



Genesis - Chapter Thirty Six

II. Genesis 11:27-50:26 - Patriarchal History (continues)

II.b Genesis 25:19-36:43 - Isaac's Descendants (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Thirty Six

Largely through genealogy-like lists, this chapter provides a brief description of Esau and his descendants. This information, which concludes the narrator's interest in Esau, precedes the much fuller and more important account of Jacob's descendants. The location of this material resembles 25:12-18, where information about Ishmael's descendants comes before the longer account of Isaac's family. The author of Genesis usually writes about minor characters before concentrating in detail on the main participants of the unique family line. Particular attention is given to the presence of both 'chiefs' and 'kings' among Esau's descendants, who coexist alongside the Horites, the original inhabitants of Seir. Eventually, however, Esau's descendants assume control of Seir, renaming it 'Edom.'

II.b.xxi Genesis 36:1-14 - Esau's Descendants

These verses, which are more narrative than genealogy, anticipate and explain the summary description of Esau that comes in v.9. Repeated references to Canaan underline that these events occurred during Esau's time in Canaan, when five sons and some daughters were born to him. Then, because the land was unable to support the livestock of both Esau and Jacob, refer to 13:5-6 for a similar scenario between Abram and Lot, the former relocated outside Canaan in the hill country of Seir, southeast of the Dead Sea.

¹ These are the descendants of Esau (that is, Edom).

Genesis 36:1

These are the descendants of. This passage marks the start of another section or toledoth of the Book of Genesis. Refer to the list of toledoths on the website.

Esau (that is, Edom). The origin of the name Edom relates to the Hebrew word for red from which Esau is derived due to his natural colouring at birth; refer to the comment made on 25:30.

² Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah son of Zibeon the Hivite, ³ and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau; 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.

Genesis 36:2-5

The names of Esau's wives here – Adah, Oholibamah, and Basemath – are not the same as those mentioned in 26:34 and 28:9. According to 26:34, Esau married Judith the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath the daughter of Elon. According to 28:9, he later also married Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael. No simple solution enables the two lists to be harmonised, although various possibilities exist: e.g.

1. Esau may have married more than three women.
2. The same woman may have been known by two different names, e.g. Basemath may also have been known as Adah since both are listed as the daughter of Elon.
3. The same name may have been given to two separate women, e.g. Basemath, which means 'perfume,' may have been a common female name.

⁶ Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his cattle, all his livestock, and all the property he had acquired in the land of Canaan; and he moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. ⁷ For their possessions were too great for them to live together; the land where they were living could not support them because of their livestock. ⁸ So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

Genesis 36:6-8

For their possessions were too great for them to live together. Esau's cry to Isaac: <<*Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!*>> (Genesis

27:38b) proved unfounded. Because he was a descendant of Abraham, God blessed Esau and blessed him in the only way he really cared about: materially.

⁹ These are the descendants of Esau, ancestor of the Edomites, in the hill country of Seir. ¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, son of Adah the wife of Esau; Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath. 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 were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. ¹³ These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. ¹⁴ These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah son of Zibeon: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

Genesis 36:9-14

These verses, which list Esau's five sons and ten grandsons, prepare the reader for vv.15-19.

Esau, ancestor of the Edomites. Edom and the Edomites are mentioned some 130 times in the Bible. They were an important group of neighbours to Israel:

- When the Israelites came through the wilderness towards the Promised Land in the time of Moses, the Edomites refused them passage through their land (Numbers 20:21). This was a source of great discouragement for the nation (Numbers 21:4).
- Even so, God commanded special regard for the Edomites among Israel: <<***You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin***>> (Deuteronomy 23:7a).
- In the days of King Saul, Edom was made subject to Israel (1 Samuel 14:47), and David established garrisons there (2 Samuel 8:14). But later, in the days of Joram, the son of Ahab, the Edomites became independent of Israel (2 Kings 8:16-22).
- Several of the prophets spoke about and against Edom, for example in Jeremiah 49:17-18 and Ezekiel 25:12-14.
- Herod the Great, who tried to kill the infant Jesus, was an Edomite.
- From the time Islam conquered the Middle East, the region has been virtually unoccupied, except for a few Bedouins and military outposts. It has been brought to nothing, as Obadiah had prophesied for his entire book records an extended prophecy against Edom.

The Edomites, in the hill country of Seir. The Edomites also held the rock city of Petra, which can only be reached through a narrow, winding gorge. Petra was so

defensible that it was said that a dozen men could protect Petra against a whole army.

Concubine. The term concubine, Hebrew *pilegesh*, may give the impression that no formal relationship existed between **Eliphaz** and these women. Yet since their sons are publicly recognised as Eliphaz' children, some type of formal relationship may have existed.

Teman is frequently mentioned in prophecies against Edom, including: <<Concerning Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts: Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?>> (Jeremiah 49:7), <<So I will send a fire on Teman, and it shall devour the strongholds of Bozrah>> (Amos 1:12), and: <<Your warriors shall be shattered, O Teman, so that everyone from Mount Esau will be cut off>> (Obadiah 9).

She bore Amalek to Eliphaz. Notable among this list is Amalek. From him came the Amalekites, notable enemies of Israel, as found in Exodus 17:8-16, Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and 1 Samuel 15:1-8.

II.b.xxii Genesis 36:15-43 - Clans and Kings of Edom

Although this section begins with a heading similar to that found in v.1, by a clever use of genealogical information vv.15-43 reveal that Esau's descendants established themselves as the dominant group in Seir.

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

Genesis 36:15-19

Esau's sons and grandsons produce fourteen chiefs of their own **clans**. While all the names listed here appear in vv.9-14, the inclusion of **Korah** among the sons of **Eliphaz** is unexpected. Korah is not included in the earlier list of Eliphaz' sons (v.11); possibly he is a grandson of Eliphaz.

Esau was obviously a blessed man but he was hated and rejected in regard to being chosen for a critical role in God's plan of redemption, hence the Scripture: <<Yet I have loved Jacob but I have hated Esau>> (Malachi 1:2b-3a).

Korah is also the name given to a son of Oholibamah (v.14 and v.18). Since chiefs were normally tribal leaders, these verses indicate that Esau became the patriarch of fourteen tribes.

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 clans of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. ²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman; 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 springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. ²⁵ These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah 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 clans of the Horites: the clans Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the clans of the Horites, clan by clan in the land of Seir.

Genesis 36:20-30

This section lists five chiefs associated with the Horites, the original inhabitants of Seir. By placing the five chiefs of Seir alongside the fourteen chiefs of Esau (vv.15-19), the narrator signals that Esau's descendants became the dominant force in the region of Seir, as probably indicated by: *<<Moreover, the Horim had formerly inhabited Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them, destroying them and settling in their place, as Israel has done in the land that the LORD gave them as a possession>>* (Deuteronomy 2:12), and: *<<He did the same for the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, by destroying the Horim before them so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place even to this day>>* (Deuteronomy 2:22).

The names of the descendants of Esau do not reflect a godly heart:

- Dishon means gazelle
- Alvan means wicked
- Ithran means advantage
- Aran means mountain goat
- Baal-Hanan (v.38), whose name embraced the false god Baal.

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

Genesis 36:31-39

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. A number of kings emerge from among Esau's descendants. Although the kings listed here succeed one another, the list probably records a series of dynasties, each associated with a particular city. The author of v.31 either lived after the Israelite monarchy was a reality or clearly anticipated that one would be established. The pattern of tribal leaders eventually being replaced by kings was repeated in ancient Israel.

Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded him as king. Many commentators have supposed that Jobab is the same person as Job, so remarkable for his afflictions and patience; and that Eliphaz was the same person in the Book of Job who is called one of his friends. However, there is no proper evidence in support of this, and there are many reasons against it.

⁴⁰ These are the names of the clans of Esau, according to their families and their localities by their names: the clans Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³ Magdiel, and Iram; these are the clans of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their settlements in the land that they held.

Genesis 36:40-43

These verses list a number of Edomite chiefs, according to their families and their localities. The distinctive feature of this section is the mention of localities. These chiefs are associated with particular regions, which possibly bore their names, although the evidence for this is limited. This list of Edomite chiefs is repeated in 1 Chronicles 1:51-54.