

istines, he sowed in that land, adding agriculture to the care of flocks and herds. *And the Lord blessed him* (v. 12), as he had promised on his first going down (v. 3).

Not only was the season's crop good, but flocks, herds and servants increased. Isaac's great prosperity caused jealousy and perhaps some alarm, lest he should become a source of peril to them.

Their hostility displayed itself in an unfriendly act—*All the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them* (v. 15). This was a common plan of the Canaanites for the removal of an unwelcome flock-master, who depended on the wells for the supply of his flocks (compare 2 Kings 3 : 25). It was virtually an act of expulsion and was well calculated to provoke reprisals. Besides, the digging of a well conferred a certain right of possession, which, if not disputed, might become permanent. The Philistines seemed to have feared that this sojourner might become a settler and were determined to prevent it.

II. A Lover of Peace, 16-22.

V. 16. *Abimelech*; the official title of the ruler of the land, like Pharaoh in Egypt. *Go from us, for thou art mightier than we are.* He was afraid of Isaac's growing power just as the Egyptians (Ex. 1 : 9) feared the power of Isaac's descendants centuries afterwards. So the Jew is hated for his prosperity in all lands to-day.

V. 17. *Isaac departed thence.* He loved peace, and instead of contending for his rights, he yielded rather than enter into a quarrel. *And pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar.* He left the town and its suburbs and retired to the *wady*, or narrow plain, through which a brook flows during the rainy season. This was a move toward Beersheba, Isaac's former home.

Vs. 18, 19. *And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham.* There had been a covenant between Abraham and the ruler of the land (ch. 21 : 22-30). It would seem to have included the rights to the wells. But after the

death of Abraham the people of the land had ignored the covenant, and no doubt through fear or jealousy had filled the wells with earth. Isaac called these wells by the names his father had called them, thus honoring his father's memory and re-asserting his father's rights. *Isaac's servants digged in the valley.* Evidently the old wells did not afford a sufficient supply for Isaac's herds and flocks. Now they find a living spring, a well of springing water, which proved sufficient.

V. 20. *The herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen.* The people of the land would contend that it was in their country, and the herdmen of Isaac had some reason to hold by it, for they had dug it. To dig a well, often a great depth into the solid rock, was a difficult undertaking, the accomplishment of which men would value highly. *He called the name of the well Esek*; "strife or contention." Proper names were often given as designations of local circumstances or personal characteristics.

V. 21. *And they dug another well*; when Isaac had surrendered the first. *Called the name of it Sitnah*; "hatred, spitefulness." The root of this word appears in Satan, "adversary." To give a name to a well implied right of property. To close it up implied the denial of that right.

V. 22. *And he removed from thence and digged another well.* It was characteristic of the much-enduring Isaac that he hesitated not to suffer loss, that he might maintain peace. He took every means to avoid contention. *And for that they strove not.* Isaac was now removed well beyond the bounds of Gerar. *He called the name of it Rehoboth*; "wide spaces." The Lord had made room for them. *We shall be fruitful in the land.* The man who is conscious of obeying God's law can trustfully look up to Him for a blessing. Isaac has overcome evil, not by contending against it, but by patiently yielding the rights he might have claimed as his own. (Matt. 5 : 39, 40; Rom. 12 : 19-21.)

III. The Heir of the Promise, 23-25.

Vs. 23, 24. *He went up from thence to Beersheba*; his birth-place, the place of his