

I HAVE LOVED JACOB

by

Joseph Hoffman Cohn, D. D.

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CHAPTER TEN

THE ENMITY OF THE AGES COME TO THE FULL: THE KING FACES A KING

PETRA, the city of mystery, has been called “The Rose Red City as Old as Time,” “The Rainbow City,” and many other descriptive names suggested by its strange, desolate beauty.

All we are able to find out about it from secular history is that it once had 267,000 inhabitants; that it was on a trade route from Egypt to Sheba, Iraq and Persia; that it was inaccessible except through the Rift which was only wide enough for two horses abreast; and that the perpendicular walls of the Rift are from 400 to 700 feet high, and brilliant with all the colors of the rainbow.

This beautiful city was occupied by the Nabataens from 100 B. C. until they were conquered by Rome about 106 A. D. It was mentioned by Strabo as a city of great riches and luxury. We know also that the armies of Mohammed swept down upon Mount Seir, and that soon after that it was lost and forgotten for hundreds of years until Burkhart heard of it through an Arab, and studied Arabic three years in order to go there disguised as a sheik. He only stayed a few hours, but he was thrilled by the beauty and mystery of this desolate city.

The Bible alone is able to solve the mystery for us. It is mentioned as one of the cities conquered by the four kings who captured Sodom and carried Lot captive. It was then called Mount Seir, and the inhabitants were called Horites or cliff dwellers. Genesis 14:6. Afterward, the story of the Twin Brothers is woven into the history of this ancient city.

One night Esau came home tired and out of sorts, and coveted a dish of red beans that Jacob had prepared for himself. He had to decide between the great Covenant of God with his grandfather Abraham, or that dish of beans, and he reasoned something like this: “What will the birthright profit me? Shall I do without my supper that the world may be blessed through me?”

He decided to let the blessing for the world go into the discard, and have a hot supper. Jacob decided that the world should be blessed through him at the cost of his supper and almost life itself, and contrived to get the blessing; but it was not the Abrahamic blessing that he received through his connivance, that blessing was given to him freely by his father Isaac later on.

He left all the riches of his father’s home and went away with only his staff. Genesis 28:3-4.

When Jacob returned from Padan Aram in after years, Esau came from Mount Seir (Petra) with 400 men to meet Jacob; and after the greeting he returned to his home in Seir, and Jacob eventually went to his father Isaac, who was still living. Genesis 33:16.

Esau must have prospered greatly, for we read, **“These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir . . . and they are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel,”** and a long list of kings and dukes are given who reigned **“in the land of their possessions”** (Genesis 36). But we read, **“Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger”** (Genesis 37:1).

Esau, who had despised his birthright, was living in the most beautiful city in the world, its palaces carved like beautiful cameos out of rose red, rainbow hued, and lemon colored stone; his family reigned as dukes and kings. But wait!

Jacob returned from Padanaram, **“a stranger in a strange land,”** grieving over the loss of his beloved wife Rachel, then soon despairing over the loss of Joseph. After a while they are distressed by famine, and the fear that Benjamin may be lost to him. In his despair Jacob says, **“All these things are against me!”**

Then the news came that Joseph was alive and master of all Egypt, and that he was providing bread for the whole kingdom. With a glad heart Jacob went to his beloved son, as the Jews will one day turn to the Lord Jesus; and Jacob spent the remaining years of his life amidst the glories that surrounded his famous son. Jacob, with all his faults, had chosen to be a channel of blessing to the world, and he lived to see his own son bless the world.

When Jacob died, Joseph had his body embalmed, and the great of Egypt followed his remains to the threshing floor of Atad on the east side of Jordan; so it must have been the desire of Joseph to pass through the land of Edom, and show Esau and his family how God had honored the humble Jacob by giving him, perhaps, the most impressive funeral cortege that had ever been seen in Palestine. His sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, and there he rests today, waiting for the coming of the Lord. What a wonderful sight that will be!

While the Edomites (children of Esau) were living in oriental luxury in their “rainbow city,” the children of Jacob were enslaved in Egypt by a king who knew not Joseph, and finally they were taken out by the hand of the Lord. Then came Amalek (descendant of Esau) and fought with Israel. **“When the hands of Moses were held up, the Israelites prevailed, but when Moses lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed.”** And God said unto Moses, **“Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out of the remembrance of Amalek from heaven”** (Exodus 17:14).

This is one reason why beautiful Petra was lost for hundreds of years!

When the children of Israel finally came to the borders of Edom and begged to be allowed to pass through the country, the plea was one of the most pathetic in the Bible:

“Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king’s highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.” And Edom said unto him, **“Thou shalt not pass by me lest I come out against thee with a sword”** (Numbers 20:14-21).

There was nothing for the children of Israel to do, but turn south over the rough country to Akabah, and travel all those weary miles out around the land of Edom, which was under the rule of the children of Esau.

Two Kings in a World Drama

One dark night, two kings were face to face for the first time. On the darkest night the world has ever known, one sat on his jeweled throne in all his magnificent regalia. He had an income of about \$3,400,000 a year; he had everything he desired, for human life was nothing to him. All that stood between him and the thing he wanted were doomed, as they had been in his father’s day. He had even repaid his brother for his hospitality in Rome, by taking his wife from him.

This was the Edomite usurper of David’s throne, Herod Antipas. The slogan of this descendant of Esau was the same: “What will it profit ME?”

The King who stood before Herod had the same burning desire only intensified to its highest degree, that had moved the heart of Jacob: He desired above all things that the whole world might be blessed through Him. He was brought in, bound, before the usurper who sat upon his own throne. What a wonderful picture! The King from the line of Esau, and the King from the line of Jacob, stood looking into each other’s eyes! With only a gesture, Jesus could have summoned legions of angels to sweep the usurper from his throne which He could have easily occupied Himself, But He did not want that throne; not then, because He was on His way to the cross to redeem you and me. He didn’t want that throne until you and I could share it with Him.

Herod sent Him back to Pilate. Later, He Who knew no sin, took the place of the sinner on the cross, and died in the place of Herod, as well as for you and me. Jesus even died for the man who had usurped His throne!

The son of Esau went on with his revelry, while the Son of Jacob hung on the cross. But the hand of God fell upon this tyrant soon after: he was banished to Lyons and died in exile in great misery (this Herod must not be confused with Herod Agrippa I, Acts 12), while Jesus Christ rose from the dead to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords for all eternity.

At this time Mount Seir (Petra) was still beautiful and prosperous, but God had spoken its doom: **“I will make Mount Seir an astonishment and a desolation”** (Ezekiel 35:3-7).

Again, **“Because that Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom (Esau) and I will cut off man and beast from it: and I will make it desolate from Teman (Maan).”**

These words were fulfilled to the letter. Maan is the railroad station, and from just there the desolation begins. Not only was Esau's city and kingdom doomed, but his nation, Edom, was to be destroyed: "**There shall be none remaining of the house of Esau**" (Obadiah 18. See Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11; Isaiah 34:5; Ezekiel 25:12).

Petra, or Mount Seir, his capital city, is an astonishment and a desolation. All the buildings that were constructed of stone blocks and mortar have crumbled to dust, but those cut from the solid rock of the mountain are still standing in all their exquisite beauty, enough of them to accommodate 100,000 people in comfort. A clear spring is bubbling over rose-red rocks, with oleanders and wild figs growing on its banks. Everything is ready and waiting for the children of Israel.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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