

**Into the Promised Land - Joshua's Story**  
**Lesson #19 – “The Arrogance of Edom”**  
**• HANDOUT**

► This current lesson [#19], examines what occurred after the events at Meribah. It opens with Moses sending a message to the King of Edom requesting permission for Israel to pass through Edom. Moses' request serves to revive the ancient hostility that existed between Israel and Edom. Furthermore, the old aggressive rancor between the two nations seems to have actually grown in scope and intensity.

Numbers 20:14-17 • Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: "This is what your brother, Israel, says: You know about all the hardships that have come upon us. Our forefathers went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our fathers, but when we cried out to the Lord, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, nor drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

Q: Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom with a request that Israel be allowed to go through Edom on their way to the Promised Land. Why doesn't Moses go in person?

Q: When addressing the King of Edom, why would Moses identify Israel as “your brother?”

**► Since Isaac was the patriarch to both Edom & Israel  
let's look at Isaac's genealogy as is summarized in Genesis 25:**

Genesis 25:19-23 • This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram, and sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?"

So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

**Now ... To fully appreciate the situation Moses found himself in with the nation of the Edomites,  
we need to follow the twins as they grew into adulthood ...**

► The older twin was Esau and Jacob was the younger. In fact, when Jacob was born, he was holding onto the heel of Esau. The Hebrew word for heel is “aqeb” so they named the younger twin Ya'aqob or Jacob, which literally means “he clutches the heel” or “grasper.” [Esau got his name because he was born with reddish hair all over his body. The name Esau means “red hairy.”]

Q: In ancient times, especially in the Bible, names were given with great meaning behind them. Did the name define what the person's character and temperament would be, or did the name cause the character and temperament to develop?

► **CONTINUING THE TWINS STORY** • The twins were opposite in temperament, just as the Lord told Rebekah they would be. They had little in common and were constantly contentious toward one another. Esau was an outdoorsman and an excellent hunter, traits which Isaac appreciated. Consequently Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, while Rebekah preferred Jacob over Esau, because Jacob had a quiet demeanor and preferred to stay in the compound, near his mother.

Esau felt absolutely secure in his place within the family. Not only was he his father's favorite but, as the first-born, he would receive the birthright, which meant he would receive a double portion of his inheritance upon his father's death. He was convinced that nothing could dislodge this right. This was made evident when he "sold" his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of porridge when he came in from the fields famished. Though he did not take this seriously and treated the transaction as a joke or prank, Jacob took it ever so seriously.

Q: Do we ever treat our salvation the way Esau treated his birthright? [Additional ref: Hebrews 12:15-17]

► **CONTINUING THE TWINS STORY** • The Birthright Debacle seemed to be the beginning of the serious problems between the twins. As Jacob grew older, he became more and more cunning and deceitful toward Esau, and this seemed to be aided by his mother. Perhaps Esau was "lording it over Jacob," which makes logical sense. Or, this might be attributed to his parents' showing such divided favoritism toward their sons. The scripture doesn't really tell us.

When Isaac was blind and dying, Rebekah helped Jacob cheat Esau out of his father's blessing as the first-born son. This blessing would have set into motion Esau receiving the double portion of his inheritance. Jacob, with his mother's help, tricked Isaac into thinking he was giving the patriarchal blessing to Esau, but he was really giving it to Jacob. The blessing could only be given once, so it would be Jacob who would receive the double portion. When Esau found out, he was livid and threatened to kill Jacob. Rebekah sent Jacob to her brother Laban in Haran.

Jacob ended up living in Haran, with Uncle Laban, for 20 years. It is interesting to note that Laban was far more cunning and deceitful than Jacob had ever dreamed of being. Jacob fell in love with Laban's younger daughter, Rachel. Though Laban gave permission for Jacob to marry Rachel, Laban required Jacob to work for him for 7 years before marrying her. Then Laban tricked Jacob into believing he was marrying Rachel, when in fact he was marrying her older sister, Leah, which he discovered the next morning, after consummating the marriage. Jacob had to work an additional 7 years for Rachel, whom he finally married. Between Leah and Rachel and their maid-servants, Jacob became the father of twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Q: What purpose do you think Laban's ill treatment of Jacob served in Jacob's life?

► **CONTINUING THE TWINS STORY** • Meanwhile, Esau had three wives and five children. Two were Canaanite women and one was the daughter of Ishmael. Esau was successful and his descendants became known as the Edomites, because they settled and then governed in the Canaanite territory of Edom. Like their father, Esau, his sons were fierce and rugged warriors who prided themselves in their self-sufficiency. Even though they became wealthy and powerful rulers, they walked away from Jehovah God.

After the 20 years in Haran, Jacob returned to Canaan with the flocks he had acquired from Laban, his two wives and eleven of his twelve sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Jah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Joseph. [Benjamin, the 12<sup>th</sup> son after returning to Canaan. Rachel died during his birth.]

Jacob was very nervous when he met Esau after all those years. He was greatly relieved and grateful when Esau forgave Jacob of his deceit and they made peace with one another.

▶ But the twins still had very little in common. The fact that Esau had walked away from Jehovah God and had embraced the Canaanite lifestyle, along with his Canaanite wives, only exacerbated their differences.

More importantly, in spite of Esau's forgiving attitude toward Jacob, there was no forgiveness on the part of Esau's family toward Jacob and his descendants.

The two nations which the twins "fathered," Edom and Israel, would continue, from that time forward, to be in conflict. This conflict is what Moses faced as he waited for the King of Edom to answer his request.

### The King of Edom Answers Moses' Diplomatic Message ...

Numbers 20:18-21 • But Edom answered: "You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword."

The Israelites replied: "We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot--nothing else."

Again they answered: "You may not pass through." Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.

Q: What is the King's Highway that Moses said Israel would travel as they passed through Edom's territory?



Q: Even though allowing Israel to pass through Edom would have been a gracious gesture and would not have compromised Edom in any way, why is Edom refusing Israel passage through their land?

Q: How does Moses respond to Edom's refusal?

Q: How did Edom respond to Moses' alternative request?

Q: How did Israel respond when Moses' alternative request was rejected?

Q: Why would Moses acquiesce and just turn away from Edom?

Deuteronomy 23:7 • "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land.

**▶ Israel almost at the end of their sentence of wandering  
and the next generation of Israelites  
must now prepare to take their place  
in Israel's new beginning.**



Next Time • Lesson #20  
"A Time For Mourning "

