

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 36

36:1 Now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.

Who is Edom

This is an editorial reminder that the nation of Edom descended from Esau. The reason for this is due to the impact of Esau's descendants on Israel during the later periods of Israel's history.

36:2-3 Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan: Adah [also called "Basemath"] daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah [also called "Judith"] daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite—also Basemath daughter of Ishmael [named "Mahalath" in 28:9] and sister of Nebaioth. (NIV)

Descent of Oholibamah

Although the second wife has two different names, they are closely related in meaning. At the time Esau took her as a wife her name was Judith ["praised"], but due to unrevealed events, her name was later changed to Oholibamah ["my tent is exalted"]. Name changes were not uncommon.

However, Judith is said to be the daughter of "Beeri" in 26:34, yet Oholibamah is the daughter of "Anah." One possible explanation is that "Beeri" was a very powerful and famous Hittite, several generations removed, and Oholibamah was actually a descendent of "Beeri", possibly a granddaughter or great-granddaughter. This is similar to how the Jews skipped many generations in claiming to be sons of Abraham.

Esau's Motives

Esau married two Canaanite wives and the daughter of Ishmael. Since the two Canaanite wives were born in the land, his descendants through them should have rights to the land by reason of their mothers' births. Since Ishmael had prior claim to the birthright, his descendants should also have claim to the land involved. Through these marriages Esau attempted to validate his claim to the land of Canaan.

36:4-5 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel, and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the sons of Esau, who were born to him in Canaan. (NIV)

36:6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob.

Esau's Territory

Esau had already gained territory in the land of Seir while Jacob was away in Haran with Laban (32:3; 33:16). However, after Jacob returned, it seems Esau may have come back to be closer to his brother now that the breach between the two of them had been healed.

36:7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock. (NIV)

This separation of the two brothers is very similar to the separation of Abram and Lot in GEN 13.

36:8-9 So Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir. This is the account of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. (NIV)

Esau moved back to the land he had earlier conquered.

36:10 These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz [Esau's firstborn, 36:15], **the son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath. (NIV)**

The remainder of this chapter is paralleled in 1CH 1:35-54.

36:11 The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. (NIV)

Eliphaz

One of Job's three friends was Eliphaz the Temanite. While Esau's son might be the same one, it is more likely that either a son or grandson of Teman was named Eliphaz [a later descendant would be more likely to carry the designation "the Temanite"].

36:12 Esau's son Eliphaz also had a concubine named Timna [daughter of Seir the Horite, 36:22], **who bore him Amalek. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Adah. (NIV)**

Amalek

Amalek was the father of the Amalekites, bitter enemies of Israel, and upon whom God passed the judgment of annihilation (DEU 2:12).

36:13-19 The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath. The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, whom she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jalam and Korah [possibly "Timna" (son of Eliphaz) in 1CH 1:36]. **These were the chiefs** [leaders, or TAN: "clans"] **among Esau's descendants: The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: Chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam and Amalek. These were the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in Edom; they were grandsons of Adah. The sons of Esau's son Reuel: Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the chiefs descended from Reuel in Edom; they were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath. The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: Chiefs Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These were the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah. These were the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these were their chiefs. (NIV)**

Esau's Descendants

This concludes the summary of Esau's descendants from his sons who were born in the land of Canaan.

36:20-21 These were the sons of Seir ["hairy"] **the Horite** [possibly meant "cave dweller" since the Hebrew "hor" means "cave"], **who were living in the region: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These sons of Seir in Edom were Horite chiefs. (NIV)**

This genealogy is apparently given to show how Esau had claim to the area of the Horites by marrying into one of the ruling families (36:25).

36:22-24 The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam. Timna [concubine to Eliphaz] **was Lotan's sister. The sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah** [named after Zibeon's younger brother]. **This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the desert while he was grazing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.** (NIV)

Anah

This "Anah" is differentiated from the one in vs 20, by pointing out that he made what then must have been an important discovery.

36:25-30 The children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah [the one who became one of Esau's wives] **daughter of Anah. The sons of Dishon : Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran. The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan. The sons of Dishan: Uz** [probably gave his name to the area where Job lived: LAM 4:21] **and Aran. These were the Horite chiefs: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These were the Horite chiefs, according to their divisions, in the land of Seir.** (NIV)

36:31 Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel:

Scriptural Addition

Verse 31 was obviously added after Moses since there was never a king over the children of Israel until the days of Samuel. The kingship over Edom was not a hereditary right, and none of the kings followed his father to the throne.

36:32-43 Bela ["destruction", may have been the Balaam of NUM 22:5] **son of Beor became king of Edom. His city was named Dinhabah. When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah succeeded him as king. When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king. When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith. When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king. When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him as king. When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan ["lord of mercy"] son of Acbor ["mouse"] succeeded him as king. When Baal-Hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab. These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans and regions: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they occupied. This was Esau the father of the Edomites.** (NIV)