

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

* * * THE ESCHATOLOGICAL END OF EDOM * * *

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

"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."
Obadiah 15

AUTHOR: Obadiah (c. 585 BC)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE. The author of this book is Obadiah (Obad1). At least twelve men in the O.T. are named Obadiah, which means *servant of the LORD*. However, the Obadiah who authored this book is unknown outside of his book. As will be apparent from the text of Obadiah, the book is dated to the year after Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple (i.e., Av 9, 586 BC; cf. Obad11; Ps137:7).

THEME OF OBADIAH. Obadiah is the shortest book in the O.T. Its subject is the eschatological judgment of JEHOVAH on the nation of Edom (i.e., Edomites) for their long history of grievous sins against Israel (Obad10; cf. Ps137:7-9). During the Day of the LORD, all remaining descendants of Esau will be destroyed (Obad18), and none will enter the Millennial Kingdom.

WHO WERE THE EDMITES? From Abraham descended the Jews and the Arabs (see CHART: DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM). The Edomites are a subset of the Arab peoples; namely, those descended from Esau (cf. Gen25:30; 32:3; 36:1,8-9) which include Amalek and the Amalekites (cf. Gen36:12). The Edomites/Amalekites are the ancient enemies of the Israelites. At the time of the Exodus, when the Israelites were journeying from Egypt to Canaan, the Edomites refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their land by means of the King's Highway (cf. Num20:14-21; 21:4; Judg11:17-18). The Israelites fought the Edomites/Amalekites during the reigns of Saul (1Sam14:47-48) and David (2Sam8:13-14). During the reign of King Ahaz, the Edomites invaded Judah and carried away captives (2Chron28:17). When Judah was conquered/exiled by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, the Edomites rejoiced (Ps137:7). Haman, who sought to destroy all the Jews in the Persian empire, was an Amalekite (Esth3:1); and Herod who sought to kill the newborn Christ by slaughtering all the babes in Bethlehem was an Idumean (see next section).

For their many grievous sins against the Israelites, there are a multitude of prophecies of the destruction of the Edomites/Amalekites (e.g., Exod17:14; Num24:20; Deut25:19; 1Sam15:3; Isa11:14; 34:5-17; 63:1-6; Jer9:25-26; 25:17-26; 49:7-10; Lam4:21-22; Ezek25:12-14; 35:1-15; Joel3:19; Amos1:11-12; 9:11-12; Obad1-21; Mal1:3-4). King Saul was commanded to utterly exterminate the Amalekites (1Sam15:3), but he failed to do so. The LORD's judgment against Edom is mentioned more times than that of any other nation/people in the O.T.

WHO ARE THE EDMITES TODAY? The Edomites originally settled at and around Mt. Seir in the region southeast of the Dead Sea (Gen32:3; 36:8-9), and

their capital was Selah-Bozrah-Petra (2Kgs14:7; Isa34:6; 63:1). In the 3rd century BC, the Nabateans (Arab peoples from northern Arabia) occupied the land of Edom. This led to many Edomites fleeing to the west and occupying land in southern Judah, which became known as Idumea (cf. Mk3:8; see CHART: MAP OF EDOM-IDUMEA). In the 1st century AD, the Herodian dynasty in Judah was Idumean (per Josephus).

According to Obadiah 15-18, the descendants of Esau (i.e., the Edomites/Amalekites) will not be completely eradicated until the Day of the LORD (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation period that precedes the 2nd coming of Christ). Thus, the Edomites as a people must exist today. Scripture describes them as an Arabic people with a perpetual hatred for the Israelites, with a lust to eradicate them as a people/nation, and with a desire to possess their land for themselves (Ps83:2-6,12). It is likely that the Edomites of today are the people who call themselves the **Palestinians**.

OUTLINE OF OBADIAH.

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| I. Pronouncement of Judgment on Edom | Obadiah 1-9 |
| II. The Reason for the Judgment of Edom | Obadiah 10-14 |
| III. Edom in the Day of the LORD | Obadiah 15-21 |

DISPENSATIONAL NOTE. The utter eschatological eradication of the descendants of Esau (i.e., Edom) demonstrates the trans-dispensational standard by which God judges the Gentile nations. Namely, God's promise to Abraham to "bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen12:3; cf. Matt25:32-46).

If it is true that those who call themselves Palestinians today are the descendants of the ancient Edomites, who are under a divine curse, both nations and individuals should think carefully about whose side they take in the modern Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

CHAPTER 1

PRONOUNCEMENT OF JUDGMENT ON EDMON

The Book of Obadiah opens with a pronouncement of judgment on the nation of Edom, which should be understood to be the descendants of Esau (Gen25:30), which included the Amalekites (Gen36:12,16).

- [1] Obadiah received a "vision" from the LORD "concerning Edom". The vision is of an "ambassador" of the LORD who is sent to the "nations" (hence the designation of "ambassador", rather than prophet; presumably an angelic envoy) to rally them to attack "Edom", the ancient and unrelenting enemy of Israel. As the enemy of Israel, all the world should oppose Edom (cf. Gen12:3). It is characteristic of God to use human nations as instruments of His divine judgment (Cp., Deut28:49; Hab1:5-6).
 - [2] The Edomites are "greatly despised" by all "nations". God characterizes Edom as "small", in contrast to the inflated view they hold of themselves (Cp., v3; Isa23:9).
 - [3] The chief characteristic mentioned of Edom is "the pride of thine heart", an attribute God hates (cf. Prov6:16-17). That Edom "dwellest in the clefts of the rock" is an allusion to its capital city, known to Obadiah as Selah (2Kgs14:7), but which became known as Bozrah (Isa63:1) and later Petra. Selah is a Hebrew word that means *rock*, Bozrah is a Hebrew word that means *sheepfold*, and Petra is a Greek word that means *rock*, or *cliff*. The boastful query, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?", always serves to invoke the wrath of the LORD (see v4; Cp., Isa14:12-15; Dan4:28-32).
- Note, in vv1-3, Obadiah quotes from/alludes to Jeremiah's prior prophecy against Edom using the very same terms (Cp., Jer49:14-16).
- [4] The pride of Edom is likened to an "eagle", who dwells in the sky above all other creatures; the figure is taken to a hyperbolic extreme, as an eagle whose "nest" is "among the stars". The pride of the Edomites is matched only by that of Lucifer himself (cf. Isa14:12-14). The answer to Edom's query (v3) is immediate and clear, "will I bring thee down, saith the LORD". Note that even when the LORD uses secondary agents as His instruments of judgment (cf. v1), He attributes the result to Himself.
 - [5] Here, God uses figures to draw a sharp contrast relative to His future work of judgment against Edom. Normally, "thieves" and "robbers" stop short of taking everything from a home, and "grape gatherers" at a harvest always "leave some grapes". In contrast, however, God's judgment of the Edomites will encompass the entire nation down to the very last man (cf. vv9,18).
 - [6] The "things of Esau" and his descendants are not "hidden", nor are they forgotten by God. God is patient and long-suffering, but He will have His vengeance (i.e., justice will be executed) in His appointed time (Cp., Deut32:35; Rom12:19).
 - [7] Those Edom believed to have been "of thy confederacy" (i.e., allies) will not come to their aid. Indeed, they will "deceive" Edom. Even

those who have benefitted from Edom will in the end "wound" (i.e., entrap) them.

- [8] Ancient Edom was renowned for their "wise men" who had "understanding" (cf. v9). However, "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1Cor1:21). The day will come when "there is none understanding in him". Today the Palestinians are the most foolish of all peoples.
- [9] "Teman" was a grandson of Esau and a prominent city in Edom, whose descendants were especially noted for their wisdom (cf. Gen36:10-11; Job4:1; Jer49:7). This verse presents the contrast noted in v5. God's judgment of Edom will be utter and exhaustive, as "every one" of the descendants of "Esau" (which includes the Edomites and the Amalekites) will eventually be "cut off by slaughter".

THE REASON FOR THE JUDGMENT OF EDM

The reason for God's judgment of the Edomites is due to their sins against the Jews (cf. Gen12:3; Matt25:41-46).

- [10] "Jacob" and Esau were brothers (Gen24:25-26), but they also represent the heads of two nations, Israel and Edom (cf. Gen24:23). Edom will be "cut off" because of its "violence" against "Jacob" (i.e., the nation of Israel, the Jews). This is the literal application of God's promise to Abraham to "curse him that curseth thee" (Gen12:3).
- [11] As an example of Edom's violence against Jacob (v10), God points to the reaction of the Edomites when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed "Jerusalem" and "carried away [the Jews] captive" to Babylon (2Chron36:17-20) in 586 BC. Although God sovereignly used the Babylonians as His instrument of divine discipline upon the kingdom of Judah, He held the Babylonians accountable for their abuses of the Jews (cf. Hab1:5-11).
- [12] In a similar manner, God holds Edom accountable for their reaction to (and participation in) the Babylonian conquest of Judah (cf. Ps137:7; Lam4:22). God charges the Edomites that "thou shouldest not" have "rejoiced" in the day in which the Jew was made a "stranger" (i.e., exiled from the Land of Israel and made captives in a foreign land; cf. Ezek25:15).

The Gentile Obligation to Bless the Jews. If God held the Edomites accountable for their attitude toward Judah's misfortune, even when Judah as a nation had turned from the worship of JEHOVAH and was worshipping idols (and God was in the process of disciplining them with the ultimate "curse" of the Mosaic covenant, which was exile from the Promised Land; cf. Lev26:32-39; Deut28:63-68), nations and individuals today should expect to be judged for their behaviors (and even attitudes) toward the reestablished nation of Israel and Jews worldwide (cf. Gen12:3; Matt25:32-45). The fact that the Jews are in a state of unbelief, or even rebellion against the LORD/Christ, does not relieve the Gentiles of their obligation to "bless" the descendants of Abraham.

- [13] The implication is that during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (i.e., 586 BC), the Edomites participated in the plundering

of the city. Note that three times the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews, even though it is divinely sanctioned discipline, is called a "calamity". God takes no pleasure, neither in the judgment of His enemies (Ezek18:23; 33:11) nor in the discipline of His children (Heb12:5-8).

- [14] A further implication is that Edomites participated in the slaughter of those Jews who might have otherwise escaped from the Babylonian army as the siege of Jerusalem came to an end (Cp., Amos1:6,9,11).

EDOM IN THE DAY OF THE LORD

The LORD's judgment of Edom will occur during the Day of the LORD (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation). Thus, of logical necessity, the Edomites must be a people who both exist today and will endure into the Tribulation. At that time, they will be utterly cut off as a people, and no Edomite will enter the Millennial Kingdom.

- [15] Note, "the day of the LORD" (i.e., the Tribulation, or Daniel's 70th Week; Dan9:27) is that period of time when God will judge "all the nations" (Cp., Zeph1:7-8,14-18; Rev14:14-20). However, "thou" is singular and addresses Edom in particular. Note that God's prophesied judgment of Edom is not only just, but it is a "reward" that has been merited. Because Edom "cursed" the descendants of Abraham, she will be "cursed" (Gen12:3); it will be an example of reaping what one has sown (Cp., Gal6:7).
- [16] Here, "drink" is used as a metaphor for judgment (Cp., Rev14:10). It is not only Edom who has "drunk upon my holy mountain" (i.e., Jerusalem; Cp., Ps2:6), but "all the nations drink continually" (Cp., Joel3:2; Zech12:3; 14:2). Thus, the Day of the LORD will be a judgment of "all the nations". Yet, the sins of the nations are not all equal. Not all Gentile nations will be utterly destroyed, but Edom "shall be as though they had not been" (Cp., Ezek25:12-14).
- [17] Whereas the Gentile nations will be judged during the Day of the LORD, "upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance". Thus, Israel as a nation will be saved (Rom11:26), and they shall "possess their possessions", the greatest of which will be the Promised Land (Cp., Ps83:12; Joel3:2,17).
- [18] The metaphor of "Jacob" as a "fire", "Joseph" as a "flame", and "Esau" as "stubble" pictures complete victory of Israel over Edom. So utter will be Israel's triumph that "there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau" (i.e., not a single Edomite will survive), and this according to divine decree. This will fulfill God's prophesied eradication of all the descendants of Esau, including the Amalekites (cf. Deut25:17-19; Num24:20; 1Sam15:2-3).
- [19] At this time of deliverance (i.e., in the Millennial Kingdom), Israel "shall possess" the lands formerly occupied by "Esau" (i.e., the Edomites/Idumeans) and "the Philistines"; they will finally "possess" all the land that was promised to Abraham (cf. Gen15:18-21).

Historical Note. Following the final Jewish rebellion attempted against the Roman Empire, the Bar Kokhba revolt (132-136 AD), the Roman Emperor Hadrian renamed the land of Israel as the Roman

province of Philistia, the ancient and perpetual enemies of the Jewish people, chosen so as to humiliate and infuriate the Jews. In Latin, the language of the Romans, Philistia is **Palestine** (Cp., Exod15:14; Isa14:29,31; Joel3:4 in KJV).

- [20] At the 2nd coming of Christ, the "captivity" of the Jewish people (i.e., those Jews still dispersed around the world) will be regathered to the Land of Israel (cf. Matt24:31). At that time they will fully and forever possess the land of the "Canaanites" (Cp., Gen15:21). "Zarephath" is between Tyre and Sidon, in Lebanon. Note that "Sapharad" is a Hebrew word that means *separated* (and came to be the Hebrew designation for Spain) and is the origin of the modern designation of Sephardic Jews (i.e., the subset of Jews who were dispersed to Spain and/or Muslim lands) in contrast to Ashkenazi Jews (i.e., the subset of Jews who were dispersed to northern Europe; cf. Gen10:3).
- [21] Here, "saviors" is the Hebrew word from which the name Joshua/Jesus is derived. These "saviors" are deliverers, akin to the "judge[s]" over Israel before the monarchy was established, and are likely to be Jewish rulers in the nation of Israel during the (millennial) "kingdom". The Lord Jesus Christ will be King of Israel (cf. Luk1:31-33) and "over all the earth" (Zech14:9), but He will have an administration of resurrected saints who reign with Him; these will include David (Ezek34:23-24), Jesus' twelve Apostles (Matt19:28), and the Body of Christ (cf. 1Cor6:2-3; 2Tim2:12 Rev2:26-27; 5:9-10).

IMPORTANT AFTERWORD

The teaching of Scripture, consummated in the Book of Obadiah, concerning the eschatological end of the Edom is the following. Although there will be many Gentile nations that exist in the Millennial Kingdom, there will be no nation of Edom. Furthermore, the remaining Edomites will be destroyed during the Day of the LORD (i.e., the Tribulation) and in association with the 2nd coming of Christ, such that no Edomite will enter the Kingdom. However, that does not mean all the descendants of Esau (e.g., Edomites, Amalekites, or Palestinians) are personally damned by a divine decree. Individual Edomites can personally believe the Gospel and be saved. However, in order to escape the coming judgment of God upon Edom, individual Edomites must separate themselves from the nation of Edom, even as individual Jews had to separate themselves from the nation of Israel in order to escape God's judgment of that nation in 70 AD (cf. Act2:36-40).

--- S.D.G. ---

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