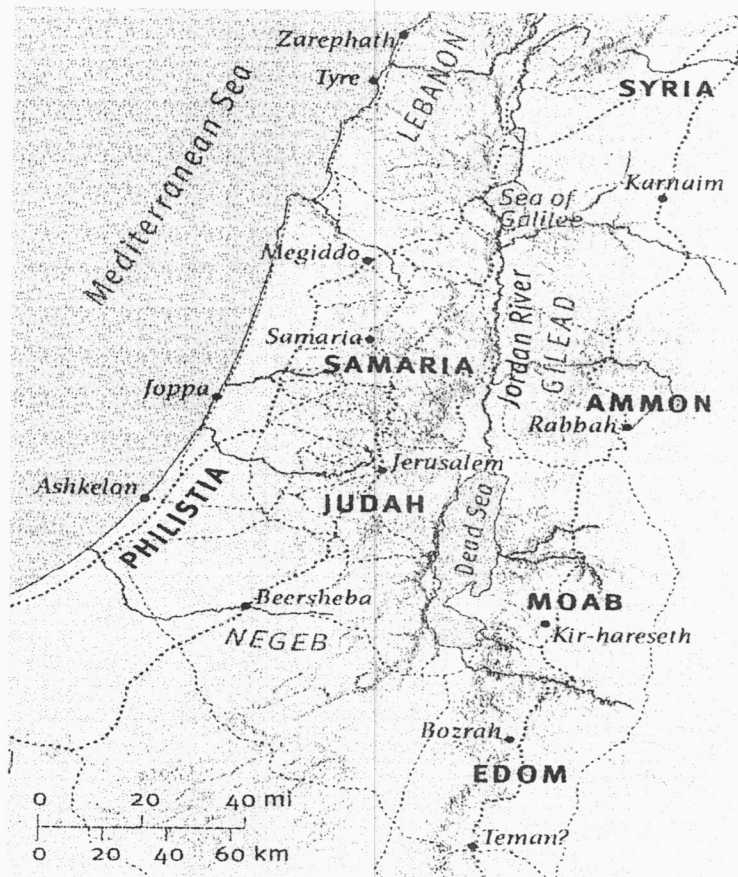


# Hidden Things of Edom

## The Book of Obadiah

### Basic Information about Obadiah:

- **Who:** The name Obadiah means “Worshipper of God.” There are 13 men in the Bible referred to as Obadiah (I Kings 18:3-16; 1 Chronicles 3:21; Chronicles 7:3; 1 Chronicles 8:38; 9:44; 1 Chronicles 9:16; 1 Chronicles 12:8-9; 1 Chronicles 27:19; 2 Chronicles 17:7; 2 Chronicles 34:12; Ezra 8:9; Nehemiah 10:5; Nehemiah 12:25). It is impossible to know with certainty who the author of this book was because nothing internally reveals his background OR when he lived; however, it appears that the author of this book is not one located in any of the scriptures above.
- **When:** It seems most likely that Obadiah is prophesying during the period of the Babylonian captivity, though there is no internal evidence to prove it. The behavior and attitude of the Edomites in the book of Obadiah match the descriptions found in Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Psalm 137, which all took place during, or prophesied about, the Babylonian siege. He could have also lived during the time of Elisha (around 840 BC) and witnessed the invasion of Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabians.
- **Audience:** Obadiah’s book is a targeted, prophetic judgment against the Edomites. They were “cousins” to the Israelites, having descended from Esau’s lineage, and lived east of Israel’s territory.
- **Message:** When Babylon began its siege of Jerusalem, the neighboring blood relatives, the Edomites, were expected to help as an ally. However, rather than aid the Israelites, they joined the enemy and were particularly disparaging toward the Jews. Obadiah denounces the behavior and arrogant attitude of the Edomites, prophesying a harsh judgment against them for their treatment of His people.



## The History of Edom and Israel

Jacob and Esau were the sons of Isaac and they, as well as their descendents, were prophesied to be at enmity from birth:

*“<sup>22</sup> And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord. <sup>23</sup> And the Lord said unto her, **Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger** (Genesis 25:22).”*

This unpleasant prophecy was fulfilled in the lives of Jacob and Esau and this familial struggle continued in their descendents, the eventual nations of Israel and Edom. Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel whose population God providentially grew during the hard years of Egyptian bondage; whom God provided with a civil and ceremonial law which was later used to regulate the theocratic government of Israel; and finally, who God empowered to complete a successful conquest through the land of Canaan, which gave them possession of the physical land promised to their progenitor, Abraham. Esau, who fathered what became known as the Dukes of Esau and the nation of Edom (Genesis 36:40-43), rebelled against His parents by vindictively seeking out Ishmael, and married two of his descendents (Genesis 28:6-9). This rebellious act illustrates the defiant, profane (ungodly) attitude he embodied throughout his life, and one the Hebrew writer warned those Christians to avoid (Hebrews 12:14-17).

The tumultuous relationship between these two brothers began a chain of unfortunate, though not inevitable events, which had significant cultural implications in successive generations. The resentment of Esau provoked by the deceptiveness of Jacob is emblematic of the strained relationship which would exist between the nations of Israel and Edom.

- **Crossing Through Edom** - The first encounter between these two nations came at one of the most vulnerable periods of Israel's history. Having just been delivered from Egyptian bondage and traversing an unfamiliar land filled with a host of enemies eager to exploit them, Israel was directed toward the land of Canaan and explicitly commanded to pass through the land of Edom (Deuteronomy 2:1-8). God was going to intimidate the Edomites and all the inhabitants of Canaan as they passed through to conquer the Promised Land. But rather than obey, Moses requested permission from Sihon, king of Heshbon, to pass through Edom.

*<sup>14</sup> And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, **Thus saith thy brother Israel**, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: <sup>15</sup> How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: <sup>16</sup> And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in*

*the uttermost of thy border: <sup>17</sup> 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 high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. <sup>18</sup> And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. <sup>19</sup> And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet. <sup>20</sup> And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. <sup>21</sup> Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him* (Numbers 20:14-21).

The King of Edom denied Moses' request and thus began a tumultuous relationship between the two nations.

- **Waging War with the Kings** - As we continue in Israel's history, Saul, David, and Solomon were all found warring against the Edomites. Saul did so in order to expand Israel's territory (I Samuel 14:47). David took measures further by attempting to slaughter every male Edomite (I Kings 11:15-17), and placing garrisons throughout all Edom making them tributaries to Israel (II Samuel 8:14). And, despite the near destruction of the Edomites during his father's reign, Solomon was also plagued with constant fighting with the Edomites for the entirety of his reign (I Kings 11:24-25). Jehosaphat, Jehoram, Amaziah, and Ahaz also fought with the Edomites throughout their reigns.
- **Edom's Vengeance**- Despite Israel's advantage through the early history between these two nations, Edom seemingly never forgot how Israel had abused them during the era of the United Kingdom. They therefore sought merciless vengeance against Israel by allying with Israel's enemies during vulnerable periods of their history. As we will see in Obadiah's prophecy, this vengeful attitude would not go unnoticed by God and would result in the harshest judgment God can levy upon a nation.

This provides a stern warning to us that the smallest speck of unrepented bitterness or resentment produced by family discord can have unintended consequences in future generations. This is discernible in the unfortunate history between these two families. It is terrible how the sinful attitudes between these brothers metastasized and created irreconcilable division between their offspring. This same pattern is observable in many Christian families today. Siblings or family members refuse to reconcile and instead analyze every word, action, and decision through the distorted prism of resentment. One or both sides are quick to take offense (James 1:19), and eventually, these misperceived slights compel action (or ungodly inaction), and the cycle of sin and retaliation begins. This cycle results in division which is an affront to our holy, perfectly unified Triune God who desires oneness in His creation, especially among His people (John

17:21-22). God calls His people to reconcile quickly, even to halt worship in order to make peace (Matthew 5:24)! Let us resist the resentful “spirit of Edom” and assert the Christian spirit where, “love [covers] a multitude of sin (I Peter 4:8),” and be careful that we do not render “... evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called (I Peter 3:9).” A failure to adhere to a superior spirit of grace toward our fellow man, will result in future generations paying the steep cost for our sins. God forbid that ever happen!

### The Hidden Things of Edom

<sup>1</sup> The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. <sup>2</sup> Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. <sup>3</sup> The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, **Who shall bring me down to the ground?** <sup>4</sup> Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. <sup>5</sup> If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? <sup>6</sup> **How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!** <sup>7</sup> All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him. <sup>8</sup> Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? <sup>9</sup> And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. <sup>10</sup> For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. <sup>11</sup> In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. <sup>12</sup> But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. <sup>13</sup> Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; <sup>14</sup> Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

The prophecy of Obadiah begins with an explanation for Edom's arrogant attitude. The Edomites found false security in their high-mountain fortresses (also referred to in scripture as Mt. Seir) southeast of the Dead Sea and proudly allied with the Babylonians upon seeing the

likely fate of Israel. They reveled in their pride, even wondering how it were possible for them to be defeated or punished for their sin.

*"The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me to the ground (v. 3)."*

Israel may have been unable to respond to Edom's aggression, but the Edomites wrongly dismissed the possibility of *divine* retribution and sought to increase the suffering of Israel throughout the siege by capturing those who safely escaped Jerusalem and by rejoicing in the suffering of its inhabitants (vs. 11;13;14). God succinctly declares through the prophet Obadiah an ominous judgment: "...thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord."

The severity of Edom's judgment is expressed in verses 5 and 6, and is where the title of our lesson is found:

*<sup>5</sup> If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? <sup>6</sup> How are the things of Esau searched out! **How are his hidden things sought up!***

When God judges Edom it will be so complete that, "...there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it (Obadian 1:18)." Or in other words, Obadiah prophesied that God would annihilate the Edomites from the face of the earth. The conquering nation will confiscate even the *hidden things of Edom* until absolute judgment from God is accomplished.

Throughout the scriptures, God is careful to reveal the suffering of His people at the hands of the wicked. He shows that the righteous tend to fall prey to two sinful responses: to doubt God's faithfulness or take revenge against our oppressors. Throughout Psalm 37, God tempers our tendency toward vengeance when He says, "<sup>33</sup>The Lord will not leave him [the righteous] in his hand [the wicked's], nor condemn him when he is judged. <sup>34</sup> Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it (Psalm 73:33-34)." In Psalm 73, the writer encourages the righteous not to despair when he says, "<sup>16</sup>When I thought to know this [the unpunished prosperity of the wicked], **it was too painful for me;** <sup>17</sup>Until I went into the sanctuary of God; **then understood I their end** (Psalm 73:16-17)."

Obadiah expands his judgment from the Edomites to all the nations in verse 15:

*"<sup>15</sup>For the day of the Lord is near upon **all the heathen**: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: they reward shall return upon thine own head. <sup>16</sup>For as ye have drunk*



*upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been (Obadiah 1:15-16)."*

We can learn from this book the severity and completeness of divine judgment upon all. The scriptures instruct us, "*Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*** (Romans 12:19)." There is a culminating day of judgment when "*...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad* (II Corinthians 5:10)." On that day, God will see to the reconciling of all things to Himself (Colossians 1:20); the complete vindication of the falsely accused, and every creature, angelic and earthly, will receive the just recompense for their deeds.

*"<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: **and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: **and they were judged every man according to their works** (Revelation 20:12-13)."*

When injustice prevails we are tempted to doubt the purity of God's character. We see the victims of injustice assaulted, receiving no recompense for their godly response. Simultaneously, the actions of heinous, proud sinners go unpunished, and are even shamelessly celebrated by the world. But, we do not need to expect fairness in this life. We know a day of reckoning is on the horizon of eternity.

*"<sup>7</sup> **Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.** <sup>8</sup> **For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.** <sup>9</sup> **And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not** (Galatians 6:7-9)."*

The just God of Eternal judgment will vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked in due time. Let patience have her perfect work (James 1:4).

Some rush to set the world right! But, finite creatures such as ourselves attempting to distribute absolute justice in a world as fallen as ours is impossible. We should try, when we are able, to be fair, but we will never untangle the complexity, nuance, hidden sin, and concealed intentions which exist in most situations. Rather than strain for fairness, we must do as the Father has done by committing all judgment to His Son (John 5:22), Jesus Christ, who will perfectly "*...judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom* (II Timothy 4:1)." On that final day of

judgment, the hidden things will be revealed (Luke 8:17), and God will justly punish and reward those according to all the facts, those known and hidden, perfectly! This may be part of what Jesus meant when He instructed us, “<sup>39</sup>...but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also (Matthew 5:39-40).”

## Conclusion

The relationships we have matter. The unrepented sin which permeates those relationships can have far-reaching consequences. We should repent and make peace with one another as God commanded to avoid seeing the consequences of our sin suffered by our offspring. Furthermore, when injustice temporarily prevails, do not doubt God or seek revenge. God’s judgment upon those who persecute His people will be just and complete. The righteous will not be forsaken, nor will His seed beg for bread (Psalm 37:25). When you suffer at the hands of injustice, rather than seek revenge, pray for forbearance, courage, restraint, and faith; God will show Himself faithful!

In humility, we yearn for that day. Not because we live perfectly, but because “<sup>21</sup>...you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled <sup>22</sup> In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and **unreproveable in his sight** (Colossians 1:22).” Praise God that He will not destroy us, but welcome us into the “...building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (II Corinthians 5:1).” We pray God hastens the day!