

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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Edom is in Modern Jewry

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This is the third issue dealing with Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac, who sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob for some red stuff and then was wronged by Jacob when he deceived their father into giving him the blessing of dominion. Thus, Esau lost both the birthright and the blessing. As previously stated, this set the stage for a centuries-long struggle of bloodshed in which Esau or, as I like to call him, Red, sought to regain the land that he lost by selling his birthright and being defrauded of the blessing to rule over the land.

It is vital to keep in mind that the struggle is over control (dominion) of the land of Canaan or, if you will, the land of Israel that Esau lost (Ezekiel 35; 36:5). Esau occupied his own land called Edom, but, in his mind, the land that Jacob occupied was his by birthright and he wanted it back. By the way, the same argument could be made for Ishmael who lost his inheritance to Isaac, even though he was a firstborn son to Hagar. Both Ishmael and Esau have sought (and fought) to regain the land they think they have a right to on the basis of birthright; this is the struggle we see going on in modern Israel today. It is generally recognized that the Arabs are Ishmael. But, where is Esau-Edom?

When Esau realized he had lost the dominion blessing, he cried out to his father. As far as he was concerned, he had lost everything. All that his father could offer him was a prophecy over his life.

And by your sword you shall live, and shall serve your brother. And it shall be when you shall have the dominion, you shall break his yoke from off your neck. (Genesis 27:40 MKJV)

In this context, the word *dominion* prophetically signifies that through force of the sword, that is, through violence and bloodshed, Esau would break free from his brother and rule. What we are not told is when this would occur, how it would occur, and what Edom's dominion would look like.

Although Jacob possessed both the birthright and the dominion blessing, it appeared that, at least early on, his brother Esau was much stronger than he was, almost as if Esau ruled over Jacob. The fact of the matter is that Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed when he heard that his brother was coming to meet him as he passed by the land of Seir, the country of Edom (Genesis 32:3, 7). Jacob even referred to his brother as "my lord," and himself as "your servant." As the story goes, there was no sword drawn or war fought; the two wept over each other, Jacob gave Esau gifts, and they departed on good terms. This hardly fulfills Isaac's prophecy. If anything, Esau already had dominion over Edom-Seir as his land and was not under a yoke to his younger brother. Edom could hardly be described as being a servant of Jacob.

After all, Jacob had no kings in the days when the two brothers were both alive. At least eight kings had come forth from Esau **before any king reigned over the sons of Israel** (Genesis 36:31). The kings from Jacob's line came much later. So, when did the prophecy begin to be fulfilled?

According to the record, Saul inflicted punishment on Edom and defeated the Amalekites (1 Samuel 14:47-48). Later, under King David, many nations were subdued, including Amalek. At that time, all the Edomites became servants to David. **In all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David** (2 Samuel 8:14). Thus, it could be said that the first part of Isaac's prophecy was fulfilled during the time of the kings of Israel.

It wasn't until after Solomon's death when his kingdom was split into two nations (Judah and Israel) that Edom began to make his move to freedom. The kings of Judah had battles with the Edomites; however, when King Jehoram reigned over Judah, **Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves** (2 Kings 8:20), and they regained their lost cities. During the reign of Ahaz, they invaded southern Judah and carried away captives (2 Chronicles 28:17). When Judah fell into Babylonian captivity, Edom gloated over their brother's misfortune and boasted in the day of their misfortune (Obadiah 1:11-12), and even seized some of the land of Judah that remained under Babylonian control (Ezekiel 35:10-11; 36:5). However, Edom never took control of all the land of Israel, meaning he did not come into dominion over the land. So, what happened to Edom?

A.R. Fausset, in his *Bible Encyclopedia and Dictionary*, page 185, gives a short history of Idumea-Edom from about 163 BC to 70 AD, during which time Edom was absorbed into Judah.

"At the Babylonian captivity they seized on the Amalekite territory, and even Hebron in southern Judea, so that Idumea came to mean *the region between Arabah and the Mediterranean*. Meanwhile mount Seir, or Edom proper, was occupied by the Nabatheans (descended from Nebaioth, Ishmael's eldest son and Esau's brother-in-law), a powerful people of S. Arabia. Idumea south of Palestine was joined to Judea under Judas Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus. Antipater, one of the Jewish perfects, an Idumean, by Roman senate's decree became procurator of all Judea. His son was Herod the Great. Just before the siege under Titus 20,000 Idumeans were admitted into Jerusalem and filled it with bloodshed and rapine. Mahometan misrule finally destroyed Edom's prosperity in fulfillment of Ezekiel 35:3-4." [Note: Antipater grew up in Idumea; his wife was Idumean.]

The conquest of Edom by Judas Maccabeus began in 163 BC and the job was finished by John Hyrcanus in 126 BC, at which time, Edom ceased being a nation.

The Jewish historian Josephus, in his *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 13, Chapter 9.1.257, gives more details, specifically making the point that Edom was absorbed into Judah and they became Jews.

"Hyrcanus took also Dora and Marrassa, cities of Idumea, and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and the rest of the Jews' way of living; at which time therefore, this befell them, that **they were hereafter no other than Jews.**"

A footnote for this section states: "This account of the Idumeans admitting circumcision, and the entire Jewish law, from these times, or from the days of Hyrcanus, is confirmed by their entire history afterwards."

It wasn't that the Idumeans simply joined Judah; they were forced to become religious Jews, that is, ones who followed the external rituals of Judaism, not ones with changed hearts. In other words, they were forcibly grafted into the bad fig tree of Judah that would later reject Jesus as the King of Judah.

Several historical sources make the assertion that **the Idumeans were called Jews**, and *The Jewish Encyclopedia* asserts that **Edom is in modern Jewry**. Notice that the Jews themselves see Edom as part of Jewry modernly, not anciently. This has profound implications to latter-day prophecy concerning modern Israel.

So, given this short history, it is apparent that Edom was free of Jacob at first, but when the kings of Israel came on the scene, Edom became Jacob's servant. Then, Edom-Idumea revolted from Judah and made a king over themselves. It could be said that they broke the yoke, but they never gained dominion over the land of Israel. They ruled in their own cities as a nation until 126 BC when they were thereafter identified as Jews, not Edomites or any of the other names associated with Esau. Edom was absorbed into Jewry, but does this fulfill Isaac's prophecy about Esau's destiny? Think about this: If Edom is in modern Jewry, and there is a modern Jewish state called Israel on the land of Jacob, then Edom must be on the land that he sold to Jacob nearly 3800 years ago. He's back! See the next issue.