

# OBADIAH

## MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

In lesson 1 we learned about the pride of Edom based upon their location, wealth, friends and allies, wisdom and knowledge, and their military power. The Edomites believed themselves to be invincible. They were prideful and arrogant.

In lesson 2, we will see God continue to communicate through the prophet Obadiah a prophecy of judgment on Edom. Though Edom is often mentioned on the pages of the Old Testament and other prophets tell of their judgment (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Amos) this is the only book addressed entirely to the Edomites.



### Obadiah 15:

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations.  
As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

Verse 15 serves as theme verse for Obadiah and contains the same thought as found in Galatians 6; that is that a man (or nation) reaps what he sows.

In verses 10-14, Obadiah will list four specific ways in which Edom had acted against Israel which caused God to bring Edom into judgment.

Edom's actions against Israel is so terrible because they are brother nations. Both Jacob and Esau are twin sons of Isaac the son of Abraham. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau and Israel the descendants of Jacob. In Deut. 23:7 the Israelites are instructed, "*You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.*"

## Edom's Violence Against Jacob

The charge against Edom is one of violence. The violence against Jacob begins in Genesis 25. In Genesis 27 Jacob tricks Esau of his birthright. (Esau is known as Edom as early as Genesis 25:30.) Though the words violence and brother should never be used together they were in the case of Edom.

Edom regularly expressed violence and animosity towards Israel. In Numbers 20:14-21 when the Israelites were traveling to Canaan the Edomites refused to allow them to pass through their territory. Edom struggled with Israelite kings beginning with Saul. David and then Solomon had to deal with the Edomites. In 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 the Edomites were part of an invasion force against Judah. In 2 Chronicles 21:16 it is likely the Edomites joined the Philistines and Arabs as they attacked Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> The Edomites had a common ancestry and were neighbours, thus they are called brothers.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, James E. *Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Micah: A Christian Interpretation*. (James E. Smith, 2011), 28.

The Hebrew word for violence is the word *hamas* and stands for violence and wrong, often arising out of hatred and sometimes, out of extreme wickedness.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the violence taken against Jacob the Edomites will face shame and destruction. The Edomites will first be despised and then be destroyed. “Subsequent to the time of Obadiah these were the highlights of Edomite history: Edom was conquered by King Amaziah of Judah (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11). The Edomites attacked Judah in the days of King Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:17). In the fifth century BC Edom fell into Arab hands. In the third century BC Edom was overrun by the Nabateans. In the second century the Edomites who resided in southern Judah were subdued by Judas Maccabeus (1 Maccabees 5:65) and compelled by John Hyrcanus to be circumcised. Thereafter Edomites as a distinct people disappeared from history.”<sup>3</sup>

In verses 11-14 the charge of violence is explained as it progresses from aloofness to personal involvement. Let’s now look at three charges against Edom in their relationship with Israel.

### **I. Aloofness and Inaction**

Verse 11 tells of a time when the Edomites stood idly by others attacked. During the invasion foreigners entered Jerusalem, plundered the wealth, divided the spoils, and devastated the nation. These invaders did not share kinship with Israel as did Edom, they were not brothers and Edom did not come to Israel’s aid.

Inaction can be a sin just as surely unjust actions are sins. James 4:17 teaches, “*So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*”

The invaders of Judah were pagan which is pictured in the casting of lots in verse 11. The plunderers called upon chance or their gods to decide what parts of the wealth each should receive from their theft and violation of the land of Israel.

**1. Is aloofness and inaction when a brother is under assault as bad as personally committing the violence?**

**2. What does the non-involvement of Edom during the time of Israel’s need say about them?**

**3. What does the phrase “like one of them” at the end of verse 11 mean?**

**4. What are some ways a man may demonstrate “aloofness” from his brother today?**



<sup>2</sup> <http://davidpfield.com/obadiah/opening.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Smith, Ibid. 29.

## **2. Gloating Over the Misfortune of a Brother**

In verse 12 God gives three commands to the Edomites. Do not gloat in the day of your brother's misfortune, do not rejoice in the day of Judah's ruin, and do not boast in the day of their distress. This shows a progression from aloofness. Now not only did Edom stand by while their brothers were attacked, they enjoyed, gloated, rejoiced, and boasted in the invasion.

In Psalm 137:7 Edom stood by during an attack against Jerusalem. They cried out "lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" This is very strong language in Hebrew meaning to literally "expose, strip down, strip naked." They wanted the city stripped naked and exposed to her tormentors.<sup>4</sup> This shows a truly violent attitude where Edom took pleasure in the death of destruction that came to Israel.

### **5. Why would anyone take pleasure in the misfortune of a brother?**

### **6. Has there ever been a time when you were tempted to take pleasure in the downfall of another?**

### **7. What did Jesus say about how his followers were to treat their neighbours? (See Luke 10:29-37)**

## **3. Taking Advantage of a Brother in His Time of Calamity**

The escalation of Edom's actions progress again in verses 13-14. Up to this point the actions against Israel have been improper and sinful attitudes. Now the Edomites are not just aloof or gloating, they are actively and physically involved in the exploitation of their brother Jacob. The Edomites entered the gates of the city to take advantage of Israel's disaster; they stood by to gloat and view the calamity without providing any aid, they looted the wealth, they cut off those who tried to escape the enemy, and they handed over the survivors.



### **8. Describe the kind of people who rush to scenes of disaster for personal profit?**

### **9. What are some ways in which we ought to come to the aid of our brothers in their times of calamity?**

As God's people we should love those who are oppressed and hurting. May we never be aloof or inactive while our brothers suffer. May we never find joy in the pain of another. May we also aid and never take advantage of a brother in the time of his calamity. May we care for others as Christ cares for them.

<sup>4</sup> Zorn, Walter D. *The College Press NIV Commentary: Psalms Vol. 2*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 2004, p. 471.