

Esau's Descendants (Genesis 36)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Genesis

I. Background, from Prior Lessons (Genesis 32-35)

- a. Jacob has returned to his homeland in Canaan after 20+ years in Haran. He has a large family, including 12 sons, and much wealth. His wife Rachel died near Bethlehem while giving birth to his twelfth son, Benjamin.
- b. His father Isaac dies at the age of 180; Jacob and his twin brother Esau bury their father Isaac.

II. Esau's Genealogy, the Lineage of the Edomites (Genesis 36)

- a. Can't we just skip over Esau's genealogy?
 - i. Jacob was the important one of the twins, since all Israel came from him.
 - ii. In **Malachi 1:2** the Lord says through the prophet Malachi, "Jacob I have loved, but *Esau I have hated*".
 - iii. In **Hebrews 12:16-17** Esau is described as a "profane person"; a man who was *rejected* by God.
 - iv. Furthermore, it seems that no one of note was descended from Esau, right? Do we recognize anyone who would become important among all of Esau's descendants?
- b. Read **Genesis 36:1-14** and **36:31-34**. Summarizing the outline of Esau's descendants:
 - i. The Edomites (a nation southeast of Judah, which shows up several times in the Old Testament), who lived near Mount Seir, are the descendants of Esau.
 - ii. Esau had children by three wives: two Canaanite and one a daughter of Ishmael. (He may have had more wives than these three.) Note that a summary genealogy of Esau's descendants also is provided in **1 Chronicles 1:23-42**. Spelling of names may vary within the manuscripts and as translated.
 1. To Adah, one of Esau's Canaanite wives one son was born:
 - a. Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau, who would have seven sons, called *leaders* or *chiefs*.

2. To Aholibamah, Esau's other Canaanite wife, three sons were born (names spelled slightly different in **1 Chronicles 1:23**):
 - a. Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah.
3. To Basemath (also called Bossoras), daughter of Ishmael, was born one son:
 - a. Reuel, who would have four sons:
 - i. Zerah, the father of a man named '*Jobab*', who would become the second king of Edom, as it says in **Genesis 36:31-33** and **1 Chronicles 1:32**);
 - ii. Plus, three other sons born to Reuel.
- c. What is the significance of the Edomites, the nation descended from Esau?
 - i. The Edomites would be neighbors of Israel; and as with the Moabites and Ammonites (descended from Lot) there would be strife ongoing between them and Israel throughout the Old Testament.
 1. (The Lord said to Moses) "...command the people, saying, 'You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink.'" (**Deuteronomy 2:4-6**, NKJV)
 - a. Note that the Lord did give Esau's descendants a land of their own.
 2. In **Numbers 20:14-21:4** it says that when the Israelites were at Kadesh, near the border of Edom, Moses requested permission from the King of Edom to pass through their land peacefully. However, the King of Edom came out with a large army to threaten the Israelites, and Moses had to lead them *around* the land of Edom.
 - ii. Some of Israel's prophets gave messages directed against the Edomites.
 1. Amos, writing about 754 BC, at the time when there were two kingdoms, wrote:
 - a. "Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Teman,

which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.” (**Amos 1:11-12**, NKJV)

2. In **Jeremiah 49:7-22** (**Jeremiah 30:1-16** in the LXX) the prophet Jeremiah speaks about God’s judgment against Edom, for their pride and arrogance, near the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity (587 BC).
 - a. “Your fierceness has deceived you, the pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill! ‘Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there,’ says the LORD. ‘Edom also shall be an astonishment; everyone who goes by it will be astonished and will hiss at all its plagues. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors,’ says the Lord, ‘No one shall remain there, nor shall a son of man dwell in it.’” (**Jeremiah 49:16-18**, NKJV)
3. **Ezekiel 25:12-14** and **Ezekiel 35** also are prophecies against Edom, that the Lord will destroy it, because of their hatred and cruelty toward Israel.
4. The book of **Obadiah**, which appears to have been written right after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, is directed to the Edomites, and is instructive of God’s view of their sin. (Read entire book of **Obadiah, verses 1-21**)
 - a. This prophecy was directed solely to the Edomites. “This says the Lord God to Edom...” (**v. 1**)
 - b. The classic condemnation of the arrogant. They dwelt high in the cliffs and assumed no one could defeat them. God says, “If you should ascend as the eagle and make your nest amongst the stars, from there I shall bring you down.” (**v. 4**)
 - i. In my mind, the language this prophecy is especially pertinent to the United States of America. Like Edom of old, we live in a land characterized by arrogance, with no fear of God.
 - c. Edom stood by and rejoiced on the day that Israel fell, and boasted. They even joined in the attack, put to death those escaping and taken prisoner those fleeing.
 - d. God will judge all the nations, and payback is coming big-time for Edom.
 - e. In the end, the house of Jacob would be restored, but Edom will be wiped out.

f. Closing: “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s”.

III. One More Significant Connection to Esau’s Line, from the Septuagint

- a. For this next point, we will need to look at the Septuagint (LXX).
 - i. I started reading an Old Testament based on the Septuagint about five years ago. I had been teaching the Old Testament for many years, and at the time was using the NKJV, which like most other modern translations used the Masoretic Text, (abbreviated MT, a Hebrew text) as the basis for Old Testament translation.
 - ii. I was aware that the early church used the Septuagint (LXX) generally for their Old Testament, and that many of the New Testament passages quoting the Old Testament did not line up with the passages in my Old Testament at the time. The New Testament writers were generally quoting from the LXX.
 - iii. I assumed that because the New Testament writers were writing in Greek, that was the reason they were using the LXX when quoting from the Old Testament.
 - iv. However, I decided to try out a version of the Old Testament based on the LXX (I started reading the Orthodox Study Bible). You may have noticed that I tend to read from that version when teaching, and often say, “if you are reading in another translation such as the NKJV, it should be pretty much the same.” Well, that is not always the case!
 - v. There are some significant differences, in places, between the LXX and the MT. If you start looking at all the Old Testament quotes and references in the New Testament, you will find that in some cases, the whole point that the New Testament writer is making is not even supported by the MT; only by the LXX that is quoted. A few examples:
 1. **Hebrews 10:5-7**, which quotes **Psalm 40:7-9** in the LXX; “but a body you have prepared for me”
 2. **Hebrews 10:37-38**, which quotes from **Habakkuk 2** in the LXX; “but if anyone shrinks back...”
 3. **Revelation 2:26-27**, where Jesus himself is quoting from **Psalm 2:9** in the LXX, making the point that we too will *rule over* the nations (his point is supported by the LXX version, but not by the MT).
 4. The New Testament writers, writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are quoting from the LXX, making their points based on it. If you follow how they make their points, it seems clear that they assume that their hearers and readers are reading the LXX as well!

5. For further information on the history and significance of the LXX, I refer you to 3-CD series of audio lessons by David Bercot, *Discovering the Septuagint*, available from Scroll Publishing.
- b. For the next point in this lesson from **Genesis 36**, we will be reading the from the ending of the book of **Job** that is contained in the LXX. As always, it is important to see this for yourself. Don't take my word for it. If you do not have a LXX at hand, you can find Brenton's translation online, available for free. In order to appreciate this next point, please take the time now to read that yourself, directly from a translation based on the LXX.
 - c. **Job 42:12-17** (The following is taken from Brenton's translation of the Septuagint, published 1851, which is in the public domain and is readily accessible online)
 - i. "And the Lord blessed the latter end of Job, more than the beginning: and his cattle were fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand she-asses of the pastures. And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters. And he called the first Day, and the second Casia (same as 'Cinnamon' -CP) , and the third Amalthea's horn (Note: 'Amalthea's horn', from the LXX, has the same meaning as 'Horn of Plenty', or 'Cornucopia'. I would have missed that when reading 'Keren-Happuch' in other versions. -CP). And there were not found in comparison with the daughters of Job, fairer women than they in all the world: and their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren. And Job lived after his affliction a hundred and seventy years: and all the years he lived were two hundred and forty: and Job saw his sons and his sons' sons, the fourth generation. And Job died, an old man and full of days..." (Note: This is where the book of Job ends in Hebrew versions, such as the Masoretic Text, on which almost all modern Old Testament translations are based. - CP)
 - ii. (**Job 4:17** continues in the Septuagint, or LXX:) "...and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up. This man is described in the Syriac book as living in the land of Ausis, on the borders of Idumea (also known as 'Edom' -CP) and Arabia: and his name before was Jobab; and having taken an Arabian wife, he begot a son whose name was Ennon. And he himself was the son of his father Zare, one of the sons of Esau, and of his mother Bosorrha, so that he was the fifth from Abraam. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, which country he also ruled over: first, Balac, the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dennaba: but after Balac, Jobab, who is called Job, and after him Asom, who was governor out of the country of Thaeman: and after him Adad, the son of Barad, who destroyed Madiam in the plain of Moab; and the name of his city was Gethaim. And his friends who came to him were Eliphaz, of the children of Esau,

king of the Thaemanites, Baldad sovereign the Sauchaeans (a/k/a Bildad, ruler of the Shuhites - CP), Sophar king of the Minaeans.”

- d. The LXX explanation clears up the mystery of who Job was, as well as when and where he lived. He is the same person as the ‘Jobab’ mentioned in **Genesis 36** and **1 Chronicles 1:23-42**. We can now discern:
 - i. Lineage of Job (great-grandson of Esau through Ruel, the son of Basemath/ Besorra; son of Zerah/ Zare)
 - ii. Fifth generation descendant from Abraham:
 1. Isaac
 2. Esau
 3. Reuel
 4. Zerah
 5. Jobab (= Job)
 - iii. Where Job lived (read **Job 1:1-12**). ‘Land of Uz’ in Hebrew text refers to Ausitis, on the borders of Arabia and Edom / Idumea.
 - iv. Lineage of one of Job’s three friends, ‘Eliphaz the Temanite’
 - v. Approximate time when Job lived (he is Esau’s grandson)
 - vi. Why Job and his friends, who were not Jews, knew there was only one God
- e. Job’s significance in the ancient world (second king of Edom)
- f. Amazing to think that this great hero of faith, of whom God says, "there is none like him on the earth: a blameless, true, and God-fearing man, and one who abstains from every evil thing", is descended from Esau. Recall that Esau is called ‘profane’ or ‘godless’ in **Hebrews 12:16**.
- g. Job is also held up by James as a great example for Christians to follow.
 - i. “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” (**James 5:10-11**, NKJV)

IV. Significance of the land of Edom (Idumea) in the New Testament

- a. Note that the Greek name for Edom (the land) is ‘Idumea’.
- b. In **Mark 3**, we learn that some of the people who came out to hear and follow Jesus were from Idumea.
 - i. “Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from

Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.”

(**Mark 3:6-8**, NKJV)

- c. Herod the Great, who was king ruling over Judea when Jesus was born, was an Idumean (not a Jew). Eusebius points out the significance of this fact, in view of the prophecy of **Genesis 49**.
- i. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from his loins, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the expectation of the nations." (**Genesis 49:10**, LXX, OSB)
 - ii. Eusebius, an early church historian, pointed out that Herod was the first non-Jew to be made king over Israel. He points out the significance of that fact in fulfilling an important prophecy regarding the timing of the coming of the Messiah. Writing about 330-340 AD in *History of the Church*, book 1, chapter VI, Eusebius says:
 1. "When Herod, the first ruler of foreign blood, became King, the prophecy of Moses received its fulfillment, according to which there should "not be wanting a prince of Judah, nor a ruler from his loins, until he come for whom it is reserved." The latter, he also shows, was to be the expectation of the nations.
 2. This prediction remained unfulfilled so long as it was permitted them to live under rulers from their own nation, that is, from the time of Moses to the reign of Augustus. Under the latter, Herod, the first foreigner, was given the Kingdom of the Jews by the Romans. As Josephus relates, he was an Idumean on his father's side and an Arabian on his mother's...
 3. When the Kingdom of the Jews had devolved upon such a man the expectation of the nations was, according to prophecy, already at the door. For with him their princes and governors, who had ruled in regular succession from the time of Moses, came to an end."
 4. (Source: Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Church History of Eusebius*. In P. Schaff & H. Wace, eds.; A. C. McGiffert, trans.; Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, pp. 89-90)
 - iii. Herod the Great was an Idumean (of the nation descended from Esau) who became king over the Jews. In light of the **Genesis 49:10** prophecy (that a non-Jewish king on Israel's throne would signal the coming of "the expectation of the nations"), perhaps now we can appreciate why Herod the Great felt threatened, and was motivated to kill the child who was born to be king of the Jews!