

The Doctrine of Esau's Wives

1. Esau had 3 wives (Gen. 26:34 28:9).
2. The daughter of Elon the Hittite is called Adah in Gen. 36:2 and Bashemath in Gen. 26:34.
3. The daughter of Anah, the [grand]daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, is Oholibamah (or, Aholibamah) so-called in Gen. 36:2. However, she is not the same Oholibamah which we find in Gen. 36:25; this person was her aunt and perhaps she was named after her aunt. In Gen. 36:24, Anah is said to have discovered the hot springs, and he is therefore sometimes called *spring-man*, or Beerli the Hittite in Gen. 26:34. In this same citation, Oholibamah is called Judith.
 - a) Hittite is a general term.
 - b) Hivite is a more specific term, honing in on the genealogy a bit more. This is not unlike the reference to Esau's Hittite wives (Gen. 26:34) as Canaanites (Gen. 28:8).
4. Later, Esau married Basemath, the daughter of Ishmael. Because her name was the same as his other wife's, either he or they were the ones who probably chose to call them by different names, to keep things straight. He married this one because she was a relative of Isaac's, so he did it to win back Isaac's favor. She is called Basemath in Gen. 36:3 and Mahalath in Gen. 28:9.
5. It is this kind of thing which speaks to the integrity of the Bible. These chapters are all fairly close together and most of this was probably written by Isaac. For this reason, it is less likely that he made a mistake and more likely that these women just had nicknames and second names. Centuries later, being that Esau is a well-known Biblical figure; had there been a lot of toying with the Scriptures, certainly someone would have changed one set of names to correlate with the other. set. However, respect for the authority of the Scriptures has kept these portions relatively unblemished.
6. As Bullinger pointed out, it is preposterous to make create a difficulty about these wives having several names and/or nicknames where some of the names are similar, where this sort of thing happens all the time in the present. In any given high school class, I would inevitably have between 2 and 5 people who had nicknames which they had been called all of their lives and I would always have students with the same name in the same class. This caused no serious confusion or difficulty for me so such a thing occurring in ancient times is not any more unusual.