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Assis' "Identity in conflict: The struggle between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel" (Book Review)

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Book Reviews



Assis, E. (2016). *Identity in conflict: The struggle between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. 214 pp. ISBN 9781575064178

Dr. Elie Assis, Old Testament Bible scholar and professor at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, has written a thorough and insightful exegesis of the story of Isaac's twin sons Esau and Jacob in Genesis and beyond. Their relationship and rivalry extended throughout the Old Testament with profound influence on their descendants, the nations of Edom and Israel. Just as Jacob experienced identity crisis so did his descendants, the nation of Israel. Esau was perceived as a threat to Jacob just as his descendants Edom were considered a threat to Israel. Many nations could have threatened Israel, but only Edom threatened Israel's very sense of identity as God's chosen people. The struggle between Edom and Israel was not a struggle like any other, but a tension between brother nations profoundly connected to Israel's sense of self-identity. Extending beyond Biblical times to the Roman empire and to Christianity as threats to Israel's identity as God's chosen people, the representation of Edom persists. Assis ably guides the reader into understanding the theology and ideology that stands behind the expansive repercussions of this Bible story, exposing its key messages, which are as relevant today as they were in antiquity. His exegesis is based on both Jewish and Christian scholarship and is extensively cited, as befits a scholarly text. It would be helpful for the reader to have some understanding of Hebrew, Hebrew poetics, and documentary hypothesis to get the most from this extraordinary scholarly work.

Reviewer

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