



## Obadiah 15-17

# Obadiah's Hymn of Indignation

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and is the most unlikely place where we would expect a positive word about the Messiah's reign. In deed, the prophecy has been described as a "Hymn of Hate," and "Obadiah's Indignation Oration." This Hebrew prophecy could be from the oldest writing prophet and could be placed in B.C. 845. Others give it a later date of 587.

Obadiah means "Servant of Yahweh." The theme of his short prophecy is the destruction of Edom whereby one historical event is taken as occasion for a prophecy. In it he predicts the destruction of Edom, the most hated enemy of Israel. But he also sees another day of judgment upon the enemies of God. He sets his sights on "the Day of Yahweh."

## A REPUGNANT FAMILY FEUD

To understand Obadiah we must go back to the days of two brothers Jacob and Esau. Jacob beat his older brother out of his birthright and as a result two brothers and their decedents have been fighting ever since. They have taken sides and waged war with each other. Esau's descendents settled in the land of Edom. It was south of the Dead Sea, marked by well-watered plains, on an important caravan trade route that became a very wealthy trading center. They were notorious for making raids on their neighbors and retreating to their impregnable strongholds at Sela (Petra), Teman and Bozrah.

The bitter hatred of the Edomites was reinforced in Numbers 20 when they refused to allow the Israelites passage through their territory while fleeing from Egypt. In the conquest of the Promised Land they fought against Israel. Later King David and his son Solomon subdued them, and the Edomites later rebelled under King Ahaz. This family feud was long, bitter and tragic. One writer says, "It is significant that nowhere in the Old Testament is any mention made of the gods of the Edomites," and there is no indication that Israel ever went after Edomite gods. There is no indication that they even had a religion. They lived on vengeance.

The pious, patriotic prophet of Judah pours forth the flaming righteous indication of his soul. He denounces the proud Edomites who deserve the punishment of God.

In this brief book Edom is destroyed (vv. 1-9) and the reasons for her destruction are given in vv. 10-14. However, it is against this backdrop of judgment on Edom that we discover that Israel will be restored. A remnant will come forth from Judah vv. 17, 21.

## THE RUIN OF EDOM (15-16)

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Obadiah has a strong firm conviction regarding the inflexible integrity of God. He is a righteous God who is in active control of every phase of His creation and His chosen people.

The Hebrew prophets looked forward to the time when Yahweh would intervene in human affairs and judge the evil world.

The Edomites represented the self-sufficient, oppressive we can do it all by ourselves without God attitude. The prophets proclaimed the end of all opposition to God. There would come a day when Yahweh would settle all accounts. He will rise to judge the world. That is the coming Day of Yahweh. It will be a day of doom and destruction to all opposition to God and a day of salvation and victory to the people of God.

Obadiah saw the "Day of Yahweh" looming near for all the enemies of God in verse fifteen.

For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations.  
As you have done, it will be done to you.  
Your dealings will return on your own head.

All of the Gentile nations will drink of the cup of the wrath of God. Keep in mind the Day of the LORD is a demonstration of divine justice and divine grace.

Edom's defeat is but a prelude to the overthrow of all powers set in opposition to the LORD.

Edom is best regarded as a type of the power of the world that is in opposition to and hostile to God and His kingdom.

The cause of Edom's ruin is their wickedness toward Israel (vv. 10-11). Edom was hostile because Yahweh elected Israel (Genesis 27:41).

Edom and all the enemies of Israel will receive just retribution for their sins against Israel on the Day of the LORD. The day is drawing near on all the nations. The rule will be "as you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. "

It would appear that Obadiah was the first prophet to use the expression "day of Yahweh." It is a day "on which Jehovah reveals His majesty and omnipotence in a glorious manner to overthrow all ungodly powers, and to complete His kingdom." Out of this comes the idea of "the day of judgment and retribution which predominates in the prophetic announcements . . ." (Keil and Delitzsch).

But judgment is only one side of what is in view on that day. God reveals His glory in judgment as well as salvation. In verse sixteen he writes:

Because just as you drank on My holy mountain,  
All the nations will drink continually.  
They will drink and swallow  
And become as if they had never existed.

The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch observe that our passage describes, "not only judging all nations and rewarding them according to their deeds (vv. 15b, 16), but as providing deliverance upon Zion (v. 17), and setting up His kingdom (v. 21). The retribution will correspond to the actions of Edom and of the nations."

Moreover, ". . . Obadiah regarded Edom as a type of the nations that had risen up in hostility to the Lord and His people, and were judged by the Lord in consequence, so that what he says of Edom applies to all nations which assume the same or a similar attitude towards the people of God. From this point of view he could, without reserve extend to all nations the retribution which would fall upon Edom for its sins."

However, as we shall see it is a divinely ordained future for Israel.

### **THE ROLE OF THE REMNANT (17-21)**

"But on Mount Zion" is a fresh cool breeze against the heat of the hot, hostile night. Obadiah writes in verse seventeen:

But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,  
And it will be holy.  
And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

Most scholars see verse twenty-one as part of the stanza formed with verse seventeen. The theme of Zion dominates both verses 17 and 21. Verse 21 takes up the phrase "on Mt. Zion" which begins in v. 17. My Zion is the seat of the kingdom of Yahweh (v. 21). It is a type of the kingdom of God in its fully developed form just as Edom is a type of the nations of the world system in opposition to God. Obadiah writes in verse twenty-one:

The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion  
To judge the mountain of Esau,  
And the kingdom will be the Lord s.'

The sacred site will be rehabilitated. The fortunes of God's people are contrasted to the absolute destruction of Edom. There is consolation and hope for the remnant.

Mt. Zion is the LORD s'dwelling place and the land rightly belongs to Him. The holy hill is a symbol of the LORD s'land. To worship Him carried with it the privilege of living in the land. When the fortunes are reversed the land too will be restored to its rightful owners. With play on words the prophet links the city of Jerusalem.

Israel's enemy Edom will be destroyed, but Yahweh will restore His people. The true victor, of course, is not Israel, but Yahweh who is sovereign over the Edomites of this world. The Lord God reigns!

Verse eighteen draws out the contrast further by emphasizing the total destruction of "all the nations." God will bring judgment upon the nations of the world.

Then the house of Jacob will be a fire  
And the house of Joseph a flame;  
But the house of Esau *will be* as stubble.  
And they will set them on fire and consume them,  
So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau, ”  
For the Lord has spoken.

The Old Testament idea of the blessings of God was bound to the material possession of the Promised Land. As Allen observes, "the land had a sacramental significance: spiritual restoration to divine favor is inextricably linked with material restoration of Palestine."

## **THE REIGN OF THE DELIVERER**

Some modern scholars see this and other passages that relate to the restoration of the land fulfilled in the modern State of Israel. On the other hand, other scholars see the contemporary Israel inspired by raw political nationalism rather than by the divine. But cannot our Sovereign LORD use a political, even non-religious Israel, to accomplish His chosen goal? Still other scholars see the territorial Israel transmuted into a supernatural heavenly Jerusalem and new Israel.

One thing is for sure the coming of this kingdom has already begun with Jesus Christ, and in Him it reaches its consummation at His Second Coming.

Edom is only a type of the God-hating Gentile world and therefore the true fulfillment can be seen in Christ alone.

Hengstenberg explains, "The leading thought is: The universal dominion of the kingdom of God which follows the deepest abasement of the people of God, and of which the fullest and most perfect realization must be sought in Christ . . . . The coming of this kingdom began with Christ, and looks for its complete fulfillment in Him." Cf. Joel 3:21; Mic. 4:7; Isa. 24:23.

Just as surely as God fulfilled His judgment on Edom He will also fulfill His promises regarding Zion and her Deliverer!

Who will eventually dominate the world? The house of Jacob, the true people of God will under the rule of the Messiah.

Malachi 1:3 reminds us Yahweh made the mountains of Esau into a wilderness. This can only refer to the desolation of the land of Edom by the Babylonians.

The destruction of the Edomites as a nation was commenced by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 B.C. John Hurcanus subdued them entirely c. 129 B.C. and forced them to accept Judaism including circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic Law. They became the hated Idumeans during the days of Christ and gave to the Jews the Herodian family. They completely disappear from history with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. The Romans slew the Idumeans in Jerusalem along with the Jews. A few Edomites who remained were lost among the Arabs. The Edomites were "cut off forever" (v. 10) by the Romans. Its very name disappeared from the earth. There are no Edomites living today.

Amos 9:11, 12; Numbers 24:18 and Obadiah 18 all refer to the same events. A Ruler will arise out of Jacob (the Messiah) and, according to Amos it will take place in connection with the raising up of the fallen hut of

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(the Messiah) and, according to Amos it will take place in connection with the raising up of the fallen hut of David, and according to Obadiah, in the day of Yahweh along with the judgment of all the nations.

The fulfillment of Obadiah 17 and 21 can only belong to the Messianic times. It commenced with the founding of the kingdom of Christ on this earth and it reaches its fulfillment at the second coming of Christ.

Jesus Christ alone will be exalted. "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus Christ is Yahweh God. One day all mankind will be made to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is all He claimed to be —very God of very God. Unfortunately, for many it will be too late for the salvation of their souls. There is a day coming in the future when the exalted place the Savior now occupies in heaven will consummate in the universal submission and acknowledgement of His lordship by all mankind.

Will you submit to His lordship today as a free volitional choice? One day you will not have that free choice. You will bow before Him and confess Him as a sovereign whose right it is to reign. One day we will have the glorious opportunity of being a part of the "great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb'" (Revelation 7:9-10). Even so come, Lord Jesus!

The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes the giving of the Holy Spirit. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone? Here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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