

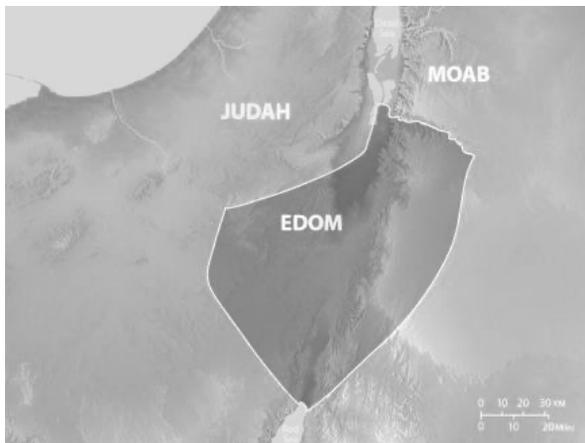
Blessed But Not Chosen

¹ These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). ² Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, ³ and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; ⁵ and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. ⁷ For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. ⁸ So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)

⁹ These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. ¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. ¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. ¹³ These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. ¹⁴ These are the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵ These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶ Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. ¹⁷ These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: the chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. ¹⁸ These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: the chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the chiefs born of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. ¹⁹ These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs. – Genesis 36:1-19 ESV



Isaac has died, leaving his son, Jacob (Israel) as the heir of his estate and the recipient of God's covenant promises and all the blessings it entails. And as Moses prepares to record Israel's history as the newly designated leader of the covenant community, he provides a brief recap of Esau's life and lineage. As the firstborn son of Isaac, Esau had been the rightful heir to the birthright and the blessing, but Jacob had managed to manipulate and deceive his brother so that he took possession of both. While time had healed the rift between these two brothers,

they would find themselves going their separate ways. This chapter provides insight into Esau's fate and a brief description of his family tree.

These first 19 verses seem painfully redundant because they repeat the names of Esau's wives and sons three separate times. The first five verses list the three wives of Esau and the five sons they bore to him. Then, in verses 6-8, Moses lists the wives and sons again, but adds the names of the ten grandsons born to Esau.

It's important to note that Esau was a son of Isaac and, therefore, still a legitimate conduit through whom God would fulfill His promise to Isaac of many offspring.

"I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..." – Genesis 26:4 ESV

The difference between Esau's descendants and those of his brother was that his sons and grandsons would not be considered part of the chosen nation. When Jacob had managed to deceive Isaac and steal his brother's blessing, it had left Esau with nothing. When he begged Isaac to provide him with a blessing of his own, all he got was a rather weak consolation prize.

*"You will live away from the richness of the earth,
and away from the dew of the heaven above.
You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your brother.
But when you decide to break free,
you will shake his yoke from your neck."* – Genesis 27:39-40 NLT

Not exactly the winning number to the lottery. But God would still bless Esau by providing him with five sons and 10 grandsons and, as the text makes clear, most of these men would grow up to be "the chiefs of the sons of Esau" (Genesis 36:15 ESV). They would become powerful leaders in their own right and from them would come many nations, including the Kenizzites, Edomites, and Amalekites.

While Jacob and Esau had mended their relationship, their descendants would never see eye to eye. In fact, a growing hostility would develop between the two groups, as they eventually found themselves fighting over the land of Canaan. It didn't help that the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, became pagans, worshiping the false gods of the other nations inhabiting the land of promise. Eventually, the prophets Jeremiah and Obadiah issued prophetic pronouncements that warned of God's judgment against them.

This message was given concerning Edom. This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says:

*"Is there no wisdom in Teman?
Is no one left to give wise counsel?"*

*Turn and flee!
 Hide in deep caves, you people of Dedan!
 For when I bring disaster on Edom,
 I will punish you, too!
 Those who harvest grapes
 always leave a few for the poor.
 If thieves came at night,
 they would not take everything.
 But I will strip bare the land of Edom,
 and there will be no place left to hide.
 Its children, its brothers, and its neighbors
 will all be destroyed,
 and Edom itself will be no more.” – Jeremiah 49:7-10 NLT*

*The Lord says to Edom,
 “I will cut you down to size among the nations;
 you will be greatly despised.
 You have been deceived by your own pride
 because you live in a rock fortress
 and make your home high in the mountains.
 ‘Who can ever reach us way up here?’
 you ask boastfully.
 But even if you soar as high as eagles
 and build your nest among the stars,
 I will bring you crashing down,”
 says the Lord.” – Obadiah 1:2-4 NLT*

God would bless Esau, resulting in the formation of a variety of nations and people groups. But they would fail to honor God and worship Him alone. Instead, they would seek and serve the false gods of Canaan, resulting in the pouring out of God’s divine wrath.

The Weight of Waiting

²⁰ These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. ²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. ²³ These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. ²⁴ These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of Zibeon his father. ²⁵ These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. ²⁶ These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. ²⁷ These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. ²⁸ These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. ²⁹ These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief in the land of Seir.

³¹ These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. ³² Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. ³³ Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. ³⁴ Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. ³⁵ Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place, the name of his city being Avith. ³⁶ Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. ³⁷ Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his place. ³⁸ Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. ³⁹ Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

⁴⁰ These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: the chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³ Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. – Genesis 36:20-43 ESV

Moses makes it clear that the land in which Esau and his descendants eventually settled was far from empty. It had been occupied by another group of people known as the Horites. The first mention we have of them is found in Genesis 14, where they are listed among a group of nations that were defeated by an alliance of four kings. This confederation of kings attacked and defeated the people living in the area around Mount Seir, in the far south of Canaan. They ended up conquering the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, taking captive all the citizens, including the nephew of Abraham.

When Esau separated from his brother, Jacob, he ended up settling in the very same region as the Horites and, eventually, his sons and their children would supplant the Horites as the official inhabitants of the land. Hundreds of years later, when Moses prepared to lead the people of Israel into the promised land, he would receive instruction from God regarding this southern region and its inhabitants.

“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.” – Deuteronomy 2:4-5 ESV

Moses records that Esau and his clan didn’t simply overwhelm the Horites with their superior numbers and strength, but that God orchestrated the transference of the land from one group to the other.

“...he [God] destroyed the Horites before them and they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day.” – Deuteronomy 2:22 ESV

The leader of the Horites was a man named Seir, and a large mountain in the region aptly bore his name. The Horites proved to be quite prolific, as the genealogy found in verses 20-43 reflects. But the chiefs of Seir and the chiefs of Esau would end up engaged in an ongoing conflict over control of the land around Mount Seir.

These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief in the land of Seir. – Genesis 36:28-30 ESV

These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: the chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. – Genesis 43:40-43 ESV



These two groups of “chiefs” or leaders of their clans would have gone head-to-head in battle with one another over control of the land. But what is interesting is that Moses provides a list of the kings who ruled over the land of Edom, and not one chief among the Horites or Edomites can be found on that list. It contains the name of eight Edomite kings, but none appear to be sons of Esau or Seir. In fact, one is referred to as a Temanite, another hales from Rehoboth, and still another comes from a place called Masrekah. This sequential order of kings seems to reveal that there was a constant shift of power among the people groups that occupied this region. And Moses points out that the land of Edom had many kings long before the nation of Israel had their first monarch. Part of the reason for this disparity is that

the people of Israel would eventually make their way to Egypt where they would remain for 400 years. During that time, the land of Edom would go through a long list of kings, chiefs, and leaders, while the Israelites were biding their time in Egypt. But the land of promise, like Edom, would not go unoccupied during the Israelites' long absence. Canaan would be filled with nations and overrun by the sins of idolatry and immorality.

And by the time Moses led the people of Israel back into the land, the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) would be well established around Mount Seir. In keeping with God's directive, the Israelites would view Edom as off-limits, restricting themselves to the purchase of food and supplies, but avoiding the confiscation of any Edomite territory because it had been given to them by God. And Moses states, "So we went on, away from our brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road from Elath and Ezion-geber" (Deuteronomy 2:8 ESV).

All of this sets up the next section of Moses' historical record of the people of Israel. While Esau and his descendants were busy making themselves at home in Edom, Israel and his descendants would be continuing the nomadic lifestyle established by Abraham and Isaac. Moses opens up chapter seven with the statement: "Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan" (Genesis 37:1 ESV).

The Hebrew word that Moses used is נָגִיד (māgîd), which can also be translated "to be a stranger." That is why the *New Living Translation* translates verse 1 this way: "So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner."

Isaac, like his father before him, lived in the land of Canaan, more like an alien and a stranger than as a legal citizen. Neither Abraham or Isaac lived in a city or built a permanent dwelling place. They were sojourners, moving from one place to another, and never staying long enough to consider anywhere in the land of Canaan as their true home. And it is the author of the book of Hebrews who explains the reason behind this vagabond existence that was passed down from father to son to grandson.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. – Hebrews 11:8-10 NLT

And the author of Hebrews indicates that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never got to see that city – in their lifetimes.

All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. – Hebrews 11:13 NLT

The Edomites had kings and kingdoms. Even the Horites had a long list of chiefs and enjoyed that benefit of living in cities built by human hands. But the people of God would have to wait a long time before they experienced the fulfillment of God's promise. God had promised to give them the land of Canaan as their inheritance, but neither Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob would ever find their permanent home in the land of promise because God had something better in store.

Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. – Hebrews 11:14-15
NLT

The wait would be difficult but well worth it.