

THE

MINOR
PROPHETS

JAMES L. R. CATRON



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James L. R. Catron

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PO Box 1028
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phone: (563) 585-2070
email: ecsorders@ecsministries.org
website: www.ecsministries.org

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The Book of Obadiah

Someone has said that “great things often come in small packages.” How true that is of Obadiah. Here we have the smallest book in the Old Testament. It is just one chapter of twenty-one verses, but it is a powerful book of holy Scripture. It is going to be very worthwhile for the student to get a firm grasp of this tiny prophecy.

I. THE AUTHOR

A. HIS NAME—Obadiah

This name, Obadiah, means “servant of Jehovah.” *Some* of the names of the prophets have prophetic significance—that is, the Lord intended that the meaning of their names have some application to their prophecies. We will note that as we go along in each of the studies. We cannot determine for certain if Obadiah’s name has any prophetic significance, but certainly we can say that the prophet sought to live a life consistent with the meaning of his name. We should seek to live consistently with the names we bear: Christians, disciples, etc.

B. HIS IDENTIFICATION—Unknown

We know absolutely nothing of the identity of this prophet. Though the name Obadiah was a popular one in the history of Israel, and though the Old Testament mentions about a dozen different men by this name, there is no sure way of linking this prophet with any of them. Inability to determine the identity does not alter our understanding and appreciation of the book. Besides, since a

prophet was only a “mouthpiece,” it was his message that was of prime importance, not his person. Some public communicators of God’s word have forgotten this; they are attracting people to themselves rather than to the Lord. One proof of a true servant is that he points people to the Lord rather than himself. Someone has said, “If a man is to be remembered for one thing only, what more worthy ground of remembrance can there be than that he was a **SERVANT OF THE LORD!**”

II. THE BOOK

A. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

The theme of Obadiah is the *Doom of Edom* (1-16) and the *Blessing of Israel* (17-21). In the first part of the theme, the principle of justice by which God operates is stated in verse 15: “**AS THOU HAST DONE, IT SHALL BE DONE UNTO THEE: THY REWARD SHALL RETURN UPON THINE OWN HEAD.**” This is **RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE**—that is, Edom will reap what it has sown. Has Edom cut off Israel? Then it will be cut off. Has Edom ransacked Jerusalem? So its rock fortress will be ransacked. Has Edom slaughtered Israel? So it will be slain. The second part of the theme, which is the *Blessing of Israel* (17-21), is a capsule sketch of what the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) dwell on in detail. It refers to the future when God will again restore His ancient people. God has promised, unconditionally, to set up his kingdom, and no nation can prevent this.

We can learn some valuable lessons from this two-fold theme: *FIRST*, the apostle Paul warns the Christian, “**BE NOT DECEIVED; GOD IS NOT MOCKED: FOR WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP. FOR HE THAT SOWETH TO HIS FLESH SHALL OF THE FLESH REAP CORRUPTION: BUT HE THAT SOWETH TO THE SPIRIT SHALL OF THE SPIRIT REAP LIFE EVERLASTING**” (Galatians 6:7-8). How are we sowing?

Edom sowed to the flesh and paid for it! We too will reap what we sow; it is an unchanging Divine law. *SECOND*, the apostle Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “**ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD IN HIM ARE YEA, AND IN HIM AMEN, UNTO THE**

GLORY OF GOD.” Just as the unconditional promises of God to Israel will be faithfully fulfilled, so all the promises which our Lord has made to the church will find fulfillment. We never have to worry about this, for God is not like us. We are often unfaithful to our promises, but Paul speaks of our God as the “God, that cannot lie . . .” (Titus 1:2), and as the One Who “abideth faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13). This should bring great peace to our hearts.

B. THE READERS

When we write a letter, we begin by addressing the person by name. There is no doubt for whom the letter is intended. But this is not always true of Scripture. For whom was this book originally intended? Was this prophecy sent to Edom to warn them? After all, most of it deals with Edom. We have no record of this. Was it delivered to Israel, since verses 17-21 primarily refer to Israel? We have no record of this either. It would seem that Israel must have been the recipient of this book. God intended it for the comfort and encouragement of His people. The fact that God would judge a nation that hated and hurt Israel, and the fact that He promised to deliver and restore Israel would be a source of hope and comfort. But we are readers of this book too, and God intended that we should gain comfort and hope through the principles found in it. What eternal truths can we find in Obadiah which apply to our personal Christian experience?

C. THE TIME OF WRITING

It can be very frustrating when you receive a letter from a friend and there is no date on it—especially when you refer to it later on and you say, “Now, when did I get this?” This can be a problem with some of the books of Scripture. Obadiah has always been a problem in this regard. No time is referred to in the superscription (1:1) as it is in some of the prophetic books (see Hosea, Amos, etc.). In many of them it is stated in the first chapter and first verse that the prophet prophesied in the reign of a certain king or kings. Since it is easy to determine the time of the kings, it is easy to determine the time of the prophet and his ministry. This is a problem not only for Obadiah, but for Joel, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi as well.

Of course, there are other ways to determine the time of the prophet and his writing besides the use of the superscription. Sometimes there are time-references within the prophet's book, and sometimes the prophet is referred to in some other book of Scripture. For instance, though no specific time is mentioned in Jonah, we know that Jonah prophesied in the eighth century B.C. because he is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 in regard to the reign of Jeroboam II, an eighth century king of the Northern Kingdom.

But what about Obadiah? Is there some time reference within his book which can help to place him? Yes, there is. Verses 10-14 speak of an invasion of Jerusalem in which much spoil was taken, many were slain, captives were taken, and EDOM WAS AN ALLY IN THIS INVASION. Now when did this happen? If we can determine this, then we can find a date for the writing of Obadiah. The Old Testament reveals that Jerusalem was invaded four times. See the chart:

BY SHISHAK OF EGYPT—926	BY THE PHILISTINES, ARABIANS AND EDOM IN 845	BY JEHOASH OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM—790	BY BABYLON IN 586
1 Kings 14:25,26 2 Chronicles 12	2 Chronicles 21:16,17 2 Kings 8:20-22	2 Kings 14 2 Chronicles 25	2 Kings 25 2 Chronicles 36
#1	#2	#3	#4

Numbers 1 and 3 are out of the question; numbers 2 and 4 are possibilities. Number 2 seems to be the most likely date; this was during the reign of Jehoram of Judah (848-841). Edom had revolted against Judah during the reign of Jehoram and was a bitter enemy of Judah at this time (see 2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-20). The invasion of 586 seems to go beyond what Obadiah describes. Obadiah does not mention the deportation of all of Judah and Jerusalem as happened in number 4. A ninth century date for the prophet seems more consistent with Obadiah. For a full discussion of this see A SURVEY OF OLD TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION, by Gleason Archer, pages 287-289, published by Moody Press.

D. THE BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK

The book of Obadiah opens with “Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom . . .” Who is Edom? Where was Edom located? How did Edom’s history develop? It is very important to ponder these questions because the answers to them help us to understand the meaning of the book.

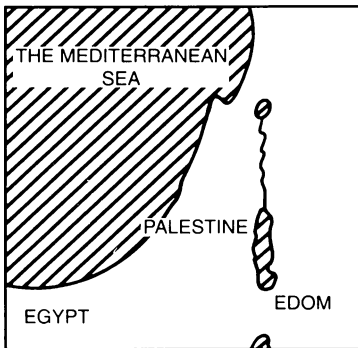
1. WHO IS EDOM?—“Esau is Edom . . .” Genesis 36:8

The book of Obadiah concerns the descendants of two men who were the children of Isaac and Rebekah—ESAU and JACOB. The Edomites descended from Esau who was Jacob’s twin, and the Israelites descended from Jacob. The story of their birth is recorded in Genesis 25:19-26 where we are told that Isaac prayed that God would provide his barren wife with a child. God answered by providing twins. Esau is considered the elder of the two because he came out of the womb first. God decreed that two nations would come from these two boys and that the “one people shall be stronger than the other people; and *the elder shall serve the younger*.” This is exactly how things worked out, as the Old Testament repeatedly affirms (see Malachi 1:2-4). Esau hated Jacob bitterly (read Genesis 27) and wanted to kill him, but Rebekah intervened (27:42-45) by sending Jacob away to Padan-aram. Years later there was a reconciliation between the two brothers when Jacob returned from Padan-aram (Genesis 33:1-16), but this was shown to be superficial by the continuing hatred that Esau’s descendants had for Israel. Throughout the history of these two peoples, Edom constantly showed a spirit of hateful revenge. Learn a lesson from this as regards your personal relationship with others in the family of God. Always keep the lines of communication open. If believers have conflicts with one another, these should be resolved immediately lest they get out of hand and affect the whole body of believers. Hate and revenge are destructive and the first to be destroyed are those who harbor these sins.

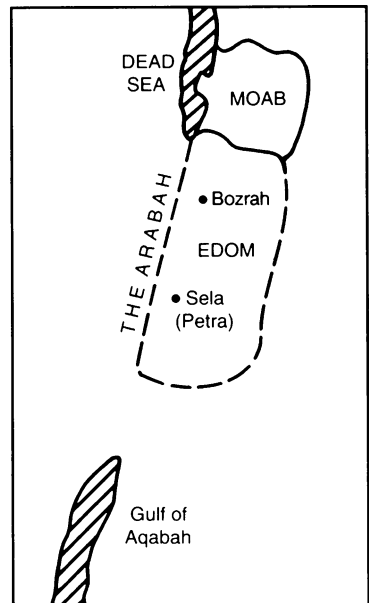
2. WHERE WAS EDOM LOCATED? See Maps

Of course, we know that Jacob’s descendants were given the promised land, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” But what about Esau and his posterity? If we had a choice of where we wanted to live, we would never have chosen Esau’s territory. Esau did not have a choice, for God appointed to him his land portion. Isaac, speaking for God made the initial statement concerning the future location of Edom: “BEHOLD, AWAY FROM THE FERTILITY OF THE EARTH SHALL BE YOUR DWELLING, AND AWAY FROM THE DEW OF HEAVEN FROM ABOVE” (NASV, Genesis 27:39)—that is, it will be the opposite of the fertile land of promise given to Israel. But where, geographically? The book of Deuteronomy gives the answer: “. . . I HAVE GIVEN MT. SEIR TO ESAU AS A POSSESSION . . . THE HORITES FORMERLY LIVED IN SEIR. BUT THE SONS OF ESAU

Maps Showing the Location of Edom



#1



#2

DISPOSSESSED THEM AND DESTROYED THEM FROM BEFORE THEM AND SETTLED IN THEIR PLACE” (2:5, 12). Mt. Seir fits well the description of Isaac: “AWAY FROM the fertility of the earth . . . AWAY FROM the dew of heaven . . .” Mt. Seir is the range of mountains running southward from the Dead Sea just east of the valley of Arabah. In this rugged, mountainous area is a rock fortress called Sela (Petra) which was the capital city of ancient Edom. The Edomites felt that no one could conquer them in their city of security, but God said, “I WILL BRING THEE DOWN . . .” (Obadiah 4). No one can escape the judgment of God! It is far better to trust in the living God than in the battles of men.

3. HOW DID EDMON'S HISTORY DEVELOP?

Quite a bit of time elapses between the history of Esau, the father of the Edomites, in Genesis and the first mention of the nation which came from him. The next we hear of Esau's descendants is in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The first contact between Israel and Edom comes in Numbers 20:14-21 as Israel is traveling toward the promised land. Israel asks permission to pass through Edomite territory but is refused. This is a key passage, showing that Esau's hatred of Jacob is continued in his posterity. Hundreds of years pass, and David (in fulfillment of Genesis 27:40a and Numbers 24:17-18) brings Edom into subjection. However, Edom later asserts itself and breaks the yoke of complete subjection to Israel (see 2 Kings 8:20-22). When Babylon was a strong power, Edom came under its yoke and was warned along with others not to rebel (Jeremiah 27:1-11). By the time of the prophet Malachi, the Edomites had already been driven from Mt. Seir by the confederates they trusted (Obadiah 1:7 and Malachi 1:3-5). Some Edomites settled in Southern Judah (called Idumea) in and around Hebron. Later, around 125 BC, in the period between the Old and New Testaments, John Hyrcanus, a second generation Maccabee, made the Edomites become Jews. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records: “Hyrcanus also took Dora and Merissa, cities of Idumea, and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, IF THEY WOULD

SUBMIT TO CIRCUMCISION, AND MAKE USE OF THE LAWS OF THE JEWS . . .” (Book XIII, Chapter IX). The last we hear of the Edomites is 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

The outline of Obadiah is based on the themes, *The Doom of Edom* (1-16), and *The Blessing of Israel* (17-21).

1. **THE DOOM OF EDMOM**..... 1-16
 - a. The **PREDICTION** of the Doom of Edom 1-2

Obadiah’s prediction of the coming doom of Edom is not due to any exceptional human foresight on his part as he reflects on the political and religious conditions of the day. What he proclaims is “**THUS SAITH THE LORD.**” Edom’s sin is great and Obadiah declares that God will make it “small among the heathen,” or as someone has put it, “cut it down to size!” How does God see us?
 - b. The **CERTAINTY** of the doom of Edom 3-4

Edom followed Satan’s sin: “The pride (arrogance) of thine heart hath deceived thee.” The deception was so great that they believed no one could destroy them. Their trust was in their well-fortified and well-located rock fortress. But Edom did not take God into consideration. Arrogance never does! So God says, “I will bring thee down.” Remember, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18; see also 26:12; 29:23; Isaiah 2:12). The way up is the way down (1 Peter 5:6).
 - c. The **COMPLETENESS** of the Doom 5-6

When God’s judgment strikes, it will not be just a casual raid by a band of thieves. A casual raid would not devastate the place. Edom is to be utterly ruined and plundered. Arrogance is always the loser! Blessed are the poor in spirit!

- d. The **INSTRUMENTS** of the Doom of Edom..... 7
 Edom trusted not only its rock fortress, but also its allies. This was its undoing. For God turned them against Edom. “All the men of thy confederacy . . . the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; . . .” This verse tells us the means that God used to judge Edom. This divine method is illustrated many times over in Scripture.
- e. The **RESULTS** of the Doom of Edom 8-9
 The wise men whose arrogant policies guided the nation of Edom, and the army (“mighty men”) who guarded the nations would be destroyed. This is the only fitting result for arrogance. It must be destroyed.
- f. The **REASON** for the Doom of Edom 10-14
 The pride of Edom’s *heart* was manifested in Edom’s *deeds*. What you think of others is evidenced in how you act toward them. Edom had a hateful spirit of revenge toward his brother, Israel. These verses tell of a time when Edom participated in a cruel invasion of Jerusalem and acted in a very unbrotherly, inhuman way. Edom did not consider him to be his “brother’s keeper.” How do we treat our brothers and sisters? Hebrews 13:1 says, “Let brotherly love continue,” and in 1 John 3:15 we are warned that “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer . . .”
- g. The **JUSTICE** of the Doom of Edom 15-16
 The justice of the doom of Edom is based on the principle of sowing and reaping. “As you have done, it will be done to you.” Edom will simply reap what it has sown! This applies to us as well, because God has not changed this law. Let us be careful what we sow.

It should be noted that these verses bring before us a cardinal principle of Old Testament prophecy—namely, “the universal prediction growing out of the local circumstances.” So Obadiah speaks of “the day of the Lord is near upon *all the heathen (nations)*: . . .”

The judgment upon Edom becomes a picture or illustration of the judgment of God upon all nations in the “day of the Lord.” The nations of the future “day of the Lord” will reap what they have sown (Matthew 25:31-46). The Old Testament prophets speak in this two-fold manner many, many times.

2. **THE BLESSING OF ISRAEL** 17-21

The prophet Obadiah now passes to the second and the brighter part of his picture—the future blessing of Israel.

a. The Blessing of **DELIVERANCE** 17

In the future “day of the Lord” Israel will experience deliverance in the Holy Land—Mt. Zion being specifically pointed out here.

b. The Blessing of **TRIUMPH** 18

Under the leadership of God Israel will participate in the coming deliverance spoken of in verse seventeen. They will be victors, and Edom (as well as all nations, verses 15, 16) will be the vanquished. The prophet Zechariah speaks at greater length concerning this (Zechariah 12-14). Keep in mind that though Edom passed off the scene after 70 AD, it, like other nations, will be revived in the future “day of the Lord.” Some passages that infer that Edom will indeed be involved in the future tribulation are: Daniel 11:41; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15.

c. The Blessing of **RE-POSSESSING THE LAND** 19-20

The thought here is that of exiles returning to their homeland. You will remember that, hundreds of years before, Joshua had brought the people of Israel into Canaan to the land which God had promised them. That was in 1405 BC. Israel never did occupy the land fully. In a coming day, when God brings his people from afar, they will **POSSESS** it. Ezekiel says, “**YES, I WILL CAUSE MEN—MY PEOPLE ISRAEL—TO WALK ON YOU AND POSSESS YOU SO THAT YOU WILL BECOME THEIR INHERITANCE AND NEVER AGAIN BEREAVE THEM O CHILDREN**” (Ezekiel 36:12). These verses (19, 20) are just a *sample picture* of the fulfillment of the promise of the land made to Abraham in Genesis 12, 13, 15, etc.

d. The Blessing of **THE RULE OF GOD** 21

What a wonderful note on which to end this brief prophecy: “. . . AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD’S.” The first Adam, because of sin, lost the dominion which God had given to him and his posterity (compare Genesis 1:26 with Genesis 3 and Hebrews 2:6-8). The last Adam, Jesus Christ, will regain this dominion for man, for God has decreed it (compare Psalm 2:6-9 with Revelations 11:15). But the way to victory over sin and Satan had to be by way of the cross. There could be no kingdom without the cross! Jesus must die the awful death of the cross! And He did! Praise God, **JESUS SHALL REIGN!**

SUMMARY

Edom is despised and God will make it small among the nations. Its rock fortress will not be a safe refuge from God, and it will be completely ravaged. Ironically, Edom’s allies will turn against it and the result will be that its vaunted wisdom and military might well be destroyed. Edom is simply reaping what it has sown and thus God is just in judging it. What Edom experiences will be the lot of all nations in the “day of the Lord.” In contrast, Israel will be greatly blessed of God: delivered from domination and oppression, triumphing over its ancient enemies—especially revived Edom (in the context), having its land restored to it, and coming under the reign of God. God is going to have the last word in the history of man. Jesus shall reign! Is He King of *your* life now?

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EXAM BOOKLET
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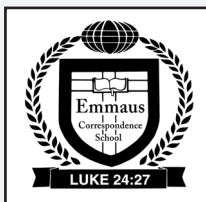
STUDENT NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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NOW I HAVE A QUESTION . . .

As you complete the exams, you may have additional questions about the course material that have not been answered. In the area below, you may ask any question you have related to the chapters you have studied. Your instructor will respond to your questions as best as he or she can.

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

OBADIAH

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. One could distinguish between a true and a false prophet by
 - A. the method he used in receiving his prophecy
 - B. whether the prophecy came to pass
 - C. whether the prophecy confirmed or contradicted God's Word
 - D. all of the above_____

2. The period of the prophets is from
 - A. Genesis 12 through Malachi
 - B. Exodus 12 through the life of Moses
 - C. Joshua through Judges
 - D. 1 Samuel 9 through the rest of the Old Testament_____

3. Obadiah's name means
 - A. "Servant of Jehovah"
 - B. "Son of Jehovah"
 - C. "Sufferer of Jehovah"
 - D. "Salvation of Jehovah"_____

4. The nation of Edom originated from

A. Ishmael	C. Esau
B. Lot	D. Saul

5. The most probable date for the ministry of Obadiah is
 - A. ninth century B.C.
 - B. eighth century B.C.
 - C. seventh century B.C.
 - D. sixth century B.C._____

6. The principle of justice found in the book of Obadiah is known as
 A. systematic justice C. impartial justice
 B. retributive justice D. partial justice _____
7. The judgment of Edom is a picture of God's judgment upon
 A. Babylon in 539 B.C.
 B. Persia in 322 B.C.
 C. Greece in 63 B.C.
 D. All nations in the future _____
8. The Edomites
 A. were forced to become Jews
 B. passed off the historical scene in A.D. 70
 C. continually hated Jacob's descendants
 D. all of the above _____
9. The place of Israel's future deliverance is specifically pointed out as
 A. Mt. Zion C. Mt. Seir
 B. Armageddon D. Edom _____
10. The last of the blessings upon Israel mentioned by Obadiah is
 A. the new birth of the nation
 B. the re-unification of the twelve tribes
 C. victory in battle
 D. the rule of God _____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

How can we recognize a true prophet (messenger) today?
