

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 31

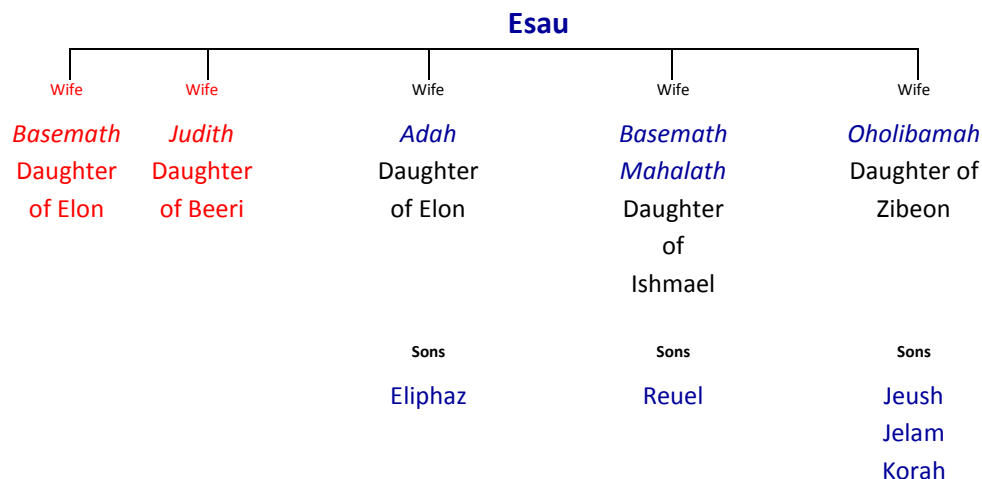
Chapter 36

Genesis 36:1 **Now these are *the records of the generations of Esau* (that is, Edom).**

Chapter 36 is a summary of Esau's immediate family and descendants including his wives, sons, grandsons and the positions some of his male offspring held as chiefs as well as others who held positions as kings. Included in the chapter are the relationships that Esau had with Ishmael and the Horite people. Although they are not detailed with births, lengths of life and ages at death, it is clear that the record of Esau's generations in this chapter transcends hundreds of years past the current year in the story, possibly even to the time of the Exodus when Moses recorded them in this book for all to know the blessing that Esau received as a descendant of Abraham. It also provides a list of the nations that came from Abraham through Esau as promised by the LORD.

Wives and Sons of Esau

Genesis 36:2 **Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite; ³ also Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ And Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel, ⁵ and Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.**



In this introduction to the wives of Esau, we have a problem because of what had already been recorded in the Scripture.

Genesis 26:34 **And when Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite;**

What happened to Judith the daughter of Beerli in the listing of wives in chapter 36? Judith could not have been Adah, the daughter of Elon, because she was the daughter of Berri. Had she died? Probably. In chapter 26, Basemath was the daughter of Elon but in chapter 36 she was the daughter of Ishmael, Isaac's brother. Could Esau have married two different women named Basemath? Yes. Did he? We do not know.

Genesis 28:9 and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

In chapter 28, Esau married Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael. Was Mahalath another name for Basemath? We do not know. Perhaps Basemath was her Hebrew name and Mahalath was her Canaanite name. Plausible, but we do not know for sure.

One thing we do know for sure, Oholibamah was the great-grand-daughter of Seir the Horite. Although Esau may have had five or six wives, from three of them, Esau obtained five sons while living in Canaan.

Seir	bore	Zibeon	bore	Anah	bore	<i>Oholibamah</i>
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Esau had begun taking wives before he was 20 years old as opposed to Jacob who married Leah and Rachel after he had reached the age of 77 with Reuben being his firstborn. At least 57 years could have separate the difference between the ages of Esau's first male child and that of Jacob's. In that 57 years, sons, grandsons and possibly a few great-grand-sons could have been born; however, the Scripture does not reveal the birth of any children to Esau before Jacob left the family. In fact, even at the age of 71, Esau might have been sonless. Therefore, Esau must have acquired five sons while he was still living in Canaan Land, probably still in the home of his father, Isaac. If the order of chronology is correct in this chapter, Esau had five sons and Jacob had eleven by the time they were 91 years old when Jacob returned from Haran. Evidently, from the time Jacob returned from Haran and eventually arrived at Mamre to live with his father and brother, no further males were born to the twins. That, however, is not to say that daughters were not born to Esau before Jacob left the family.

Move of Esau

Genesis 36:6 Then Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to *another* land away from his brother Jacob. ⁷ For their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock.

Just as with Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau could not continue to dwell on the same land because their wealth of livestock was far too great and the land could not sustain their needs for the animals. Esau made the decision to return to the mountain range of Seir to live. He had been

living there when he was 91 at the time Jacob returned from Haran. Most likely, he moved back to be with his father and Jacob as one large family for some unknown period.

Name of Esau

Genesis 36:8 **So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.**

Esau and Edom are two names for the same person. In the Scripture, Esau is used to refer to the twin of Jacob and Edom is used to refer to his descendants. Edom also became the name of the land they inhabited as a large and wealthy family.

Sons of Esau

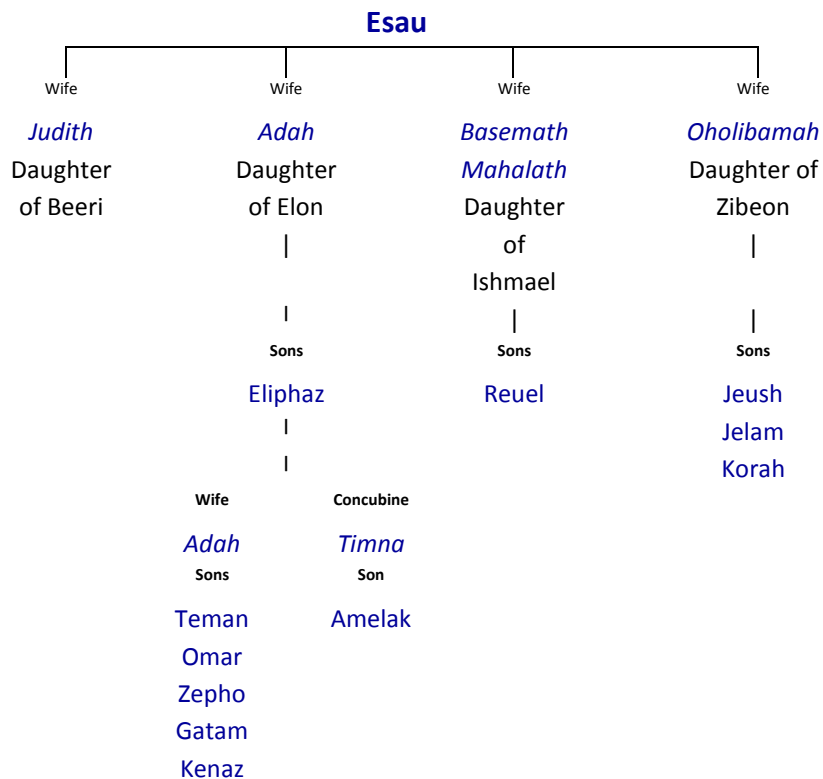
Genesis 36:9 **These then are *the records of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.* ¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Esau's wife Adah, Reuel the son of Esau's wife Basemath.**

This passage repeats the names of the sons of Esau, omitting the three sons of Oholibamah, Esau's second wife.

Sons of Eliphaz

Genesis 36:11 **And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho and Gatam and Kenaz.**

¹² **And Timna was a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah.**

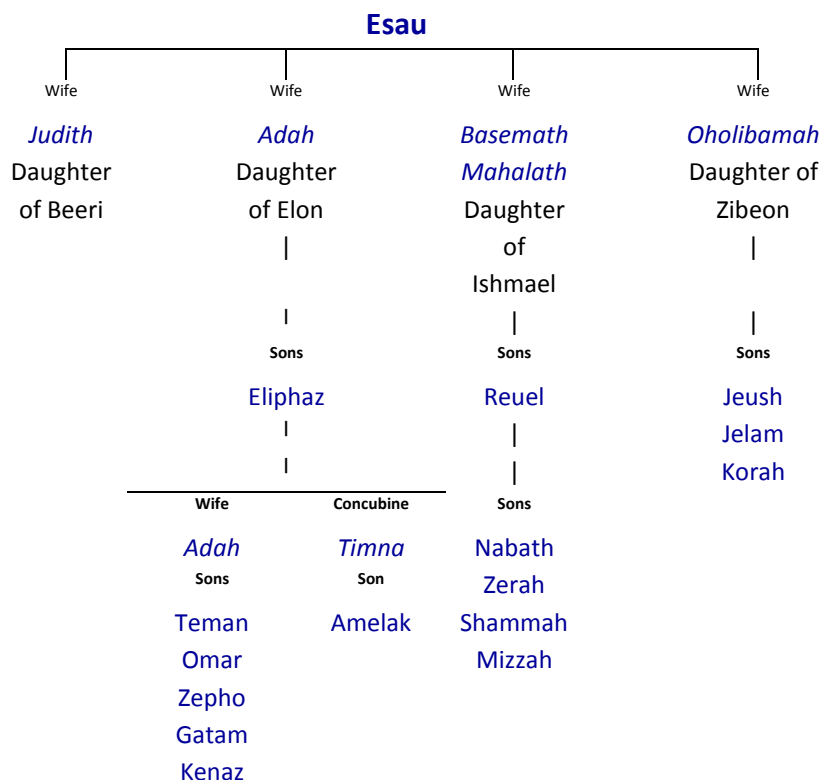


Six grandsons of Esau are mentioned here, all born in Seir. Timna is introduced for the first time. Why would this lone concubine be mentioned while others might have been overlooked? Genesis 36:22 explains that Timna was the granddaughter of Seir the Horite. This union between Eliphaz and Timna ties Esau's family to the Canaanites who lived in the mountain range that belonged to Seir. Their son, Amalek, became the father of the Amalekites whom the LORD commanded the Israelites to destroy when they entered the Promised Land. The Amalekites were bitter enemies of the Israelites during the return from Egypt. Cousins, standing in the way of cousins!

Deuteronomy 25:17 Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, ¹⁸ how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. ¹⁹ Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

Sons of Reuel

Genesis 36:13 And these are the sons of Reuel: Nahath and Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.



Five more grandsons of Esau are listed, descendants of Reuel. They were also born in Seir.

Sons of Jeush, Jalam and Lorah

Genesis 36:14 **And these were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon: she bore to Esau, Jeush and Jalam and Korah.**

Below is a lineage of the text above.

Seir	bore	Zibeon	bore	Anah	bore	<i>Oholibamah</i>	Jeush
						bore with Esau	Jalam
							Korah

These three are sons, not grandsons; they are part of Esau's first five sons.

Seven or Eight Chiefs from Adah

Genesis 36:15 **These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the first-born of Esau, are chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, ^{16a} chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.**

As time passed and the grandsons of Esau came of age, each became a chief or head of a family tribe and established its own village in Edom. Thus, the six sons of Eliphaz became chiefs. This passage poses a problem. Korah is listed as a son of Eliphaz through Adah when in fact he is a son of Oholibamah. This problem is settled by looking at the Samaritan version of the Genesis text in which this error is not present. Therefore, the insertion of Korah's name is a copy error in our text.

Four Chiefs from Basemath

Genesis 36:17a **And these are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath.**

Here, the four sons of Reuel are added to the chiefs of Edom bringing the total to 10.

Three Chiefs from Oholibamah

Genesis 36:18 **And these are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. ¹⁹ These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.**

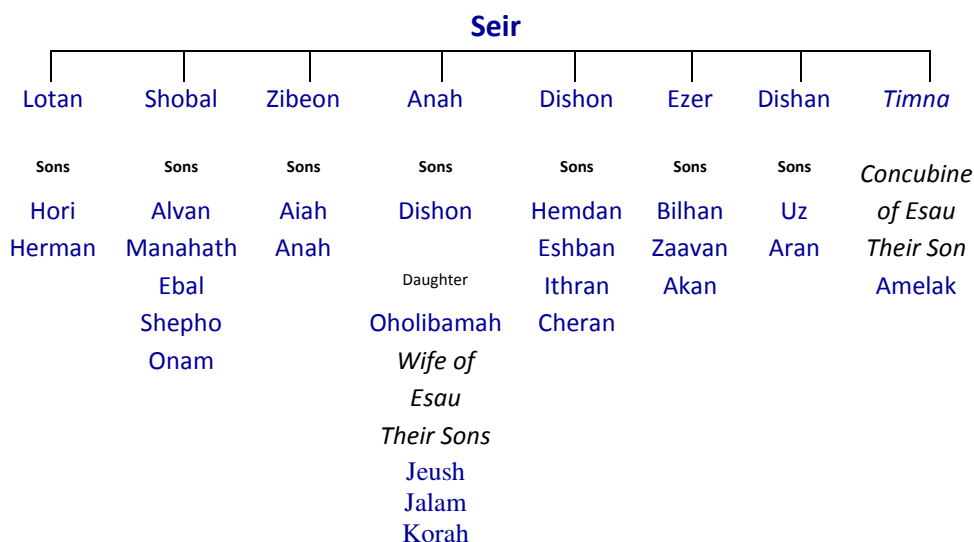
Finally, the three sons of Oholibamah are added to the 10 grandsons as chiefs in the record bringing the total number of 13 in the land of Edom

listed as chiefs as are those of her sister-wives? Most likely, the grandsons have reached the age of beginning their own tribes and families and the three sons of Oholibamah have not.

Seir the Horite

Genesis 36:20 **These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan and Shobal and Zibeon and Anah,^{21a} and Dishon and Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom.²² And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.²³ And these are the sons of Shobal: Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, Shepho and Onam.²⁴ And these are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah-- he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.²⁵ And these are the children of Anah: Dishon, and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.²⁶ And these are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan and Eshban and Ithran and Cheran.²⁷ These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan and Zaavan and Akan.²⁸ These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.**

In this passage, we find that Seir was a Horite. It was a branch of the Hittites who also had another branch called the Hivittes. These variations of the same family line were descendants of Heth the son of Canaan. Horite means “cave dweller” and that makes sense because of the terrain of the Seir Mountains with its many caves in which the families lived. Hivites means “midlanders” or “villagers” and that makes sense because they lived in the land between the Great Sea (Mediterranean) to the west and the vast desert to the east. Therefore, it is correct to call Seir a Hittite or Hivite as well as a Horite because his family dwelt in the caves of the mountain range.



Seven Chiefs of the Horites

Genesis 36:29 These are the chiefs descended from the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah,³⁰ chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, according to their *various* chiefs in the land of Seir.

All seven sons of Seir became the heads of their own tribes and established their own villages in the mountains of Seir.

Chronology of the Eight Kings of Edom

Genesis 36:31 Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel.³² Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah.³³ Then Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place.³⁴ Then Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place.³⁵ Then Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city was Avith.³⁶ Then Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place.³⁷ Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the *Euphrates* River became king in his place.³⁸ Then Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place.³⁹ Then Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar became king in his place; and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab.

1 Chronicles 1:43-50 says the following:

⁴³ Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king of the sons of Israel reigned. Bela *was* the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dinhabah.
⁴⁴ When Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place.⁴⁵ When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place.⁴⁶ When Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city *was* Avith.⁴⁷ When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place.⁴⁸ When Samlah died, Shaul of Rehoboth by the River became king in his place.⁴⁹ When Shaul died, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place.⁵⁰ When Baal-hanan died, Hadad became king in his place; and the name of his city was Pai, and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

At this point in the story we must wonder if Moses included this information in the book of Genesis originally or if it was copied into the text from the Chronicles record at some point. Before delving into a commentary on this passage, a chart of the succession of the kings in the land of Edom might help simplify the text.

Chart of the Succession of the Kings in the Land of Edom		
Name of King	City of Habitation	Wife
Bela, son of Beor	Dinhabah	
Jobad, son of Zerah	Bozrah	
Husham	Teman	
Hadad, Son of Bedad	Avith	
Samlah	Masrekah	
Shaul	Rehoboth by the River	
Baal-hanan, son of Achbor		
Hadar	Pai	Mehetable, daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab

Because these men were kings in the land of Edom and not those of Seir, it is an indication that Esau's family was predominant in the region south of the Dead Sea. The mountain range was still called the Mountains of Seir but the Edomites were in control of the region. Furthermore, the cities of habitation listed in this passage are all within the boundaries of the Edomite region. The Scripture uses the Hebrew word *melek* which is properly translated "king" in the passage. Therefore, these eight men served in succession as the rulers of the Edomites and Horites after the establishment of the tribes of the sons and grandsons of Esau controlled the land. We do not know how these eight men were related to Esau. During the years after the establishment of the tribes of Esau's descendants in the land, intermarrying with the descendants of Seir occurred regularly. It could have been that these men were blood relatives of Esau but that was not a requirement. They could have been related to him by extended family relations only.

Dating the reigns of these kings is impossible first because we do not know how and where they fit into Esau's family heritage. Second, because the record does not reveal the lengths of the reigns of each king, it is impossible to add their dates to the timeline. Third, because we do not know if this passage belonged to Moses or was transferred here from the Chronicles record, we cannot positively date the end of the rule of the kings listed here before the writing of the Book of Genesis when Moses was about 82 years old. The fact that they reigned in succession is not in doubt; when this passage was recorded is.

With all of that said, it is most likely that Moses did place this record in the Book of Genesis and the author of the Chronicles transferred it into that record. It is most likely that it was Moses' intent to sum up the life and heritage of Esau in this location so that he could focus on the life of Jacob in the rest of the book. It is therefore most likely that Moses had an authoritative source for this information and it is found in the genealogy of Esau. The clue is found in verse 35, **"Then Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place."** Midian was the fourth son of Abraham by Keturah as recorded in Genesis 25:2 and 1 Chronicles 1:32. Before Abraham died, he gave a large gift to all of his sons and sent them to the east to establish their tribes; therefore, Isaac would inherit the bulk of Abraham's wealth at his death. Midian became the head of the Midianite tribe that settled south of Moab on the east side of the Seir mountain range. At the age of 40, Moses was expelled from Egypt and settled in the land of Midian and married a Midianite woman. For the next 40 years, Moses lived in the Midianite region within 70 miles of the Edomite land. By the time he was chosen by the LORD at the age of 80 to rescue the Israelites out of Egypt, he had 40 years of firsthand knowledge because he had lived among the Midianites and the Edomites. Although

Moses lived about 400 years after the events of the book of Genesis, the placement of the record of these eight kings at this juncture is just as authoritative as all that came before and will come after in its story. Therefore, the last king of Edom, named Hadar, was probably still in control when Moses recorded this passage in this portion of the Scripture.

Eleven Chiefs of Esau

Genesis 36:40 Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families *and* their localities, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth, ⁴¹ chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, ⁴² chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, ⁴³ chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of the Edomites), according to their habitations in the land of their possession.

As Moses completed the record of Esau's lineage in Chapter 36, he added a completely different list of Edomite chiefs from those first listed in verses 15 – 18. Two names seem familiar, Timna and Oholibamah; however, here they were male descendants whereas they were wives in the earlier text. Therefore, they were different people. Furthermore, we can only conclude that these eleven chiefs were the tribal heads of the Edomite region at the time of the writing of the Book of Genesis and Moses would have had firsthand knowledge of this fact. It is his final summary of Esau's life and descendants. Moses will not refer to Esau again in this book.