

15. OBADIAH

6th century BC

Theme: Doom for Edom and restoration for Zion.

The Messiah will destroy Edom as a nation

(Obadiah 15-21)

This small book of 21 verses begins with judgment on Edom and finishes with the restoration of Israel and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Edom (meaning red) is another name for Esau, Jacob's twin brother. Esau, the older twin, sold his birthright to Jacob for a pot of red stew (Gen 25:30), and then Jacob cheated him out of receiving their father Isaac's final blessing. So the enmity between Edom and Israel resulted from a bitter family relationship, and that bitterness remains between Arabs and Jews to this day.

Vs. 15 gives us the context of the following verses; it is the Day of the Lord for all nations, God's universal day of judgment, when the Messiah reveals himself physically in power and glory to take vengeance on the nations of the world who have rebelled against God. The Edomites had done evil by plundering the Lord's people on his holy mountain Jerusalem, after Judah was defeated by Babylon in 586 BC, and so their name became a symbol of nations who rebel against the Lord and who will eventually lay siege to Jerusalem in the last days. On that day God will take vengeance on them all.

There will be those who escape in Mount Zion, the remnant of Israel, and they will repossess the lands of which they had been dispossessed. The significance of the present struggle for dominion over Mount Zion is only realized when we take into account that the descendants of Edom are the modern-day Arabs with whom they intermarried and assimilated. The mosque called the Dome of the Rock currently sits on Mount Zion.

There will be no survivors from Esau (18).

I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance, declares the Sovereign Lord (Ezek 25:14).

On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume all the surrounding peoples right and left, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place (Zech 12:6).

This prophecy is based on the word from Balaam, that a star would come from Jacob (Messiah) and defeat Moab and Edom. Amos also said that Israel would possess Edom as a result of the restoration of the booth of David that had fallen (Amos 9:12). The Edomites no longer exist as a nation. They have been absorbed into Arab nations who claim to be the descendants of Esau and who maintain hostility against Israel. When the Messiah returns, it is the Arab nations that surround Israel who will be regarded as Edom. Israel will repossess the West Bank, Gaza (ancient land of the Philistines), Jordan (ancient Ammon, Moab, and Edom), and southern Lebanon as far as Zarephath. Isaiah 63:1-6 is a graphic description of the Messiah single-handedly defeating Edom.

After a prophecy of vengeance on the nations, Obadiah ends on a high note; the deliverers will go up to Mount Zion to rule, and the kingdom will be the Lord's. The Messiah will reign from Mount Zion over an enlarged Israel and will extend his reign over the whole Earth.