

The digital age has witnessed the rise of many online resources that seek to help others trace their heritage and discover their family history. Some of those resources offer searchable databases, forums for collaboration, and DNA testing to help people trace their ancestry and explore their personal genealogies.

In one sense, Genesis chapter thirty-six functions in a similar manner. On this occasion, the subject of our genealogical research will be Jacob's brother, Esau.

While Esau's life was characterized by [spiritual indifference](#), his grandfather, Abraham, [was known as a man of faith](#). God also made several promises to Abraham that served to impact the course of Esau's life. We find one such promise in Genesis chapter seventeen...

***“I will give you many descendants. Many nations and kings will come from you” (Genesis 17:6 GW).***

The genealogical data presented to us in Genesis thirty-six will demonstrate God's faithfulness in fulfilling that portion of His covenant with Abraham.

***“These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir” (Genesis 36:9 ESV).***

This portion of Scripture tells us that Esau eventually relocated to Edom, a regional area located south of the Dead Sea. Genesis 36:6-7 provides us with the explanation for that move...

***“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.***

***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.”***

So Esau (the man who once sought to [murder Jacob](#)) acted with remarkable graciousness. He moved his family, his livestock, and his entire household far away from Jacob in order to provide sufficient grazing areas for their respective herds.

Perhaps Esau realized that God was determined to make good on His [promise to give Jacob that land as his possession](#). So when the available pasture lands could no longer support them, Esau took the initiative to relocate.

So Esau left for the hill country of Seir ([Genesis 36:9](#)), a rugged, mountainous area that lay south and east of the Dead Sea. It was there that his family grew large enough to form a national people group. That nation eventually became known as “Edom,” a name that was derived from Esau's nickname (see [Genesis 25:30](#)).

The Edomites are mentioned repeatedly throughout the Biblical Scriptures and later became a neighboring nation to the people of Israel. A long list of Esau's descendants begins in Genesis 36:9 and [continues](#) through verse thirty. The best-known person within that list appears in verse twelve...

***“Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz...”***

Amalek was the ancestor of a people group that bore his name: the Amalekites. The Amalekites would later rise to become one of Israel's most formidable enemies.

For instance, the Amalekites once [attacked](#) the nation of Israel on their journey to the land of God's promise. Their assault strategy was simple: as the people of Israel made their way, the Amalekites ambushed those who were traveling behind...

***“Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God” (Deuteronomy 25:17-18 NIV).***

These verses thus preview the mutual hostility that characterized the relationship between the Amalekites and the people of Israel throughout their Biblical history.

Genesis thirty-six and the historical record of Esau’s descendants also serves another purpose; it alerts us to the negative consequences that can follow whenever we forsake God's direction. That may lead to ramifications that extend well beyond our earthly lives.

Consider how this unfortunate reality unfolded in the history of this region. For instance, the land of Edom later came to be known as Idumea. Three political figures emerged from Idumea who would later play significant roles in New Testament history. Those leaders formed branches of the “Herodian Dynasty” that comprised Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa the First, and Herod Antipas.

Herod the Great was the person who murdered every male infant in the Bethlehem region aged two or younger in an attempt to exterminate Jesus and eliminate him as a potential rival ([Matthew 2:16-18](#)).

Herod Agrippa the First later executed the Apostle James, one of the leaders of the ancient church ([Acts 12:1-2](#)). Finally, there was Herod Antipas. Antipas is perhaps best known as the man who issued the order to decapitate John the Baptist ([Mark 6:17-28](#)).

These historic examples present us with an object lesson. You see, Esau was a man who [cared little](#) for the things of God, and he clearly passed that character trait to his descendants. If Esau had been someone who sought to honor God, then history might have turned out differently.

Genesis chapter thirty-six thus underscores the importance of following God’s direction in our lives. One of the best ways to do so involves consistent Scripture reading, daily communion with God in prayer, and faithful participation in corporate worship and Bible study at a local church (see [Acts 2:42](#)).

A person who travels that path is sure to grow spiritually and serve as a positive influence in the lives of others.