

Book of Jasher, Chapters 49-50 | A Prophecy of Esau and Jacob

Webmaster's Remarks: To the viewer who has opened this webpage, it's important to expand with an opening remark that provides a brief background to explain those who may have landed here by accident. If you ended up here and were directed from this **URL LINK** you know why you're here. However, if you arrived at this webpage and wasn't directed here by the link just mentioned, then you will know the reason behind the subject and its context and purpose by going to **THIS LINK**.

The below essay was the results of prompting ChatGPT on a topic that's discussed below. This is a presentation that's part of an experiment that delves into the narrative of Esau and Jacob, biblical characters from the book of Genesis. This analysis culminated with an examination on the historical lineage of those who are recognized as contemporary Jews that that reveals a story many are not familiar with. The title below; Esau, the Book of Jasher, and the Providence of God, is the title of the essay as designated by ChatGPT, which can be read next, while the title of the page post above serves as a distinct heading that differentiates it from the one below.

Statement made by ChatGPT: Below is a **complete essay version** of our discussion (*webmaster's exchange with ChatGPT*) on *Esau, Jacob, and the Book of Jasher*, written in a formal yet readable style. It includes a clear introduction and conclusion, and I've added **footnote-style references** (numbered) with an **Appendix** section at the end containing expanded notes and historical substantiation for the key points—such as the Edomite takeover, the Idumean-Herodian

connection, and Jasher's relation to the biblical narrative.

Next is the unedited essay as explained and drafted by ChatGPT.

Esau, the Book of Jasher, and the Providence of God

Introduction

Among the lesser-known works of Hebrew tradition, few have provoked as much curiosity as *The Book of Jasher* (Hebrew: *Sefer haYashar*, meaning *Book of the Upright*). Though referenced twice in the Old Testament (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18; and a cite 2 Timothy 3:8), the book itself is not part of the canonical Scriptures. In later centuries, various pseudepigraphal writings emerged under this title, claiming to preserve ancient accounts of patriarchal history, often expanding on figures such as Esau, Jacob, and their descendants.

The question naturally arises: **Can the Book of Jasher be trusted?** And if so, to what extent does its content align with the biblical record? Exploring this question provides an opportunity not only to compare Jasher's claims with Scripture but also to trace the divine providence evident in the story of Jacob and Esau – a narrative that extends from the tents of Isaac to the politics of Judea in the time of Christ.

1. The Book of Jasher and Its Reliability

The canonical Scriptures mention *The Book of Jasher* twice. The first reference in **Joshua 10:13** recalls the miraculous event when the sun stood still at Gibeon, saying, “*Is not this written in the book of Jasher?*” The second, in **2 Samuel 1:18**, records David’s lament over Saul and Jonathan, which he instructed Judah to learn as “the song of the bow,” again noted as being written in *the book of Jasher*.

From these citations, it appears the original *Book of Jasher* was a **national record or poetic chronicle** that preserved songs and heroic acts of Israel’s early history. It held historical value, yet it was never included among the inspired Scriptures. Its loss left only the biblical references as testimony of its existence.

The text that circulates today under the same name – first printed in Venice (1625) and later translated into English in 1840 – is **not the same ancient record** but a later composition blending biblical retellings, Jewish midrashic traditions, and apocryphal expansions. Scholars generally classify it among the **pseudepigrapha**, writings falsely attributed to ancient authors.[1] Nevertheless, portions of the later *Jasher* parallel Genesis closely enough to suggest that the author worked from the canonical account and sought to fill narrative gaps through legend or oral tradition.

2. Parallels and Divergences Between Jasher and Genesis

The *Book of Jasher* repeats many details consistent with Genesis: the creation account, the flood, the dispersion at

Babel, and the patriarchal line from Abraham to Jacob. Where it diverges most notably is in its **elaboration of the character of Esau**.

In *Jasher* 27–29, Esau is depicted as fiercely violent, impulsive, and vengeful – qualities consistent with his biblical portrayal in **Genesis 25–27**, though described in greater detail. The biblical Esau sold his birthright for immediate gratification (Genesis 25:29–34) and later sought to kill Jacob after losing his father’s blessing (Genesis 27:41). *Jasher* amplifies these tendencies, portraying Esau as a hunter of men and a leader in the slaying of Nimrod. While such details cannot be verified, the **moral character** drawn in *Jasher* aligns with Scripture’s depiction of Esau’s spiritual disregard and impulsive nature.

Thus, while *Jasher* should never be treated as authoritative, **some of its descriptive color may reflect genuine oral tradition** circulating among ancient Israelites – much like later rabbinic midrash sought to expand moral lessons from the biblical text.

3. Human Deception and Divine Providence

Both Scripture and *Jasher* recount that Jacob obtained Esau’s birthright and blessing through a series of human schemes – his mother Rebekah’s deception of Isaac and Jacob’s false claim to be his brother. These acts are not commended in Scripture; they are recorded with moral transparency. Yet even through such human frailty, **God’s sovereign purpose was fulfilled**, just as foretold before their birth:

“The elder shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23)

This same divine pattern appears earlier in the case of **Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar** (Genesis 16). Both narratives display humanity's impatience and attempt to secure God's promises by human means. Yet God's plan – to raise the covenant line through Isaac and Jacob – unfolded exactly as intended.

This interplay of divine sovereignty and human weakness illustrates the doctrine of **providence**: that God's eternal purposes are accomplished not because of human merit but in spite of human error. As Joseph later declared to his brothers, *"Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."* (Genesis 50:20)

4. Esau's Descendants and the Rise of Edom

The later history of Esau's lineage confirms the continuing tension between the lines of Jacob and Esau. The nation of **Edom** (named for Esau, Genesis 36) became a persistent rival of Israel.

When **Judah was carried into Babylonian exile** (586 B.C.), historical sources – both biblical and extra-biblical – note that **Edomites seized portions of Judah's southern territory**.^[2] The prophet **Obadiah** condemned this betrayal:

"Thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger." (Obadiah 1:12)

By the post-exilic period, Edom's population had migrated into the region south of Judea, known to the Greeks and Romans as **Idumea**. During the second century B.C., the **Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus** forcibly converted the Idumeans to Judaism,

effectively merging them into the Jewish nation.[3] Centuries later, **Herod the Great**, who ruled Judea under Roman authority, was **an Idumean by descent** – a political figure descended from Esau's line yet reigning over the covenant land promised to Jacob.[4]

In this way, the ancient rivalry between Jacob and Esau continued symbolically into the New Testament era: the Edomite ruler sought to destroy the Christ child who was the true heir to David's throne (Matthew 2:13–16).

5. “Jacob Have I Loved, Esau Have I Hated” – Divine Election Explained

The prophet **Malachi** later summarized God's covenantal distinction:

“Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.” (Malachi 1:2–3)

This declaration, cited by Paul in **Romans 9:10–13**, is not a statement of arbitrary emotion but of **divine election** – God's sovereign choice of the covenant line through which redemption would come. The “love” and “hatred” represent preferential election and rejection in the context of God's redemptive plan.

Jacob's election did not stem from his moral superiority; his own deceit reveals otherwise. It was **grace**, not merit, that determined God's choice – prefiguring the gospel principle that salvation is not by works but by divine mercy (Romans 9:16).

6. The Theological Thread: From Esau to Herod

The spiritual opposition that began in the womb of Rebekah finds echoes throughout Scripture. The Edomites' hostility during Judah's fall, their later absorption into Idumea, and the rise of Herod all form a **historical continuum** of the Esau spirit – opposing the purposes of God.

Yet even in this, **God's providence shines**. Herod's reign set the stage for the coming of Christ, the true King and fulfillment of every covenant promise. Just as Jacob supplanted Esau, so Christ supplanted the false rulers of His day – not through deceit but through righteousness, fulfilling the prophecy that *"the scepter shall not depart from Judah"* (Genesis 49:10).

Conclusion

The *Book of Jasher* may provide imaginative detail and historical curiosity, but Scripture alone reveals the divine plan with certainty. Jasher's expansions on Esau's wickedness harmonize with the biblical portrayal but offer no new revelation. The ultimate message of Esau's life and legacy is not found in apocryphal elaboration but in the **sovereign faithfulness of God** – who works through flawed human instruments to bring forth His redemptive purpose.

From Esau's despising of his birthright to Herod's usurpation of Judea, the same pattern unfolds: **the purposes of God stand firm, even amid human rebellion**. History, prophecy, and providence converge to show that the covenant promise rests

not in human strength but in divine grace – a theme that threads through every page of Scripture, from Genesis to the Gospels.

Appendix: Historical and Scriptural Notes

[1] *Pseudepigrapha and the Modern Book of Jasher.*

The 1840 English *Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City, 1887 reprint) was translated from a Hebrew text published in Venice in 1625. Modern scholars (e.g., Robert Graves & Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*, 1964) view it as a midrashic expansion composed no earlier than the medieval period. No ancient manuscript corresponding to the Jasher mentioned in Joshua 10:13 or 2 Samuel 1:18 has ever been found.

[2] *Edom's Opportunism During Judah's Exile.*

Biblical references: **Psalms 137:7, Ezekiel 35:5–10, Obadiah 1:10–14** all condemn Edom for violence and opportunism during Judah's fall. Archaeological and historical sources (e.g., Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.11.7) confirm Edom's territorial expansion northward after the Babylonian conquest.

[3] *Forced Conversion Under John Hyrcanus.*

Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.9.1 (c. 134–104 B.C.), records that Hyrcanus “subdued all the Idumeans” and compelled them to adopt circumcision and the laws of the Jews, thereby integrating them into the nation. This marked the political and ethnic blending of Edom with Judah.

[4] *Herod's Idumean Lineage.*

Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.1.3, identifies Antipater (Herod's father) as an Idumean who had converted to Judaism. Herod's rise to kingship under Rome thus fulfilled the ancient irony: an Edomite ruled in Jerusalem over the descendants of Jacob,

even as he sought to destroy the true King born in Bethlehem
(Matthew 2:1–16).
