

This prophecy written by the prophet Obadiah focuses on the LORD's judgment of Edom, the nation descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob, one of the patriarchs of Israel. As a brother-nation to Israel, Edom should have been friendly with Israel but instead they were antagonistic toward them. The LORD holds them responsible for their attitudes and actions toward His chosen people of Israel.

1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

“The vision of Obadiah” – We know very little about Obadiah or when this prophecy was written. The mentions of Jerusalem and Judah in this book suggest that he lived in the southern kingdom and commentators believe that he was likely a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha. This prophesy is described as the “vision” of Obadiah, suggesting that he received it from the LORD while asleep at night.

“Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom” – This vision was no mere dream – it came from the LORD and its focus was on Edom. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Gen. 25:24-26), which is why the LORD chastises Edom for their violence against Israel (“thy brother Jacob” – v. 10).

“We have heard a rumour [report] from the LORD, and an ambassador [messenger] is sent among the heathen” – The LORD influences the nations of the world to do His will and here Obadiah uses figurative language to say that the LORD has sent a “messenger” to influence the nations to accomplish His purposes against Edom.

“Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle” – The purpose of the message that the LORD sends to the nations is to provoke them to fight against “her” (Edom). We will discover that the LORD is angry with Edom for their treatment of Israel and will bring judgment against them through the aggression of other nations.

2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. 3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

“Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised [to hold in contempt]” – Edom was not a large nation and the LORD had caused them to become weak. Because of this, other nations did not respect Edom and they were seen as easy prey.

“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock” – Edom's capital city was Petra, a seemingly impregnable fortress set in the rocky terrain of a mountain. Because they believed that no enemy could capture this city, the Edomites had become proud as they were lured into a false sense of security.

“whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?” – Living in the mountains, the Edomites proudly believed that no one could conquer them since they were physically above any attacking enemies.

4 Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

The Edomites believed that no one could “bring them down” but the LORD steps forward and declares that He can. Even if they could exalt themselves above even their current defenses and make dwellings in high places “among the stars” like an eagle, the LORD could still bring them down into defeat. They could never be above the reach of the LORD.

Verses 5-9: Normal thieves would limit what they stole to what satisfied their desires, but the LORD's judgment would not have such limits. Edom would be betrayed by those whom they trusted and the LORD will destroy all the wise and mighty men in their nation.

10 For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

The LORD states the reason that His judgment and wrath are against Edom. They have committed violence against their brother-nation of Israel, with whom they shared a common ancestry (both Esau and Jacob were sons of Isaac). For this reason they will suffer shame and be completely destroyed.

11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of them.

“In the day that thou stoodest on the other side” – Edom did nothing to help their “brother Jacob” (Israel) when they were being attacked by their enemies. Not only that, but it pleased them to see Israel's calamity (v. 12).

“in the day that the strangers [foreigners] carried away captive his forces [substance; wealth]” – These foreign nations invaded Israel and carried away their wealth as spoils.

“and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem” – These nations invaded Israel and “cast lots” on Jerusalem as spoil to be divided up among the conquerors.

“even thou wast as one of them” – Rather than being a defender or helper of Israel, they stood with the enemies of Israel and took part in looting and spoiling Israel.

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.

The LORD chastises Edom for their attitudes and actions against Israel, providing a list of the things they should not have done (vs. 12-14).

“But thou shouldest not have looked [to look with satisfaction] on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger” – They watched Israel’s misfortune with satisfaction when they were carried away by other nations and became “strangers” (foreigners) in the nation in which they were captive as well as to their own land.

“neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction” – Edom rejoiced when Judah was being conquered by their enemies. This statement may be a reference to Judah as a distinct nation from Israel and may foreshadow the day when Judah was carried away captive to Babylon.

“neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress” – “Speaking proudly” likely includes insulting Israel and celebrating their calamity. Edom “spoke proudly” against Israel during their time of distress as if they were above the judgments that Israel was enduring, but they should have realized that the LORD’s judgments could just as easily fall on them.

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;

“Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity” – Edom took advantage of the fact that Israel’s defenses were down and entered Israel’s territory. They entered the gates of their cities looking for easy spoil.

“yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity” – As in v. 12, the word “looked” implies looking with satisfaction. Edom enjoyed seeing the death and destruction that had come upon Israel and wanted to profit from it.

“nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity” – Edom saw the day of Israel’s misfortune as an opportunity to plunder them.

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.

“Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape” – In addition to withholding their help from Israel, Edom also stationed themselves at crossroads in order to prevent Israel’s refugees from escaping the death and destruction. Since the expression “to cut off” typically referred to the killing of people, Edom must have either killed or captured the refugees they encountered.

“neither shouldest thou have delivered up [to imprison; to hand over captive] those of his that did remain in the day of distress” – The people of Israel that Edom did not kill were either imprisoned or else turned over to the conquering nation as captives.

15 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.

“For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen” – This prophesy may have a near fulfillment as well as a far fulfillment. Obadiah may be referring to a generic “day of the LORD” (i.e. a day of God’s judgment) as a near fulfillment. All nations will have a day when the wrath of God will fall on them for their sins, particularly for their treatment of Israel and this day can be different for each nation. However, the far fulfillment of this “day of the LORD” looks prophetically to the day when Jesus Christ returns and executes His wrath at the battle of Armageddon against the nations that have gathered against Israel to destroy them (**Isa. 2:12** “For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low”; **Isa. 13:9** “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it”; **Rev. 19:15** “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”).

“as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head” – Edom (and all nations) will be justly punished according to their sins against Israel. The principle of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” applies here.

Verse 16: The heathen will drink from the cup of the wrath of God until they are destroyed.

17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

The LORD will deliver Israel from their enemies so that they can once again live in their land in righteousness and holiness. He will also restore everything that has been taken from Israel. This prophesy seems to point to the millennial kingdom of Christ.

Verses 18-20: The LORD will enable Israel to conquer and destroy the nations that have oppressed them.

21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’s.

“And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau” – During Christ’s millennial reign, “saviors” (judges or leaders) from Israel will govern Edom’s territory from “the mount of Esau,” likely referring to Edom’s capital or a central location.

“and the kingdom shall be the LORD’s” – While Israel will be supreme among the nations during Christ’s millennial reign, Jesus Christ Himself will reign over His kingdom, which will include all nations.