

Obadiah

by Ross Callaghan

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- Author** The prophet Obadiah.
- Written to** The nation of Edom.
- Date** Around the time when Jerusalem was ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC.
- Type** Prophecy of judgement.
- Theme** Edom will be judged because of its cruelty to Israel.
- Purpose** To pronounce God's judgement on Edom.
- Key verse**

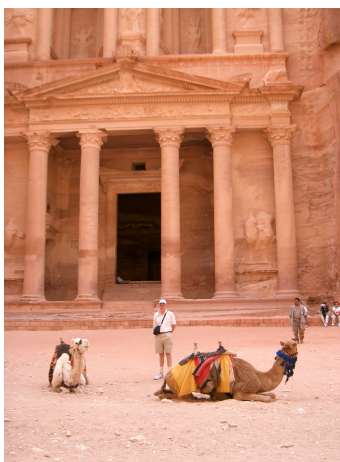
Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. v10

Introduction

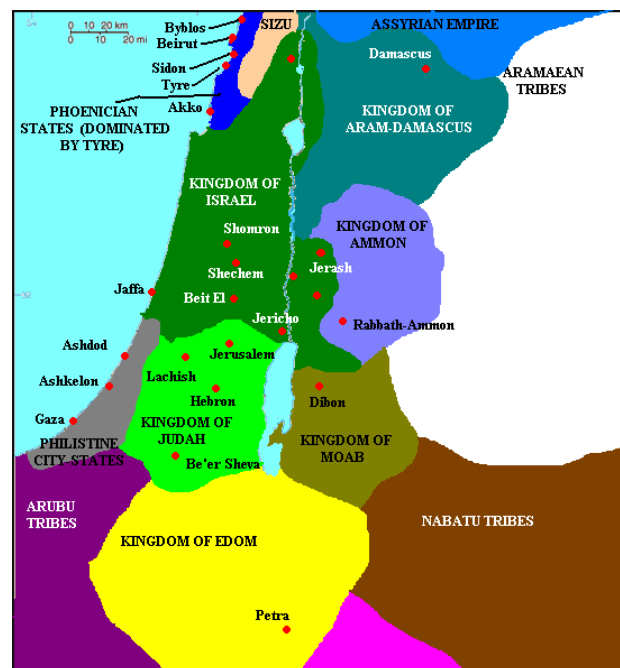
Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament: just 21 verses. It is a prophecy against Edom, one of the countries that were enemies of God's people, Israel.

Edom is in modern day Jordan. Its capital was Petra (or Sela) meaning a *rock*.

Petra is today one of the 7 wonders of the world. It is called the Rose Red City and is entered through a siq (or a cleft) in some towering rocks leading to an amazing city carved out of the red rock faces.



Petra today



Background

The nations of Israel and Edom descended from Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau. See Genesis 25:19-34. Esau was born first and Jacob came out *with his hand grasping Esau's heel*. God had said *that the elder shall serve the younger* and this came to pass when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for *some bread and some lentil stew*.

Jacob settled in Canaan and his descendants became the Israelites. Esau settled in Edom and his descendants became the Edomites. See Genesis 36.

When Moses was leading the children of Israel towards the Promised Land he asked the Edomites whether they could pass through Edom but was refused. See Numbers 20:14-21. This meant that the Israelites could not head west and go directly into Canaan but had to travel a much longer way by going up the King's Highway to the east of the Dead Sea and then cross the Jordan River in the north.

As a result there was an ongoing feud between the Israelites and the Edomites even though the Law specifically said *Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother*. Deuteronomy 23:7. The Israelites attacked the Edomites in a number of battles, causing many casualties. See 2 Chronicles 20 and 25.

When the Israelites were taken into captivity in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the Edomites gloated about their misfortune. *Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down" they cried, "Tear it down to its foundations"*. Psalm 137:7.

The Edomites were eventually driven out of Edom by the Nabateans, and settled in the Negev, where they were called the Idumeans. In the Second Century BC. they were subdued by the Maccabees and were proselytized and circumcised. One of their descendants was Herod, King of Judea from 37BC to 4 AD. Herod's family ruled Judea right through to the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD.

God has a special love for His special people, Israel. Perhaps that's why He said *I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals*". Malachi 1:2,3.

Outline

Predictions of judgement on Edom v1-14

The pride of Edom has deceived her. She gets her security from her position in the rocks, but she will be ransacked and her treasures pillaged. God will bring her down, and will destroy her because of the way she has treated Israel.

Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. v10

Results of judgement on Edom v15-18

The day of the Lord is near when He will judge Edom. As they did to Israel, so it will be done to them. Through this Israel will once again possess the land as its inheritance. There will be no survivors from Edom.

But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. v17

Edom will be governed by the Lord v19-21

The nation of Edom will be taken over and governed by Israel.

Ultimately: *The Kingdom will be the Lord's.* v21.

Lessons

1. Israel and Edom descended from twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. If family members treat each other like Edom treated Israel they can expect the same kind of relationship breakdown that Obadiah described. God wants good relationships in families!
2. Edom trusted in its position on the Kings Highway (thus ensuring a constant supply of trade); and that its capital Petra was safe high up in the cleft of the rocks with a reliable water supply (brought in from outside by an ingenious system of channels).

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD. v3,4

This prophecy has been accurately fulfilled. The inhabitants of Petra, the Nabateans, were conquered by the Romans in 106AD when their water supply was cut off at the entrance to the city. Later on a more reliable highway was discovered so trade dried up on the Kings Highway. There was also a big earthquake that destroyed the water channels. As a result Petra became deserted except for occasional Bedouins. It was rediscovered in 1812 and is now a major tourist attraction. Well worth a visit!

Obadiah prophesied that Petra would be desolate and it is today. During the day there are lots of tourists but after dark no-one is allowed in there. This amazing fulfillment of God's word reminds us that we can't afford to trust in our material possessions and circumstances, just in the Lord.

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

3. Obadiah's message reflects Genesis 12:2,3 where God says He will make Israel a great nation, and *I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed by you.*
4. There can be conflict in our own lives mirroring the conflict between Israel and Edom. The 'flesh' and the Spirit are in a continual battle just like the two nations in Obadiah's prophecy and ultimately one or other of them will triumph. If we put to death the deeds of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit we can live according to the Spirit; and that's the best way to live! See Romans 8:5-17 Colossians 3:5-10.

Discussion questions

Why was Edom judged by the Lord? What was the result of this judgment?

If you have visited Petra you will have been amazed at what an ancient civilization was able to achieve. Yet it all came to ruin! What does this tell you about the fragility of empires, nations, buildings, economies etc. that we put so much store on today? Is it possible that our civilization could fall and come to ruin? (Consider aspects like global warming, population growth, pandemics, nuclear power, military might, selfishness, sinfulness, power struggles, rejection of the Lord).

God judged Edom and in many parts of the Bible He says He will judge other nations in the future. What do nations need to do in response? What do Christians need to do in response?

The ancient land of Edom is currently in Jordan. Obadiah says that it will be returned to Israel. What are the implications of this?

What have you learned from your study of Obadiah? How has this affected your life?

Watch a video of our trip to Petra here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxQQhJMxGUk>

Some pretty amazing scenery, and a wonderful fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy!