

Malachi 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

Analysis

And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. This verse continues God's answer to Israel's skepticism about His love (v. 2). The Hebrew שָׁנְאָתִי (sane'ti), "I hated," must be understood in its covenantal context—not emotional hatred but divine rejection for covenant purposes. Where Jacob received election and blessing, Esau received non-election. This language of love versus hate appears in covenant contexts throughout Scripture (Deuteronomy 21:15-17, Luke 14:26), indicating preferential choice rather than malicious animosity.

The proof of this divine judgment appears in Edom's devastation: **laid his mountains and his heritage waste** (וְאֵשִׁים אֶת-הָרִים שְׁמָמָה, va'asim et-harav shemamah). Edom occupied the mountainous region of Seir, south of the Dead Sea. The term שְׁמָמָה (shemamah) means desolation, waste, or ruin. Edom's territory had become home to **dragons of the wilderness** (תָּנִים, letannot midbar)—tannim) refers to jackals or desert creatures inhabiting ruins, emphasizing complete desolation where once proud cities stood.

Paul quotes this passage in Romans 9:13 to demonstrate God's sovereign election: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The point isn't individual eternal destinies but God's freedom in choosing whom He will use for His redemptive purposes. Jacob's line produced the Messiah; Esau's descendants opposed God's people throughout history (Numbers 20:14-21, Obadiah, Psalm 137:7).

Historical Context

Edom descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother (Genesis 25-36). Throughout Israel's history, Edom remained antagonistic—refusing Israel passage during the Exodus (Numbers 20:14-21), raiding Israel's borders, and rejoicing at Jerusalem's fall to Babylon (Obadiah 10-14, Psalm 137:7). By Malachi's time (450-400 BC), Edom had been devastated by Nabatean Arabs. Archaeological evidence confirms Edom's destruction in the 6th-5th centuries BC. Where Israel was restored after exile, Edom never recovered. The Edomites were eventually absorbed into Judea as Idumeans; King Herod the Great was an Idumean descendant.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does understanding covenant election (love versus hate) differ from modern notions of divine favoritism?
2. What does Edom's historical judgment teach about the consequences of opposing God's purposes?
3. How should God's sovereign election produce both humility and security in believers?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת שְׁמַמָּה הַכְּרִי אֶת אַשְׁר יָמַשׁ וְאֵת
H853 **Esau** And I hated and laid H853 **his mountains** waste H853
H6215 H8130 H7760 H2022 H8077

מִדְבָּר: לְתַנְּגֹת וְגַנְּחֹלֶת וְ
and his heritage for the dragons of the wilderness
H5159 H8568 H4057

Additional Cross-References

Joel 3:19 (Parallel theme): Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

Obadiah 1:10 (Parallel theme): For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

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