

Genesis 36:1-37:1
Psalm 137/108
Matthew 2

“Who Is This Who Comes from Edom?”

November 22, 2009

Verse 1 of Genesis 37 *must* be read with chapter 36.

If you would understand why the “generations of Esau” are here,

then it is *essential* to understand that Jacob lived in the land of his father’s sojournings.

And Esau did not.

Esau lives to the south – outside of the land of Promise.

And for many years the Edomites are not a problem.

Edom would not let Israel pass through their land after the Exodus (Numbers 20)

but there are no major conflicts between Israel and Edom

until the days of Saul.

But for 500 years (from the days of Saul until the Exile)

there was conflict between Israel and Edom.

You hear of it repeatedly throughout the prophets –

and often in the Psalms.

There is perhaps no more poignant statement of this
than the song of Exile – Psalm 137.

In Psalm 137 the people of God are weeping by the waters of Babylon.

They are exiled from their home – they are far from the temple of the LORD,

which lies in ruins back in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

And at the end of Psalm 137 the Psalmist identifies two peoples who deserve judgment for this:

Babylon – of course – because Babylon is the nation that destroyed Jerusalem.

But also Edom – because Edom egged the Babylonians on!

“Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem,

how they said, ‘Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!’”

How shall we sing the LORD’s song?

How can we sing Psalm 137?

We are not singing against the Edomites or Babylonians!

Their cities were torn down centuries ago!

It was Isaiah who taught us how to think of such things:

in Isaiah 24-25, after speaking against the nations (each by name),

Isaiah speaks simply against “the city” without identifying it,

and contrasts this hostile city with the city of God, the mountain of the LORD.

There are two cities – the heavenly city and the earthly city.

And when the earthly city wages war against the heavenly city,

we pray with the souls under the altar in Revelation,

“O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long

before you will judge and avenge our blood

on those who dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10)

We sing Psalm 137 as those who are longing for the triumph of the heavenly city.

Psalm 137

Matthew 2

What does Herod have to do with Genesis 36?

Well, Herod the Great was an Idumean – an Edomite.

1800 years before it had been said,

“the older shall serve the younger.”

Nearly two millennia ago Isaac had blessed *Jacob*, saying

“May your brothers bow before you.”

And in the days of David and Solomon

the Edomites did bow to the sons of Israel.

But Isaac had also said to Esau,

“By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother;

but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

And as Psalm 137 suggests,

even during the days of the kings,

Edom had already done this.

But in Herod, Edom has turned the tables!

Now Edom rules over Israel

And so no doubt Herod enjoyed those passages that spoke of Esau “bowing” to Jacob – especially when he saw the heirs of Jacob prostrated before him!

And that is also no doubt why Herod is so troubled about this “King of the Jews”!

And so he commands the slaughter of all the young boys in Bethlehem.

And when Matthew hears the weeping of the mothers of these boys

he hears the weeping of Rachel, spoken of in Jeremiah 31.

Why does Matthew connect the weeping of Rachel with Herod?

Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin –

but Bethlehem is in the land of Judah.

Jeremiah 31 is where we hear the promise of the new covenant.

Jeremiah 31 is speaking of what God will do in restoring his people from exile.

The verses immediately preceding the reference to Rachel speak of how God will

ransom and redeem Jacob from his enemies,

how God will turn “their mourning into joy” (Jer 31:11-14).

And then we hear about Rachel weeping for her children,

because they are no more.

And the LORD replies to Rachel,

“Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears,

for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD...

your children shall come back to their own country.”

Who is God talking about there:

31:18 makes it clear:

“I have heard *Ephraim* grieving” –

and God promises that he will have mercy on Ephraim.

In other words, the point of Rachel's weeping in Jeremiah 31 is that she is weeping over the exile of her children (especially the northern Kingdom – Ephraim), and so when Matthew speaks of Rachel's weeping he sees her weeping as a sign of the coming restoration.

When Rachel weeps, then God will restore her exiled children.

Remember that last line of Psalm 137?

The slaughter of the innocents – the bashing of the little children's heads – this time it is Edom that is slaughtering the children of Jacob.

And yet, God's response to the slaughter of the innocents is to raise up his Son to his right hand in glory – in spite of Edom's best efforts!

So, how should you think about Edom?

Well, you need to hear the generations of Esau with the context that Israel had.

And so I will do my best today to help you understand who Edom is.

Introduction: Why Is This Here?

Genesis 36 is the ninth book of Genesis:

| | | |
|-------------|--|------|
| 2:4-4:26 | “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth” | (1) |
| 5:1-6:8 | “This is the book of the generations of Adam” | (2) |
| 6:9-9:28 | “These are the generations of Noah” | (3) |
| 10:1-11:9 | “These are the generations of the sons of Noah” | (4) |
| 11:10-26 | “These are the generations of Shem” | (5) |
| 11:27-25:11 | “These are the generations of Terah” | (6) |
| 25:12-18 | “These are the generations of Ishmael” | (7) |
| 25:19-35:29 | “These are the generations of Isaac, the son of Abraham” | (8) |
| 36:1-37:1 | “These are the generations of Esau” | (9) |
| 37:2-50:26 | “These are the generations of Jacob” | (10) |

What is book 9 doing here in Genesis?

In some ways it is very much like book 7 – the generations of Ishmael.

Israel is to remember that Esau is also of the children of Abraham!

He does not inherit the promise –

indeed, he does not seem particularly interested in the promise – but he is of the seed of Abraham.

Also, Jacob and Esau (Israel and Edom) will be fighting each other for a long time!

Israel is commanded to remember that Edom is his brother.

This means, on the one hand, that Israel is to be gracious to Edom.

But there is also a warning implied:

both Israel and Edom are grandsons of Abraham – by the same father,
by the same mother.

They are twin brothers.

And God chose one and rejected the other.

Israel must never forget this!

Because the day will come when Israel will be the older brother,
and the Gentiles will be the younger brother.

And Paul says in Romans 9 that “when Rebekah had conceived children by one man,
our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born
and had done nothing either good or bad –
in order that God’s purpose of election might continue,
not because of works but because of him who calls –
she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’

As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” (Romans 9:10-13)

God’s purpose of election will be accomplished.

It may take a long time!

Remember that Rebekah was told “The older will serve the younger”?

It will take about 800 years for that to come to pass.

God will accomplish his purposes.

You have to remember that *he* is God – and you are not!

If he did everything the way we wanted him to,

he wouldn’t be God – *we* would be!

Book nine of Genesis helps us understand the rest of what the scriptures say about Edom:

the first part deals with Esau among the Canaanites;

the second deals with Esau in Seir.

1. The Generations of Esau among the Canaanites (36:1-8)

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.

Just as Jacob has been renamed Israel,

so also Esau has another name, Edom.

Notice that the list of wives does not mesh neatly with Genesis 26:34.

In Genesis 26:34 (and also here in 36:9) there are three wives

Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite
Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite
and Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth.

But here in verses 2-3 we also hear of three wives:

Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite
Oholibamah, daughter of Anah the daughter [or son] of Zibeon the Hivite
and Basemath, the daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth.

If you look at this closely, it is somewhat puzzling:

Did Esau marry two different women named Basemath?

One the daughter of Elon, the other the daughter of Ishmael?

Did Esau marry two different daughters of Ishmael?

One named Basemath, the other named Mahalath?

Did Esau marry two different daughters of Elon?

Basemath and Adah?

It is likely that somewhere in the 25 centuries between 1400 BC and 1000 AD
some scribe accidentally got the names mixed up.

But what *is* clear is that Esau married two Canaanite women and an Ishmaelite.
And they gave him five sons 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.)

Just as Lot and Abraham had separated,
so also Jacob and Esau.

In chapter 32 we heard that Esau had moved to Seir *before* Jacob returned from Paddan-Aram.

Now we hear that it is only *after* Jacob returned
that Esau officially renounced the land

It appears that Esau had already settled in Seir,
but Jacob's return (and perhaps Jacob's present)
convinces him not to come back.

2. The Generations of Esau in Seir (36:9-43)

a. The Sons of Esau (36:9-19)

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.

There are a couple names here that are important in the rest of Scripture.

1) Teman is consistently listed as the eldest grandson –

and throughout the prophets Teman is often used in place of Edom.

One of Job's comforters is "Eliphaz the Temanite" –

no doubt a descendent of Teman the son of Eliphaz the son of Esau!

2) Kenaz is the father of the Kenizzites –

an Edomite clan that aligns itself with Judah during the Exodus.

Remember Caleb?

One of the two faithful spies?

He is the representative of Judah who is sent to spy out the land,

but he is consistently referred to as Caleb the son of Jephunneh,

the Kenizzite.

Of the *only* two of the wilderness generation that remained faithful was an Edomite.

This is especially important if you think about one of the central themes of Genesis:
the promise of the blessing to the nations.

Even Esau – the rejected son –

will be given a place among the people of God.

So Esau has five sons and ten grandsons.

But if you look carefully at the structure of the passage,

the grandsons of Esau by Adah are five (not including Amalek

who is relegated to a parenthesis)

the grandsons of Esau by Basemath are four

and the sons of Esau by Oholibamah are three.

No grandsons are mentioned there,

which has the effect of including her sons in the same generation as their nephews.

The result is that there are twelve (5+4+3) descendents of Esau,
plus Amalek.

Why is Amalek separated out from this list?

It is especially important to see how he is treated here,
because in the following section on the Edomite chieftains,
he is included!

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.

Here you see 7, 4, and 3 – making 14 chieftains of the Edomites.

Apparently there was a tribe of Korah within the clan of Eliphaz,
as well as within the clan of Oholibamah.

This highlights again the importance of the 12 “tribes” of Edom in verses 9-14.

We saw that there were twelve descendents of Ishmael.

Now we see twelve tribes of Edom.

It also highlights the fact that Amalek is not like the rest of his brothers.

Dt. 23:7-8 orders Israel not to destroy Edom,
because Edom is a brother.

But Amalek steps outside of that protection by ambushing Israel in Ex. 17:8-16,
and Moses tells us that “The LORD will have war with Amalek
from generation to generation.” (17:16)

In Dt God commands Israel to “remember” what Amalek did (Dt 25:17-19)
and blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

But the Amalekites continued to harass Israel (Judges 3:13, 6:3, 7:12, 10:12)
during the days of the Judges.

And finally in the days of Saul, the LORD commands the new king
to do what Israel was commanded to do:

destroy the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15).
“Fight against them until they are consumed” (15:18).
But Saul did not do as God had commanded him!
Instead Saul spared their king Agag,
and God’s response to Saul’s disobedience
was to remove the kingship from Saul.

And at the end of 1 Samuel, David succeeds where Saul had failed,
as he destroys a band of Amalekite raiders.

But the story of the Amalekites does not end there.

Because while Saul the son of Kish, the Benjamite had failed,
his kinsman would be given a chance to repair Saul’s error.

Hundreds of years later, a Benjamite of the house of Kish
would encounter an Agagite – a descendent of Agag the Amalekite.

The story is recounted in the book of Esther.

Have you ever wondered why Mordecai would not bow to Haman?

Some have said that Mordecai would only bow to God –

but in the ancient world, such a thought would be unheard of.

Everyone bows to the king – and to those who represent the king!

Mordecai of the house of Kish would not bow to Haman of the house of Agag

because Haman is a cursed Amalekite,

and because Mordecai is the heir of Saul.

And even further back, Mordecai remembers the blessing of Isaac:

“may your brothers bow down before you.”

Mordecai, the son of Jacob,

will not bow to this Edomite!

And this time, against all odds, the son of Saul takes down the son of Agag!

And thus the Amalekites pass from the biblical history.

b. The Sons of Seir (36:20-30)

*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.*

Verses 20-30 then provide a genealogy of the inhabitants of Seir –
those whom Esau rules over or displaces (Dt 2).

Notice that “Lotan’s sister Timna” in verse 22
is the same Timna whom Eliphaz took as a concubine,
and Oholibamah, the wife of Esau, is said to be a Horite (v25).

So it would appear that Esau intermarried with the Horites
but also dispossessed them.

c. The Kings of Edom (36:31-43)

*31 These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom,
before any king reigned over the Israelites.*

This suggests that the king list may date from the time of David or after.
Perhaps Moses authored the first part of Genesis 36,
and someone else inserted an updated genealogy years later.

But you will notice that the kings of Edom are not necessarily related to each other.
They rule in different cities
and so may not in fact rule over the whole of Edom.

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.

(Literally, this is Rehoboth on the River –
which is more likely referring to the river that divided Edom and Moab)

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.*

This is a curious list, if you compare it with the earlier lists.
The difference with the earlier list is that this speaks of “dwelling places” –
so it may refer to the cities or administrative districts of the clans.

So what should we make of all this?

Think back over all the interactions between Jacob and Esau.
God had promised, “the older shall serve the younger.”
Isaac had blessed Jacob: “may your brothers bow down to you.”

But here at the end of the story of Esau,
there is no hint of Esau bowing to Jacob.

Once again, we are being taught patience!
Do not expect the promises of God to happen overnight!

Conclusion: But Jacob Lived in the Land (37:1)

37:1 Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

Many have thought that 37:1 fits better with book 10 than with the generations of Esau.
But if you think about what book 9 is doing,
you can see the contrast between Jacob and Esau.

Esau abandons the promised land and moves to Seir,
which becomes the land of his possession.
But Jacob lived in the Promised Land –
“the land of his father’s sojournings.”

As Bruce Waltke says,
“Jacob’s children, who were exiles in Paddan Aram, by faith possess the land,
and Esau’s children, who were born in it, walk away from it.
Likewise, after Israel’s exile in Babylon, the true seed return and possess the land.
The church, the chosen today (1 Peter 2:9-10), is scattered abroad,
but it will possess the Promised Land that never passes away.” (p488)

But there is one more thing that we need to see!

The prophet Obadiah focuses the attention of his short prophesy on Edom:

- 10 *Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob,
shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.*
- 11 *On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth
and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you were like one of them.*
- 12 *But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune;
do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin;
do not boast in the day of distress.*
- 13 *Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity;
do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity;
do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity.*
- 14 *Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives;
do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.*

- 15 *For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations.
As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.*
- 16 *For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually;
they shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been.*
- 17 *But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy,
and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.*
- 18 *The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame,
and the house of Esau stubble;
they shall burn them and consume them,
and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau,
for the Lord has spoken.*

Obadiah says that in the day of deliverance – when God restores his people –

- 21 *Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau,
and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.*

The day will come when Edom will be subdued –
and the kingdom shall be the Lord's!

Jeremiah 49:17-22 adds to this:

- 17 *“Edom shall become a horror.
Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters.*
- 18 *As when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring cities were overthrown,
says the Lord,
no man shall dwell there, no man shall sojourn in her.*

Edom will become like Sodom and Gomorrah!

- 21 *At the sound of their fall the earth shall tremble;
the sound of their cry shall be heard at the Red Sea.*
- 22 *Behold, one shall mount up and fly swiftly like an eagle and spread his wings against Bozrah,
and the heart of the warriors of Edom shall be in that day*

like the heart of a woman in her birth pains.”

As God delivered his people from Egypt, and overthrew the Egyptians
so now God will bring the pangs of judgment against Edom.

Amos 9:11-12 says of the restoration of God’s people:

*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.*

How should we think of all this?

Think about all the images that we have seen Edom connected to:

Sodom and Gomorrah

The Exodus

Through the Amalekites they are connected to the utter destruction of the Canaanites

The destruction of Jerusalem

And through Babylon they are connected to the dashing of children’s heads against a rock

It would be easy for us to say,

God is going to judge all those bad people out there!

But we are Abraham’s children!

Remember, brothers and sisters,

that Edom is also Abraham’s children!

Esau is the twin brother of Jacob.

What is the difference between Esau and Jacob?

As Malachi had said, “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother? declares the LORD.

Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.” (Malachi 1:2-3)

The difference is that God loved Jacob and called him.

Notice something:

God’s love is not obvious from what happens *in the middle* of history!

In the middle of history – in the middle of your story –

it may not be at all evident that God loves you.

Isaiah speaks of this with a vision of the end of history in Isaiah 63:

*Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah,
he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength?*

“It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.”

Verse 1 starts with something that sounds very much like a warrior returning in triumph!
The people of Jerusalem are gathered on the city walls and they see the mighty warrior
clothed in red.

But as the speaker gets closer,
those on the walls of Jerusalem start asking questions:

2 Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?

And the divine warrior responds:

3 “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me;

I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath;

their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.

4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.

5 I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold;

so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.

6 I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath,

and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

Your first inclination may be to say,

“Pastor this isn’t helping!

It is just more blood and guts and gore!”

But do you not see who this is?

Jesus is the mighty warrior –

he is the one who came alone and did battle against his foes.

He is the one who brought salvation to his people –

as he went into battle alone against the powers of sin, death and the devil.

Jesus is the Divine Warrior –

and he is the one who will make everything right in the end!