

Edom's Condemnation

Printed Text · Obadiah 1:1-4, 10-11, 15, 21

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will IDENTIFY opportunities to serve God, be INSPIRED by God's expectation of His people for mutual love, aid in times of trouble, and intervention, and SUPPORT one another in our experiences of injustice.

In Focus

Cleveland was ranked first in his class in scholastic achievement, but he ranked last among his peers. He was described as an arrogant "know it all" who had mastered the art of belittling and intimidating people.

"You keep 'dogging' people, and it'll catch up with you." These were the wise words of someone Cleveland didn't think much of, then.

Ten years later, as Cleveland sat on the curb outside of an abandoned building he called "home," he realized that the truth of those words spoken over 10 years ago had actually caught up with him. His mistreatment of people over the years had left him friendless, jobless, and homeless.

His fall came after someone who was never identified slipped something in his drink at a party. That trick triggered something in Cleveland's brain that altered his intellect, which in turn affected his future. With his dreams and hopes shattered, he was humbled to face the reality that he didn't know much of anything, and he really didn't feel like doing much of anything either. Cleveland's story reminds us that God cares how we treat others. How can our acts of kindness bring about God's victory in the world?

Keep In Mind

"As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (from Obadiah 15, KJV).

Words You Should Know

- A. **Edom** – (Obadiah 1:1) The name for the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob; both were later known as Edom and Israel, respectively.
- B. **Sela** – Hebrew word meaning "rock."
- C. **Ally** – A friend. Edom and Israel could have benefitted from their close kindred relationship by helping to defend each other from their enemies.
- D. **Adonai** – Hebrew from the word adonAy, translated Lord and signifying, from its derivation, "sovereignty." Lord GOD and Sovereign LORD are two words that generally appear side by side in the Hebrew text.

Say It Correctly

Semitic. se-ME-tik

Exile. EG-zile

KJV

Obadiah 1:1 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.

2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

3 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?

4 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.

10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.

11 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.

15 For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

NLT

Obadiah 1:1 This is the vision that the Sovereign Lord revealed to Obadiah concerning the land of Edom. We have heard a message from the Lord that an ambassador was sent to the nations to say, "Get ready, everyone! Let's assemble our armies and attack Edom!"

2 The Lord says to Edom, "I will cut you down to size among the nations; you will be greatly despised.

3 You have been deceived by your own pride because you live in a rock fortress and make your home high in the mountains. 'Who can ever reach us way up here?' you ask boastfully.

4 But even if you soar as high as eagles and build your nest among the stars, I will bring you crashing down," says the Lord.

10 "Because of the violence you did to your close relatives in Israel, you will be filled with shame and destroyed forever.

11 When they were invaded, you stood aloof, refusing to help them. Foreign invaders carried off their wealth and cast lots to divide up Jerusalem, but you acted like one of Israel's enemies.

15 "The day is near when I, the Lord, will judge all godless nations! As you have done to Israel, so it will be done to you. All your evil deeds will fall back on your own heads.

21 Those who have been rescued will go up to Mount Zion in Jerusalem to rule over the mountains of Edom. And the Lord himself will be king!"

The People, Places, and Times

The prophetic book of Obadiah is a solitary prophecy about the relationship and attitude that Edom had demonstrated toward God's chosen people, Judah. The story told by the messenger in the Book of Obadiah is a vision of doom for Edom as Yahweh declares war on Edom. The Moabites, Ammonites, and desert Bedouins were all allies of Edom. Edom, we recall, was a descendant of Esau, the twin brother of Israel. Thus, the tribes of Edom and Israel originated as close siblings. Other tribes related to Israel included Lot's descendants, the Moabites and the Ammonites, Semitic peoples living northeast of the Dead Sea in the area surrounding Rabbah, their capital. But these tribes often battled with the Israelites for possession of the fertile Gilead. The smaller kingdom of Judah consisted of only two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Geographically, Judah was situated close to Edom.

The Book of Obadiah provides no time frame nor does it identify the ancestors or other family members of Obadiah. Because of the events surrounding the exile, we must construe the period as post-586 B.C. and subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Background

Obadiah is the shortest book of the Hebrew text (Old Testament), containing only one chapter, and Obadiah is one of the twelve minor prophets. Little is known about the writer of the book or the person of Obadiah. The name Obadiah means “servant of Yahweh.” The book begins with God calling Obadiah to experience a vision. The vision describes a condemning judgment against Edom due to its relationship with Judah.

Its central message concerns the destruction of Jerusalem, which had been carried out by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Edomites played a pivotal part in the tragedy. Located south of the Dead Sea, the Edomites resided in proximity to Judah and could have provided a strategic advantage as protector. Situated to the southeast of Judah, and notwithstanding its relationship as a brother to Judah, Edom refused to come to Judah’s assistance during the siege and even assisted Babylon by ravaging Jerusalem and many of its people as refugees.

At-A-Glance

1. A Message from God to the Disobedient People (Obadiah 1:1)
2. Edom’s Misplaced Pride Is a Disease of the Heart (v. 2)
3. God’s Expectations for Humanity (vv. 10–11)
4. God’s Punishment of Edom; They Reap Just What They Sowed (v. 15)
5. Victory in the End; the Day of the Lord (v. 21)

In Depth

1. A Message from God to the Disobedient People (Obadiah 1:1)

The announcement of Obadiah’s vision focuses upon God as the divine giver of the vision. This vision is a prophetic revelation received from God against Edom. God will rise in battle against Edom and utterly destroy it because of its rejection of Israel and its subsequent destruction of the enemies.

2. Edom’s Misplaced Pride Is a Disease of the Heart (v. 2)

The capital city of Edom was Sela. Sela is the Hebrew word for rock. It is to this capital city that God refers in the phrase, “live in the clefts of the rock.” These rocks were believed to be impregnable, with a long narrow path through the mountains being the only entrance and exit to and from Edom. Edom found refuge in its wonderful geographic location, high atop fortified hills on a plain. The “nest” is situated in a hidden and inaccessible place. The “nest among the stars” constitutes an exaggerated image of the height of the mountain against the stars of the sky and refers to the stardom of Edom itself. Very important in this scheme is the power and authoritative voice of God, a power that is far greater than that of Edom. Thus, God declares that He is the one who has spoken this prophecy to the people to differentiate the Prophet Obadiah’s words from the message of the Lord.

Edom turned against Judah in her time of need as she battled against the Babylonian siege on the brink of exile. God’s plan would be that the strength and strategic positioning of Edom would be helpful to Judah against her enemies. It was the overwhelming pride of Edom that caused it to sin. The statement, “your proud heart has deceived you” translates the Hebrew meaning concerning Edom’s heart and its pride in its military might. Edom doubted that its armies could be defeated in battle. It paraded its military independence and power.

3. God's Expectations for Humanity (vv. 10–11)

The brotherly relationship of Edom and Judah is based on the patriarchal accounts of Genesis 25–29 and 32. Esau and Jacob were blood brothers. However, tensions ran high between Edom and Judah from the early days of the rivalry between the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. Other texts throughout the Old Testament testify to Edom's rejoicing at the pitiful state and weakness of Judah. Instead of helping Judah, Edom stood by and watched her defeat and pillage by her enemies. Edom even assisted in the pillaging of the nation. It was always God's plan that the two nations would love each other. Deuteronomy 23:7 clearly states: "You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin" ["brother"]. Even though the relationship between these peoples involved varying levels of hostility, their fraternity presupposes a moral obligation of solidarity that should not be ignored.

4. God's Punishment of Edom; They Reap Just What They Sowed (v. 15)

The nation's suffering will be complete, its destruction total and severe. The prediction is a haunting threat. The timing of the destruction is unknown, but it is still promised, "Oh, what a disaster awaits you." The God of enviable lavishness and promise to Israel could have been a blessing to Edom's future. Instead, because of its jealousy of and failure to protect Israel, this curse looms over its future. God sends Obadiah with a vision of Edom's own suffering. Edom will be plundered by enemies and betrayed by its allies in the same manner that Edom had just treated Judah. Edom's former mammoth strength will be watered down to the extent that it will not be able to save itself. Even the other nations formerly friendly to Edom will plunder it. Edom will be expelled from its own homeland. Eventually, Edom was driven out of its homeland, westward to the Negeb.

5. Victory in the End; The Day of the Lord (v. 21)

The day of the LORD is the time of Christ's second coming and of the judgments on all the nations that accompany that event. Edom's punishment, however, does not await that future time but has already been carried out. The day of the Lord is God's eschatological statement describing the end times. God will deploy saviors, most likely judges who will help rule in the millennial kingdom.

Search the Scriptures

1. How was Edom related to Judah? (v. 10)
2. What did Edom do to cause God's condemnation and prophecy of destruction? (vv. 3, 10–11)
3. What punishment did God promise to Edom? (v. 15)

Discuss the Meaning

1. What does it mean for a Christian to be a brother or sister to another person?
2. What is the "day of the Lord"? (vv. 15–16)
3. In this age when self-pride and self-esteem are major foundations of positive living, when and how is pride destructive? (vv. 3–4)

Liberating Lesson

A unifying presence is needed in our world. The kindred relationship between people is blurred by the many distinctions that we allow to set us apart. The differences between nations, continents, races, various ethnic groups, male and female, homosexuals and heterosexuals, and the rich and the poor are actually far smaller than the commonalities. The world is richly diverse. The opportunity is ample for all to respond to God's call, for each of us to act as the sisters and brothers that we are.

Archaeology and history confirm the biblical truth that each of us originates from a single ancestor and heritage. Yet rather than display solidarity, the world is separated because of its diversity. Evil is persistent as each faction endeavors to dominate the others. Yet God is a God of second chances. Over and over again, we have seen the mercy and power of God in our lives, working through people who act in brotherly and sisterly love in times of trouble for our families and communities.

Application For Activation

Read Obadiah 1:7. How many communities in your city have neighborhood covenants that govern their residents? Do any of these covenants impart a view of the beloved community in which neighbors show love and protect and preserve the lives, emotions, and well-being of its residents? What about the churches? Does each church shepherd its own, or is it in competition for the same members? In your church does each member actively seek to perform deeds of goodness and protection for fellow members and visitors? Can you envision what your community would be like if it had such intentional caring and protection for its brothers and sisters? Share with the members of your class the ways in which specific groups and individuals can restore the family God created by performing intentional acts of caring and protection for one another.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Obadiah 1–4, 10–11, 15, 21

1:1 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.

Obadiah receives the prophetic instruction from an unspecified divine council. Acting on a rumor from God, the council condemns the decision of Edom to contribute to the detrimental siege against Israel. God, identified as this divine council, has announced an impending judgment on the people of Edom. The name of “the LORD” in Hebrew, Yehovah, is the Jewish national name of God—Jehovah, the Lord, the self-existent or eternal One. It is not altogether clear to whom in Edom Obadiah delivered this message. “Battle” is the Hebrew word *milchamah* which refers to engagement in a battle, warfare, or fighting. God calls several nations to war against Edom.

2. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

The prophetic message is structured as if it were being addressed directly to the Edomites. This strategy lets the people of Israel know that God is about to punish their traditional enemies. God vows to reduce this puffed-up nation, affirming in this text that “I will surely make you least or small among the nations” since Edom proved itself to be Judah’s enemy. The Hebrew word for “small,” qatan or qaton, is a diminutive, literally meaning small in quantity, size, number, age, or importance. God vows to make Edom the least, lesser, and little one. Because Edom stood idly by and watched the siege upon Judah, it was just as bad as if they had attacked Judah themselves. The Hebrew word bazah is used, meaning to disesteem, despise, disdain, show contempt for, or scorn. The size, the might, even the power and authority of Edom will be diminished.

3 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?

The statement, “Your proud heart has deceived you” refers to Edom’s huge military entity. Its pride in its military might have produced a false comfort level in the belief that it could never be defeated. This foolish pride is the source of its sin against Judah. Edom withheld its powerful helping hand from its sister Judah at the time of Judah’s vulnerability to the invasion of Babylon.

The positioning of the city on a plain atop a series of mountains gave it a fortress-like, strategic advantage over other communities. It was both a strength and a weakness that the city was accessible from only one direction. Yet the condition of the heart was the issue with God concerning Edom. The expression, “you say in your heart” referred to Edom convincing itself of its safety from the attack of enemies because of its power. The word zadown describes Edom’s arrogance, presumptuousness, and pride. In its heart, Edom affirms its superiority: “Who will bring me down to the ground?” The place in the rock where Edom dwells is described with the word shakan, which carries with it the idea of lodging, to reside or permanently stay, abide, continue, inhabit, remain, and be able to rest.

4 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.

The Prophet Obadiah personifies the pride, majesty, and strength of Edom with the imagery of a proud eagle. The eagle is enormous. From the tip of one wing to the tip of the other, the wingspan of the bird is six to eight feet. It is the pride of the sky. Eagles represent prestige, with an enormous wing span and grace during very high flight, they build nests in insular places. Its ability to gracefully fly the skies is the source of its strength as a bird of prey.

Edom’s predatory strike against Israel in its time of weakness and vulnerability was a disgrace. Yet Israel protected itself by building a nest in a secluded place. Because of Edom’s betrayal, Israel, with all of its strength and might, became vulnerable to God’s promises to disempower it. The issue of pride is often stressed in the prophetic oracles against the nations (see in Isaiah 10:5–15; Jeremiah 50:31–32). In Obadiah’s prophecy, God brings down even the prideful saying, “You soar . . . [but] I will bring you down.”

10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

The cause of the ruin of the Edomites (Esau) is their wickedness toward their brother nation Judah (Jacob). The Hebrew chamac means violence, wrong, unjust gain, cruelty, or damage. The unrighteous violence was an assault against God. God’s expectation concerning Edom and Judah was solidarity between the two nations that were brothers from the same womb (Rebecca). The brotherly relationship mentioned in the text is based on the patriarchal accounts (Genesis 25– 29,

32). Additionally, Deuteronomy 23:7 clearly states, "You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin" ["brother"]. Even though the relationship between these peoples involved varying levels of hostility, their fraternity presupposes a moral obligation of solidarity that should not be ignored. Although Esau and Jacob were blood brothers, for future generations reading about the struggles between these two brothers, the term "brother" is not to be taken literally. The word conveys the notion of kinship as well as that of a covenant partner.

God enters the charges against Edom into evidence. The violence was Edom's failure to protect Israel and to respect the human rights of the Israelites. The punishment will be the destruction and humiliation of the nation of Edom. Edom took advantage of Judah's misfortune to vent its resentment and hostility toward her. Edom will be "cut off" (karath, meaning cut down or asunder, destroyed or consumed) "forever" (owlam meaning to the vanishing point, time out of mind, until practically eternity).

11 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.

The indictment is pronounced against Edom with explicit details describing its sin. "Stoodest on the other side" recounts how Edom stood on its own mountain without lifting a finger and inhumanely watched the slaughter and defeat of Judah. These were Obadiah's charges. Judah was carried into captivity. Edom acted as an enemy by allying itself with Judah's invaders: "Even thou wast one of them." The result of the enemy's attack on Judah was that "strangers carried off his wealth" and "foreigners entered his gates, and cast lots for Jerusalem." In the midst of this disaster, even the Edomites took part in the plundering and violence against Judah. The Hebrew word echad describes how Edom was united "as one of them." In the siege, Edom's involvement to destroy Judah was as if it were one of the enemy captors.

15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

The prophet begins his message by announcing judgment "against all the nations." The "day" of divine judgment is God's response to Edom's behavior after the devastation of Jerusalem in 587 and 586 B.C. The word "day" refers to the eschatological day of God's final judgment. This "day" in Hebrew is yowm (pronounced yome), from an unused root meaning to be hot, the warm hours, or can be understood figuratively as the space of time defined as an age chronicles, continually full, life, outlived. The timing of God's day is qarowb, which means near, or at hand, or to occur shortly. God ensures that Edom's disgraceful conduct as an ally with Babylon against Israel is directly related to a day of divine judgment at an undisclosed future time. In this future day, the victory will belong to Judah. Judah will then be vindicated.

God's victory over Edom is a foretaste of His victory and sovereignty over competing human powers of the world. In effect, Edom accomplished evil and would receive its "reward," understood in the Hebrew word 'asah, meaning to do or to make, accomplish, advance, or appoint. The punishment of God in the day of the Lord will return upon their own head, and the Hebrew word ro'sh (roshe) gives an understanding of this punishment as meaning to shake the head, the captain, chief place.

21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

The concluding message of the prophet Obadiah is God's victory. The final aspect of the prophecy is the gracious act of God granting salvation by restoring Israel to its home on Mount Zion. Israel shall conquer its enemy, the Canaanite nations: "Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the

mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD'S" (v. 21, NIV). God will save Israel, who in turn, will judge Edom, but the victory over the kingdoms shall belong to God. The Hebrew word *yasha'* describes the salvation to be open wide or free and implies safety, freedom, or succor. God will avenge, defend, deliver, help, preserve, rescue, bring salvation, and get the victory. Esau will represent the heathen world in its defeated state, conquered by God. But Mount Zion will represent God's kingdom, and it shall belong to the Lord. *Siyown* is the same as *Tsijon*, the permanent capital and the mountain of Jerus or Zion.

The Israelites arrived at Mount Zion to rule over the Edomites, who in this verse are again called Mount Esau (vv. 8, 19). The Hebrew word *mîsâ (âm)* means "deliverers" or "those who have been saved." Ultimately, the victory and salvation pronounced in Obadiah is a bold affirmation that in the end (eschaton) "the kingdom will be the Lord's." Edom will finally recognize the kingdom of God.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday

Psalm 137:1-7

Tuesday

Numbers 20:14-21

Wednesday

1 Kings 18:1-6

Thursday

1 Kings 18:7-15

Friday

Obadiah 1:1-9

Saturday

Obadiah 1:10-14

Sunday

Obadiah 1:15-21