

## **The Faith of Father Isaac**

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Isaac, like Jesus and John, was named before his birth (Genesis 17:19). His name, one who laughs, reflected Sarah's laughter at the promise of God that soon "Sarah shall have a son" (Genesis 18:12-15; 21:6-7). Isaac was a younger brother to Ishmael, Abraham's first born. He and his son, Jacob, are cited in Hebrews for their faith excluding their respective elder brothers, Ishmael and Esau. They lived in tents with Father Abraham and were heirs with him of the promise God gave Abraham (Hebrews 11:9; Genesis 12:2-3).

Isaac was a submissive, trusting child who offered no recorded resistance to being trussed up for sacrifice by Father Abraham (Genesis 22:9). Isaac was an obedient son patiently waiting until he was forty for Abraham to arrange his marriage. In contrast, forty-year-old Esau foolishly married two Hittite women "Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah" (Genesis 26:35). Furthermore, Isaac was a thoughtful man, who meditated in the field. In fact, Isaac was in the midst of meditation when he saw Abraham's camel train bringing Rebekah and her damsels into Canaan (Genesis 24:61-65). When he was nearly sixty, "Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren . . . and Rebekah his wife conceived [Esau and Jacob]," her intrauterine wrestlers (Genesis 25:21).

With help of trusted servants, e.g., Eliezer (Genesis 15:2; 24:2-4), Isaac married and became CEO of livestock operations in Abraham's house. Abraham had warned his steward against taking Isaac back to Haran to negotiate for his wife (Genesis 24:5-6). Similarly, when a famine loomed in Canaan, God commanded Isaac not to go into Egypt as Abram had done in an earlier famine (Genesis 12:10; 26:2-3). Clearly, Isaac was not a pioneer as was Abraham. And, he personally was not a forceful man with hard bargaining and negotiating skills so evident in Jacob's later dealings with Laban and Esau (Genesis 30:26-34; 32:13-21; 33:1-17). Isaac, however, was supported by Abraham in retirement. Though he had remarried, "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of [Keturah] . . . Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country" (Genesis 25:5-6). Yet, Isaac was more than a "caretaker" patriarch of God's people.

When famine threatened ruin to Isaac Enterprises, Isaac by faith did not seek refuge in Egypt. Rather, he obeyed God and "sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him" (Genesis 26:12-14). Further, Isaac doubtless benefited from Abraham's experienced counsel in negotiating with the envious Philistines (Genesis 21:22-32). He was not provoked into war against the nasty neighbors who had sabotaged his wells. He did not get embroiled in water disputes (Genesis 26:15-22). After abandoning a number of wells to striving Philistines, Isaac's servants finally "dugged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Genesis 26:22).

"And the LORD appeared [to Isaac, saying] . . . 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 countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:2-5). When Isaac died, he "was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him" (Genesis 35:29).

