

9. Defining Esau as a Type of Apostates (Genesis 24–27)

Conflict between Jacob and Esau began even in their mother's womb: "Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. . .

"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom [from the Hebrew word *'adom*, which means "red"). And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:21–24).

When Jacob passed himself off as Esau and Isaac blessed him with the birthright blessing, Esau still pleaded for it. What he received instead foreshadows the enmity between the brothers that continues to this day: "Isaac his father answered and said to him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran" (Genesis 27:39–43).

In Haran, Jacob married Leah and Rachel, Laban's daughters and raised twelve sons and also daughters. He eventually returned to the land of his inheritance and paid tribute Esau in the form of sheep and cattle. From Esau came the people called Edom, whose land bordered the land of Canaan, a nation that continued Esau's hatred for Jacob's descendants. When Moses led Israel out of bondage in Egypt, Israel was compelled to circumvent the land of Edom in order to inherit the Promised Land:

"Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, Thus says your brother Israel, You know all the travail that has befallen us: How our fathers went down to Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers: And when we cried to

the Lord, he heard our voice and sent an angel, and he has brought us forth out of Egypt: and behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost part of your border: Let us pass, I pray you, through your country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed your borders. And Edom said to him, You shall not pass by me, lest I come out against you with the sword. And the children of Israel said to him, We will go by the highway: and if I and my cattle drink of your water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet. And he said, You shall not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through its border: wherefore Israel turned away from him" (Numbers 20:14–21).

Isaiah shows how the enmity between the descendants of Esau and Jacob continues till the end of the world. At that time, all who become identified with Esau or Edom are destroyed in God's Day of Judgment. Like Esau, many of those whom God destroys are his own people who, like Esau sell their spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage, speaking figuratively not literally.

"Come near, you nations, and hear! Pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth give heed, and all who are upon it, the world, and all who spring from it. The Lord's rage is upon all nations, his fury upon all their hosts; he has doomed them, consigned them to the slaughter. Their slain shall be flung out and their corpses emit a stench; their blood shall dissolve on the mountains, their fat decompose [on the hills]—when the heavens are rolled up as a scroll, and their starry hosts shed themselves with one accord, like withered leaves from a vine, or shriveled fruit from a fig tree. When my sword drinks its fill in the heavens, it shall come down on Edom in judgment, on the people I have sentenced to damnation" (Isaiah 34:1–5).

"For it is the Lord's day of vengeance, the year of retribution on behalf of Zion [Edom's] streams shall turn into lava and her earth into brimstone; her land shall become as burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall ascend forever. It shall remain a wasteland from generation to generation; through endless ages none shall traverse it. But hawks and falcons shall possess it, and owls and ravens inhabit it. It shall be surveyed with muddled measure and chaotic weight" (Isaiah 34:8–11).

At his coming, the Lord also figuratively portrays the destruction of the apostates of his people and of all nations who identify with Esau or Edom: "Who is this coming from Edom in red-stained garments? Who is this from Bozrah, arrayed in majesty, pressing forward in the strength of his power? It is I, who am mighty to save, announcing righteousness! Why are you clothed in red, your garments like those who tread [grapes] in the winepress? Alone I have trodden out a vatful; of the nations no one was with me. I trod them down in my anger; in my wrath I trampled them. Their lifeblood spattered my garments, and I have stained my whole attire. For I had resolved on a day of vengeance, and the year of my redeemed had come" (Isaiah 63:1–4).

In the end, only those who remain loyal to the God of Israel survive into the earth's millennial age: "On Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall inherit their possessions. The house of Jacob will be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall be for stubble, and they shall kindle in them and devour them; and

there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord has spoken it. . . . Saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's” (Obadiah 1:17–18, 21).