

Joshua 24:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

Analysis

I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau (וַיַּעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה לְאַיָּצָר לְיַעֲקֹב וְלְיַעֲשֹׂעַ) — God's sovereign election becomes explicit. Though both were Isaac's sons, only Jacob inherited covenant promises. The verb natan (נָתַן, to give) appears repeatedly, emphasizing divine gift, not human achievement. God gave Isaac to Abraham, gave Jacob and Esau to Isaac, and selectively chose Jacob for covenant lineage.

I gave unto Esau mount Seir...but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt — this contrast highlights sovereign discrimination. Esau received immediate territorial possession (Mount Seir, Edom), while Jacob's descendants entered 400 years of Egyptian bondage before inheriting Canaan. Yet Jacob, not Esau, received covenant blessing. This paradox demonstrates that God's electing purposes transcend immediate circumstances. Romans 9:10-13 cites this passage to establish unconditional election: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated' — sovereign choice, not foreseen merit, determines salvation.

Historical Context

The division between Jacob and Esau occurred around 1915 BC. Esau settled in Mount Seir (the region of Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea) after selling his birthright and losing the blessing (Genesis 25:29-34, 27:1-40, 36:6-8). Jacob's descendants went to Egypt around 1876 BC during the famine, remaining 430 years (Exodus 12:40-41). Though Esau received immediate possession, Jacob's line

—despite centuries of slavery—inherits covenant promises. This reversal pattern (younger over older, bondage before freedom) characterizes God's redemptive method.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does God's choice of Jacob over Esau teach about election based on grace rather than human merit or effort?
2. Why did God give Esau immediate possession while Jacob's descendants endured centuries of slavery before inheriting?
3. How does this passage (cited in Romans 9:10-13) establish the doctrine of unconditional election?

Interlinear Text

לְעֵשׂ וְתַאֲתִי לְעֵשׂ וְתַאֲתִי
And I gave unto Isaac H853 Jacob H853 and Esau H6215 And I gave and Esau H6215

וְבָנָיו יְמִינָה אֶת שָׁעֵיר לְכַשֵּׁת יְמִינָה אֶת שָׁעֵיר לְכַשֵּׁת
H853 mount H2022 Seir H8165 to possess H3423 Jacob H3290 and his children H1121

מִצְרָיִם: יָרַד וָיָּשַׁבְּנָה
went down into Egypt
H3381 H4714

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 36:8 (Parallel theme): Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

Deuteronomy 2:5 (Parallel theme): Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.

Acts 7:15 (References Egypt): So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

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