

# GENESIS

## In the beginning God...

### The Genealogy of Esau

Isaac died at the age of 180 making Esau and Jacob each 120 years old. Esau had been married for 80 years while Jacob had only been married less than 40 years. Esau, consequently, had a full generation of descendants more than Jacob, and this fact is reflected in the extensive list of names given in chapter 36. By Mose's time, the descendants of Esau were known as the Edomites, a nation of considerable concern to the Israelites.

#### Chapter 36

**V1** *These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom).* (ESV)

**V2** *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,* (ESV)

**V3** *and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth.* (ESV)

A difficulty occurs right at the beginning of the list, due to the apparent contradiction between the names of Esau's wives given here in chapter 36 and those given in chapters 26 and 28. The names are outlined here:

Genesis 26:34	Judith, daughter of Beeri; Basemath, daughter of Elon
Genesis 28:9	Mahalath, daughter of Ishmael
Genesis 36:2	Oholibamah, daughter of Anah; Adah, daughter of Elon
Genesis 36:3	Basemath, daughter of Ishmael

Comparison of the names indicates that Judith (feminine of Judah meaning "praiseworthy") is the same as Oholibamah (Hebrew for "tent of a high place"); Basemath (Hebrew for "fragrant"), daughter of Elon the Hittite, is the same as Adah (Hebrew for "ornament"); and Basemath, daughter of Ishmael, is the same as Mahalath (Hebrew for "fruitfulness"). It was common for people to have more than one name including names from different languages, their role in society, their marriage status, etc. Even Esau had two names as introduced in verse one, he was known as Edom. it was also common for women to be given a new name at the time of marriage. Similarly, Beeri must have been the same man as Anah.

The fathers of Esau first two wives were said to be Hittites (See Genesis 26:34), but one of them here (See verse 2) is said to be a Hivite and also a Horite (See verse 20, some scholars believe they are related to the group known in secular history as the Hurrians). All three groups were scattered throughout Caanan, and were Canaanite tribes; so there was undoubtedly much intermarriage among them, and the names were frequently used interchangeably.

- V4 ***And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel;*** (ESV)
- V5 ***and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.*** (ESV)
- V6 ***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.*** (ESV)
- V7 ***For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock.*** (ESV)
- V8 ***So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)*** (ESV)

Esau had five sons and an unknown number of daughters, as well as many servants and a lot of livestock. After realizing that Jacob was destined to be the heir of Isaac and to possess the land of Canaan, he realized there would not be room enough for both of them, so began to move southward into the mountainous regions southeast of the Dead Sea. Both he and Isaac, and Jacob when he returned, were still “strangers” (foreigners) in these lands, owning little property of their own but pasturing their flocks and herds wherever there was room for them.

The region into which Esau (also known as Edom) migrated to have previously been settled by the descendants of Seir, and the central range of mountains had come to be known as Mount Seir. To some extent the children of Esau had pushed out the Horites by force (See Deuteronomy 2:12 and 22), many scholars believe that Esau to an even greater extent had essentially assimilated the people through intermarriage providing a mix of Semitic and Canaanitic cultures.

- V9 ***These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.*** (ESV)
- V10 ***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.*** (ESV)
- V11 ***The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.*** (ESV)
- V12 ***(Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau’s son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau’s wife.*** (ESV)
- V13 ***These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau’s wife.*** (ESV)
- V14 ***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.*** (ESV)
- V15 ***These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,*** (ESV)

- V16** *Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.* (ESV)
- V17** *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.* (ESV)
- V18** *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.* (ESV)
- V19** *These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.* (ESV)

These verses give the names of the sons and grandsons of Esau, all of whom had risen to considerable prominence in the land of Edom ("chiefs," or "dukes" in the KJV). A total of eleven such grandsons are listed, seven from Eliphaz and four from Reuel (sons of Adah and Basemath, respectively). On the same level with them are listed the three sons of Oholibamah, making 14 such "chiefs" altogether.

Esau's daughters (referenced in verse 6) had no doubt also married Horite men, as presumably also his granddaughters. The listing of Korah as one of the chiefs in the family of Eliphaz (he is not listed in verse 11 as one of Eliphaz's sons) is probably best explained by assuming he was Eliphaz's son-in-law. It is interesting that the name of Eliphaz' concubine, Timna, is given, where that of his wife is not given. Possibly due to the future prominence of her son, Amalek, who became the ancestor of the notorious Amalekites, the enemies of Israel in later years.

- V20** *These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,* (ESV)
- V21** *Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom.* (ESV)
- V22** *The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.* (ESV)
- V23** *These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.* (ESV)
- V24** *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.* (ESV)
- V25** *These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah.* (ESV)
- V26** *These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.* (ESV)
- V27** *These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.* (ESV)

**V28** *These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.* (ESV)

**V29** *These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,* (ESV)

**V30** *Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief In the land of Seir.* (ESV)

This section of the descendants of Seir is included no doubt due to their close association with the descendants of Esau. Through intermarriage the two groups finally were one people, the Edomites. The Horite patriarch Seir evidently was the pioneer settler of the region. His seven sons each became prominent “chiefs” in the land. In turn, they are listed as having 19 sons of their own. The sons of Seir were evidently approximately the same age as the generation of Isaac, since Esau married the daughter (Oholibamah) of one of them (Anah).

One of Seir’s sons, Zibeon, is mentioned as having two sons, one of who was Anah (verse 24), probably named after his uncle (verse 25). The former Anah has often been confused with the other Anah, but it is clear from verse 25 that he could not have been the same as the father of Oholibamah, Esau’s wife. The latter Anah was obviously as son of Seir (verse 20), not of Zibeon. However, Anah the son of Zibeon is mentioned as of special importance because of his finding “*hot springs in the wilderness*” while he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.

**V31** *These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites.* (ESV)

**V32** *Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah.* (ESV)

**V33** *Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place.* (ESV)

**V34** *Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.* (ESV)

**V35** *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.* (ESV)

**V36** *Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place.* (ESV)

**V37** *Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his place.* (ESV)

**V38** *Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place.* (ESV)

**V39** *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.* (ESV)

The balance of this chapter seems likely to have been added later by Moses. The names of kings and chiefs in Edom appear long after the time of Esau and continuing to about the time of Moses. It is interesting to see that Moses began by stating these kings of the Edomites reigned long before there was any king in Israel.

None of the names in this list can be identified with confidence with any similar names found in history or any other connection in the Bible. It is interesting that the Edomite kings never became a family dynasty. When each king died, another unrelated individual acceded to the throne, probably by force of arms. Altogether, eight such kings are listed. Three of them are listed as having a particular city of their own.

The fourth king in the list, Hadad (besides the first and the last on the list, the only one to establish a city of his own), is especially notable apparently because of his victory over the Midianites in the “*country of Moab*.” Since the Midianites lived south of Edom, and the Moabites north of Edom, it seems probable that the Midianites during this period had swept northward through Edom (or perhaps around to the east of Edom’s mountains) on a mission of conquest into Moab, and that Hadad had taken his own army into Moab to defeat them. This is the only military exploit mentioned for any of these Edomite kings.

**V40** *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,* (ESV)

**V41** *Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,* (ESV)

**V42** *Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,* (ESV)

**V43** *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.* (ESV)

These last verses of the chapter give the names of the more important chiefs, or chieftains, descended from Esau—eleven in all. These names do not seem to be listed chronologically; but geographically; and they do not seem to have any necessary connection with any of the names listed previously in the chapter. They probably refer to the main “chiefdoms” of the country of Edom.

It is interesting to note that most of the “generations of Esau,” including the material from verse 15 through verse 43, have been incorporated in the genealogical lists of 1 Chronicles 1:35-54. Not only Moses, but also the much later chronicler, considered them important enough to include in the genealogical records of Israel.