

## **Edom. Esav's Descendents** **by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

In chapter 36 of Bereishis, at the end of Parshas Vayishlach, we are given an overview of Esav's future. We are told about his wives, children, grandchildren, as well as later kings of his territory. We are also told about the inhabitants of his territory of Seir before he arrived there. As Torah repeats a number of times, Esav is Edom.

Edom extends from the Dead Sea in the North along the Wadi El-Kurachi or Wadi El-Chas to the Desert of the Kedemites in the East. [Kedemites are generally understood to be Eastern nomadic desert dwelling tribes.] The Eastern border went along with the desert down to the Gulf of Aqqabah which leads into the Red Sea. The Western border is from the Dead Sea by Aravah to the Red Sea. While the exact boundaries are subject to much debate among historians, they had to be outside of Eretz Yisroel as Edom was not to be awarded to us till the time of Moshiach. For a time Dovid Hamelech had stationed garrisons in this area as we are told in Shmuel II 8:14 and in Divrai Hayamim 18:12 and in Tehillim 60:2. Edom later rebelled and won back their total independence. At some point they wanted to join with Yehuda to fight Babylonia but later joined Babylonia, thus showing their true colors. In the days of the second Bais Hamikdash they were known as the Greek and later the Roman Province of Idumea.

In verses 31-43 we are told of the eight kings who ruled over Edom. They each had a different capital but they were all in Edom. The classic Meforshim had much to say on why the Torah tells us so much about Edom's kings and their cities. Rabbeinu Bachaya quotes Ibn Ezra tells us that the location of Seir was southeast of Eretz Yisroel as we are told in Devarim 2:1-9. But why are we told all of his information about Edom? What meaning does it have for Am Yisroel? Rabbeinu Bachaya answers that we need to know the borders of Edom in order to know what territories we are forbidden to conquer and completely take over. We also need to know who Esav's descendent Amalek is so we can fulfill the command to obliterate them.

Rashi tells quotes our mesorah that Magdiel is Rome. This is how Esav spread himself all over the world as The Roman Empire covered the entire Middle East, North Africa and a good part of the European Continent. In Eicha 4:23 we read the following: "Rejoice and be happy O daughter of Edom who dwells in the land of Utz on you too the cup[of punishment] will pass." Rashi tells us that this is a hint to the Romans as Yirmiyahu was having a prophecy about the destruction of the second Bais Hamikdash at the hands of Edom, descendents of Edom. The Targum Yonassan on Eicha identifies Utz with Constantina which could be referring to Constantinople. We have historic sources that tell us that descendents of Edom went to this area of Asia Minor. This city was the capital of the Byzantine Empire which was the Eastern half of the Roman Empire. The city remained strong the Persian Emperor Khosru conquered it, thus fulfilling one opinion in the Gemara in Yoma 10 that holds Rome will fall into the hands of Persia. So we see some of how Edom spread itself all over the world.

The Ramban explains that the bracha given to Esav, ‘By your sword you shall live’, was fulfilled. While many Chachamim believed that these historical accounts about the eight kings were referring to the future, the Ramban believed it all took place before the time of the giving of the Torah. The Ramban then clarifies the historical order of what the Torah describes of the alufim, war-lords. First Esav’s grandsons were alufim in their time. Then they established an organized solid kingdom. After that they went back to the system of independent alufim. The first time they had the system of alufim, they all ruled together in one city. The second time they were war-lords over all of Esav’s descendent but never really having the glory of kings. However, the Ramban agrees that Magdiel was the ancestor of Rome. He quotes the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliazer that Esav was given one hundred countries from Seir to Magdiel. This is also part of the rule that what happens to the fathers is a sign for the children which the Ramban seems to extend to Esav as well. Magdiel means being greater than Hashem, as Rome thought itself to be.

The Ohr Hachayim tells us that the Torah mentions three times in this Parsha that Esav is Edom. This indicates that Hashem swears three times that he will destroy Edom. The Ohr Hachayim quotes Midrash Tanchuma that Esav will put on Tztizis sit between the tzaddikim till Hashem pulls him away. [Perhaps this is an allusion to Esav’s pretensions to be a tzaddik but really the total opposite which Hashem will make known at the end of time.] He also points out that *Etzer* and *otzar*, treasury have the same root letters, *alef*, *tzadi* and *reish*. He explains that Am Yisroel has to endure the pains from Esav’s family to be worthy of the otzar, treasury of rewards in the future. On the verse, “These are the kings who ruled in Edom Before there was a king to Bnai Yisroel”, the Ohr Hachayim comments that all who join with Edom even if they are not originally from Edom will fall and be destroyed. Edom and all of its allies will be blown away. Edom will have its time and its heyday as the listing of the eight kings describes. But afterwards, when Edom is destroyed, Am Yisroel will rule. Am Yisroel is the nation of truth bearing Hashem’s message to the world and will utterly obliterate Esav’s legacy of falsehoods.