

The Numerical Features of the Book of Genesis

A New Approach to its Compositional Structure

Please read the [General Introduction](#)

Part VI, Genesis 36,1-37,1 The Toledoths of Esau

Vss	Texts	Words	Letters	Sum words	Contents and Structure
1	Gen 36,1	5	19	5	§ 1 The descendants of Esau in Canaan
2	Gen 36,2	18	63	23	It is intriguing to see the the information about the birth of the five sons born to him in Canaan is not highlighted by any of the divine name numbers, probably deliberately.
3	Gen 36,3	6	24	29	
4	Gen 36,4	9	34	38	
5	Gen 36,5	16	57	54/54	
6	Gen 36,6	30+	105	84	
7	Gen 36,7	14+	54	98	This fact is consciously brought into the focus of attention to express God's approval.
8	Gen 36,8	7=51 (3x17)	24	105/51 (3x17)	
9	Gen 36,9	7+	26	112	§ 3 The descendants of Esau in Edom
10	Gen 36,10	14+	46	126	The in formation about the birth of children and grandchildren born to him in Edom, however, is highlighted by 153 (9x17) words.
11	Gen 36,11	8+	33	134	
12	Gen 36,12	15+	56	149	
13	Gen 36,13	13	45	162	
14	Gen 36,14	18+	62	180	
15	Gen 36,15	16+	59	196	
16	Gen 36,16	14+	53	210	
17	Gen 36,17	23+	82	233	
18	Gen 36,18	18+	69	251	
19	Gen 36,19	7=153 (9x17)	27	258/153 (9x17) S	
20	Gen 36,20	10	41	268	§ 4 The descendants of Se'ir the Horite
21	Gen 36,21	10+	41	278	The same applies to this paragraph, which has also 11 verses. Except for <u>vs 20</u> and <u>29-30</u> , (the first and last two verses) the entire text is governed by 68 (4x17) words.
22	Gen 36,22	8+	33	286	
23	Gen 36,23	8(=26)+	33	294	
24	Gen 36,24	17+	66	311	
25	Gen 36,25	7+	26	318	
26	Gen 36,26	7+	29	325	
27	Gen 36,27	6+	22	331	
28	Gen 36,28	5=68(4x17)	17	336	
29	Gen 36,29	11	44	347	§ 5 The kings of Edom and the chiefs of Esau
30	Gen 36,30	12	49	359/101 P	
31	Gen 36,31	11	44	370	
32	Gen 36,32	8+	31	378	
33	Gen 36,33	8+	31	386	
34	Gen 36,34	7+	31	393	
35	Gen 36,35	15+	54	408	
36	Gen 36,36	6+	27	414	
37	Gen 36,37	7=51(3x17)	32	421	
38	Gen 36,38	8+	31	429	
39	Gen 36,39	19+	67	448	
40	Gen 36,40	13+	57	461	
41	Gen 36,41	6+	26	467	
42	Gen 36,42	6=52(2x26)	23	473	
43	Gen 36,43	14	58	487 P	
44	Gen 37,1	7	29	494/135	
44	36,1-37,1	494 (19x26)	1880	494 (19x26)	

Observation 1 Seeing that the heading of the Toledoth of Jacob is to be found in 37,2, verse 1 strictly belongs to the Toledoth of Esau. Therefore, the **Petuchah** after 36,43 and before 37,1 should be interpreted as a layout marker that does not have the function of a delimiting device, but only serves to direct special attention to what follows: the important fact that Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in Canaan. The literary function of this information is that it serves as a cliffhanger anticipating the Toledoth of Jacob. This is underscored by the fact that, in the general storyline, the Toledoth of Esau functions as an intermezzo before the story of Joseph.

Observation 2 The most conspicuous numerical feature of the Toledoth of Esau is that the text is made up of **44** (4x**11**) verses and **494** (19x**26**) words. The symbolic significance is that the entire family story of Esau: his temporary stay in Canaan, his wealth acquired there, and his departure for a land 'away from his brother Jacob' (v 6b), is from beginning to end determined and governed by YHWH. This is also expressed by the fact that 33 of the 44 verses (75%) and 385 of the 494 words (78%) are governed by the divine name numbers **17** and **26**, signifying God's presence and approval.

The text divides into 5 paragraphs, partly supported by layout markers and numerical considerations:

§ 1, 36,1-5, The descendants of Esau in Canaan	composed of 54 words.
§ 2, 36,6-8, Esau leaves Canaan to settle in Edom	composed of 51 (3x 17) words.
§ 3, 36,9-19, The descendants of Esau in Edom	11 verses, composed of 153 (9x 17) words.
§ 4, 36,20-30, The descendants of Se'ir the Horite	11 verses, highlighted by 26 and 68 words.
§ 5, 36,31-37,1, The Edom's kings and Esau's chiefs	11 of the 14 verses (<u>vs 32-42</u>) are specifically highlighted by 51 + 52 words.

The fact that there are no less than four instances in which the number of fulfilment, **11**, is consciously used, requires an explanation. It expresses, in my opinion, symbolically the fulfilment of the 'blessing' Isaac gave to Esau, "Your dwelling will be far from the richness of the land, far from the dew of heaven above" (27,39), which is a very apt description of the region.

For the conspicuous use of the number **11** in connection with the fulfilment of the land promises in Deuteronomy, see Observation 9 in my analysis of [Deuteronomy 1-3](#).