

Commentary Studies *in Obadiah*

1. THE VISION OF OBADIAH. (The book opens announcing the author. There are a number of Obadiahs in the Bible, but it cannot be determined which one this man was or whether he was any of the others mentioned. No identity of parentage, home, or background is given in the book to help us. The problem of when he prophesied will be discussed in connection with verse 17.) THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD CONCERNING EDOM; (Normally God sent His prophets with a message for His people; Obadiah's message concerns the people of Edom, who lived south of Judah and were descendants of Edom, Jacob's twin brother better known by the name of Esau.) WE HAVE HEARD A RUMOUR ("Tidings"—Revised Version,) FROM THE LORD, AND AN AMBASSADOR IS SENT AMONG THE HEATHEN, (From the Lord signifying His workings among the heathen nations to bring about His purpose against Edom.) ARISE YE, AND LET US RISE UP AGAINST HER IN BATTLE. (God was putting it into the hearts of the heathen to battle against Edom. They probably had one motive in attacking Edom; God had another.)

2. BEHOLD, I HAVE MADE THEE SMALL AMONG THE HEATHEN; (Belittled, insignificant, ready to be attacked.) THOU ART GREATLY DESPISED. (But, they were small in their own eyes. See following verses.)

3. THE PRIDE OF THINE HEART HATH DECEIVED THEE, THOU THAT DWELLEST IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK, WHOSE HABITATION IS HIGH; (One writer has observed that all the southern part of Palestine was full of caverns hewn out of the rocks in which people lived. Some of the most amazing ruins of the old world are those found in Petra, the capital city of Edom. In order to enter the city, one had to climb, climb, climb. The city itself was surrounded by steep faces of mountain-like walls, and the entrance into the city was a narrow crack in one of the mountains. In that day of hand-to-hand combat, this seemed impregnable to its inhabitants. This accounted for their pride here referred to.) THAT SAITH IN HIS HEART, WHO SHALL BRING ME DOWN TO THE GROUND? (Edom

did not expect to fall, Its trust was in its military fortifications.)

4. THOUGH THOU EXALT THYSELF AS THE EAGLE, (The bird that symbolizes freedom because of its place of abode.) AND THOUGH THOU SET THY NEST AMONG THE STARS, (Like the eagle.) THENCE (From there.) WILL I BRING THEE DOWN, SAITH THE LORD. (In the preceding verse, Edom complacently said, "Who shall bring me down?" This verse gives the answer, "I will bring thee down, saith the Lord." Those who are proud encounter the displeasure of God: I Pet. 5:5; Prov. 6:16, 17. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled by God: Luke 18:14; Matt. 23:12. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall: Prov. 16:18. When we think that we stand, we are warned to be careful lest we fall: I Cor. 10:12. Peter fell through over confidence: Matt. 26:31-35,40,41,69-75.)

5. IF THIEVES CAME TO THEE, IF ROBBERS BY NIGHT, (HOW ART THOU CUT OFF!) WOULD THEY NOT HAVE STOLEN TILL THEY HAD ENOUGH? IF GRAPEGATHERERS CAME TO THEE, WOULD THEY NOT LEAVE SOME GRAPES?

6. HOW ARE THE THINGS OF ESAU SEARCHED OUT! HOW ARE HIS HIDDEN THINGS SOUGHT UP! (One of the best comments upon this passage possible to print is a parallel passage in Jer. 49:9,10: "If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not." In other words, by the time that God had finished His work upon Esau, there would be nothing left. This is strongly suggested in verse 5's parenthetic statement, "How art thou cut off!")

7. 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: (Alliances are usually entered into for selfish reasons and broken for selfish reasons. When a ship is going to go down, everybody abandons it, and when the doom of

Edom was apparent, it became an abandoned nation by the other nations.) THERE IS NONE UNDERSTANDING IN HIM.

8. SHALL I NOT IN THAT DAY, SAITH THE LORD, EVEN DESTROY THE WISE MEN OUT OF EDMOM, AND UNDERSTANDING OUT OF THE MOUNT OF ESAU? (Mt. Seir. In addition to Edom's confederates failing them, their military leaders would be at an utter loss to know what to do in the siege.)

9. AND THY MIGHTY MEN, O TEMAN, (The southern district of Edom,) SHALL BE DISMAYED, TO THE END THAT EVERY ONE OF THE MOUNT OF ESAU MAY BE CUT OFF BY SLAUGHTER.

10. FOR THY VIOLENCE AGAINST THY BROTHER JACOB SHAME SHALL COVER THEE, AND THOU SHALT BE CUT OFF FOR EVER. (Now Obadiah begins to point out why God was going to destroy Edom: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob." God was dealing with nations in the book, but He speaks in the language of the individuals behind the nations. The struggle between Jacob and Esau began at birth, Gen. 25:26, and demonstrated itself throughout their lifetimes. The same spirit possessed their descendants, for Edom refused Israel passage through their land when Israel was traveling from Egypt to Canaan, Num. 20:14-21. Ezekiel's prophecy against Edom was because of the Edomites' hostility toward Judah, Eze. 25: 12-14. The same was true of Amos's condemnation of Edom, Amos 1:11.)

11. IN THE DAY THAT THOU STOODST ON THE OTHER SIDE, (Like the priest and the Levite in the parable,) IN THE DAY THAT STRANGERS CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE HIS FORCES, (One finds out who his true friends are in his days of calamity.) AND FOREIGNERS ENTERED INTO HIS GATES, AND CAST LOTS UPON JERUSALEM, EVEN THOU WAST AS ONE OF THEM, (Edom was numbered with the enemies of Israel in the time of calamity being discussed.)

12. 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. (Edom's jealousy through the years had caused them to rejoice in the downfall of Israel and Judah. The calamities befalling Jacob had brought not only an inward satisfaction, but an outward expression of their own proud feelings.)

13. 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; (They had even taken advantage of Jacob's calamity by helping pillage and spoil.)

14. 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. (Even those of Jacob that had been able to escape the enemy, Edom had intercepted and turned them over to those from whom they had escaped. They lost no opportunity to do God's people harm. That is the way hate is.)

15. FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR UPON ALL THE HEATHEN; (Not only upon Edom, but also upon the neighbor nations that had opposed God's people. When those nations fell, they probably thought it was merely that military might had overpowered their strength, but it was because of the decree of God that they were brought down to the dust.) AS THOU HAST DONE, IT SHALL BE DONE UNTO THEE; THY REWARD SHALL RETURN UPON THINE OWN HEAD. (That God requites or pays back is taught and seen throughout the Bible. He makes men reap what they have sown. Edom would be the same. In no way is the fairness of God seen more than in His treating people as we have treated others. As they had seen Judah in great affliction and had rejoiced over it, the day was coming when calamity would also crush them.)

16. FOR AS YE HAVE DRUNK UPON MY HOLY MOUNTAIN, (In gaiety and in triumph,) SO SHALL ALL THE HEATHEN DRINK CONTINUALLY. (In punishment. The Lord's anger is often pictured as being in a cup of which He makes the punished drink, Rev. 14:10; Jer. 25:15,16; Isa. 51:17. What a terrible drink that is! None would want to drink, but they must drink of that cup even when they do

not want to, Jer. 25:27,28,) YEA, THEY SHALL DRINK, AND THEY SHALL SWALLOW DOWN, AND THEY SHALL BE AS THOUGH THEY HAD NOT BEEN. (Utter destruction awaited not only Edom, but all the surrounding nations.)

17. BUT UPON MOUNT ZION (In Jerusalem of the Israelites—not upon Mt. Seir of the Edomites.) SHALL BE DELIVERANCE. (The question of when the book of Obadiah was written hinges much upon this passage. The contents of the book favor its being written after the fall of Jerusalem, for it would seem that Edom was rejoicing over that fall. That would argue for a date in the 500's. But, the book of Joel is usually dated in the 800's, and in chapter 2, verse 32 of Joel, it says, "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said," which appears to be a quotation from this verse in Obadiah. If it is, then Obadiah's date would have to be earlier than Joel's. Joel, however, may have been quoting a well known oral prophecy extant among the Jews of his day to the effect that "in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance".) AND THERE SHALL BE HOLINESS; (Numerous passages in the prophets and elsewhere predict the holiness of Jerusalem, Joel 3:17; Nah. 1:15; Rev. 21:27. Beyond a doubt, the ultimate fulfillment of this promise is in the heavenly Jerusalem rather than in the earthly Jerusalem) AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB SHALL POSSESS THEIR POSSESSIONS. (At first one might suppose that this refers to the fact that what was left of the Edomites became swallowed up in Judah, which did happen, but by what follows, one cannot so restrict it.)

18. AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB SHALL BE A FIRE, AND THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH A FLAME, AND THE HOUSE OF ESAU FOR STUBBLE, AND THEY SHALL KINDLE IN THEM, AND DEVOUR THEM; AND THERE SHALL NOT BE ANY REMAINING OF THE HOUSE OF ESAU; FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT. (God's having said it would be just reason for understanding that it would come to pass. There is no house of Esau today. It passed out of existence long ago, and while one may wander about in the remains of its former abode, he will not find the Edomites themselves. They are gone just as God said they would be.)

19. AND THEY OF THE SOUTH SHALL POSSESS THE MOUNT OF ESAU; (With this statement, the prophet envisioned Jerusalem as a center of conquest with the people

of God of the south conquering the Edomites who lived to the south,) AND THEY OF THE PLAIN THE PHILISTINES; (Next the people of God who lived toward the Maritime Plain would conquer the Philistines who lived near them,) AND THEY SHALL POSSESS THE FIELDS OF EPHRAIM, AND THE FIELDS OF SAMARIA; (Apparently the people of God of the north would be the ones who would conquer Ephraim where Samaria was the capital city.) AND BEN-JAMIN SHALL POSSESS GILEAD. (Gilead lay east of the Jordan, thus completing the area to be conquered; the south, the west, the north, and now the east.)

20. AND THE CAPTIVITY OF THIS HOST OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL POSSESS THAT OF THE CANAANITES, EVEN UNTO ZAREPHATH; (Even those afar off.) AND THE CAPTIVITY OF JERUSALEM, WHICH IS IN SEPHARAD, (Sepharad is as yet unidentified,) SHALL POSSESS THE CITIES OF THE SOUTH. (We are constrained to believe that these conquests were to be of an evangelistic nature rather than a military because of two considerations; (1) from the time that God returned Judah to its land until He destroyed the nation in 70 A.D., they were never such a military power as described here; and (2) these prophecies of conquest are said in Acts 15:14-17 to be fulfilled in the evangelism by the church. True Acts 15 is quoting a prophecy from Amos 9:11,12, but it says the "prophets"—plural, not just Amos—predicted such "victories".)

21. AND SAVIOURS (Men whom God would use.) SHALL COME UP ON MOUNT ZION (So often referred to as God's headquarters.) TO JUDGE THE MOUNT OF ESAU; (The struggle between Jacob and Esau would end in complete victory for Jacob.) AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD'S. (Under the gospel, when the Sword of the Spirit was to be used to bring all nations into subjection to God, we have a realization of this prophecy. Psa. 22:27,28 likewise predicted, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations." Of the kingdom that Daniel said God would set up, he predicted, "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever," Dan. 2:44. Thus, the book of Obadiah closes with a clear ringing bell proclaiming God's victory.)