

GENESIS 36: THE GENEALOGY OF ESAU

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Have you ever known someone who had absolutely everything?
 - i. Good looks, money, success, friends, huge family, personality, popularity
- B. Have you ever compared yourself and found that you came woefully short?
- C. Esau seems to have everything in Genesis 36
 - i. Certainly way sooner than his brother
 - ii. But the one thing he didn't have is the covenant blessing from God
 - iii. We will find that worldly success is fleeting because Esau's story ends right here

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Esau took three wives
- B. He moved them to the country of Seir
 - i. Because there wasn't enough room for his livestock and Jacob's livestock
- C. The genealogy of Esau is given
 - i. First his sons are given
 - ii. Then the chiefs of his people
- D. The genealogy of Seir the Horite is given
- E. The kings and chiefs of the land of Edom are given

III. THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU – V. 1

- A. The non-chosen bloodline is always listed first in genealogies
 - i. This chapter will end Esau's story
 - ii. But Edom will remain a major player in Israel's story
- B. The same phrase is repeated about Jacob in the next chapter

IV. THAT IS, EDOM – V. 1

- A. Repeated three times in this chapter – v. 1, 8, 19
 - i. Three represents the completion of a task
 - ii. This chapter represents the completion of the establishment of Edom as a nation
 - iii. Edom would become a major enemy to Israel
- B. *Edom* is similar to *adam* – humanity or mankind
 - i. Often will be used as a play on words

- a. James saw a greater meaning in Amos's prophecy about the tent of David¹
 - i. Amos 9:11-12 ***In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,*** declares the LORD who does this.
 - ii. Acts 15:16-17 ***“After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord...”***

V. TOOK WIVES FROM THE CANAANITES – V. 2

- A. Abraham didn't want this for his offspring
 - i. Genesis 24:37 ***My master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell...***
- B. These women made life difficult for Isaac and Rebekah
 - i. Genesis 26:34-35 ***When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.***

VI. ADAH – V. 2

- A. Daughter of Elon the Hittite
- B. Means ornament
- C. Called Basemath earlier
 - i. Genesis 26:34 ***When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite...***

VII. OHOLIBAMAH – V. 2

- A. Means tent of the high place
 - i. As for idol worship
- B. Called Judith in Genesis 26:34
 - i. Judith means praiseworthy

VIII. THE DAUGHTER OF ANAH – V. 2

- A. Called the daughter of Beeri in Genesis 26:34

¹Sailhamer, J. H. (2008b). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (T. Longman & D. E. Garland, Eds.; Revised Edition). Zondervan.

B. Different from Anah in verse 20 who was the brother of Zibeon

IX. DAUGHTER OF ZIBEON – V. 2

- A. Son in the Septuagint and in Samaritan and Syriac texts
- B. The difference is important

X. BASEMATH – V. 3

- A. Means perfumed
- B. Originally called Mahalath
 - i. Genesis 28:9 *Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.*

XI. THE PROBLEM OF ESAU'S WIVES

- A. Presents an inconsistency in scripture
- B. Three views²
 - i. They are the same wives as in Genesis 26 and 28
 - ii. They are three different wives giving Esau a total of six
 - iii. Some are the same, some are different
 - a. Judith and Oholibamah may have been different women
 - b. Adah daughter of Elon and Basemath daughter of Elon may have been sisters
- C. Purpose of the inconsistency
 - i. Highlights the immorality and idolatry of Esau's wives and Esau himself
 - a. Adah adorned herself with ornaments (jewelry) and perfume (incense)³
 - i. For the purpose of prostitution (jewelry) and idolatry (incense)
 - b. Esau called Oholibamah Judith to convince his parents she was a good woman⁴
 - i. But she was the daughter of adultery
 - a. Beeri was her father and Anah was her mother
 - ii. She brought her idolatry and harlotry to other men's tents⁵
 - c. Mahalath refers to forgiveness⁶
 - i. Esau married her to obtain forgiveness from his parents
 - ii. But she ultimately became just as idolatrous as the other two wives

² Klein, R. C. (2014). The Wives of Esau. *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 42(4), 211–220.

³ Kadari, T. (1999, December 31). *Esau, Wives Of: Midrash and Aggadah*. Jewish Women's Archive. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/esau-wives-of-midrash-and-aggadah>

⁴ Klein

⁵ Kadari

⁶ Klein

- ii. Hebrews 12:15-16 **See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.**

XII. ELIPHAZ – V. 4

- A. Means pure gold⁷

XIII. IN THE LAND OF CANAAN – V. 5

- A. All Esau’s sons were born in the land of Canaan
 - i. Contrasted with Jacob’s sons who were all born outside the land of Canaan
- B. But it would be Jacob’s sons that would inherit Canaan instead of Esau’s sons

XIV. ALL HIS PROPERTY THAT HE HAD ACQUIRED – V. 6

- A. This reveals God’s generosity
 - i. All of the sons of Abraham that were not included in the covenant were still blessed
- B. God gave Esau what he wanted⁸

XV. AWAY FROM HIS BROTHER JACOB – V. 6

- A. Similar to Ishmael being sent away from Canaan
 - i. Genesis 21:10-13 **So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.” And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.”**
- B. Similar to Abraham deferring to Lot
- C. God separated Jacob and Esau physically and spiritually⁹
 - i. We who have the promises of God must remain separate from the world

XVI. THEIR POSSESSIONS WERE TOO GREAT – V. 7

- A. Similar to Abraham and Lot
 - i. The land could not support them
- B. They were both very wealthy

⁷ Cole, S. J. (1997). Lesson 63: A Successful Man Who Failed With God (Genesis 36:1-43). Bible.org.
<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-63-successful-man-who-failed-god-genesis-361-43>

⁸ Guzik, D. (2018). The Family Of Esau. Enduring Word. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-36/>

⁹ Armstrong, S. (2012, November 25). Genesis 2011 - Lesson 36. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyversemministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_36

- i. God's blessing is not centered on material wealth
 - a. Though that may be part of it
- ii. God's blessing is all about establishing God's purposes on earth
 - a. Jacob received the blessing and was also wealthy
 - b. Esau was wealthy but did not receive the blessing

XVII. SO ESAU SETTLED – V. 8

- A. There seems to be an inconsistency here
 - i. Genesis 32:3-4 ***And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now.”***
 - ii. Esau was already in Seir when Jacob returned
- B. Possible he realized this before Jacob returned
 - i. Jacob still had an inheritance there being maintained by Isaac

XVIII. IN THE HILL COUNTRY OF SEIR – V. 8

- A. God gave Esau the land but he had to go and possess it just like Israel did
 - i. Deuteronomy 2:12 ***The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession, which the LORD gave to them.***

XIX. THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU – V. 9

- A. Esau had a total of thirteen grandsons or tribes
 - i. Similar to Israel after Joseph's sons were added
 - ii. Thirteen refers to rebellion in the bible¹⁰
 - a. This is why Israel was considered to only have twelve tribes
 - b. Levi was not considered a tribe with an inheritance
 - c. Twelve refers to God's government

XX. TEMAN – V. 11

- A. Father of the Temanites
- B. Job had a friend who was a Temanite named after his ancestor
 - i. Job 4:1 ***Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said...***
 - ii. The book of Job likely takes place shortly after this

¹⁰ Wheadon, M. (2019, November 6). **13: The Importance of Numbers in the Bible.** Gants Hill URC. <https://www.gantshillurc.co.uk/ministers-blog/13-the-importance-of-numbers-in-the-bible>

XXI. AMALEK – V. 12

- A. Father of the Amalekites
 - i. They were the first to attack Israel from the south when they entered Canaan¹¹
 - ii. They would eventually be completely destroyed during Hezekiah's reign

XXII. ZERAH – V. 13

- A. Means rising or east¹²

XXIII. CHIEFS – V. 15

- A. Refers to military or political leader¹³
- B. Only used here and in Zechariah referring to leaders of Jerusalem¹⁴
 - i. Zechariah 12:5-6 *Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.' "On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.*

XXIV. SEIR THE HORITE – V. 20

- A. They lived in caves
 - i. Horite means cave-dweller¹⁵
 - ii. Likely very easy for Esau to drive out of the land
 - a. Since they didn't live in walled cities

XXV. DISHON – V. 21

- A. Means gazelle¹⁶

XXVI. HOT SPRINGS – V. 24

- A. This story seems randomly inserted but could actually provide important commentary
- B. Hebrew *yemim* – only used once in the bible
- C. Four different possible translations according to Rabbi Shmuel Klitsner¹⁷
 - i. Springs/hot springs
 - a. Consistent with the motif of finding water in the wilderness

¹¹ Armstrong

¹² Cole

¹³ Sailhamer

¹⁴ Sailhamer

¹⁵ Armstrong

¹⁶ Cole

¹⁷ Shmuel Klitsner, "Anah Found Hayemim in the Wilderness: A Hidden Critique of Jacob's Family" TheTorah.com (2021). <https://thetorah.com/article/anah-found-hayemim-in-the-wilderness-a-hidden-critique-of-jacobs-family>

- i. Hagar, Isaac, Israelites
- ii. Likely why modern translators lean toward this translation
- ii. Mules
 - a. Suggests that Anah was the first to breed horses with donkeys to create mules
 - b. Etymology of this word is rooted in Greek rather than Hebrew
- iii. The Eimim people
 - a. Septuagint uses the proper noun lamin
 - b. Samaritan Targum translates it to Eimim
 - i. Deuteronomy 2:10-11 **The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. Like the Anakim they are also counted as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim.**
 - c. The geography presents a problem
 - i. This takes place in Seir
 - ii. But the Eimim occupied Moab to the north
- iv. Heimim
 - a. Could refer to Heimim the son of Lotan in verse 22
 - i. This would have been Anah's cousin
 - b. This changes the story
 - i. Heimim was lost in the wilderness and Anah found him while pasturing his father's donkeys
 - c. Similar to three stories
 - i. Saul searching for his father's donkeys in the wilderness
 - a. 1 Samuel 9:3-4 **Now the donkeys of Saul's father, Kish, were lost. So Kish said to Saul, his son, "Take one of the servants, and go and look for the donkeys." Saul went through the mountains of Ephraim and the land of Shalisha, but he and the servant could not find the donkeys. They went into the land of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. They went through the land of Benjamin, but they still did not find them.**
 - b. Saul is later mentioned as a king of Edom in verse 37
 - c. Implies Saul should have the qualities of Anah
 - 1. He looks out for his brothers
 - ii. God saving Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness

- a. Genesis 21:17-19 ***And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.***
- iii. Contrasts with the story in the next chapter
 - a. Joseph went looking for his brothers in the wilderness
 - b. They find him and want to kill him
 - c. Reuben wants to return him to his father
 - d. In the end they sell him to slavery
 - d. Self-aware criticism proves authenticity of the bible
 - e. The wicked brother who is cut off from the covenant should not be the one to model proper brotherly love

XXVII. THESE ARE THE KINGS – V. 31

- A. The Horites and Edomites had been ruled by tribal chiefs
- B. After Esau conquered the land kings began to rule

XXVIII. BEFORE ANY KING REIGNED OVER THE ISRAELITES – V. 31

- A. Reveals knowledge or anticipation of kings of Israel
 - i. Evidence that Moses was not the final editor
- B. There was still anticipation of kings in Moses' day
 - i. God told Jacob that kings would come from his body
 - a. Genesis 35:11 ***And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.***
 - ii. Jacob blessed Judah with a promise of a royal line
 - a. Genesis 49:10 ***The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.***
 - iii. Moses provided a law for selecting a king
 - a. Deuteronomy 17:14-15 ***“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all***

the nations that are around me,’ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.”

- C. Edom had significant political power while Israel were still slaves in Egypt
 - i. Political power is not what God’s people should be seeking after
 - ii. True power comes through persecution and suffering

XXIX. THE NAME OF HIS CITY – V. 32

- A. Each king is from a different city
- B. Indicating a lack of inherited succession to the throne
 - i. Instead, power moved from tribe to tribe

XXX. BAAL-HANAN – V. 39

- A. Means *Baal is gracious*¹⁸
- B. Evidence Baal worship has begun in Edom

XXXI. HADAR – V. 39

- A. Only one in this section who didn’t die
 - i. Implies he was alive when it was written¹⁹
- B. Updated during second temple period
 - i. 1 Chronicles 1:50-51 *Baal-hanan died, and Hadad reigned in his place, the name of his city being Pai; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. And Hadad died.*

XXXII. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER?

- A. Two purposes²⁰
 - i. Written before Israel entered the promised land
 - a. Edom had refused them entry into their country
 - i. Numbers 20:14-21 *Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: “Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met: how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers. And when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we*

¹⁸ Armstrong

¹⁹ Sailhamer

²⁰ Cole

are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King's Highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory." But Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you." And the people of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more." But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him.

- b. Reminder for Israel of who Edom is so they wouldn't attack them
 - i. Deuteronomy 2:2-5 *Then the LORD said to me, 'You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward and command the people, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful. Do not contend with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.*
 - ii. Contrasts Esau's life with Jacob's life
 - a. Esau sought material wealth and success and found it
 - i. As shown by the meaning of the names
 - b. Jacob sought God's blessing and found it

XXXIII. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. The land of Canaan is a picture of Eden which foreshadows the New Jerusalem
 - i. Revelation 22:14-15 *Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*
- B. Esau was a pretty gracious, likeable guy
 - i. His family took care of each other
 - ii. But the goodness of their actions were not enough to secure them a place in Canaan

- iii. God chose one brother over the other for reasons unknown to us
 - a. Jacob was a scoundrel but grew in faith in God
 - b. Esau grew in graciousness but never showed any faith
 - c. It is never our works that secure our inheritance in the age to come
 - d. But it is our faith in God's work of grace alone
 - i. Ephesians 2:8-9 **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

C. There will be a Day when each of us will be judged

- i. It will come after the Millennial reign of Christ
- ii. Revelation 20:11-13 **Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.**
- iii. This chapter is a reminder that God sees and knows each one of us

XXXIV. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

A. Why do you think there is an entire chapter dedicated to the non-elect? What does this say to you about what is important to God?

B. Why do you think God allowed Esau to live next to the land of Canaan where Israel would be? What can we learn from this?

C. How does God define success? Was Esau successful by God's standard or by human standards?

D. In which areas of life could we be tempted when we are successful according to human standards? How can we resist this temptation?

E. Is material wealth something we should work for? Why or why not?

XXXV. FURTHER STUDY

A. What will the Messiah do to Edom, according to Numbers 24:15-19? Does this challenge your view of the Messiah? Why or why not?

B. Why is it significant that the prophet Isaiah sees the Messiah coming up from Edom in bloodstained clothes? What do you think is the message here?

C. Find an online Hebrew lexicon and look up the meanings of Lamech's wives names in Genesis 4:19. What do you notice? Why do you think the author is comparing Esau and his

wives to Lamech?

D. Why is it such a big deal that Edom did not allow Israel to pass through their territory in Numbers 20:14-21 in light of Genesis 33 and 36?
