

What is the significance of Edom in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Edom-in-the-Bible.html>

Edom was an ancient kingdom that is mainly associated with Esau and his descendants in the Bible. Being descendants of Abraham, the Edomites were related to the Israelites. But they did not always act as brothers.

Located on the east side of the Arabah and extending down to the Dead Sea, Edom was first occupied by the Horites, who were later driven out by Esau's descendants (M. G. Easton, Easton's Bible Dictionary, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893, entry for Edom). Numerous verses in the Bible equate the hill country of Seir with Edom, which would "suggest that Seir and Edom comprise an entity that should be viewed as one and the same in terms of their respective geographical locations" (Bruce Crew, "Did Edom's Territories Extend West of Wadi Arabah?" *Bible and Spade* 15:1, 2002, p. 4). Interestingly, the name Edom means "red," which is easily linked with Esau, who sold his birthright for red stew and thereby earned the name Edom (Genesis 25:30). In spite of the connection with Esau, many scholars believe that the kingdom of Edom was associated with red before Esau took control of it because of the red cliffs located in its area (W. Ewing, "Edom; Edomites," *Bible Study Tools*, 1915, www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/edom-edomites.html, accessed 3-29-20). Bozrah and Petra (or Sela) were notable cities in Edom, with Bozrah being the capital and central city of the kingdom.

The nation of Edom existed before the Israelites left Egypt, and the Lord commanded the Israelites not to attempt to take the land from the Edomites as they passed through, since He had given the land to Esau (Deuteronomy 2:1-5). Moses and the Israelites asked permission to cross through the land of Edom on their journey out of Egypt, but they

were refused passage by the Edomite king (Numbers 20:14-21). From this point on in the Bible, Edom is mentioned as Israel's enemy, and the two nations fought frequently.

Both Saul and David fought against the Edomites, with David conquering them and forcing them into labor (1 Samuel 14:47-48; 2 Samuel 8:13-14). During the reign of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up their own independent king (2 Kings 8:20-22). The Edomites continued to be a problem for the Israelites and even raided Judah after it fell to the Babylonians (Ezekiel 25:12-14). Because of Edom's sin in raiding Judah and taking delight in Israel's fall during the Babylonian Captivity, the Lord pronounced judgment on Edom (Jeremiah 49:7-22). God declared that Edom would be a wasteland, occupied only by wild animals (Malachi 1:2-5). This began to come to pass when Edom was pushed out of their land and taken over by the Nabateans (Craig Blaising, "Malachi," Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament, ed. by J. Walvoord and R. Zuck, David C. Cook, 1983. p. 1,576). God justly dealt with the Edomites because of their actions and attitude toward Israel.

The book of Obadiah deals specifically with Edom's judgment. The Edomites were proud (Obadiah 1:3), violent (verse 10), and apathetic to the destruction of Israel (verse 11), and God promised a reckoning. After the Edomites were driven from their land by the Nabateans, they migrated to the southern part of Israel and became known as Idumeans. Much later in biblical history, Herod the Great, an Idumean, appears on the scene. It was Herod who tried to kill the infant Jesus in Bethlehem—through Herod, the rebellion of Edom continued.

In AD 70, the Idumeans joined the Israelites in their revolt against Rome, and they were wiped out when Jerusalem was destroyed. At that point, the descendants of Esau

disappeared from human history, just as God had said. Although once a mighty kingdom among the red cliffs of its land, Edom was destroyed for its sin. It is the restored Israel who will one day possess the land of Edom and the “mountains of Esau” in the millennial kingdom of Christ (Obadiah 1:19-21).