-five years married and the mother of two fullgrown sons who evidently had been kept in the background, perhaps engaged in pastoral and other field pursuits. But after a considerable lapse of time, Abimelech, "king of the Philistines," happened to be "looking out at a window" and saw, "and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife" (literally, he was "fondling" her, and certainly not in the manner by which a brother would show affection for his sister). Whereupon Abimelech constrained Isaac to admit that she was his wife, charged him with the impropriety of his conduct, and commanded his own subjects to refrain from harming either of them on pain of death. "Knobel pronounces this story to be a duplicate account of a similar incident in the life of

Abraham. But a close examination will show that the circumstances here detailed are different from those of the earlier transaction. Although the name of the principal personage in both narratives is Abimelech, a royal title, it is highly probable, considering that an interval of about seventy years had elapsed, another king was reigning in Isaac's day; then Rebekah was not taken into the royal harem; and there was a difference also in the way in which her conjugal relation to Issac was discovered. Altogether the stories are marked by distinctive peculiarities of their own; and though it is striking, it cannot appear improbable that, in the same country and at the same court, where Oriental notions as to the rights of royalty obtained, incidents of such a description should, from time to time, occur. Issac's conduct, however, in this affair, has been made the subject of severe animadversion by the friends as well as the foes of Revelation, as a compound of selfishness and weakness, as well as of cold indifference to his wife's honor, for which the same apology cannot be made as in the earlier case of Abraham. But *Waterland* ('Scripture Vindicated'), after a full and dispassionate examination of the circumstances, gives his verdict, that the patriarch 'did right to evade the difficulty so long as it could be lawfully evaded, and to await and see whether Divine Providence might not, in some way or other, interpose before the last extremity.' His hope was not disappointed" (CECD, 191).

Lange (CDHCG, 505-506): "In the declaration of Isaac the event here resembles Abraham's experience, both in Egypt and at Gerar, but as to all else, it differs entirely. With regard to the declaration itself, it is true that Rebekah was also related to Isaac, but more distantly than Sarah to Abraham. It is evident from the narrative itself that Isaac is not so seriously threatened as Abraham, although the inquiries of the people at Gerar might have alarmed him. It is not by a punishment inflicted upon

a heathen prince, who perhaps might have abducted the wife, but through the intercourse of Isaac with Rebekah that the true relation became known. That the Abimelech mentioned in this narrative is the same person who, eighty years before, received Sarah into his harem, appears plausible to Kurtz and Delitzsch, since it may be taken for granted that as a man gray with hair as he, did not send for Rebekah and take her into his harem. We reject these as superficial grounds. The main point is, that Isaac appears in this narrative as a very cautious man, while the severe edict of Abimelech seems to suppose a solemn remembrance in the king's house of the former experience with Abraham. The oath that follows seems also to show that the new Abimelech avails himself of the policy of his father, as well as Isaac. The windows in old times were latticed openings for the light to enter, as found in the East at the present day."

Finally in this connection, the following: "Criticism, with almost complete unanimity (we know only of Koenig as an exception) calls this a later (Isaac) version of the original (Abraham) legend, or else calls chapter 26 the original and chapter 20 derivative. Yet the differences, aside from the very plain statements of the text to the same effect, point to two different situations: here a famine, there none; here Rebekah is not molested, there Abimelech took Sarah; here accidental discovery, there divine intervention; here no royal gift, there rich recompense. Of course, criticism usually points to 12:10f. as being merely another form of the same incident. Yet at least one aspect of the critical approach can be refuted completely on purely critical grounds. For, as K.C. [Koenig's *Kommentar* on Genesis] observes, it is unthinkable that J, to whom chapter 12 as well as chapter 26 are attributed, should have preserved two versions of one and the same incident" (Leupold, EG, 721).

5. *Isaac's Successful Venture into Agriculture* (vv. 12-17).

Besides planting trees, Abraham was to the end of his life a nomad. Isaac, however, begins to pursue agriculture along with his nomadic life: this venture causes commentators to classify him as a kind of semi-nomad. (The only other allusion to husbandry in the patriarchal history occur in Genesis 30:14 and 37:7). "Isaac is described as living in the city of Gerar itself. He tried his hand successfully at a season of farming and his yield was 'a hundredfold,' a statement worth recording because nomads are poor farmers as a rule. Isaac's experiment is an interesting example of a nomad beginning to settle down to semi-nomadism. A recurring pattern in the Near East is that nomads are attracted to sown acres, where they plant their crops, thus supplementing the living they get from their flocks. So they become agriculturists; they turn into villagers, usually still grazing their flocks, for that is a noble tradition, in keeping with their origin. Isaac's career apparently marks this transition to that intermediate stage" (Cornfeld, AtD, 77).

This account agrees well with the area around Gaza: the soil is very rich, we are told. As a result, Isaac reaped from his initial venture a rich harvest, to the extent of a hundred measures ("a hundred fold"). Such a rich harvest was taken as a sign of divine favor. The man became very wealthy: "he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household." Since Abraham was very rich (13:2, 14:23) and the bulk of his property had gone to Isaac, such an increase as this in Isaac's wealth must have brought his possessions up to a startling total. His establishment of necessity required also a great number of servants. "The man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great," that is to say, he kept growing richer and richer. But a serious problem arose as a consequence of this unusual

prosperity: *the Philistines grew envious*. The statement is an intimation of the clash with them over the wells, the account of which soon follows. Hostilities began when the natives began filling with earth the wells which Abraham had dug at Gerar and which therefore belonged to Isaac. "This very act was already an indirect expulsion, for without wells it was not possible that Isaac should live a nomadic life at Gerar." As a matter of fact, Isaac's household was strong enough to constitute a threat to the safety of the Philistines had Isaac been inclined to use his power for personal ends. V. 16—the king's summons is a combination of flattery, "thou art much mightier than we," and ungraciousness, "go from us." "Isaac is a pacifist in the best sense of the word. Power is safe in his hands. He shows no inclination to abuse it. Secure in his strength but mindful primarily of his responsibilities to his God, he yields to pressure and moves farther up the valley, *i.e.*, southeast from Gerar, and there pitches his tent with the intent of staying there permanently (he "dwelt there," *i.e.*, he "settled down") (EG, 725-726).

6. *The Contention over Wells* (vv. 18-22). "The whole of the southern frontier of Palestine, called the Negeb or 'south country,' consisting of vast undulating plains, which extend between the hills of Judah and the desert of Sinai, were neutral grounds, on the natural pastures of which the patriarchs fed their large flocks, before they had obtained a permanent abode. The valley of Gerar . . . about fifty miles south of the city Gerar, is perhaps the remote extremity of that pasture land" (CECG, 192). Here Isaac "dugged again"—that is, *re-opened*—the wells which had been dug "in the days of Abraham his father," and which had been "stopped" (filled up) by the Philistines. "The statement that they were wells that Abraham had first dug is not superfluous after v. 15, but clearly establishes his claim to these wells. To indicate, further, his right to these wells and to indicate

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his respect for what his father did, Isaac in every case revived their original names" (EG, 727). "The naming of the wells by Abraham, and the hereditary right of his family to the property—the change of the names by the Philistines to obliterate the traces of their origin—the restoration of their names by Isaac, and the contests between the respective shepherds for the exclusive possession of the water, are circumstances that occur among the natives in those regions as frequently in the present day as in the time of Isaac" (CECG, 192).

"The history of Isaac's sojourn in Gerar is very curious and instructive. Combining both pastoral and agricultural industry, it is not strange that he grew very great. The vast grazing plains around and south of his position enabled him to multiply his flocks indefinitely, while the 'hundred-fold' harvests furnished bread for his numerous servants; and, in addition to these advantages, the blessing of the Lord was on the labour of his hands in a manner altogether extraordinary. These things made the Philistines envy and fear him; and therefore Abimelech, king of Gerar, demanded and obtained a covenant of peace with him. Just so at this day the towns, and even cities, such as Hamath and Hums in the north, and Gaza and Hebron in this region, cultivate with great care friendly relations with the sheikhs of prosperous tribes on their borders. It appears that the country was deficient in water, and that wells, dug at great expense, were regarded as very valuable possessions. Isaac was a great well-digger, prompted thereby by the necessities of his vast flocks; and in those days this was an operation of such expense and difficulty as to be mentioned among the acts which rendered illustrious even kings. The strife for possession of them was a fruitful source of annoyance to the peaceful patriarch, as it had been the cause of separation between Abraham and Lot before him; and such contests are now very common all over the country, but more especially in these southern

deserts. It was the custom in former times to erect towers or castles to command and secure the possession of valuable watering-places; thus Uzziah built towers in connection with 'his many wells' (2 Chron. 26:9, 10). And to stop up wells was the most pernicious and destructive species of vengeance—the surest way to convert a flourishing country into a frightful wilderness. Israel was commanded thus to destroy the land of the Moabites, by stopping all the wells of water (2 Ki. 3:19, 25). It would be a curious inquiry for the explorer to seek out these wells, nor would it be surprising if they should be found bearing the significant names which Isaac gave them. All travelers agree that water is so scarce and valuable in that region, that the places where it is to be found are as well known by the Arabs as are the most flourishing towns in other parts of the country. Isaac's place of residence was the well Lahai-roi, as we read in Genesis 25:11 and 24:62—the same that was so named by Hagar (Gen. 16:14). It may have been first discovered by her, or miraculously produced by 'the God that saw her,' for the salvation of the maternal ancestor of the Arab race and her unborn son, as the fountain of Kadesh afterward was for all Israel, and perhaps that of Lehi for Samson (Num. 20:11, Judg. 15:19). It seems to have been the usual mode to designate the dwelling-place in patriarchal times, and indeed long after, by some circumstance or fact which made it memorable. Abraham dwelt under *the* oak at Mamre; Isaac at this well; Jacob hid the idols of his family under the *oak* at Shechem; and long after, Joshua took a great stone and set it up under the same oak, as I suppose. Thus, also, Deborah dwelt under *the* palm-tree of Deborah; the angel of the Lord that was sent to Gideon came down and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah; King Saul is said to have tarried under a pomegranate tree in Migron; and it is yet quite common to find a village better known by some remarkable tree or fountain near it than by its

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proper name. The knowledge of these places and things is perpetuated from generation to generation; and I doubt not many of these wells in the south could be discovered, if one had the time and liberty to explore" (LB, 559-560). (Cf. Gen. 35:4, Josh. 24:25-27; Judg. 4:5, 6:11; 1 Sam. 14:2).

Apparently, the rapid increase of Isaac's wealth brought about a need of additional wells, and so Isaac's servants began digging "in the valley" and found there a well of "springing" (living, bubbling, gushing) water. But the Philistines were keeping close watch, and immediately on hearing of the discovery they asserted their claim to the new well. "No doubt, the distance from Gerar was sufficient to establish Isaac's claim to the well, otherwise this fair-minded man would never have sanctioned the digging. Isaac's policy is in keeping with the word, 'Blessed are the meek.' He leaves a memorial of the pettiness of the strife behind by calling the well *Esek*—'Contention'—the Quarrel Well. Perhaps a mild and tolerant humor lies in the name. Yet after all, what a fine testimonial to a great man's broadmindedness and readiness to sacrifice, lest the baser passions in men be roused by quarreling" (EG, 727). Isaac's servants then moved some distance and brought in a new well: this they named *Sitnah*, i.e., "enmity," "hostility." In this case the opposition seems to have been more spiteful, more violent, as indicated by the name. "Everyone must recognize that it is magnanimity and not cowardice on Isaac's part when he yields, because Isaac had ample manpower at his command" (EG, 728). Isaac then moved even further away and his servants brought in a well which he named *Rehoboth*, i.e., "wide places," "room," rather, "plenty of room," that is to say, the Lord hath made room for us. It seems that by now the patriarch had moved beyond the territory that Gerar could legitimately claim. It is possible, too, his generous example might have shamed



the opposition. "We shall be fruitful in the land," declared Isaac, that is, in this land where we now are. Is not Isaac thinking primarily in terms of that aspect of the Divine promise stated in v. 4? "The character of Isaac is very marked and peculiar. He never traveled far from this spot during his long life of one hundred and eighty years—probably never removed from Wady Gerar and its neighboring city. There are but few acts of his life on record, and several of these are not much to his credit. He seems to have been an industrious, quiet man, disposed to wander alone and meditate—at least when he had such an interesting theme to think about as the coming of the camels with his expected bride. He preferred peace to strife, even when the right was on his side, and he was 'much mightier' than those who annoyed and injured him" (LB, 561).

7. *The Theophany at Beersheba* (vv. 23-25). We now read that Isaac "went up" from Gerar to Beersheba. (Though Beersheba is said to lie lower than Gerar, "yet the general expression for approaching any part of Palestine from the southwest is to 'go up,'" EG, 729). Here Yahweh appears again to Isaac, for covenant matters must be again considered. Isaac has conducted himself in a manner that calls forth divine approval. "Besides, Isaac's faith needs to be strengthened in the matter of the realization of the covenant promise. For one part of the promise is: numerous descendants. . . . Isaac shall have to walk by faith very largely as did Abraham. That this faith might well be established he is informed that God will surely bring this promise to pass. So we see that the situation is sufficiently important to call for the appearance of Yahweh, *the second and last that is granted to Isaac*. The substance of Yahweh's promise is: Fear not as to the realization of the promise given thee, for I am with thee, I, the God of Abraham, thy father, who never failed to make good what I promised to him; I guarantee to make thy descendants (Hebrew 'seed') numerous, for the sake

of Abraham my servant. It is here only in Genesis that the title 'my servant' is applied to Abraham. By it another aspect of Abraham's relation to the Lord is covered: he stood in God's service all his days and faithfully did His will" (EG, 729).

Now, any place that is sanctified by a Divine appearance naturally became a sacred spot where Yahweh was wont to be worshiped (cf. 12:7-8, 13:4). Hence, following the example of his illustrious father, Isaac erected an altar, and of course offered sacrifice: a fact so obvious that it hardly need be mentioned. It is stated that "he called upon the name of Jehovah." This means, as it did from the very beginning (cf. 4:26), that Isaac acting on behalf of his entire household—as their priest—engaged in all the essentials of public worship of God characteristic of the Patriarchal Dispensation, the very heart of which was sacrifice that included the shedding of precious blood (Gen. 4:4-5, Heb. 11:4, Lev. 17:11, John 1:29, Heb. 9:11-22, Rev. 7:13-14). Because of Yahweh's manifestation at this place it became sacred to Isaac and he pitched his tent there, and as relatively permanent residence was involved, he ordered his servants to (literally) *start digging* a well there: "the success of the attempt is not reported until v. 32" (ABG, 202).

8. *The Covenant with Abimelech* (vv. 26-33). As "Abimelech" was the standing title of the Philistine kings, so "Phicol" seems to have been the standing title of the captain (or general) of the army. (Cf. 21:22f.) "As there was a lapse of seventy years between the visit of Abraham and of Isaac, the Abimelech and Phicol spoken of must have been different persons' official titles" (CECG, 193). "It is fair to conclude that Abimelech was the royal title, just as Pharaoh was in Egypt, and Caesar in Rome. *Phicol* may also have been a name of office, as *mudir* or *mushir* now is in this country. If one of these officers is spoken of, his *name* is rarely mentioned. I, indeed, never

know any but the official title of these Turkish officers" (LB, 560). Abimelech brought with him a certain *Abuzzab his friend*, that is, "his confidential adviser, or 'vizier'—an official title common in Egypt from an early period, and amongst the Ptolemies and Seleucids (I Mac. 2:18, 10:65; cf. 2 Sam., 16:16f., 1 Ki. 4:5, 1 Chron. 27:33" (Skinner, ICCG, 367). (In 1 Chron. 27:33, we find the rendering, "counsellor"). (Ahuzzath: note the Philistine ending of the name: cf. Goliath, 1 Sam. 17, also Gath). Note that one idea stands out in the conversation of these Philistines, namely, we are impressed by the fact of Yahweh's blessings which go with you continually: "they do not think it safe to be on bad terms with one who so manifestly stands in Yahweh's favor." "That the name 'Yahweh' should be used by Philistines need not surprise us. They naturally do not know Him as the One who is what this name involved. They simply take the heathen attitude: each nation serves its own God: we have heard that Isaac serves Yahweh; it must be Yahweh who has blessed His faithful follower" (EG, 731). Abimelech makes the overture. But Isaac chides him for his unkindness in sending him away and his inconsistency in now seeking a conference with him, v. 27. However, the king sees clearly now that Isaac's God is to be reckoned with: "thou art now the blessed of Jehovah"; therefore "let there now be an oath between us . . . and let us make a covenant with thee," etc. "By whatever motive the proposal was dictated—whether fear of his growing power, or regret for the bad usage they had given him, the king and his courtiers paid a visit to the tent of Isaac (Prov. 16:7). His timid and passive temper had submitted to the annoyances of his rude neighbors; but now that they wish to renew the covenant, he evinces deep feeling at their conduct, and astonishment, or artifice, in coming near him. Being, however, of a pacific disposition, he forgave their offence, accepted their proposals, and treated them to a

banquet by which the ratification of a covenant was usually crowned" (CECG, 193).

The *oath*, v. 28, in this case was what was known as a "curse-oath," that is, "the curse invoked on violation of the covenant." The Jews in later ages "were in the habit of using vain and frivolous oaths in their ordinary talk. They swore by the temple, by the earth, by heaven, by the head, etc. So long as they did not use the name of God in these oaths, they did not deem them particularly binding. This practice is alluded to in Matt. 23:16-22" (ADB, 243). This was known as *profane swearing* (cf. Matt. 5:33-37, Jas. 5:12). The *judicial oath* was of an entirely different character. The validity of this type of oath was recognized by Jesus: indeed He allowed Himself to be put under it (cf. Matt. 26:63-68), and He responded to the solemn *adjuration*. We find also that good men, an angel, and even God Himself, made use of the "oath" for confirmation (Gen. 21:23, 24; 1 Sam. 20:42; Heb. 6:17, 18; Rev. 10:5, 6). It should be noted that the oaths were exchanged on the morning after the "feast" (vv. 30, 31) before the Philistines departed. Apparently the feast, "the common meal," was a feature of the covenant ceremony (cf. 31:53, 54) even though the oath-taking did not occur until early the next morning.

9. *The Naming of the Well* (vv. 32-33). "On the same day" the oaths were exchanged Isaac's servants found water. "This is the well mentioned in verse 25. It is possible that it is the same well which Abraham had excavated and named Beer-sheba (21:31). The Philistines had stopped it up; now Isaac reopened it and gave it the same name it had borne previously (Nachmanides). Rashbam holds that it was a different well, there being two of that name (SC, 148). "To the rationalistic objection that 'identical names of places are not imposed twice,' we may reply, in general, that it is 'in full accordance with the genius of the Oriental languages and the literary tastes of

the people,' to suppose that a name may be *renewed*; in other words, that a *new meaning and significance* may be attached to an old name. (This is the testimony of a scholar thoroughly acquainted with Oriental manners and customs, Prof. L. J. Porter, in Kitto's *Biblical Cyclopaedia*, II, 132, latest edition.) This fact sweeps away a host of objections urged against this and similar cases. The whole series of events served to recall to Isaac's mind the former name and the circumstances which gave rise to it, hence he renewed it. From 26:15, 18 we learn that all the wells dug by Abraham had been filled with earth by the Philistines, but that Isaac re-opened them, and *called them by the old familiar names*. This would seem a sufficient explanation of the case before us" (ADB, 410).

"This was not the restoration of an old, but the sinking of a new well; and hence, by the formal ceremony of inauguration gone through with Abimelech, Isaac established his right of possession to the adjoining district. . . . One would naturally imagine that the place received this name [Beer-sheba] now for the first time from Isaac. But it had been so called long before by Abraham (21:31), in memory of a solemn league of alliance which he formed with a contemporary king of Gerar. A similar covenant, in similar circumstances, having been established between Isaac and the successor of that Gerar monarch, gave occasion to a *renewed proclamation* of the name: and it is accordant with the practice of the sacred writer to notice an event as newly occurred, while in point of fact it had taken place long before" (CECG, 193-194). For similar instances of twofold naming, cf. Gen. 35:6, 7, 15, with 28:18-22, as to the name *Bethel*; Gen. 35:10 with 32:28, as to the name *Israel*; Gen. 14:14 with Deut. 34:1, Josh. 19:47, Judg. 18:29, as to the name *Dan*; Num. 32:41, with Deut. 3:14 and Judg. 10:3-4, as to the name *Havoth-jair*). (For a description of the present-day Wady-es-Seba and the "two deep wells" on the northern bank, which

are still called Bir es-Seba, the ancient Beer-sheba, see again Jamieson, CECG, 193-194, quoting Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, I, 300, 301).

Isaac called the well *Shibab*, i.e., Sheba). "On account of the covenant (connecting *Shibab* with *shebuah* ('an oath, covenant'))" according to Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105). "It was the 'seventh' well which he had dug," according to Ben Jacob Sforno, c. 1475-1550. (See SC, 148). Cf. 21:31—obviously, the name *Beer-sheba* is best interpreted "the well of the oath," rather than "of the seven." On the latter view, "seven" could have been variously interpreted, either as indicative of the seven ewe lambs given by Abraham to the Philistine king (21:28-30), or as signifying the seventh well which Isaac had dug, or as indicating that either (or both) of the patriarchs had put himself under the influence of the number *seven*, which was regarded among ancients generally as a *sacred* number. This last view is suggested by Skinner (ICCG, 326); to the present writer it seems rather farfetched. "Both points of view seem well justified: there were originally 'seven' wells; the place was the scene of an 'oath.' One account emphasizes the former; the other, the latter idea. For that matter, Isaac may well have remembered the name given to the place in Abraham's time and may have welcomed the opportunity for establishing that name. The expression 'unto this day' simply carries us up to the writer's time and is, of course, very appropriate coming from the pen of Moses" (EG, 733). At any rate Beer-sheba came to be the principal city in the Judean Negeb. It was situated at the junction of the highway running southward from Hebron to Egypt and the route that ran northeastward from Arabah to the coast. It marked the southern limit of Israelite occupation, so that the entire land came to be described as the territory extending "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. 20:1). "Beersheba still exists, and retains its ancient name in a slightly modified form.

The old wells too are there, of great depth, and of great value to the surrounding Arabs" (SIBG, 257).

10. *Esau's Hittite Wives* (vv. 34-35). At the age of forty, Esau took as wives two young women of Hittite stock who no doubt were well contaminated with prevailing Canaanite vices. According to Rashi, Esau "had been living a dissolute life until then, but now he hypocritically said he would follow his father's example and marry at the same age he had married" (SC, 148). These alliances were contrary to the will of God (Exo. 34:16, Deut. 7:3, Josh. 23:12, Ezra 9:1-3, Neh. 13:23-27, 2 Cor. 6:14-15, 1 Cor. 7:39; and of his grandfather and parents (Gen. 24:38, 27:46; 28:1, 2, 6; cf. 6:2). "Esau's incapacity for spiritual values is further illustrated by this step. He is not concerned about conserving the spiritual heritage of the family" (EG, 733). These marriages of Esau were "a grief of mind" to his parents, possibly because the young women's personal characters, "but chiefly because of their Canaanitish descent, and because in marrying them Esau had not only violated the Divine law which forbade polygamy, but also evinced an utterly irreligious and unspiritual disposition" (PCG, 332). (Cf. Acts 17:30). "If the pious feelings of Abraham recoiled from the idea of Isaac forming a matrimonial connection with a Canaanitish woman, that devout patriarch himself [Isaac] would be equally opposed to such a union on the part of his children; and we may easily imagine how much his pious heart was wounded, and the family peace destroyed, when his favorite but wayward son brought no less than two idolatrous wives amongst them—an additional proof that Esau neither desired the blessing nor dreaded the curse of God. These wives never gained the affections of his parents; and this estrangement was overruled by God for keeping the chosen family aloof from the dangers of heathen influence" (CECG, 194). Note that these wives were "a grief of mind" (according to the Septuagint, contentious

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or obstreperous) to Isaac and Rebekah. How could it have been otherwise? one might well ask. "To the various troubles which the Philistines prepared for Isaac, but which, through the blessing of God, only contributed to the increase of his wealth and importance, a domestic cross was added, which caused him great and lasting sorrow. Esau married two wives in the 40th year of his age, the 100th of Isaac's life (25:26); and that not from his own relatives in Mesopotamia, but from among the Canaanites whom God cast off. . . . They became '*bitterness of spirit,*' the cause of deep trouble, to his parents, viz., on account of their Canaanitish character, which was so opposed to the vocation of the patriarchs; whilst Esau by these marriages furnished another proof, how thoroughly his heart was set on earthly things" (BCOTP, 273).

### FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

#### *The Essentials of Life*

Text: Gen. 26:25. Dr. Bowie (IBG, 675-676) presents some challenging thoughts concerning our text, v. 25. We have here, he writes, only the bare catalogue of what Isaac did on a particular day. However, there are three nouns in this text which have deep implications: an *altar*, a *tent*, and a *well*.

1. It should be noted that the *altar* was first. The first thing Isaac did when he moved up to Beersheba was to cause his servants to build an altar there. (Recall that the first thing Noah did on coming out of the ark was to build an altar unto Jehovah and offer the prescribed sacrifice, Gen. 8:20). "With Isaac, as with Israel in all its history, God was no afterthought." "Existence was not secular, but lifted up always to a religious reference." Isaac was doing what his father Abraham always did on moving into a new environment. *The altar was first. When a man is right with God all other matters fall into*



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*place.* In our affluent society today men have so much that they consider themselves self-sufficient, whereas if God did not provide the food they eat, the water they drink, and the air they breathe, they could not live five minutes. *Man is a creature.* When he loses sight of this fact, he loses his bearings and brings chaos upon himself and his fellows. *We must start with God* as the First Truth of all being. Hence if any part of life is to be worth anything, it must begin with the recognition and worship of God.

2. After erecting his altar and calling upon the name of Jehovah (in his office as the patriarch-priest of his household), Isaac then pitched his *tent* there. Naturally what went on in that tent was commonplace enough: "everyday human needs had to be provided for through the routine of ordinary work; the building of an altar could not obviate that, nor contact with the spiritual world take men out of this one." What Isaac kept in mind was "that family life—its duties, loyalties, and affections—needed always to be brought under the protection of the altar." Note, too, that Isaac had no mansion, not even a house solidly built and comfortable, adapted to present occupancy, such as men and women desire in our day. *He had only a tent.* Does not this suggest that the patriarchs were not rooted in material things; that, on the contrary, they confessed themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:12)? Are not we all just such? "In the civilization of today, complex and materially rich, there is danger that men may be so satisfied with what they already possess that they do not reach forward to that spiritual communion which pilgrim souls would seek to gain. Yet in the scale of eternal values the great man is he who knows that life here is a pilgrimage" (Job 14:1-2, Matt. 6:19-21, Col. 3:1-3, 2 Cor. 4:16-18), and that if he does not seek "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), his life

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on earth will be aimless and empty. The only happiness to which man is ordained by the very nature of his being is ultimate *union with God*, the union of the human mind with the Mind of God in knowledge and the union of the human will with the Will of God in love (1 Cor. 13:12, 1 John 3:2): that alone will be perfect happiness (cf. Matt. 5:3-12; note that the Latin word for happiness is *beatitudo*, "blessedness," hence this ultimate union with God is known as the Beatific Vision; the Latin word was coined by Cicero; Aristotle used the word *eudaimonia*, which means, literally, well-being). To achieve this Beatific Vision, one must be steadfast in growing in the Spiritual Life here (2 Pet. 3:18) as programmed for him in the Divine Word (1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 5:22-25; 1 Cor. 12:31, 13:1-13; Rev. 2:10, etc.).

3. Finally, having built his altar and pitched his tent, Isaac's servants dug a *well*. This was necessary to their existence. "Out of it must come the water to slake the thirst of men and cattle; and because of it there could be an oasis of growth and shade." Without water, physical life would come to an end soon. Hence, all through the Bible *water is a symbol for the satisfaction of a deeper thirst*. (Cf. Ps. 42:1, Isa. 55:1; John 4:14, 7:37-39).

### *Digging the Wells of the Fathers*

Gen. 26:18. As stated heretofore, "digging again" here meant re-opening of the wells which Abraham had caused to be dug in previous years. Abraham, a powerful prince of the preceding generation had dug these great wells in Philistia when he was sojourning there. The supply of water was abundant and sufficient for generations to come. But the wells had been stopped up by the envious Philistines. Another great famine descended upon the same area in the time of Isaac. Isaac knew that there was an abundance of sparkling water flowing beneath the obstructions which had been placed in the old wells. He

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therefore did not dig new wells, but set about restoring (re-opening) the old wells. Having done this, Isaac's servants set about digging elsewhere in the valley and "brought in" (as men say in the oil fields) a well of springing (living) water, v. 13.

We all know that water is necessary to the existence of every living thing, including man himself. Because of this fact, the prophets especially, and many other Scripture writers, were wont to use wells and rivers of water as metaphors of the life-giving sources of salvation. Isa. 12:3—"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isa. 41:18—"I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Cf. again John 4:13-14, 6:35, 7:37-39; also Rev. 22:1-2. This living water—the Water of Life to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6)—poured forth from the old Gospel well, for the first time, on the first Pentecost after the Resurrection: it was on this day that the *facts* of the Gospel were proclaimed for the first time (1 Cor. 15:1-4, Acts 2:22-24), that the commands of the Gospel were stated for the first time (Acts 2:38), that the promises of the Gospel were communicated to man for the first time (cf. Luke 13:5, 2 Cor. 7:10, Rom. 10:9-10, Gal. 3:27, etc.), and that the *ekklesia* came into being, vitalized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41-42, 46-47). During the lifetime of the Apostles multitudes drank of this life-giving flow, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated alike. The Pentecost multitude, the people of Samaria, the Roman centurion and his household, the Ethiopian treasurer, the seller of purple from Thyatira, the Philippian jailor, the fanatical Saul of Tarsus, Crispus the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, and many others, including "a great company of the priests," alike drank of this living water and went on their way rejoicing. (Cf.

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Acts 6:7, 2:41, 8:12-13, 10:1-44, 8:26-39, 16:11-15, 16:27-34; 9:1-22, 18:8). The supply of the water of the Life Everlasting in this old Gospel well was sufficient to quench the spiritual thirst of obedient believers of all ages. (Cf. John 6:63, Matt. 7:24-27; John 5:40, 10:10, etc.).

As the centuries rolled on, however, the ugly face of human authority reared itself above the glorious image of the Logos. Man presumed to improve upon what the Spirit had revealed in the New Testament. The debris of human wisdom, tradition, and creed (stemming from the attempt to explain Christian doctrine by the use of philosophical gobbledygook and to improve upon the design of the ordinances of Christ by borrowings from the pagan mystery religions) continued to accumulate from generation to generation. Human interpretations, human speculation, human tradition filled the old Gospel well with the debris of "the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1:19-21). The result was apostasy, heresy, clericalism, sectism, and all the devices that Satanic ingenuity could muster to destroy the structure of the Church of Christ as it existed at the beginning. Theologians, priests, cultists, sectists alike departed from the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and hewed for themselves and their misguided followers *broken cisterns* that held no relief for deep spiritual thirst.

Following the "Protestant reformations," a group of spiritual leaders, by name Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and other spiritually-minded men who developed a keen appreciation of the simplicity of apostolic Christianity, its laws, its ordinances and its fruits, set out like Isaac of old to re-open the wells of the apostolic fathers and bring to men again the Water of Life that flowed from the old Gospel well that was opened on Pentecost. Not reformation, said they, but only *restoration* will revive the spiritual power that

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characterized the life of the church of the first century. Back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, said they, indeed back of Roman Catholicism, back of Greek Catholicism, all the way back to Pentecost, and to the permanent features of *the New Testament pattern* of the church. The movement which resulted from their work came to be known as the Restoration movement. The message of this movement was essentially a plea for the recognition and acceptance of the Lordship of Christ over His church. This message became known as a *Plea*, a plea for Christ.

The chief thing in Catholicism is the *machine*, the visible hierarchy; in fact, Catholicism *is* the machine. The chief thing in Protestantism is the *creed*. True, men are breaking away from the creeds, yet the fact remains that the so-called "Protestant" systems have been built upon their respective creeds and the traditions of the fathers founded on these credal statements. But the fundamental thing in Christianity as taught and practised by the Apostles and the first Christians was, not the machine (there was no ecclesiastical hierarchy in the apostolic age), not the creed (there were no stereotyped creeds until after the Apostles had passed from the stage of human events), but *the personal Christ* Himself. Christ was, and is, Christianity; and Christianity was, and is, Christ. That He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and that He ascended to the Father and was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, 10:39-43, 17:29-31, Rom. 10:9-10)—this was the essence of the apostolic message. Christ was all in all apostolic preaching (Acts 8:12, 8:35, 16:31, etc.). (Cf. also 2 Tim. 1:12, 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 2:20, Rev. 19:11-16).

As the Restoration movement stands for the reproduction of New Testament Christianity, it follows that the central thought and theme of its preaching is likewise the *personal Christ*. The Restoration movement differs from

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Catholicism in that it repudiates all ecclesiastical machines; it differs from Protestantism in that it rejects all human names, creeds and ceremonials. It is a protest, not only against Catholicism, but also against those things which Protestantism has borrowed from Catholicism that are not to be found in the New Testament church. The fundamental message of the movement is the preeminence of Christ. The Restoration plea may be defined in a single sentence as a plea for Christ. This plea comprehends the following particulars:

I. *The name of Christ.* The Restoration message pleads that the name of Christ may be worn by His people, to the exclusion of all human designations, for these reasons: (1) it is the name in which they are baptized, Acts 2:38; (2) it is the divine name, because Christ is divine; (3) it is the preeminent name, Phil. 2:9-11; (4) it is the only name in which we can be saved, Acts 4:12; (5) it is the name which was divinely bestowed upon the disciples, Acts 11:26; (6) it is the name in which we should do everything that we do, Col. 3:17. Human names are denounced by apostolic authority, *i.e.*, as *religious* designations, I Cor. 3:4-5, Rom. 8:6-8. The name "Christian" is both Scriptural and catholic; it is the only name upon which the followers of Jesus can unite.

You and I have no credit at the Bank of Heaven. Suppose you were to step up to the window in that glorious Bank and present a check for your soul, what would the Great Teller say? He would tell you that your check must have an endorsement. Then, suppose you were to offer as endorsement the name of Paul, or Peter, or Martin Luther, or John Wesley, or Alexander Campbell—would any of these names be sufficient security for your soul? No—you would find them insufficient. There is one Name, and one only, that will be recognized at the Bank of Heaven—the name of Jesus Christ. In it there is salvation, but in no other.

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“Tis noble to be a Christian,  
‘Tis honor to bear the name,  
To know that we’re honored in heaven,  
Is better than earthly fame.

The name implies one is noble,  
It means he is honest and true;  
It means his life is Christlike—  
Does it mean all this in you?”

II. *The Person of Christ.* The Restoration message includes the *Person* of Christ as the one sufficient creed for all Christians. The word *creed* comes from the Latin verb, *credo*, meaning “I believe.” The only article of faith imposed upon Christians in New Testament times was personal belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matt. 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10, etc. But belief in Christ as the Son of God includes acceptance of the fact of His *personal atonement* for sin. That He offered His body as a living sacrifice, and shed His blood for the remission of sins, are the two facts of the atonement; and the atonement was sufficient because His Person was divine. Matt. 26:28, Rom. 3:24-25, Heb. 9:22, 10:20; John 1:14, etc. The creed of Christianity is the personal Saviour.

Human creeds are incomplete statements and can not be universally accepted. At best they are nothing but the opinions of uninspired men. They set limits upon intellectual progress. They divide God’s people by submitting tests of fellowship separate and apart from God’s Word; they are written and enforced without divine sanction. They are superfluous and unnecessary. If a creed contains less than the Bible, it doesn’t contain enough; if it contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it teaches what the Bible teaches, it isn’t necessary because we have the Bible. Human creeds are the un-

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inspired products of theological speculation and contribute tremendously to the spread and perpetuation of denominationalism.

The true creed of the church of Christ is a Person. It could not be otherwise, logically. Faith does not center in a dogma, nor in an institution. I do not believe in baptism as such, but I believe in the Christ who instituted baptism and to please Him I shall be baptized according to His example. I do not believe in the Lord's Supper, but I do believe in the One who said, "Do this in memory of me," and I shall exert every effort to be in my accustomed place when the memorial feast is spread on each Lord's Day. We do not believe in things, but in *persons*. Therefore, says Paul, "For I know him *whom* I have believed," 2 Tim. 1:12.

This divine creed is Scriptural—no question about that. It is also catholic, *i.e.*, universally accepted by all who are worthy of the name Christian. It is the all-embracing creed. It includes everything in God's revelation to man, and embraces everything in man's relation to God. It is as high as heaven, as broad as the human mind, and as inclusive as the illimitable spaces. "This creed was not made at Nice, nor at Westminster, nor at Augsburg. The creed of the living church of the living God is *the living, ever-living Christ*. Christ is our creed; that is a simple creed; that is a growing creed; that is a heaven-sent creed." (Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, p. 85).

III. *The Word of Christ*. The Restoration message includes the word of Christ as the sufficient book of discipline for His church. The word of Christ is the New Testament, John 16:14-15, 20:21-23. It is quite sufficient to furnish the Christian unto every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. I recall a lady, who had been reared a strict denominationalist, asking me on one occasion for the "book of rules" of the church which I was serving as minister. I could do nothing but offer her a copy of the



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New Testament; this I did, even at the risk of having been pronounced discourteous. *Truth* is sometimes more needed than *courtesy*.

The New Testament is the Christian's book of discipline. He should have no other—he needs no other. If the Scriptures are sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works, written disciplines of human origin are unnecessary. Take this divine discipline and follow it. Are you inquiring what to do to be saved? Read John 3:5. If Jesus says you can not enter into the kingdom without being born of water and the Spirit, then *how can you?* Read Acts 2:38. What the Holy Spirit has joined together by the conjunctions, "and" and "for," let no theologian put asunder. May every Christian follow the apostolic exhortation, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," Col. 3:16.

IV. *The Authority of Christ.* The Restoration plea is essentially a plea for the *authority* of Christ. This is fundamental. Most of our present-day religious controversies are not over questions of interpretation, but questions of authority. The Bible teaches that God delegated all authority to Jesus, who, in turn, delegated the same authority to His apostles and clothed them with the infallible presence of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and to protect them from error in revealing His word to mankind, John 16:13-14. There is no evidence anywhere in the Bible that divine authority was ever delegated to any one else; in fact divine authority ended with the work and revelation of the apostles. All authority in Christianity is vested in Christ. Matt. 28:18, Eph. 1:22. Every local church is a *theocracy democratically administered*. In matters of faith and doctrine it is an absolute monarchy subject to the will of Christ which is the absolute law from which there is no appeal. In matters of expediency, or method, it is a democracy subject to the wish and will of the majority. The "historic episcopacy"

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has no authority to make any changes in the teaching of Christ: therefore I am not an Episcopalian, but a Christian. The presbytery has no authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Presbyterian, but a Christian. Not even the congregation has any authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Congregationalist, but a Christian. (How utterly absurd that the Board of Officers of any church of Christ should even discuss such a question as the reception of the "pious unimmersed!" That question was settled for us by Christ and the apostles almost twenty centuries ago. We are presumptuous to even consider or discuss it). I do not believe in baptism, but I do believe in the Christ who commands me to be baptized; therefore I am not a Baptist, but a Christian. I believe that everything in the local church should be done "decently and in order," but I do not believe that the church should be named after the *methods* used; therefore I am not a Methodist, but a Christian. Again, who instituted the ordinances? Our Lord instituted them; therefore, He alone has the right to alter them, to make changes in their observance, or to take them away. The Pope did not institute baptism; therefore the Pope has no right to annul baptism or to substitute something for baptism. The church did not institute baptism or the Lord's Supper; therefore the church has no right to change these ordinances in any way. They are the ordinances of *Christ* which are to be perpetuated by the church.

Restore the authority of Christ over His church and bring all professing Christians to accept His authority, and you will have solved many of the problems which harass modern Christendom. You will have swept away all popes, councils, synods, presbyteries, conferences, associations and assemblies which, in the past, have presumed to speak with authority. You will have swept Catholicism off the face of the earth and you will have destroyed every

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vestige of humanism that lingers in Protestantism. When all professing Christians recognize the exclusive authority of Christ over His church, Christian unity will soon be a reality. May God hasten the day when He shall reign on earth even as He now reigns in Heaven!

V. *The Church of Christ.* The Restoration message includes a plea for the restoration of the *church of Christ*. The modern world is so befogged by "churchanity" that Christianity has largely become obscured. We hear so much in these days about Luther's Church, Calvin's Church, Wesley's Church, and so on, we are liable to forget—in fact the world at large has almost forgotten—that our Lord Himself established a church. This church came into existence on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 30. Matt. 16:18—here he speaks of it as His church. It is the church of Christ and the only church to which I care to belong. Let us go back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, back of Rome, back of Constantinople, all the way back to Jerusalem and find, reproduce and restore the church of Christ, or, using the adjectival form, Christian Church. This is the supreme objective of the Restoration movement of the nineteenth century.

VI. *The Ordinances of Christ.* The Restoration plea has a specific message with reference to the ordinances of Christ. It says they are not ordinances of the church, but ordinances of Christ to be perpetuated by the church as sacred trusts committed to the church for safekeeping.

The ordinances of Christ are three in number: (1) *Baptism*, to test the loyalty of the penitent believer. (2) *The Lord's Supper*, to test the loyalty of the Christian. (3) *The Lord's Day*, which is a memorial of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

True obedience does a thing commanded, does it without question, and does it in the way the author of the command wants it to be done. I might illustrate as follows: A gentleman who is about to die calls his two sons to his bedside. He tells them he owns a farm out in Kansas, that he has made extensive plans for the development of that farm, but

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that death threatens to prevent the execution of his plans. He asks for a map of the farm. He tells the boys just how he wants the farm developed. He points out on the map the spot where the house is to be erected, also the spot where the barn is to be built. Pointing to a certain place on the map, he says: "This is all bottom land. I have prepared it for corn and I want you to plant corn there next spring when you begin to develop the land. Up here on this rolling ground I want you to sow the wheat because it is especially prepared for wheat. Then along the road here is a patch of new ground. The soil is fresh and fertile and I have planned to put an orchard on this spot. "Now, boys," said he, "after I am dead and gone, I shall depend upon you to develop the farm according to the plans I have given you." The sons agree to do so, and in a few days thereafter the father dies. Several months later the boys decide to go to Kansas and take a look at the farm. Taking the map with them, they make what would be called in modern language a "survey." They find the place where the house is to be erected and they agree it is an ideal location. They next find the spot where the barn is to be built and again they agree. They take a look at the bottom land and they see it is quite evident that this is the ground which will produce the corn. They take a look at the rolling land and again they are of the same mind and judgment. They express their astonishment at the wise judgment manifested by the father; thus far they are in complete accord with his plans. By and by they stroll over the patch of new ground. John looks at it for a moment and Bill looks at it, then they look at each other and shake their heads. John says: "It seems to me that father has slipped just a bit in selecting this spot for an orchard. It is full of roots and stumps that will retard the growth of the trees. Besides, it is right here along the road and all the bad boys in the neighborhood will be clubbing the apples, pears, and peaches. I think we had better put the orchard back from the road," etc. Bill is of the same opinion. Now I have a problem in mathematics for you. That father gave his sons five specific commands. The commands were very clear-cut; there was no danger of their being misunderstood. In how many of these commands did the boys obey their father? You say, They obeyed him in four particulars, but disobeyed him in one. No, my friends, *they didn't obey him in anything*. They accepted his judgment in the four particulars because *it so happened that their judgment coincided with his*; but when it came to the last item, they did not agree with the father's judgment, and instead of obeying him without question, they followed their own judgment in the matter. How like people today! They are perfectly willing to believe and repent of their sins; but when they come to the baptismal water, they stop and say, "This is a matter for me to decide in my own conscience," and in many cases they follow their own preference or inclination instead of submitting to the ordinance of Christ in the way it was performed in New Testament times.

That Christian baptism was immersion, under the preaching of the apostles, is readily admitted by scholars of all denominations. There is no more clearly established

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fact in church history than this. No man of any standing in the world of scholarship questions it for a moment. Moreover, *immersion* is the only catholic baptism: one who has been buried with Christ in baptism will be accepted in any church in Christendom with but one or two exceptions. There is no argument about immersion; all are agreed that it is baptism; the argument is all over the matter of substitutes for baptism. In other words, the controversy is not over what baptism is, but over what baptism is *not*. Why not accept the baptism that is unquestionably Scriptural and that is universally admitted to be right?

The plea of the Restoration movement is that the ordinances may be restored to their proper place and significance in the faith and practice of the churches of Christ.

VII. *Unity in Christ*. One of the most important items in the Restoration message is the plea for Christian unity—not *union*, but *unity*. There is a great difference between *union* and *unity*. Someone has facetiously remarked that by tying two cats together by the tail and throwing them over a clothesline one would have a union, but not much unity. Our Lord prayed for the unity of His people, John 17:20-21. The apostles condemned division in no uncertain terms, I Cor. 1:10-13, 3:1-5. The church of the New Testament was a united church, Eph. 4:4-6.

It is quite evident that the present divided condition of Christendom is the direct antithesis of the ideal for which our Lord prayed. It is equally evident that divisions are wasting the church and nullifying the effects of gospel preaching. As John R. Mott has said, "The price that has been paid for a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world."

Someone inquires: Is Christian unity possible? If Christian unity is impossible, then our Lord prayed for an

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impossibility. Moreover, if Christian unity does not come to such an extent as to include all who claim to be Christians, it will be due to the fact that *men will not allow it to come.*

The question arises here: How did Christ, through the apostles, go about the task, in New Testament times, of building a *united body*? This is a worth-while question. The answer is very clear. The first thing the apostles did under the guidance of the Spirit, was to bring into existence a local church of Christ which was a united church. See Acts 2.44-47, 4:32. Note that the "multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This church in Jerusalem was a wonderfully united church. In establishing such a united church of Christ, it should be noted that the apostles did not make their appeal to the Pharisees, nor to the Sadducees, nor to the Herodians, etc., *as sects.* No—they made their appeal to *individuals* to come out of Judaism; those who obeyed the gospel were then added together into a local church and as other individuals came from time to time they were added to the original group. Thus there was a united church of Christ in Jerusalem. The next step was to establish churches of the same faith and order in adjoining cities and towns. By and by there was a church of Christ in Antioch, another in Samaria, another in Philippi, another in Thessalonica, and so on. In this manner the united church of Christ spread over the entire known world even before the death of the Apostle Paul. How was it all done? It started with a *united local church in Jerusalem; thence the lines were extended by establishing local churches of Christ in other cities; and the sum total of all the members of these united local churches constituted the united universal church of Christ.*

Herein lies a great lesson for the churches of Christ of the present century. Not only the Scriptures, but observation and experience as well, proclaim the absolute

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folly of appealing to any denomination or denominational group, as such, in the matter of bringing about unity. The appeal must be made to individuals to come out of denominationalism and to unite in Christ. This was the method used in apostolic times and by divine authority. It was the method used by the pioneers of the Restoration movement and the Word of God prevailed mightily. Churches of the New Testament order sprang up all over the country in an incredibly short time. Later, out of an exaggerated conception of religious courtesy, the method was changed from *proclamation* to *negotiation*. The result has been temporary stagnation. It should be remembered that a merger of denominations is not unity. The ideal for which Christ prayed is not achieved in a "league of denominations," it can be achieved only by the elimination of denominational barriers and the breaking down of denominational walls. I look upon the time and energy that is being spent at present negotiating with the self-constituted leaders of denominationalism, in vain endeavors to achieve consolidation through human schemes of union, as nothing but sheer waste of effort. The thing to do is to rekindle the fires of evangelism; to extend the lines into every community in the land; and leave the results with God. Preach the Word to individuals; plead with them to abandon sectarianism and to become one in Christ Jesus; go here, there, everywhere with the New Testament message; until the whole Christian world shall come to recognize and accept the New Testament basis. Then, if it should turn out that the ideal for which Jesus prayed can not be achieved to the extent of taking in the whole of Christendom, due to the prejudices and perversities of mankind, we may have the satisfaction of knowing that it shall have been realized, to a limited degree at least, in the unity of the churches of Christ; and we shall be comforted by knowledge of the fact that when the Son of man cometh, He will find the faith on the earth (Matt.

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24:14). The present-day ecumenical movement has been dubbed rightly, "a conglomerate of conflicting units" (Bulletin by Harry L. Owens, San Antonio, Texas.)

VIII. *Consecration to Christ.* The last, but by no means the least, item of the Restoration message, is a plea for personal consecration to Christ.

Baptism is not the end, but just the beginning, of Christian life and service. It is only the consummation of the divine plan whereby we are adopted into the family of God. It is the act in which we "put on" Christ. Gal. 3:27, John 3:5, Rom. 8:14-17. Following baptism we are given the Spirit of adoption as the earnest of our inheritance, and this indwelling Spirit endows us with the privilege of calling God our Father. Baptism is the final act of primary obedience through which we are saved from a state of alienation and by means of which we obtain the right to approach our Father through Christ, our High-Priest, in daily confession and prayer. I John 1:9, Heb. 10:19-22, etc.

In other words, baptism is the consummating act of conversion. Conversion is the complete surrender of self and substance to God, the submission of the human will to the divine. New converts thus inducted into the body of Christ must "continue stedfastly" in the essentials of Christian worship, Acts 2:42; they must grow in divine grace, 2 Pet. 1:5-11; they must bring forth in life and conduct the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Gal. 5:22-25. They must work out their own salvation, Phil. 2:12; they must fight the good fight of faith; they must press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God; they must run the race with patience. The crown of life is promised only to those who endure, Rev. 2:10, the "overcomers."

The Restoration ideal not only demands the proclamation of first principles; it also includes going on to perfection. It takes in the Lord's Supper, prayer, liberality,



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meditation, consecration, personal piety and zeal. It includes everything essential to a devout Christian life.

"There's a sweet old story translated for man,  
But writ in the long, long ago,  
The gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,  
Of Christ and His mission below.

"Men read and admire this gospel of Christ  
With its love so unfailing and true;  
But what do they say and what do they think  
Of the gospel according to you?

"Tis a wonderful story—this gospel of love  
As it shines in the Christ life divine,  
And oh, that its truth might be set forth again  
In the story of your life and mine.

"You are writing each day a letter to men,  
Take care that the writing is true,  
'Tis the only gospel some folk will read—  
The gospel according to you."

"God highly exalted him and gave unto him a name that is above every name." And to think that He loves us so much He is willing to extend us the privilege of wearing that name! That privilege is yours this very moment if you will but accept Him as your Savior and obey him in Christian baptism. Allow Him to enter your heart and assume authority over your soul. No privilege vouchsafed a human being is comparable to this! May God help you to decide—*now!*

The wells of the fathers must *be kept open*: no ecumenical conglomerate must be permitted to fill them with theological rubbish. The pure water of the primitive Gospel, the true Gospel, the only Gospel, must be allowed to flow in all its pristine purity. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. This must be the positive

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message sounding out from every pulpit that dares to call itself Christian, from now unto the end, His Second Coming, even until the redeemed shall join with the angels before the Heavenly Throne in proclaiming praise to His matchless name:

“O that with yonder joyful throng,  
We at His feet may fall,  
We'll join the everlasting throng  
And crown Him Lord of all.”

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-EIGHT

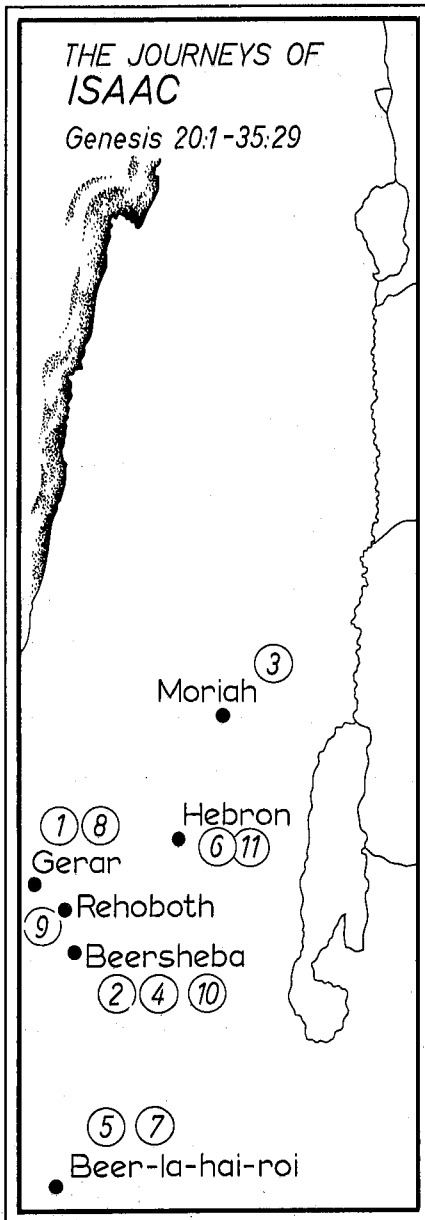
1. Where was Isaac “tenting” when he married Rebekah?
2. Where was the Philistine maritime plane geographically?
3. Who were these Philistines who infiltrated the region around Gerar in earliest times? From what region did they come? By what name are they otherwise known in the ancient records?
4. Name the five cities of Philistia? Of what special significance was Gerar?
5. What was the meaning of the word “Philistine”? What was the origin of the name “Palestine”?
6. What Divine assurance was vouchsafed Isaac at this time? What did God prevent his doing and why?
7. To what place did God tell Isaac to go?
8. How did Isaac’s experience with Abimelech in regard to his wife Rebekah differ from Abraham’s experience with the king’s predecessor in regard to Sarah?
9. What reasons have we for accepting these stories as two separate accounts of two separate episodes?
10. What was the result of Isaac’s venture into agriculture?
11. What did Isaac do about the wells which had been dug by Abraham?

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12. What were the names of the new wells dug by Isaac and what did each name signify?
13. What was the substance of the Divine communication at Beersheba?
14. How many times in Isaac's life did Yahweh appear to him?
15. What was the probable significance of the terms "Abimelech" and "Phicol"?
16. What was the substance of the covenant of Isaac with Abimelech?
17. Distinguish what was Scripturally known as *profane* swearing and what was known as *judicial* swearing? Cite scriptures to authenticate this distinction.
18. What was the character of the oaths exchanged between Isaac and Abimelech?
19. What was the other feature of the covenant ceremony? What light does this incident throw on Isaac's character?
20. What was the name given to the last well "brought in" by Isaac's servants?
21. How may we relate the naming of this well to the similar naming in Gen. 21:31?
22. Cite other instances of twofold naming in the Old Testament. How is this to be explained?
23. What was the location of the ancient city of Beersheba? Does it still exist? What role did this city play in the geography of Palestine?
24. At what age did Esau first marry? From what ethnic group did Esau select these two wives?
25. What do these facts of Esau's marriage indicate as to his character?
26. How did Esau's marriage affect his parents?
27. Name and describe the essentials of life as specified in v. 25.

## THE JOURNEYS OF ISAAC

Genesis 20:1-35:29



## LIFE OF ISAAC

1. *Gerar*
  - a. Birth; Gen. 20:1; 21:1-22.
  - b. Rejection of Ishmael; 21:8-21.
2. *Beersheba*
  - a. Command to sacrifice Isaac; 21:32-22:2.
3. *Moriah*
  - a. Sacrifice of Isaac; 22:3-20.
4. *Beersheba*
  - a. Death of mother; 23:1-20.
5. *Beerlahairoi*
  - a. Marriage to Rebekah; Ch. 24.
6. Trip to *Hebron* and back
  - a. Death and burial of Abraham; 25:7-10.
7. *Beerlahairoi*
  - a. Birth of twin sons; 25:11, 19-26.  
Birthright sold; 25:27-34.
8. *Gerar*
  - a. Lie about Rebekah; 26:1-11.
  - b. Great crops and herds; 26:12-17.
  - c. Disputed wells; 26:18-21.
9. *Rehoboth*
  - a. Undisputed wells; 26:22
10. *Beersheba*
  - a. Covenant with Abimelech; 26:26-33.
  - b. Esau's wives; 26:34-35.
  - c. Blessing given to Jacob; Gen. 27.
  - d. Jacob sent away 28:1-5.
11. *Hebron*
  - a. Reunion with Jacob; 35:27.
  - b. Death and burial of Isaac; 35:28-29.