

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 (וְאֶת־יִצְחָק לְיַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו)—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—inherited 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

Psalms 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

וָאֶת־	לְיִצְחָק־	אֶת־	וְיַעֲקֹב־	וָאֶת־	לְעֵשָׂא־	וָאֶת־	לְעֵשָׂא־
And I gave	unto Isaac		Jacob		and Esau	And I gave	and Esau
H5414	H3327	H853	H3290	H853	H6215	H5414	H6215
אֶת־	הַר־	שֵׁעִיר־	לָקַח־	אֶת־	וְיַעֲקֹב־	וּבָנָיו־	
H853	mount	Seir	to possess	H853	Jacob	and his children	
	H2022	H8165	H3423		H3290	H1121	
יָרַד־	מִצְרָיִם־						
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,