

## Concerning Edom

The Book of Obadiah

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Given 18-Mar-06; Sermon #764

Literature and history are full of stories about competing brothers and sisters. There is a technical term that psychologists and behavioralists use to describe this sort of competition: sibling rivalry. I am sure you have heard of it. These internecine conflicts go all the way back to Cain and Abel, the first two siblings born of all humanity. They became caught up in this type of rivalry, and it ended with the death of Abel. Not only were Cain and Abel brothers, but the Hebrew of the Genesis account indicates that they also may have been twins. Classic studies of sibling rivalry are best conducted using sets of twins.

We can also see this competitive relationship in the case of Esau and Jacob. This is the biblical story and that classic model of two siblings—twins—starting out with a level playing field on which both vie for attention, for power, and for dominance. Each one tries to be superior to the other.

There are other examples of such sibling rivalry that have come down to us through our literature, stories, and movies. *Cinderella*, for example, is a classic story of sibling rivalry between Cinderella and her stepsisters. There are those who feel that the four witches in *The Wizard of Oz* were sisters, and that they, too, were subject to such stormy sibling relationships. It does not actually specify this in L. Frank Baum's classic text, but some have perceived this to be the case. Shakespeare often included this particular twist in his plays. *Much Ado About Nothing* comes to mind, where we find the prince and his brother vying with one another. Steinbeck used it in *East of Eden*, and many other writers of stories and screenplays have used this relationship model.

Other examples that came to mind as I prepared this sermon were *Legends of the Fall*, describing a rivalry among brothers; and in *A League of Their Own*, a movie about women's baseball, there is a rivalry between sisters included as a sub-plot in the story. C. S. Lewis used it in the *Narnia* books and Tolkien used it in *Lord of the Rings*. It may not have been a major part of the plot in either of these last two examples, but, as we can readily see, it is used rather frequently throughout much of our literature to a greater or lesser degree. There is much we can learn from these examples. I am certain that if we thought about it for a time we would see how common a theme it is in those movies and stories that we have seen and read.

However, when we think of sibling rivalry, it is the classic conflicts of the Old Testament

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that come to mind. These are the ones to which everyone returns: Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, David and his brothers. There was even sibling rivalry among Christ's disciples. They may not all have been blood brothers, but we do find that many of them were related. They were certainly brothers in the faith. They were caught up in the pursuit of power and dominance within the context of the coming Kingdom of God. This was, indeed, a problem with sibling rivalry, and it demanded Jesus' attention. Even the mother of James and John got caught up in the spirit of competition. We also have the parable of the prodigal son, which is, in part, about the rivalry between the older son and his prodigal brother. There are other examples, as well, if we were to search them out.

But arguably, the sibling rivalry that has had perhaps the greatest impact on the entire plan of God is that of Esau and Jacob. We are going to track down the roots of this sibling rivalry—which had begun even *before* they were born!

**Genesis 25:21-23** Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. [This is where the trouble all began.] But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" [It must have been an awful experience to have this wrestling match in her womb. We can all relate to having an upset stomach or being somewhat queasy, but this was terrible!] So she went to inquire of the Lord. [She was a very smart woman.] And the Lord said to her: "Two nations are in your womb [Now we know why—it was World War III in there!], two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

When we consider the fact that this relationship has directly and adversely affected many nations throughout history, along with the resultant sufferings and deaths of millions of people, it is really no laughing matter! This is, and always has been, attributable to the struggle between these two brothers.

**Genesis 25:24-27** So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob [meaning "heal-catcher" or "supplanter"]. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. [And I am sure he aged quickly after this point!] So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was

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a mild man, dwelling in tents.

These two were just complete opposites. One was hairy and one was smooth; one enjoyed the outdoors and the other liked to stay in tents. One seemed to have one particular driving force (he liked to hunt), and the other was a *complete* man, a well-rounded man who was able to keep several balls in the air. This is the meaning in the Hebrew when Jacob is described as a "mild man." He was not one to have a laser-like focus on one interest, but was a man of great talent in several areas.

**Genesis 25:28-34** And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. [Here is another wrinkle in the relationship: Mom and Dad played favorites—and you just know there is going to be competition.] Now Jacob cooked a stew [I want you to remember the word *cooked*, because it will come up again]; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom. [*Esau* means "hairy"; *Edom* means "red."] But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." [Jacob started negotiating. He was a businessman. "Give me this for that and we have a deal," Jacob said, in effect.] And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" [Esau said, "Look, if I survive, this birthright may be of some profit, but right now I will trade anything to live."] Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

One of Esau's problems was that he could not really see that which was truly important. Whatever was before him at the time drew his complete attention. He seemed to take no thought of future problems, future blessings, or future consequences. He counted his birthright as nothing—worth no more than a meal!

Jacob is now possessor of the birthright and, in Genesis 27, he tricks his father into passing down the blessing to him, as well. Esau is devastated upon discovering this duplicitous turn of events.

**Genesis 27:34-37** When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me—me also, O my father!" But he [Isaac] said, "Your brother came with deceit and

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has taken away your blessing." And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright. [He did not even truly understand what had happened. Esau cried out, in effect, "He did it; it was Jacob that did it! I did not have any part in all this! It was all Jacob's fault!" God looks at it a bit differently, however.] And now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?"

There was nothing left. The subsequent "blessing" Esau is given is tantamount to a curse: "You are going to live far away from the fatness of the land. The dew of heaven will not be there. You will live in a dry land and will have to live by the sword. And, on occasion, when you become restless, you will break your brother's yoke. But, for the most part, you are going to be a people grappling for an existence."

**Genesis 27:41** So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

This is the attitude that Esau and his people have had ever since. Just to compare the two of them mentally, in the games people play, Esau was no match for Jacob. Jacob could run circles around Esau at any time. It was not that Esau was dumb; it was just that his personality did not provide him the wherewithal to keep up with Jacob's deceptions. Twice Jacob had swindled him out of priceless inheritances! The birthright made Jacob recipient of that portion of the inheritance that belonged to the firstborn alone, and the blessing Jacob took to himself was that gift of God by which the patriarch passed on the promised family blessings for the future. These birthright blessings included the patriarchy—which was now Jacob's! We read the part where he was made Esau's master. This meant that the leadership position in Abraham's and Isaac's family passed not to the elder, Esau, but to the younger, Jacob; thus, he would become patriarch when Isaac died. Esau would be left to form his own house, but without all the advantages and wealth inherent within the blessing and the birthright.

For these thefts, Esau hated Jacob enough to kill him! Again, this is the hatred that has been passed on from generation to generation ever since that time—approximately 3,700 years ago! This, then, provides us with a basic understanding of the relationship

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between these two peoples. It all began with the contentious relationship between these two twin brothers.

Today we are going to examine the other end of the story. We will go through the amazing prophecies concerning Edom and the *end* of this conflict found written in the book of Obadiah—the shortest book in the Old Testament at only twenty-one verses. This would seem a logical follow-up to my last sermon on the king of the South. Edom will be a significant player, as I explained it, in the confederation fulfilling the role of the king of the South. Through Obadiah, we can see how God lays out, in a succinct overview, the resolution of this sibling rivalry. By extension, He also lays out the resolution of this confederacy, as well.

There is some debate as to when this book was written. We find nothing to indicate when Obadiah may have written it. Our attention, however, can be drawn toward one of two historic time periods from the way in which Edom is described reacting to certain misfortunes that Judah, in particular, had experienced. However, they are both, nonetheless, inconclusive. I lean toward one of these conclusions for various reasons.

The earlier one falls between 800 and 750 BBC and would place Obadiah contemporary with Joel, Amos, and probably Elisha, who would have been rather old at this time. Amos might have been in his prime and Obadiah may have bridged the two. The later date would place the book after the fall of Jerusalem (c. 587-586 BBC). If this were the case, then he would have been contemporary with Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. Modern scholars lean toward this later date because they feel Obadiah is describing the actions of the Edomites when the Babylonians came and overthrew Jerusalem. However, there was an earlier time in the days of Joram (or Jehoram) when similar events happened involving a different confederacy. Edom could have been involved here, too. Thus we find that there are two time periods into which the book of Obadiah could fit.

To me, the deciding factor is where Obadiah fits into the Minor Prophets. He is linked with Joel and Amos—all three together. Had it been after the fall of Jerusalem, he would have been linked more with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Since Obadiah is found more toward the front of the sequence of the Minor Prophets in the inspired compilation of the canonical books, the book seems to fit in more with the earlier prophets than the latter. These are my reasons; and it is not all that important when the book was written, because the events addressed were prophesied to occur way in the future—which is now the very *near* future for us!

*Obadiah* means "servant (or worshiper) of Yah (or Yahweh)." We do not know if this was

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his actual name or an anonymous title. This could be referring to *anyone* who worships God. There are eight or ten Obadiah's in the Bible, but none seems to fit the one described in this prophetic book. We do not know whether this was a man who was well-placed in the kingdom or of the royal family, perhaps, or a Jew, Levite, or Manassite. All we know is that he was a servant of Yahweh. This is in contrast to a prophet such as Amos:

**Amos 1:1** The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Amos was specific in terms of the time during which he wrote, where he wrote, who he was, and with whom he worked. The kings of Judah and Israel are also mentioned. He gave the specifics of the times in which he lived and prophesied.

Obadiah, on the other hand, seems to have been inspired to keep these details from us. He keeps himself in the background, identifying himself only as a "servant of Yahweh." It is God's message that is at the forefront of his book. We also know that he was a competent writer. He writes passionately and poetically. He seems to have a soft and empathetic heart, even toward his enemies. We will see this in several places.

The book can be outlined in several ways, but I want to keep this as simple as possible for us.

- Obadiah 1-4 make up one section: God's pronouncement of judgment upon Edom.
- The second section includes Obadiah 5-9 and describes *how* Edom will be annihilated.
- Obadiah 10-14 reveal *why* Edom will be annihilated.
- Two verses (Obadiah 15-16) make up the fourth section, which I have entitled, "Edom and the Day of the Lord."
- Finally, Obadiah 17-21 describe Israel's complete triumph over Edom.

As we go through, we will identify a peculiar theme for each section and see that it is, then, revealed and interpreted by other scriptural references. This will help us in our understanding of the message encapsulated in the book of Obadiah.

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These themes will also be useful to us as we approach the Passover. We are studying the verity of God bringing swift punishment upon a people as a result of the things that they have done and will do. They are made to suffer the consequences of their hostile attitudes, as well. These lessons could very easily be used, in a general way, to examine ourselves and determine whether it is we, now, who may be in the grip of any or all of these feelings, attitudes, or aggressive traits that Esau (Edom) has exhibited throughout their entire history. This is not necessarily the focus of the sermon, but I thought that I would mention it because we are fast approaching the Passover.

### **Verses 1-4: God's pronouncement of judgment upon Edom**

We will find the theme for this one in Proverbs 16. This is a well-known proverb:

**Proverbs 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

The adage is that *pride* is the father of all sin. This is the sin of Satan and the sin that is indicative of Babylon's mindset in the end time: a lofty pride. This is the sin Esau has, as well. We will read through the first section in Obadiah.

**Obadiah 1-4** The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the Lord, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, "Arise, and let us rise up against her [Edom] for battle"): "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the Lord.

You would think that, because of all the trouble Israel suffered at the hands of the Edomites down through history, Obadiah would write with great antagonism: "These are our enemies and they deserve this!" But this does not seem to be the case from what I can determine. Reading in some of the commentaries reinforces my perception that there is a seeming sadness throughout these opening verses; and in various other verses throughout the book, we get a sense what can only be called a lament. The message also takes on an imploring tone from time to time. There is a visceral hope for them to change, to not do what is prophesied for them to do. This may spring from

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God's command in Deuteronomy:

**Deuteronomy 2:1-7** "Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the Lord spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days. [This Mount Seir is the area where the Edomites lived.] And the Lord spoke to me, saying: 'You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward. And command the people, saying, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren [your brothers], the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. You shall buy food from them with money, [Do not take anything, you buy it!] that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. [Everything must be on the up-and-up. Do not take a thing; pay for it!] For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.'"

God tells Israel, "Just do as I say and treat the Edomites with kid gloves as you go through their land."

**Deuteronomy 23:7** "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.

This was the approach Israel was to take toward their brothers, the Edomites, per God's command. Brothers have a certain covenantal relationship by virtue of birth. They are of the same blood and should get along; they should be pals and cooperate with one another. They should be guarding each other's backs. This is how God wanted Israel to treat Edom in all of their dealings.

These two "brothers" did not always treat each other in this manner, but this was the standard to which Israel was held. This is, in a way, how Obadiah writes his message. He is watching his brother's mistakes as they stubbornly head toward their destruction. He is trying to warn them before it is too late; but according to prophecy, his warnings will go unheeded.

Verse 1 begins very simply, "Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom," and the parenthetical statement is added, "We have heard a report from God (from the Lord)

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that a messenger has been sent among the nations." It is then recounted what message it is that this messenger bears. This gives us an insight into how things really work, and it is no different from how international diplomacy is conducted in the world today. It is God who is the prime mover of world affairs: God has determined a purpose and God then sends a messenger to proclaim it. It is then the politics among nations that takes over in bringing this purpose to fruition. God is still guiding events, and He does things to push them in a certain direction.

A national leader or ruler in this confederation has decided to send an ambassador to the other nations in the confederation. The plan is to get rid of Edom. The message says, "Let us rise up in battle against her. She is weighing us down. She is not a team player." This is how diplomacy works. God is sovereign and the prime mover. He makes things work within the politics of men and moves them forward toward a specified end. God gives a report first and this is explained in Isaiah 46:9-11 and Isaiah 55, which says:

**Isaiah 55:11** So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

When God gives a report, it is going to happen. This is what Obadiah is saying. "This is something that God has decreed," and He sent a messenger to make certain this purpose begins moving toward the prophesied end. God is at work, and it is this theme that runs through the book of Obadiah.

We find this principle in verse 4, where the simple words "says the Lord" appear. Verse 8 repeats this, and finally, we see in verse 18 that it says with no equivocation, "the Lord has spoken!" This reminds me of Yul Brynner in *The Ten Commandments* when he, in the part of the Egyptian Pharaoh, decrees, "So let it be written; so let it be done!" Only in this case, God can back it up.

Thus we find that this is one of the themes of the book: God speaks; God acts; it is done! Another theme, then, which is a corollary to this, is that God is going to bring His purpose about for His own reasons—despite men. We will see this in the last section.

**Obadiah 2** "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised."

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God backs up what He says in verse 1 with what He says in verse 2. We are being made to understand exactly who is working to bring about the desired outcome. This has nothing to do with those referred to in the parenthetical phrase, those who are scheming against Edom; it is God who will bring this decree to its end. Even though nations and diplomats may be the means by which Edom will be made small and despised, it is still the Almighty God who is behind it all—and He wants Edom to recognize this!

**Obadiah 3** The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock...

It was easy for Edom to think themselves invincible. The territory of Edom was in the mountainous area to the southeast of the Dead Sea. It runs from the south end of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. It is an almost uninhabitable territory with just a bit of arable farmland on the eastern part. To the west, they were pretty much impregnable. Even from the other directions, they could secure themselves in their little grottoes in the cliffs and fight guerilla warfare from there. There was no way to pry them out, and they knew it. They felt invulnerable and were filled with pride. "No one can touch us where we are!" to which God says, "Your pride is going to get you into trouble. You forget with whom you are dealing." He goes on to say that even though Edom could exalt himself like an eagle in the air and set his nest among the stars, they would still not escape God's punishment.

**Obadiah 3-4** Whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you exalt yourself as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, thence will I bring you down, says the LORD.

Obadiah is urgent in his prophecy toward Edom that it is God who will bring them down.

Do you remember that I told you to tuck the word *cooked* away in the back of your mind? It was because of the word *pride* in verse 3 that I asked you to do this—"the *pride* of your heart has deceived you." This is the word *zadon* in the Hebrew and has as its root the word *ziyd*. This root is translated *cook* in Genesis 25. They are cognate words, and it seems as if Obadiah specifically used this word to make us go back and think about what happened when Jacob *cooked* a pot of stew for Esau. The reason why Esau took that came from his pride. He did not humbly ask his brother for some stew because he was on his last leg. He was too proud to do anything else, perhaps.

I want to make the connection between these two words. The word *cook* would be better translated *boiled* or *seethed*. The idea is that when water or anything else has heat applied to it, it begins to boil after a time; and it is from this "boiling up" that the Hebrews gain their understanding of pride. It was somewhat like an offended puffing up. Esau became heated and angry, and it manifested itself as haughtiness, an overweening pride. This is a trait that he passed on to his descendants. This is a clue leading us back to the similar word inspired in the Genesis account of these two brothers. Just as stew boiled up under heat, so Edom puffs itself up thinking that it is self-sufficient. God says, "No way! I can—and will—bring you down from wherever you are!"

The Edomite challenge at the end of verse 3 bears some scrutiny. "Who will bring me down to the ground?" they boast. This is remarkably similar to the very words of Satan in Isaiah 14 and to those of the great harlot in Revelation 18:7. This is the exact same pride about which we are speaking and which leads Edom into trouble. In all of these examples, it is God who has the last word; it is He who humbles them all.

### **Verses 5-9: How Edom will be annihilated**

We find the theme for this section in the New Testament.

**Galatians 6:7** Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

**Obadiah 5-9** "If thieves had come to you, if robbers by night—Oh, how you will be cut off!—would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings? Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after! All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; the men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it. Will I not in that day," says the LORD, "even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau? Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter."

This is quite grim. This is why I chose the word *annihilated* to describe the predicted end for Edom: Nothing short of annihilation is prophesied for them. Normally, if a thief would come into a home, he would take only those things of value and interest; he would not take *everything* in the house. He would take only those items he could either fence or,

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perhaps, use himself; but he would certainly not take everything.

In like manner, the grape gatherers would go through the vineyard, take the best for their purposes, and leave the rest on the vine. Some of the vintage might not have come to ripen, or they might have simply missed some of the grapes as the leaves were, at times, rather large. There were often large clusters of grapes that were missed. A biblical command with which we are probably familiar is that one was supposed to leave some of the crop behind for the poor so that they could come and glean what was left for them.

Verses 5 and 6 indicate that this will not be the case with Edom. It will be as if the thieves came and stole **everything**—even the carpeting. Nothing will be left; everything will be gone. Even the things hidden away will be gone. They will have nothing left! God is serious about annihilating these people for what they have done. We will soon come to the reasons for this, but He lays out what will happen first. This is what Edom will reap—and we will soon see what it is that he has sown.

The New King James soft-peddles some of this in verse 6: "Oh, how Esau shall be searched out!" The word should be *ransacked*! This is much more aggressive and powerful. "His hidden treasures shall be sought after." This seems as though somebody is just going through and considering what items are of value and then leaves the rest behind. A more accurate picture of what is being described here is one of *pillaging*. This is like an army coming through and taking everything—destroying the rest. They will be completely sacked.

Also, there are two phrases here that describe Obadiah's empathetic attitude. *Oh, how you will be cut off* is a typical expression of grief in the Hebrew language. This sense of heartache is then repeated in verse 6 with *Oh, how Esau will be searched out*. Obadiah is full of grief that this people must come to such an end and is lamenting, "This is an awful and terrible thing to happen! If only it did not have to end this way!"

While verses 5 and 6 focus on the complete ransacking of Edom's wealth, verses 7 and 8 hone in on the deletion of their wisdom and understanding. Their "smarts" will be taken from them.

**Obadiah 7** All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; the men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it.

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This last phrase would be better translated, "No one shall understand it," or "There is no understanding of it."

**Obadiah 8** "Will I not in that day," says the LORD, "even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau?"

Historically, Edom was known throughout the Middle East for their wisdom. Esau has produced some wise and notable people.

**Jeremiah 49:7** Against Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?"

These are rhetorical questions and presuppose that there is both counsel and wisdom in Edom. In Job 1, we are told that Job is from Uz, which is generally thought to be around the area of Edom; and in Job 4, we are introduced to Eliphaz the Temanite, one of his (supposedly) wise friends who counseled him. We get the idea that they were renowned for their wisdom. This, then, makes the removal and destruction of this wisdom a more relative and ghastly prophetic end for this people. Plus, it is a stern lesson for those of us reading about this particular aspect of Edom's punishment. They are prophesied to lose everything—even their common sense will be gone. The worst part is that they will not even recognize that their wisdom is gone.

Their confederates and allies are described as betraying them to the point that even Edom's ambassadors will be shown to the border—thrown out of their respective consulates. Yet they will still think their friends are acting in good faith toward them. "Hello, Edom, are you in there? Are you seeing things clearly? These people are giving every indication of betraying you!"—but they will not understand. They will eat bread with their allies and not be able to perceive the treachery and the trap being laid for them. Something is blinding them and clouding their eyes.

I am reminded of the disciples on the road to Emmaus when they could not recognize Jesus—even though they had been many years with Him. God puts blindness over their eyes just as He puts the blindness over Israel in the reading of the Old Testament. God is able to do this for His own purposes. In this case, He says that He is going to take away their wisdom so that they will not be able to see what is coming.

Verse 9 focuses on their loss of might and courage, which will lead to a slaughter. We

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see, too, another reference to Teman, which was in the northernmost section of Edom. This verse, then, sums up this particular section and the well-known principle that one reaps what one sows.

I have been leading up to verse 10, which may very well be the most astonishing verse in the entire book, but let us first look back in Leviticus 19 and dig out the theme for our next section:

### **Verses 10-14: Why Edom will be annihilated**

**Leviticus 19:17** "You shall not hate your brother in your heart."

This verse succinctly describes the fundamental flaw in Edom, as revealed through many other scriptures: hatred! We may perhaps better understand this hatred in terms of being the primary outcome of his pride. He carried this pride, this "boiling up" against his brother, and it manifested itself in hatred. Esau always felt that it was he that should have had the birthright and the blessing. He felt it was he who should have been the master and not the servant, the one who should have had the yoke on Israel. He felt he should have been the one living where the dew from heaven fell while enjoying the fatness of the earth. But no, he had to have the dregs—and he *hated* his brother for it.

Hatred against a brother can lead one to do terrible acts, which are most often underhanded, as we shall see. Attitudes such as gloating and rejoicing over catastrophes befalling one's brother are evident. Pillaging, selling into slavery, and the taking of territory follow close behind when one's pride leads to such vehement hatred

Now for the astonishing part, revealed in the word *violence*:

**Obadiah 10** "For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you."

Would anyone care to guess what the word *violence* is in the Hebrew? It is *chamas*, believe it or not. It is right there in scripture! It is the Hebrew word *chamas*, and it is strikingly similar to the name of the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas. In actuality, however, this is simply an acronym that stands for *Harakat al-Muqawima al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Resistance Movement). They are Israel's chief enemy at this time and have been for many years. This is no mere coincidence!

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Could this be a scriptural clue as to the identity of these people? I feel that it most certainly is. The details revealed here lead me to such a conclusion. We need only look back through the most recent history of the Middle East to see how Hamas has set itself against the state of Israel. There is no other group that bears such vehement hatred against them to the degree that they do. Even though they have now come into political power in the Palestinian territory, they still will not renounce their perpetual hatred against the state of Israel—not even for greater political gain in order to become a viable player on the world stage. They want to annihilate Israel.

This word, *chamas*, carries the concept of an immoral violence, a cruel violence, and it goes hand-in-hand with the word *slaughter* in the previous verse. These two words are undoubtedly linked. Esau will be cut off with the same slaughter and in the same manner by which they treated Israel: with violence, with *chamas*!

Why would God describe Esau in these terms and direct our attention to their fierce hatred? What drives Esau to hate Israel so and where in the Bible do we find the origin? Well, as we have already seen, it comes out in a lot of places. Deuteronomy 32, however, succinctly illustrates God's attentive relationship with Israel, but not with Esau. This is one reason why hatred and violence toward Israel by anyone is such a terrible transgression—and this is one of the driving forces of Esau's hot anger

**Deuteronomy 32:10** "He [God] found him [talking about Israel] in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye."

Verses 11 through 14 then teach us what God did to protect Israel and how He molded them into a great nation. We find a similar description of God's special relationship with Israel in Zechariah 2.

**Zechariah 2:8** For thus says the Lord of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye."

You know that if someone were to poke you in what would be the apple of your eye—in the iris or pupil—it would hurt; and because Esau's perpetual enmity and violence is against the apple of God's eye—Israel—He takes extreme umbrage. Esau has gone against God's will and picked on the one whom God has chosen. This is in total disregard for what God has decreed. This is a sin, not against Israel, but against God.

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Rather than humbly bowing before God's will that the older shall serve the younger, Edom decided to wage perpetual war against Jacob. By doing so he has, in effect, declared perpetual war against God—and God takes this very seriously.

We will look at some of the scriptural examples of Esau's kicking against his brother and against God's will. Psalm 137 contains scriptures we sometimes sing during song service on the Sabbath day about being captive in Babylon. This Psalm reveals how the story ends for Esau.

**Psalm 137:7** Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, "Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!"

They were scheming against the Israelites—the Jews, in this instance.

**Lamentations 4:21-22** Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz! The cup shall also pass over to you and you shall become drunk and make yourself naked. [Not a stitch on! Remember that Obadiah 5-6 said that they would be completely plundered.] The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no longer send you into captivity. He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will uncover your sins!

Jeremiah is evidently speaking of the same thing: the destruction of Esau!

**Ezekiel 25:12-14** Thus says the Lord God: "Because of what Edom did against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended by avenging itself on them," therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will also stretch out My hand against Edom, cut off man and beast from it, and make it desolate from Teman; Dedan shall fall by the sword. I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel, that they may do in Edom according to My anger and according to My fury; and they shall know My vengeance," says the Lord God.

**Ezekiel 35:5** "Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end..."

**Ezekiel 35:15** "As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of

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Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom—all of it! Then they shall know that I am the Lord."

**Ezekiel 36:5** Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with whole-hearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country."

**Joel 3:19** And Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land.

**Amos 1:11-12** Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother [Israel] with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah." [Bozrah is an Edomite city.]

We have a complete record of the violence that Edom perpetrated against all Israel and against Judah in particular. God took great offense to these heinous acts, and it is because of them that He says in verse 10 of Obadiah that He will "cut them off forever."

In the next four verses (11-14), we see that the phrase *in the day* or *on the day* occurs approximately ten times. This is a clue. This is like God putting up huge spotlights and shouting at us through a loudspeaker, "Guess what time this is! Guess when this is! Guess when this happens!" He says:

**Obadiah 11** In the day that you stood on the other side—in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem—even you were as one of them.

This simply reinforces that about which we have been reading. However, here is where Edom's transgression begins. It is said that they "stood on the other side." This is a Hebraism and means that they stood aloof. This is, again, descriptive of their haughtiness. The literal phrase is *they stood from in front of them*. It means that they considered themselves too good to stand *with* them. They stood off to the side or in front and, because of pride, effectively separated themselves from their brother. Their actions reflected what was in their heart, saying, in effect, "We are not they—and we are glad we are not they! We are going to take advantage of them!" This is indicative of a feeling

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of great superiority. God is emphasizing their attitude here—one of haughty pride and separation. This just shows that Edom did not act as a brother should have but allowed the enemies of Israel to do as they wanted. They stood aside and let them be destroyed. Even if they were not directly engaged in the violence against Israel, their hearts were certainly with their enemies.

Verses 12-14 are not very well translated in the New King James Version. What is written using the past tense should have been transcribed using the future tense. I will read these verses in the future tense—the manner in which they should have been written.

**Obadiah 12-14** But you should not [gloat] on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you [rejoice] over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you [boast or speak] proudly in the day of distress. You should not [enter] the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not [gloat] on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor [lay] hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not [stand] at the crossroads to cut off those among them who [escape]; nor should you [deliver] up those among them who [survive] in the day of distress.

What is the day of Israel's captivity? What is the day of Israel's destruction? What is the day of Israel's distress? What is the day of Israel's calamity?

**Jeremiah 30:5-7** "For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.'"

This is the day of Israel's calamity, his distress. These are huge spotlights shining on what is, at this present time, the very beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy. He is warning Hamas not to do these things.

The idea of them gloating and dancing in the streets, waiting to take advantage of a given situation, reminds me so much of what happened after September 11, 2001. We saw pictures of them giving out candy, dancing and shouting, letting out war-yells and

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shrieks of celebration. Over 3,000 of our people died in the World Trade Center that fateful day, and it is in Obadiah 10-14 where we read an exact description of Esau's prophesied reaction to these horrific and tragic events!

What we saw in the videos on and after September 11 is likely to happen again when the Great Tribulation fully comes upon the nations of Israel. Edom may not have a great deal of power over Israel, and it does not seem as if they are prophesied to have any such power—remember that God had said that He would take their power, their wisdom, and their money—but they will still be able to gloat when they see their brother fall. All they can do is kill themselves in an attempt to murder some few of us. They do have the ability to boast, to gloat, to pillage, and to take advantage of any sign of weakness. This same sort of attitude is what we see here.

### **Verses 15-16: Edom and the Day of the Lord**

The theme is found in Jeremiah, where God says:

**Jeremiah 25:28** "And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "You shall certainly drink!"'"

That is the theme: "You shall certainly drink!"

**Obadiah 15** "For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near..."

What happens after the Great Tribulation? The Day of the Lord happens! When we see these prophetic "celebrations" over Israel's calamitous downfall described in verses 12-14 begin to occur, we know that the Day of the Lord is near—upon all the nations.

**Obadiah 15** "As you have done, it shall be done to you..."

This is a biblical law. In the Latin, it is called *lex talionis*, meaning "the law of the talon" or "the law of just retribution." We may know it better as "an eye for an eye." Jesus said that whatever you measure out to others will be measured to you. Paul also said that you shall reap what you sow. Jesus stated this in a more positive manner when He said that what you want others to do to you, you do to them. This phrase in verse 15 is the Golden Rule flipped negatively. God says that this is how He will judge in the Day of the

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Lord, the Day of His wrath.

**Obadiah 15-16** "Your reprisal shall return upon your own head. [So be careful. What you do to others is going to come back to haunt you.] For as you drank on My holy mountain [He is talking to Edom again. They drank in feasting and partying and gloating glory over Israel when they captured Jerusalem and thought that it was finally theirs], so shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been.

This may be better translated, "Yes, they shall drink and drink and drink and drink until they drink themselves right out of existence." This is Edom and the rest of their ill-fated confederacy in the Day of the Lord. God says, "It is coming. You might gloat now, but I am going to deal with you in the Day of the Lord. You will not escape; I am just going to wipe you off the face of the earth!" God does not take these things lightly!

This reference to Edom drinking on God's holy mountain could easily be descriptive of the present-day status of the Temple Mount. It is now held by the Palestinians, and they have strict rules toward the Jews about just who may and may not go up on that Mount. They gloat over their ability to stop them from going up and praying there. God is saying, "Okay, so you held the Temple Mount for awhile. Just you wait. I have time."

Now we have come to the last section:

### **Verses 17-21: Israel's complete triumph over Edom**

#### **Obadiah 17 But...**

This is a word that is used to grab our attention and redirect it to a tremendous contrast: the contrast between what has been going on up to this point in the sibling rivalry and what is prophesied to soon occur. The Edomite nations have had their way with Israel and conducted themselves as if they were above reproach. This marks a drastic change in the entire chapter.

**Obadiah 17** But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

The theme for this section is found in Malachi:

**Malachi 1:2-3** "I have loved you," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother," says the Lord? "Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness."

"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." God's choice is supreme. His sovereign choice of Jacob over Esau was made before they had ever done anything. They may have struggled in the womb, but this choice was made prior to any bit of character being developed. He *chose* Jacob. This is the end of the matter as we now proceed through the last five verses.

The *but* that begins this section, as I have stated, is indicative of a remarkable change from what had occurred prior to this point in the book. Previously, there had been destruction and all those things that had gone on, but there will now be deliverance for Israel.

There is an interesting dichotomy: "on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance"—but as we proceed to the end of verse 18, it says that "no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau." These are two totally opposite ends of the spectrum. Whereas God loves Jacob and allows a remnant to survive into the Millennium, it seems from this as though there are no survivors from Esau. I do not know how absolute this may be. Will there be, perhaps, some few survivors from Esau counted among those who are converted—spiritual Israel, in effect? Maybe so, but certainly all those of Esau who are of this prideful and gloating attitude will be completely wiped out.

We see, too, the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph together here in verse 18. It is possible that the house of Jacob could be Judah and the house of Joseph would then refer to all the rest of Israel. In any case, this is speaking of the entirety of Israel. This may be an allusion to Zechariah 12, where it says that the governors of Judah will be like a fire pan in the woodpile and they will burn up the surrounding peoples. Edom is going to be one of these nations!

I will not go into verses 19 and 20 to any great extent, because these verses simply show that Israel will return and inhabit the original Promised Land. From what I read in the commentaries, this is probably the worst part of the entire book in terms of being able to understand it. It is difficult to determine what goes with what because there are things that are missing. Because words that we would expect to be there are not there,

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we do not know exactly how they are all supposed to fit together. The basic idea is that Israel is going to come back into the Promised Land, and they will then settle the lands that God originally gave them.

Then, finally, the great and triumphant ending of the book:

**Obadiah 21** Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

Remember that we began with God saying that it was He who is the prime mover? Well, it ends here with God saying, "The Kingdom is Mine! I rule!" As it often says in the Psalms, "The Lord reigns!"

We went through the Great Tribulation, and we then went through the Day of the Lord in verses 15 and 16. "But on Mount Zion there is deliverance," it says in verse 17. This is the time when God begins wrapping things up and apports to Israel the fullness of the promise given back in the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and the time when He wipes out Esau as He had promised because of their hatred against Jacob. Israel returns, settles back in the land, and the Millennium will begin!

Mr. Armstrong, in *Mystery of the Ages* (pages 239-241), explained these "saviors" to be you and me—us—the Church. "Co-saviors with Christ," he called us, as he expounded this verse. This is certainly a possibility.

We should not take this to mean, however, that we can in any way give salvation as Jesus Christ does. This is not what is meant. This is not describing the spiritual salvation that comes from accepting the blood of Jesus Christ as atonement for our sins. This verse reveals that God will have helpers in delivering people from a way of life that is contrary to God's perfect way. We can deliver them to a way that is good and peaceful, a way in which brothers can get along.

This is complimentary to what Isaiah says:

**Isaiah 30:21** Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

Whatever these "saviors" do—and notice that it is plural—they rescue people. They

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save them; they deliver them; they help them to survive; and it all begins in Jerusalem.

I would like for us to end in Zechariah 14—scriptures to which we often turn during the Feast of Tabernacles or on the Day of Trumpets. It ties in beautifully with this last verse in Obadiah.

**Zechariah 14:1-3** Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. [This is what we have been reading about in verses 12-16.] Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle...

**Zechariah 14:5** Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.

**Zechariah 14:9** And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—"The LORD is one," and His name one.

I specifically picked up that last part of verse 5 to show that when Jesus Christ returns He comes with His saints—the saviors we just read about in Obadiah. They, along with Jesus Christ, will come and judge the mountains of Esau. They are part of His government, and their job will then be to govern the land of Edom and the entire earth. This is the essence of the Kingdom of God: when mankind, along with maybe those few Edomites who may live through into the Millennium, will finally submit to God's rule!