

*Analysis of*

## OBADIAH

### "THE DOWNFALL OF EDOM"

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Obadiah 1:17-18, 21

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# OBADIAH

## "THE DOWNFALL OF EDOM"

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Obadiah 1:17-18, 21

### A1 EDOM'S DOOM TO COME vv. 1-9

#### B1 Introduction vv. 1-2

C1 The prophet v. 1

D1 His mission and identity: The vision of Obadiah." <sup>1</sup>

D2 His authority

D3 His target: Edom--

C2 The somber message from Yahweh

D1 The source of the report -- Yahweh

D2 The bearer of the report -- an unnamed human messenger sent

D3 The audience of the report: the nations

D4 The essence of the report -- war against Edom!

C3 The determination of Yahweh v. 2

D1 His reduction of Edom among the nations

D2 His contempt for Edom

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<sup>1</sup> 1:1 - Obadiah: The author, Obadiah, of whom little is known. The date of writing: possibly 840 B.C.

**B2 Edom's Impregnability vv. 3-6**

C1 Her false pride vv. 3-4

D1 Edom's arrogant self-deception v. 3

D2 The basis for Edom's deception -- false confidence in her lofty, remote cliff dwelling <sup>2</sup>

D3 Edom's expression of self-deception

D4 Yahweh's somber prediction of judgment v. 4

E1 His acknowledgment of her lofty dwellings

E2 His determination to dethrone her!

C2 Her misplaced confidence vv. 5-6

D1 Thieves would have left something v. 5

D2 Grape gatherers would have left something

D3 By contrast, Esau will be totally impoverished! v. 6

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<sup>2</sup> 1:2 - clefts of the rock: (Walter Baker, Habakkuk, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, I, p. 1456.): "Contributing to this self-deception was the supposed security of Edom's geographical location in the mountains of Seir. She trusted in the natural protection provided by **the clefts of the rocks**. Living in caves high (**on the heights**) above the ground level she felt totally safe from enemy attacks. Some of the Edomites had settled in such high caves and other places up in the mountains that it was as if they, hyperbolically speaking, were soaring **like the eagle** and nesting **among the stars**."

(JTB): The ruins of Petra show lofty temples and buildings carved into rock in an almost inaccessible region. It is no wonder, in that day, that Edom felt secure!

**B3 Edom's Downfall vv. 7-9**

- C1 The ironic betrayal of Edom by her ally <sup>3</sup> v. 7
- C2 The ironic inability of Edom's wise men to prevent such a catastrophe vv. 8-9a
- D1 The failure of her advisors <sup>4</sup> v. 8
- D2 The dismay of her military <sup>5</sup> v. 9a
- C3 The totality of Edom's downfall by slaughter. <sup>6</sup> v. 9b

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<sup>3</sup> 1:7 - allied: The Nabateans made friendly overtures to the Edomites. (Baker, p. 1456): "**Those who eat your bread** refers to friends or allies (cf. Ps. 41:9). . . . The downfall referred to here probably occurred in the late sixth or early fifth century B.C. when the Nabateans . . . went to the Edomites, who took them in for a banquet. Once welcomed inside Edomite territory, the Nabateans turned against their ally and killed the guards."

<sup>4</sup> 1:8 - wise men: Edom apparently had been known for her wise counselors. Cf. Jer 49:7 "Concerning Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman? Has good counsel been lost to the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?'"

<sup>5</sup> 1:9 - Teman: (Baker, p. 1456): "**Teman**, Edom's capital named for Esau's grandson (Gen. 36:10-11), represented the entire nation (cf. Amos 1:12)." JTB: See also Amos 1:11-12, Jer. 49:7,10, 20; Ezek. 20:46 and 25:13-14.

<sup>6</sup> 1:9 - everyone ... cut off ... by slaughter: Does Obadiah's description of a complete destruction of Edomites by slaughter find its fulfillment in the invasion by Nabatea? Apparently not all Edomites were destroyed (see Baker, below). Some were absorbed by the Nabateans, while others settled in Idumea, the Greek name for southern Judea, where they were, to some degree, assimilated by the Judeans. Herod the Great was an Idumean (Edomite). Obadiah's prophecy did not find its complete fulfillment in the Nabatean invasion, for a second destruction of Edom occurred in the Roman obliteration of Jewish rebellion in 70 A. D. (see Baker, below). According to Obadiah, v. 18, a remnant of Edom will have survived even the Roman assault and will have flourished again enough to be a force against Israel at the time of the end. Presumably some of today's Palestinians, at the beginning of the third millennium, A. D., are descendants of those earlier Edomites. That being the case, they await a yet future extermination in connection with Christ's return. At that point (Obadiah v. 18), the Edomites will be forever exterminated. Note the following quotation from Baker, p. 1455.

In the late sixth or early fifth century B.C. the Nabateans, from northern Arabia, worshipers of gods and goddesses of fertility and the celestial bodies, drove out most of the Edomites (see comments on Obad. 7). Apparently some remained in Edom and were absorbed by the Nabatean Arabs. The Nabateans were the renowned stone-carvers of Petra. The expelled Edomites settled in Idumea, the Greek name for southern Judea. Later (ca. 120 B.C.) the Edomites there, then called Idumeans, were subdued by John Hyrcanus, a Maccabean, who forced them to be circumcised and to follow Judaism (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 13. 9. 1; 14. 7. 9). Herod the Great, king of Judea from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C., was an Idumean (Edomite).

**A2 EDOM'S SINS vv. 10-14****B1 The Catalogue of Past Sins vv. 10-11**

C1 Violence against his brother Jacob v. 10

D1 Edom to be covered with shame

D2 Edom to be cut off forever <sup>7</sup>C2 Standing aloof -- failing to render aid <sup>8</sup> v. 11**B2 Warnings against the Repetition of Sins Previously Committed <sup>9</sup>**

C1 Gloating over Judah's misfortune v. 12

D1 Gloating over his brother's misfortune

D2 Rejoicing at the destruction of Judah

D3 Boasting because of Judah's distress

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The Idumeans joined the Jews in their rebellion against Rome in A.D. 70, but were almost obliterated by Titus, the Roman general. Only a few Idumean refugees escaped. The Edomites then faded from history.

<sup>7</sup> 1:10 - forever: To recapitulate -- My initial interpretation, when studying this passage, posited that the major fulfillment of this prophecy was at the Nabatean invasion of Edom. That was, apparently, only the first installment of God's judgment upon Edom, for it was repeated at the invasion of Chaldea, when, according to Charles L. Feinberg, (*The Minor Prophets*, p. 130), "Edom was laid waste by them; (Jer. 49 and Eze 35). The Maccabees further subjugated him. The Romans completed his ruin at the time that they destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70." And of course, according to Feinberg, Edom will again arise at the time of the end against Israel, but will be totally destroyed, so that not one survivor is left (see footnotes on v. 16).

<sup>8</sup> 1:11 - cast lots: "Edom's rebellion against Judah in the days of Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20-22) may have occurred at the same time the Philistines and Arabians attacked Jerusalem (2 Chron. 21:16-17). This best fits the statements in Obadiah 11-14. When the Philistines, Arabians, and Edomites entered the city, they cast lots to decide which portions of the city would be granted to each contingent for the purpose of plunder" (Baker, p. 1454).

<sup>9</sup> 1:12-14 - repetition of sins: "The form of the Hebrew verbs in verses 12-14 ("you should not . . .") warned Edom against doing *again* what she had already done" (Baker, p. 1454).

- C2 Looting Judah v. 13
  - D1 Invading
  - D2 Gloating
  - D3 Looting
- C3 Obstructing Judean fugitives v. 14
  - D1 Obstructing Judean escape
  - D2 Killing escapees
  - D3 Imprisoning survivors

### **A3 EDOM AND THE DAY OF THE LORD 15-21**

#### **B1 Trouble for Edom 15-16**

- C1 The approach of the day of Yahweh <sup>10</sup> upon all nations v. 15a

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<sup>10</sup> 1:15 - day of the Lord: "Edom illustrates God's judgment to come on **all nations** (cf. Isa. 34:2) who rebel in arrogance against God. **The day of the LORD** may refer to any time God judges by entering into world affairs (e.g., Ezek 30:3; see comments under "Major Interpretive Problems" in the *Introduction* to Joel [of *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*]). Most frequently, though, it refers to (a) God's judgments in the Great Tribulation and at the return of Jesus Christ in glory, and/or (b) God's establishing of the Millennium. In other words the Lord's "day" is when He will bring all things under His rule.

"Edom's humiliation foreshadows what the Lord will do to all nations who similarly mistreat Israel. Besides her past humiliation, Edom will be repopulated in the future (see comments on Obad. 16) and with other nations will again come under God's wrath in the forthcoming day of the Lord when Christ returns to establish His reign."

(Baker, p. 1457.)

- C2 The retribution to fall on Edom as one of the nations
- D1 Turn about is fair play <sup>11</sup>
- D2 Boomeranging balefulness
- C3 The just retribution on Edom depicts the retribution on all nations v. 16
- D1 Poetic justice
- E1 You drank <sup>12</sup>
- E2 All nations will drink <sup>13</sup>
- D2 Disappearance from the face of the earth <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 1:15 - as you have done: "God's judgments on Edom corresponded to her crimes. What she (**you** is sing.) had **done** to Judah would then be **done to** her: (1) She looted Jerusalem (v. 13), so she was looted (v. 6; cf. Jer. 49:10). (2) Edom killed Judean fugitives (Obad. 14; cf. Amos 1:11), so she was slaughtered (Obad. 8; cf. Isa. 34:5-8; Ezek. 32:29; 35:8). (3) She handed over Judean survivors to the enemy (Obad. 14; cf. Ezek. 35:5), so Edom's allies expelled her (Obad. 7). (4) Edom rejoiced over Judah's losses (Obad. 12; cf. Ezek. 35:15), so she was covered with shame and destroyed (Obad. 10)" (Baker, pp. 1457-58).

Ezek. 35:15 "As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you. You will be a desolation, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

<sup>12</sup> 1:16 - drank on my holy mountain: "Edom had been involved in a drunken celebration in Jerusalem (**My holy hill**; cf. Pss. 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; 24:3; 78:54; Dan. 9:16, 20; Zeph. 3:11) when she entered the city (Obad. 13). Other **nations** that oppose Israel will also reap God's judgment, often pictured as a cup to **drink** (cf. Isa. 51:17, 21-23; Jer. 25:15-33; Hab. 2:16; Rev. 14:9-10; 16:19; also see Isa. 63:6)" (Baker, p. 1458).

JTB: In October, 2000, I watched on television newscasts as a mob of Palestinians in Ramallah murdered two Jewish military reserve soldiers who had taken a wrong turn, overpowering them in a police station, throwing their bodies out the window, one Palestinian ecstatic over the blood on his hands, others feverishly bludgeoning the body of their victim with a window frame, and the whole mob ecstatically parading the corpse around town.

<sup>13</sup> 1:16 - all nations ... drink continually: In the Battle of Armageddon, the earth's nations will gather around Jerusalem in their anti-Semitic rage to drink of the elixir of Jewish blood. They will find it a poisonous brew that will plunge them into fatal seizures. Zech 12:2-3 2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. 3 "It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

<sup>14</sup> 1:16 - never existed: "Those nations will be so completely destroyed when Jesus Christ returns to the earth (Rev. 19:15, 17-18, 21) that it will be **as if they had never** existed. Edom will be included in that judgment. For though Edom ceased to exist as a nation when the Romans conquered Idumea, some of the

## B2 Israel to Replace Edom in the Millennium 17-21

C1 Some Israelis to survive the Tribulation

C2 Mt. Zion to be free from unbelieving Gentile contamination <sup>15</sup>

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Edomites' descendants will again populate their land in the future. Even today that land, now a part of Jordan, is not totally desolate. But the Edomites will then be completely wiped out (cf. Obad. 18) and their land in the Millennium will be occupied by Israelites (vv. 19, 21)" (Baker, p. 1458).

Charles L. Feinberg (pp. 128-129) applies this statement directly to Edom: "The time of this judgment will be just before the establishment of Messiah's kingdom; then the power of Edom will be finally and completely broken. When the last great confederacy against Israel takes place (Zech 12; 14), the Edomites will be among these adversaries of God's people. They will be routed, and Edom will be blotted out as a nation. When other nations, like Assyria and Egypt, are restored and brought into millennial blessing, Edom will have been utterly destroyed. Edom, representative of the flesh and the carnal mind with its enmity against God and His Law, must be irrevocably cut off." (JTB: See v. 18 below.)

(JTB): Matt. 25:31-46 describes the returning Christ's judgment of all the nations. Those who are believers, who will have shown mercy to the Jewish people during the tribulation, will survive to inhabit Christ's millennial kingdom. Those who are not believers, who will not have shown mercy to Israel, will be summarily executed and sent away into eternal punishment. The net result will be that only the righteous are left to inherit the Millennial Kingdom. Edom as a nation will evidently cease to exist forever at that point.

"As if they had never existed" was never intended to mean the annihilation of all nations forever. Rather it means that all those among the nations who oppose God will be destroyed. The survivors from among the nations will be those people of any language or nation who have acknowledged God and trusted in His Son. Rev. 19:15 captures the twin ideas of destroying the rebels and ruling the rest: Rev 19:15 (NNAS) "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the **nations**, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty." (Cf. also Psalm 2:9.)

Numerous Scriptures reveal that there will continue to be nations who exist during Christ's Millennial Kingdom: Isa 2:1-4 (NNAS) "The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. {2} Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the **nations** will stream to it. {3} And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} And He will judge between the **nations**, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. **Nation** will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war." Rev 15:4: "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE **NATIONS** WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."

Even in the eternal state, there continue to be nations who exist in the New Jerusalem: Rev 21:23-26: "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. {24} The **nations** will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. {25} In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; {26} and they will bring the glory and the honor of the **nations** into it."

<sup>15</sup> 1:17 - it [Zion] will be holy: As Edom and other nations have defiled Jerusalem / Mount Zion, God's holy mountain (see Obadiah v. 16) by capturing it and treading it under foot, celebrating over their anti-Semitic victories, so God will allow neither Edomites nor any other Gentiles to defile it: Joel 3:17: Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more. Isa 52:1: Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion;

## C3 Israel to own and possess Gentile territory

D1 The absolute ethnic cleansing of Edom: Israel to exterminate Edom completely v. 18

E1 Israel the vehicle for ethnic cleansing

E2 Esau the recipient of ethnic cleansing

E3 The totality of the ethnic cleansing <sup>16</sup>

E4 Yahweh the Instigator and Guarantor of ethnic cleansing <sup>17</sup>

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Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no longer come into you. (As John A. Martin, (Isaiah, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1106) says re: Isa. 52:1: "This no doubt refers to the time when the Messiah will establish God's kingdom on earth, for only then will pagans never again trample the city."

Jesus himself said, Luke 21:23-24: "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; {24} and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be **trampled under foot** by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

When, as a college student on tour in the summer of 1967, I heard Jerusalem liberated from Arab control, I wondered if the times of the Gentiles had passed. But as time went on and I became more politically astute, I saw how helpless the Israelis were to govern their own city. Hundreds of thousands of "Palestinians" still live in the old city (east Jerusalem), and a Muslim shrine (Dome of the Rock) (Al Aqsa) mosque infringe upon the Temple Mount so that, in 2000, when the Temple Mount Faithful wanted to lay a cornerstone for the Jewish temple, the Jerusalem police forbade them access to the temple mount! But there will come a time, when Christ has returned, that the Gentile occupation of the city and the Temple Mount will be terminated. Zec 14:20-21: "In that day there will *be inscribed* on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO THE LORD." And the cooking pots in the LORD'S house will be like the bowls before the altar. {21} Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day."

<sup>16</sup> 1:18 - no survivor of the house of Esau: This extermination will take place in connection with Messiah's return in power (Rev. 19) followed by His judgment of all the nations (Matt. 25). See also the comments on Obadiah 1: 9.

<sup>17</sup> 1:18 - LORD has spoken: Though judgment is a fearsome thing; though the prospect of ethnic cleansing (as in the Old Testament) has always been a stumbling block for liberals, and in recent years has been deemed the ultimate in political incorrectness, yet God is holy and just. When He decrees ethnic cleansing, it is the right, if sad thing to do. And it will be done, for He has spoken!

- D2 The Israeli occupiers of various foreign and domestic territories<sup>18</sup> vv. 19-20
  - E1 Those of the Negev<sup>19</sup>-- Edom v. 19
  - E2 Those of the Shephelah<sup>20</sup>
    - F1 Philistia
    - F2 Ephraim<sup>21</sup>
    - F3 Samaria<sup>22</sup>
  - E3 Benjamin -- Gilead<sup>23</sup>
  - E4 Israeli exiles from as far as Zarephath and Sepharad -- the Negev v. 20
    - F1 The Zarephath exiles

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<sup>18</sup> 1:19-20 - Israeli occupation of "foreign" land: One must remember the sole reason why Israel has the right to occupy all of the land of Palestine and more -- it is because God has given it to her! Gen 15:18-21: On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: {19}the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite {20}and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim {21}and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite." "Israel has never possessed this land in its entirety, but she will when Christ returns to reign as Messiah" (Allen P. Ross, *Genesis The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 56).

<sup>19</sup> 1:19 - Negev: Israelis in the southern desert portion of Israel will move directly east and inhabit the mountainous land of Edom -- the area south and east of the Dead Sea, directly below Moab.

<sup>20</sup> 1:19 - Shephelah: Israelis in the western foothills will move south and farther west to the coastal Philistine plain.

<sup>21</sup> 1:19 - Ephraim: Israelis will possess this area in central Palestine north of Jerusalem and west of the Jordan River.

<sup>22</sup> 1:19 - Samaria: Israelis will possess this area in central Palestine north of Ephraim and west of the Jordan River.

<sup>23</sup> 1:19 - Gilead: The area to the east of Samaria across the Jordan River, and north of ancient Ammon.

F2 The Sepharad<sup>24</sup> exiles

F3 The territory possessed

C4 Mount Zion<sup>25</sup> to judge Mount Esau v. 20

C5 Yahweh to establish His Kingdom!

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<sup>24</sup> 1:20 - Sepharad: (Baker, p. 1458): "Suggestions on the location of Sepharad include two countries (Spain, Media) and two cities (Hesperides in Libya, and Sardis in Asia Minor). Sardis seems preferable. It may be the same as the Akkadian Sapardu. If Sepharad is to be identified with Sardis, then Jews there will be returning a distance of almost 400 miles to the Negev. At the beginning of the Millennium Israelites will return to their land from these and other lands, and their territory will be expanded."

<sup>25</sup> 1:21 - deliverers: from the Hebrew 3467 *yasha'*, to save. The action of saving or delivering Israel occurs repeatedly in the book of Judges, e.g.: Judg 3:9: "When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a **deliverer** for the sons of Israel to **deliver** them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother." The judges were deliverers of Israel. In this context, appropriately, the Saviors or Deliverers of Israel will judge Esau! This means either that Israelites will stand in judgment over Esau by vanquishing the Edomites, or, perhaps more likely, since they have already vanquished them, it may mean "From Jerusalem (**Mount Zion**; cf. v. 17) **deliverers** (judges) **will... govern** the people who will have occupied **the mountains of Esau** (cf. vv. 8, 19)" (Baker, p. 1458).