

The Edomites

A relationship with Israel explained through Infographics

In Summary

The Edomites were a tribe formed from the offspring of Esau, the patriarch Jacob's (Israel) brother.

In terms of the tribes that possessed the promised land, their relationship with Israel was largely one of respect (Deuteronomy 23:7-8), but came to be considered enemies, due to their treatment of the Israelites on their escape from Egypt, and because they are believed to have helped Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II plunder Israel (Psalms 137:7-8; Obadiah 1:11-14).

Patriarch



Esau
(also known as Edom)

Land Possessed



Time of the Patriarchs

Esau is born

Esau (or Edom), father of the Edomites, is born to Isaac and Rebekah

Genesis 25:25

Edom becomes a nation

Esau has many wives, and many children and grows to become a nation in his own right, settling in the land of Seir.

Genesis 32-33, 36

Leaving Egypt and the time of Wandering

Israel attempts to travel through Edom

While journeying through the wilderness and toward the promised land, Israel hopes to take a shortcut through Edom. They send messengers to request passage but are denied, Edom threatening them with war.

Numbers 21-22

The Lord declares Edom will be conquered

The seer Balaam is hired by King Balak of Moab to curse Israel. However the Lord intervenes and while in the Spirit, Balaam ends up blessing Israel but cursing several other nations. One of which is Edom.

Numbers 24

Israel are commanded not to despise Edomites

On the cusp of entering the promised land, the Lord reiterates his promises and commands to Israel, as part of this they are commanded to treat Edomites well because they are related to one another. Esau/Edom being the older brother of Jacob/Israel.

Deuteronomy 23:7

The time of the Kings

King Saul battles several of the surrounding nations, including Edom

After Saul becomes king, he engages in war with the enemies of Israel, the Edomites are included in this campaign.

1 Samuel 14:47

Doeg the Edomite is commanded to strike down the priests who assisted David

After David visits Nob and receives supplies from the priest Ahimelek, Saul heads there afterwards in hope of catching and killing him. Arriving too late, he commands instead that the priests of Nob be killed, his men are unwilling to kill priests of the Lord, so he instead instructs Doeg to do so, who agrees.

1 Samuel 21-22

King David kills eighteen thousand Edomites, establishes garrisons in their land and rules over them

As part of his campaign to conquer and subdue the nations surrounding Israel, King David decimates the Edomites, and establishes military garrisons in their land in order to rule over them. They become subject to him and he also dedicates the gold and silver plunder gained to the Lord.

2 Samuel 8:11-14

The Lord raises up an Edomite adversary against King Solomon

As a result of his sin in taking many foreign wives, the Lord brings about a measure of judgement on King Solomon by raising up Hadad the Edomite as his adversary. Hadad fled to Egypt as a child to escape David's war on Edom, but on hearing about his death, returned home.

1 Kings 11:14-22

The kings of Israel, Judah and Edom join forces together to battle against the Moabites

After King Ahab of Israel dies, the Moabites rebel against the Israelites. The new king of Israel, Joram, allies with Judah and Edom to go to war against Moab.

2 Kings 3

Edom rebels against Judah

While Jehoram is king of Israel, Edom rebels against Judah, and sets up their own king. Jehoram attempts to quell the rebellion, only to fail, allowing Edom to remain in rebellion against their Jewish occupiers. This would lead to regular raids by the Edomites and battles between them and Israel and Judah.

2 Kings 8:20-22

Amaziah, King of Judah defeats the Edomites

Amaziah King of Judah, goes to war with the Edomites of Seir in the Valley of Salt, winning a decisive victory. However, he then takes their idols home and worships them, bringing about judgement from the Lord on himself.

2 Chronicles 25

Rezin, King of Aram drives Judah out of Elath

Rezin, King of Aram, while allied to Pekah, King of Israel, attempts to besiege Jerusalem but is unsuccessful. However Rezin does manage to drive the people of Judah out of Elath (a former Edomite area), leading to the Edomites returning to the area.

2 Kings 16:5-6

The time of Israel's Exile & Return

The LORD declares judgement against Edom and other nations

Through the prophets the LORD declares judgement against Edom for their sins against him and his people Israel.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Malachi

Times met in battle



■ Israelite/Judean Victory
■ Edomite Victory

*The total number of times is uncertain, but there are at least four specific references in the Bible that mention conflict between Israel and Edom.

Total years ruling over Israel



Gods worshipped

Qos*

*While this information is not explicit in the Bible, it is verified by archaeological evidence.

What's more, the Bible mentions 'gods', but it's not clear if this means there are more than one or if it's just a turn of

Notable Edomites

Esau

Brother of Jacob (Israel). Sold his birthright to him for some stew, and also lost his father Isaac's blessing to him as well.

Doeg

King Saul's chief shepherd. He witnesses David taking shelter with the priests of Nob, whom he is subsequently commanded by Saul to kill. Which he does.

Hadad

King Solomon's adversary, from the royal line of Edom. Raised up against Solomon by the Lord.

Mentions outside of the Bible

Khirbat en-Nahas

Khirbat en-Nahas is a large-scale copper-mining site excavated by archaeologist Thomas Levy in what is now southern Jordan.