

Gen. 26:1 There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine [מִלְבַּד הָרָעֵב הָרְאִשׁוֹן] that had occurred in the days of Abraham—and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar. ² The LORD had appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I point out to you. ³ Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will make your heirs as numerous as the stars of heaven, and assign to your heirs all these lands, so that all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your heirs— ⁵ inasmuch as Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings.”

Gen. 12:10 There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

Gen. 20:1 Abraham journeyed from there to the region of the Negeb and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While he was sojourning in Gerar, ² Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

Jon Levenson, “Genesis,” *Jewish Study Bible*

1–5: Here, the LORD affirms the continuity of Isaac with his father, whose experience he in part relives (vv. 1–2; cf. 12.10; 20.1–18). Isaac will fall heir to the Abrahamic promise of offspring, blessing, and land (vv. 3–5; cf. 12.1–3, 7; 15.5). V. 5 may be a reference to the ‘Akedah (cf. 22.15–18), the only explicit one in the Tanakh outside of chapter 22.

Gen. 46:26 All the persons belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt—his own issue, aside from [מִלְבַּד] the wives of Jacob’s sons—all these persons numbered 66.

Ex. 12:37 The Israelites journeyed from Raamses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children [לְבָד מִטָּף].

Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*

1. *besides the former famine.* The writer (some would say, the editor) signals at the outset that this story comes after, and explicitly reenacts, what happened before to Abraham.

E. A. Speiser, *Genesis (Anchor Bible)*

26:1. *the previous famine.* Cf. 12:10 (J); no such motive is given in E’s account in 20.

BDB: II. בָּדַד, בָּדָד, n. m. separation, concr. part (בָּדָד, בָּדָד *portion*)

d. followed by בָּדָד it becomes a prep., *apart from, besides*, Ex 12:37, Nu 29:39, Dt 3:5, 18:8 (rd. מִמְּקָרִי with טו טז אק עו די) Ju 8:26, 20:15 al. (15 t.); once, Ezr 1:6, with עַל instead of בָּדָד.

e. מִלְבַּד ³³ (prob. inverted for בָּדָד *besides*) (chiefly P and late): **Gen 26:1**, 46:26, Lv 9:17, 23:38 (4 t.) Nu 5:8, 6:21, 17:14 + 12 t. Nu 28–29; Dt 28:69, Jos 22:29, 1 K 10:13, 1 Ch 3:9, 2 Ch 9:12, 17:19, 31:16, Ezr 2:65 = Ne 7:67, Dn 11:4. With sf. † Dt 4:35 עוֹד מִלְבַּדוֹ אֵין there is none else *besides* him (cf. מִבְּלַעַד Is 45:21).

Claus Westermann, *Genesis (Continental Commentary)*

The natural continuation of v. 1 is v. 6, “So Isaac remained in Gerar.” This suggests that vv. 2-5 are an addition, but the text of 2-5 is not in itself a unity. [The “expansion” is 2b and 3b-5.]

Joel Baden, “A Narrative Pattern and Its Role in Source Criticism”, *Hebrew Studies* 2008

... standard biblical trope for the fulfillment of a command: a command issued in the imperative, followed by the remainder of the speech between the two characters, and then the immediate fulfillment of the command, using the same verb, in the same binyan, in the waw-consecutive.

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David Frankel, "Isaac before He Was Abraham's Son", *thetorah.com* 2020

^{Gen 26:1} There was a famine in the land, **aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham** and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

The verse reads very well without the bolded words. The insertion begins with the word מלכך, which, as noted by Israel Knohl, introduces late editorial comments throughout the Pentateuch. The insertion helps to incorporate the story within the narrative flow of Genesis by presenting Isaac's famine as a second famine, the first being that which caused Abraham to descend to Egypt (Gen 12:10).

...

This analysis suggests that the original narrative presented all of Isaac's efforts in this chapter as his own unprecedented achievements; they originally had nothing to do with Abraham. And yet the Isaac and Abraham stories retain many parallels: **Famine—Gerar—Wife-Sister Story—Wealth—Oath—Beersheba.**

RASHBAM: Aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. When "there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt" (12:10). The point is to let us know that Isaac too was heading for Egypt, via Philistia, the shortest route.

KIMHI: There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. The first that had occurred since then.

GERSONIDES: There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. These were the only two years of famine that had occurred there since Abraham came to the land—whether because "it is a land which the LORD your God looks after, on which the LORD your God always keeps His eye, from year's beginning to year's end" (Deut. 11:12) or because of the special providence extended personally to Abraham and Isaac.

ABARBANEL: There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. The Holy One did not want Abraham to have to go down to Egypt again, as he had during the original famine. But He caused another famine immediately after Abraham's death, to let the inhabitants know that the plenty they had experienced was due to Abraham's merit.

NAHMANIDES: Aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. Which may perhaps have been the first famine in the history of the world. Otherwise, what would be the point of mentioning it? But I think we are being told that everyone remembered that famine, and how Abraham had gone down to Egypt because of it and by God's grace gained great honor there. So it would be natural for Isaac too to think of going down there in this situation, explaining why he had to be told not to. I think there is an allusion to the future here, just as Abraham's exile to Egypt by famine symbolizes his descendants' exile there. Now, Abraham's sojourn in Gerar was not an exile, since he settled there voluntarily. But Isaac's going down to Gerar was forced on him by the famine; and Gerar was "the land where his father had sojourned" (37:1)—so it must allude to the exile to Babylonia, where the ancestors of the Patriarchs had originally lived. In this exile, at least, they do not start out by taking his wife: "Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall be put to death" (v. 11). Still, he is in exile and afraid. But eventually they tell him, "Go away from us" (v. 16), and still later they come back to him and say, "Let there be a sworn treaty between our two parties" (v. 28). Now, this is just what happened to those who were exiled to Babylonia. They were exiled there amid "the fever of famine" (Lam. 5:10). But once they were there they were not enslaved or oppressed. Eventually some of them became high officials, and finally they were told, "Anyone of you of all His people—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the LORD God of Israel" (Ezra 1:3).

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