

OT-OV

Lesson 129

1. Last week I taught an overview of the book of Amos and when time expired we were about to start an overview of the book of Obadiah.

2. Obadiah was written by Obadiah from Judah in about 580. The emotional tone of Obadiah's prophecy against Edom is strong. The intense mood of the book is based on the prophet's keen sense of justice. Obadiah, along with Daniel and Ezekiel, was an exilic prophet. Edom's past conduct and their future judgment are the subjects of the book.

Book of Obadiah

1. The Edomites had violated the bonds that hold related tribes together and had committed terrible crimes against Judah. They had participated in the sacking of Jerusalem with the Babylonians. Their sins said Obadiah must be punished!

2. The prophecy of Obadiah alludes to a historical situation in which the Edomites were allied with the enemies of Israel.

2.1 It is known that Edom was allied with the Babylonians and others at the fall and plunder of Jerusalem in 586. Probably the prophecy of Obadiah is best dated just after the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

2.2 Obadiah was a prophet who is best known for the book bearing his name. Little information is available about him personally. His book seems to indicate that he was a citizen of Judah.

3. Since Obadiah is about Edom, we need to learn a little about this land of Esau.

3.1 The term Edom means red. The name has three possible origins: the red sandstone cliffs of the country (there is evidence that the country may have been called "edom," or "red" even before Esau took the land from the Horites) or Esau's red hair at birth; or the red pottage which Esau took in exchange for his inheritance (Gen 25:25-30). Either of the three reasons listed could certainly explain its name.

Gen 25:25 And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

Gen 25:26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

Gen 25:27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

Gen 25:28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

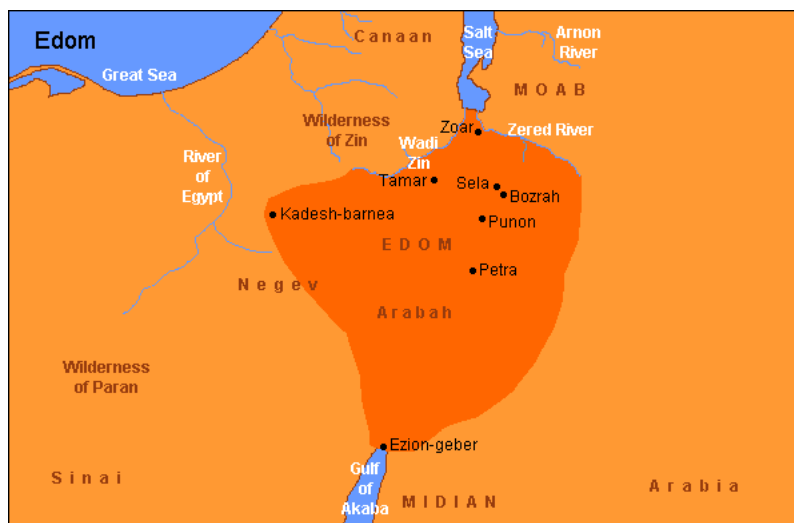
Gen 25:29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

Gen 25:30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

3.2 Esau seems to have settled in the Negev south of Beer-sheba (Gen 28:9) the land in which Esau settled was called Seir at that time (Gen 32:3).

Gen 28:9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son ...

Gen 32:3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.



3.3 This continued to be the homeland of the Edomites until after the time of Moses and Joshua, who came in contact with them just east of Kadesh-barnea (Deu 2:1-8) and south of Judah's tribal allotment.

Deu 2:1 Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days.

Deu 2:2 And the LORD spake unto me, saying,

Deu 2:3 Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

Deu 2:4 And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore:

Deu 2:5 Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.

Deu 2:6 Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.

Deu 2:7 For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.

Deu 2:8 And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Ezion-geber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab.

3.4 This mountainous area extends south from Moab, with the border for 70 miles to the Gulf of Aqabah.

3.5 The area consists of colored sandstone mountains which contain some of the grandest rock scenery in the world. From these mountains of Transjordan the Edomites looked down upon a maze of cliffs, chasms, rocky shelves, and narrow valleys.

3.6 This range of mountains is actually the crested edge of a high, bleak plateau, covered by stones and spotted with patches of grain land and scattered woods. Its western cliff walls are steep and bare, black and red, rising from the pale yellow sands of the Arabah desert floor.

3.7 So rugged is the terrain that the valley in which Petra is located can be reached by a deep gorge wide enough at times for only two horsemen to ride abreast. In addition to the wheat lands on the eastern plateau, the wider defiles provide some fertile fields and terraces for vineyards.

3.8 Its 5,000 foot high promontories precipitate some of the moisture from the prevailing west winds that have passed over the Negeb, so that it is a comparatively well-watered land.

3.9 Thus Mount Seir was a well-stocked fortress, with its copper and iron mines in Arabah. Yet it was so high and lofty and locked in by precipice and jagged mountains that it was practically impregnable.

3.10 It was this feature to which the prophet Obadiah referred in verses three when he wrote of Edom's dwelling in the clefts of the rock, setting his nest among the stars, and boasting, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?"

Oba 1:3 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?

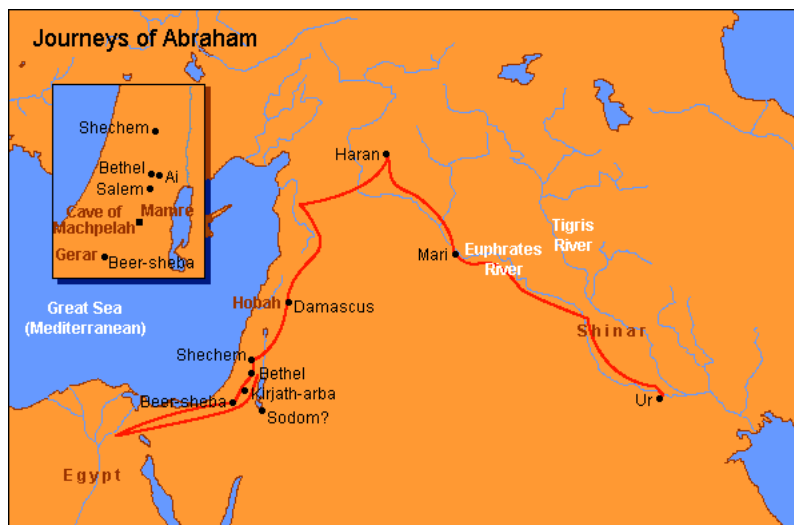
3.11 Living in this rich fortress-land, the Edomites enjoyed a civilization superior to that of the tribes of the surrounding deserts. Furthermore, they looked disdainfully at their relatives the Israelites who thought, in error, that they must, because of their vulnerable borders, make alliances with surrounding nations in order to survive. The Edomites thought of themselves as secure in their mountain redoubts.

3.12 The Edomites naturally absorbed something of the characteristics of their mountains. They were alone, aloof, unsympathetic and unmoved by the precarious position of their kinfolk - the Israelites.

3.13 For this lack of sympathy toward Israel the Lord passed judgment on them: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.

3.13.1 I will send a fire upon Teman (an oasis in north-west Arabia south-east of Ezion-geber), and it shall devour the strongholds of Bozrah (a capital of Edom, located about 18 miles south-east of the Dead Sea)" (Amos 1:11-12).

Amo 1:11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:
Amo 1:12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.



3.13.2 The Nabataeans defeated the Edomites in c. 646 and thus there was a near term fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy and later when the Lord comes back He will discipline Edom in spades.

3.14 The Edomites of Mount Seir at times controlled the harbors of Aqabah, into which Solomon's ships had come with gold from Ophir. They swooped down periodically upon the Arabian caravans and cut the roads to Gaza and Damascus.

3.15 Mainly, however, the Edomites were traders, middlemen between Arabia and Phoenicia, thereby filling their caverns with both eastern and western wealth. This coveted position drew the envious fire of the Israelites-especially when the land of Edom was so cut off and so difficult to attack.

3.16 Yet such kings of Judah as David, Amaziah, and Uzziah did invade Edom successfully and gained control of the oriental trade which flowed through the ports of Elath (located in biblical times at the head of the Gulf of Aqabah) and Ezion-geber.

4. Date

4.1 It is impossible from the book itself to date the writing of Obadiah. It seems to be definitely related to a time when a terrible misfortune befell the city of Jerusalem when the Edomites gleefully prided themselves in the event. The crucial question is the dating of Jerusalem's calamity.

4.2 There were several significant invasions in which the Edomites were involved but as you have earlier seen it seems clear to me Obadiah was written just after the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 586 by Nebuchadnezzar.

5. Outline of the Book

I. Introduction > Oba 1:1

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

II. Public Enemy Number One Arraigned > Oba 1:2-7

Oba 1:2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

Oba 1:3 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?

Oba 1:4 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.

Oba 1:5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

Oba 1:6 How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!

Oba 1:7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

III. Edom indicted > Oba 1:8-14

A. The Judge's Intention > Oba 1:8-9

Oba 1:8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

Oba 1:9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

B. The Case Against Edom > Oba 1:10-14

Oba 1:10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.

Oba 1:11 In the day that thou stood 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.

Oba 1:12 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.

Oba 1:13 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;

Oba 1:14 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.

IV. Edom Is Sentenced > Oba 1:15-20

A. Judgment > Oba 1:15 and 16

Oba 1:15 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.

Oba 1:16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

B. Vindication > Oba 1:17-20

Oba 1:17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

Oba 1:18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

Oba 1:19 And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.

Oba 1:20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath (located about eight miles south of Sidon); and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad (a land near Media mentioned in the Assyrian records of Sargon), shall possess the cities of the south.

V. The Lord To Be King > Oba 1:21

Oba 1:21 And saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

6. Summary of Message

End Lesson