

# Obadiah

## God's Judgment on Edom

1:1 The vision<sup>1</sup> that Obadiah<sup>2</sup> saw,<sup>3</sup>  
The Lord God<sup>4</sup> says this concerning<sup>5</sup>  
Edom:<sup>6</sup>

## Edom's Approaching Destruction

We have heard a report from the LORD.  
An envoy was sent among the nations,  
saying,<sup>7</sup>

“Arise! Let us make war against Edom!”<sup>8</sup>

1:2 The LORD says,<sup>9</sup> “Look! I will<sup>10</sup> make  
you a weak nation;<sup>11</sup>

you will be greatly despised!

1:3 Your presumptuous heart<sup>12</sup> has de-  
ceived you –

you who reside in the safety of the rocky  
cliffs,<sup>13</sup>

whose home is high in the mountains.<sup>14</sup>

You think to yourself,<sup>15</sup>

“No one can<sup>16</sup> bring me down to the  
ground!”<sup>17</sup>

1:4 Even if you were to soar high like an  
eagle,<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **sn** The date of the book of Obadiah is very difficult to determine. Since there is no direct indication of chronological setting clearly suggested by the book itself, and since the historical identity of the author is uncertain as well, a possible date for the book can be arrived at only on the basis of internal evidence. When did the hostile actions of Edom against Judah that are described in this book take place? Many nineteenth-century scholars linked the events of the book to a historical note found in 2 Kgs 8:20 (cf. 2 Chr 21:16-17): “In [Jehoram’s] days Edom rebelled from under the hand of Judah and established a king over themselves.” If this is the backdrop against which Obadiah should be read, it would suggest a ninth-century b.c. date for the book, since Jehoram reigned ca. 852-841 b.c. But the evidence presented for this view is not entirely convincing, and most contemporary Old Testament scholars reject a ninth-century scenario. A more popular view, held by many biblical scholars from Luther to the present, understands the historical situation presupposed in the book to be the Babylonian invasion of Judah in the sixth century (cf. Ps 137:7; Lam 4:18-22; Ezek 25:12-14; 35:1-15). Understood in this way, Obadiah would be describing a situation in which the Edomites assisted in the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem. Although it must be admitted that a sixth-century setting for the book of Obadiah cannot be proven, the details of the book fit reasonably well into such a context. Other views on the dating of the book, such as an eighth-century date in the time of Ahaz (ca. 732-716 b.c.) or a fifth-century date in the postexilic period, are less convincing. Parallels between the book of Obadiah and Jer 49:1-22 clearly suggest some kind of literary dependence, but it is not entirely clear whether Jeremiah drew on Obadiah or whether Obadiah drew upon Jeremiah. In any case, the close relationship between Obadiah and Jer 49 might suggest the sixth-century setting.

<sup>2</sup> **sn** The name *Obadiah* in Hebrew means “servant of the LORD.” A dozen or so individuals in the OT have this name, none of whom may be safely identified with the author of this book. In reality we know very little about this prophet with regard to his exact identity or historical circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the vision of Obadiah” (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV); *TEV* “This is the prophecy of Obadiah.”

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “LORD.” The phrase יהוה אלהים (*‘adonay yehviah*) is customarily rendered by Jewish tradition as “Lord God.” Cf. NIV, *TEV*, NLT “Sovereign Lord.”

<sup>5</sup> **tn** The Hebrew preposition ל (*le*) is better translated here “concerning” (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV, NLT) or “about” (so NIV, NCV, *TEV*, *CEV*) Edom rather than “to” Edom, although much of the book does speak directly to Edom.

<sup>6</sup> **sn** The name *Edom* derives from a Hebrew root that means “red.” Edom was located to the south of the Dead Sea in an area with numerous rocky crags that provided ideal military advantages for protection. Much of the sandstone of this area has a reddish color. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob (Gen 25:19-26).

<sup>7</sup> **tn** Although the word “saying” is not in the Hebrew text, it has been supplied in the translation because what follows seems to be the content of the envoy’s message. Cf. ASV,

NASB, NCV, all of which supply “saying”; NIV, NLT “to say.”

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Arise, and let us arise against her in battle!” The term “Edom” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation to specify the otherwise ambiguous referent of the term “her.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** The introductory phrase “the LORD says” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation to clarify the identity of the speaker.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** The Hebrew perfect verb form used here usually describes past events. However, here and several times in the following verses it is best understood as portraying certain fulfillment of events that at the time of writing were still *future*. It is the perfect of certitude. See GKC 312-13 §106.n; *Joüon* 2:363 §112.h.

<sup>11</sup> **sn** *Heb* “I will make you small among the nations” (so NAB, NASB, NIV); NRSV “least among the nations”; NCV “the smallest of nations.”

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the presumption of your heart”; NAB, NIV “the pride of your heart”; NASB “arrogance of your heart.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* “in the concealed places of the rock”; KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV “in the clefts of the rock”; NCV “the hollow places of the cliff”; *CEV* “a mountain fortress.”

**sn** The word *rock* in Hebrew (סֵלָה, *sela*) is a wordplay on *Sela*, the name of a prominent Edomite city. Its impregnability was a cause for arrogance on the part of its ancient inhabitants.

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* “on high (is) his dwelling”; NASB “in the loftiness of your dwelling place”; NRSV “whose dwelling (abode NAB) is in the heights.”

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the one who says in his heart.”

<sup>16</sup> **tn** The Hebrew imperfect verb used here is best understood in a modal sense (“Who *can* bring me down?”) rather than in the sense of a simple future (“Who *will* bring me down?”). So also in v. 4 (“I *can* bring you down”). The question is not so much whether this will happen at some time in the future, but whether it even lies in the realm of possible events. In their hubris the Edomites were boasting that no one had the capability of breaching their impregnable defenses. However, their pride caused them to fail to consider the vast capabilities of Yahweh as warrior.

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Who can bring me down?” This rhetorical question implies a negative answer: “No one!”

<sup>18</sup> **sn** The eagle was often used in the ancient Near East as a symbol of strength and swiftness.

even if you<sup>1</sup> were to make your nest  
among the stars,  
I can bring you down even from there!”  
says the LORD.  
1:5 “If thieves came to rob you<sup>2</sup> during  
the night,<sup>3</sup>  
they would steal only as much as they  
wanted!<sup>4</sup>  
If grape pickers came to harvest your  
vineyards,<sup>5</sup>  
they would leave some behind for the  
poor!<sup>6</sup>  
But you will be totally destroyed!<sup>7</sup>  
1:6 How the people of Esau<sup>8</sup> will be thor-  
oughly plundered!<sup>9</sup>

Their<sup>10</sup> hidden valuables will be ran-  
sacked!<sup>11</sup>  
1:7 All your allies<sup>12</sup> will force<sup>13</sup> you from  
your homeland!<sup>14</sup>  
Your treaty partners<sup>15</sup> will deceive you  
and overpower you.  
Your trusted friends<sup>16</sup> will set an ambush<sup>17</sup>  
for<sup>18</sup> you  
that will take you by surprise!<sup>19</sup>  
1:8 At that time,<sup>20</sup> the LORD says,  
“I will destroy the wise sages of Edom!<sup>21</sup>  
the advisers<sup>22</sup> from Esau’s mountain!<sup>23</sup>  
1:9 Your warriors will be shattered, O  
Teman,<sup>24</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **tc** The present translation follows the reading תַּעֲשֶׂה (*ta-sim*; active) rather than שִׂים (*sim*; passive) of the MT (“and your nest be set among the stars,” NAB). Cf. LXX, Syriac, Vg.

<sup>2</sup> **sn** Obadiah uses two illustrations to show the totality of Edom’s approaching destruction. Both robbers and harvesters would have left at least something behind. Such will not be the case, however, with the calamity that is about to befall Edom. A virtually identical saying appears in Jer 49:9-10.

<sup>3</sup> **tn** *Heb* “if thieves came to you, or if plunderers of the night” (NRSV similar). The repetition here adds rhetorical emphasis.

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Would they not have stolen only their sufficiency?” The rhetorical question is used to make an emphatic assertion, which is perhaps best represented by the indicative form in the translation.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** *Heb* “If grape pickers came to you.” The phrase “to harvest your vineyards” does not appear in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation to clarify the point of the entire simile which is assumed.

<sup>6</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Would they not have left some gleanings?” The rhetorical question makes an emphatic assertion, which for the sake of clarity is represented by the indicative form in the translation. The implied answer to these rhetorical questions is “yes.” The fact that something would have remained after the imagined acts of theft or harvest stands in stark contrast to the totality of Edom’s destruction as predicted by Obadiah. Edom will be so decimated as a result of God’s judgment that nothing at all will be left.

**sn** According to the Mosaic law, harvesters were required to leave some grain behind in the fields for the poor (Lev 19:9; 23:22; see also Ruth 2); there was a similar practice with grapes and olives (Lev 19:10; Deut 24:21). Regarding gleanings left behind from grapes, see Judg 8:2; Jer 6:9; 49:9; Mic 7:1.

<sup>7</sup> **tn** *Heb* “O how you will be cut off.” This emotional interjection functions rhetorically as the prophet’s announcement of judgment on Edom. In Hebrew this statement actually appears between the first and second metaphors, that is, in the middle of this verse. As the point of the comparison, one would expect it to follow both of the two metaphors; however, Obadiah interrupts his own sentence to interject his emphatic exclamation that cannot wait until the end of the sentence. This emphatic sentence structure is eloquent in Hebrew but awkward in English. Since this emphatic assertion is the point of his comparison, it appears at the end of the sentence in this translation, where one normally expects to find the concluding point of a metaphorical comparison.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Esau.” The name Esau here is a synecdoche of part for whole referring to the Edomites. Cf. “Jacob” in v. 10, where the meaning is “Israelites.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* “How Esau will be searched!”; NAB “How they search Esau.” The Hebrew verb חָפַץ (*khafas*, “to search out”) is used metonymically here for plundering the hidden valuables of a conquered people (e.g., 1 Kgs 20:6).

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* “his” (so KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV); this is singular agreeing with “Esau” in the previous line.

<sup>11</sup> **tn** *Heb* “searched out” (so NASB, NRSV); NIV “pillaged”; TEV “looted”; NLT “found and taken.” This pictures the violent action of conquering warriors ransacking the city in order to loot and plunder its valuables.

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* “All the men of your covenant”; KJV, ASV “the men of thy confederacy.” In Hebrew “they will send you unto the border” and “all the men of your covenant” appear in two separate poetic lines (cf. NAB “To the border they drive you – all your allies”). Since the second is a noun clause functioning as the subject of the first clause, the two are rendered as a single sentence in the translation.

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* “send”; NASB “send you forth”; NAB “drive”; NIV “force.”

<sup>14</sup> **tn** *Heb* “to the border” (so NASB, NIV, NRSV).

<sup>15</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the men of your peace.” This expression refers to a political/military alliance or covenant of friendship.

<sup>16</sup> **tn** *Heb* “your bread,” which makes little sense in the context. The Hebrew word can be revocalized to read “those who eat bread with you,” i.e., “your friends.” Cf. KJV “they that eat thy bread”; NIV “those who eat your bread”; TEV “Those friends who ate with you.”

<sup>17</sup> **tn** *Heb* “set a trap” (so NIV, NRSV). The meaning of the Hebrew word מַצּוּד (*mazor*; here translated “ambush”) is uncertain; it occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. The word probably refers to something “spread out” for purposes of entrapment, such as a net. Other possibilities include “trap,” “fetter,” or “stumbling block.”

<sup>18</sup> **tn** *Heb* “beneath” (so NAB).

<sup>19</sup> **tn** *Heb* “there is no understanding in him.”

<sup>20</sup> **tn** *Heb* “in that day” (so KJV, NIV); NAB, NASB, NRSV “on that day.”

<sup>21</sup> **tn** *Heb* “Will I not destroy those who are wise from Edom?” The rhetorical question functions as an emphatic affirmation. For the sake of clarity this has been represented by the emphatic indicative in the translation.

<sup>22</sup> **tn** *Heb* “understanding”; NIV “men of understanding.” This undoubtedly refers to members of the royal court who offered political and military advice to the Edomite kings. In the ancient Near East, such men of wisdom were often associated with divination and occultic practices (cf. Isa 3:3, 47:10, 13). The Edomites were also renown in the ancient Near East as a center of traditional sagacity and wisdom; perhaps that is referred to here (cf. Jer 49:7).

<sup>23</sup> **tn** *Heb* “and understanding from the mountain of Esau.” The phrase “I will remove the men of...” does not appear in the Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity and smoothness. Here “understanding” is a synecdoche of part for whole; the faculty of understanding is put for the wise men who possess it.

<sup>24</sup> **sn** *Teman*, like *Sela*, was a prominent city of Edom. The name *Teman* is derived from the name of a grandson of Esau (cf. Gen 36:11). Here it is a synecdoche of part for whole, standing for all of Edom.

so that<sup>4</sup> everyone<sup>2</sup> will be destroyed<sup>3</sup>  
from Esau's mountain!

*Edom's Treachery Against Judah*

**1:10** "Because<sup>4</sup> you violently slaughtered<sup>5</sup>  
your relatives,<sup>6</sup> the people of Jacob,<sup>7</sup>  
shame will cover you, and you will be  
destroyed<sup>8</sup> forever.

**1:11** You stood aloof<sup>9</sup> while strangers took  
his army<sup>10</sup> captive,  
and foreigners advanced to his gates.<sup>11</sup>  
When they cast lots<sup>12</sup> over Jerusalem,<sup>13</sup>  
you behaved as though you were in  
league<sup>14</sup> with them.

**1:12** You should not<sup>15</sup> have gloated<sup>16</sup> when

your relatives<sup>17</sup> suffered calamity.<sup>18</sup>  
You should not have rejoiced over the  
people of Judah when they were des-  
troyed.<sup>19</sup>

You should not have boasted<sup>20</sup> when they  
suffered adversity.<sup>21</sup>

**1:13** You should not have entered the city<sup>22</sup>  
of my people when they experienced  
distress.<sup>23</sup>

You should not have joined<sup>24</sup> in gloating  
over their misfortune when they suf-  
fered distress.<sup>25</sup>

You should not have looted<sup>26</sup> their wealth  
when they endured distress.<sup>27</sup>

**1:14** You should not have stood at the fork  
in the road<sup>28</sup> to slaughter<sup>29</sup> those trying  
to escape.<sup>30</sup>

You should not have captured their refu-  
gees when they suffered adversity.<sup>31</sup>

**1 tn** The Hebrew word used here (מָאֵן, *l'ma'an*) usually ex-  
presses purpose. The sense in this context, however, is more  
likely that of result.

**2 tn** Heb "a man," meaning "every single person" here; cf.  
KJV "every one."

**3 tn** Heb "cut off" (so KJV, NASB, NRSV); NIV, NLT "cut  
down"; CEV "wiped out."

**4 tn** Heb "from." The preposition is used here with a causal  
sense.

**5 tn** Heb "because of the slaughter and because of the vi-  
olence." These two expressions form a hendiadys meaning  
"because of the violent slaughter." Traditional understanding  
connects the first phrase "because of the slaughter" with the  
end of v. 9 (cf. KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT). It is preferable, however,  
to regard it as parallel to the reference to violence at the be-  
ginning of v. 11. Both the parallel linguistic structure of the  
two phrases and the metrical structure of the verse favor con-  
necting this phrase with the beginning of v. 10 (cf. NRSV, TEV).

**6 tn** Heb "the violence of your brother." The genitive con-  
struction is to be understood as an objective genitive. The  
meaning is not that Jacob has perpetrated violence (= subjective  
genitive), but that violence has been committed against  
him (= objective genitive).

**7 tn** Heb "your brother Jacob" (so NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV);  
NCV "your relatives, the Israelites."

**8 tn** Heb "be cut off" (so KJV, NASB, NRSV).

**9 tn** Heb "in the day of your standing"; NAB "On the day  
when you stood by."

**10 tn** Or perhaps, "wealth" (so NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT). The  
Hebrew word is somewhat ambiguous here. This word also  
appears in v. 13, where it clearly refers to wealth.

**11 tc** The present translation follows the Qere which reads  
the plural ("gates") rather than the singular.

**12 sn** Casting lots seems to be a way of deciding who would  
gain control over material possessions and enslaved peoples  
following a military victory.

**13 map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2;  
Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

**14 tn** Heb "like one from them"; NASB "You too were as one  
of them."

**15 tn** In vv. 12-14 there are eight prohibitions which sum-  
marize the nature of the Lord's complaint against Edom. Each  
prohibition alludes to something that Edom did to Judah that  
should not have been done by one "brother" to another. It is  
because of these violations that the Lord has initiated judg-  
ment against Edom. In the Hebrew text these prohibitions are  
expressed by אַל ("al," "not") plus the jussive form of the verb,  
which is common in negative commands of immediate ur-  
gency. Such constructions would normally have the sense of  
prohibiting something either not yet begun (i.e., "do not start  
to ...") or something already in process at the time of speaking  
(i.e., "stop..."). Here, however, it seems more likely that the  
prohibitions refer to a situation in past rather than future time (i.e.,  
"you should not have ..."). If so, the verbs are being used in a  
rhetorical fashion, as though the prophet were vividly project-  
ing himself back into the events that he is describing and urg-  
ing the Edomites not to do what in fact they have already done.

**16 tn** The Hebrew expression "to look upon" often has the

sense of "to feast the eyes upon" or "to gloat over" (cf. v. 13).

**17 tn** Heb "your brother" (so NAB, NIV, NRSV); NCV "your  
brother Israel."

**18 tn** Heb "in the day of your brother, in the day of his calami-  
ty." This expression is probably a hendiadys meaning, "in the  
day of your brother's calamity." The Hebrew word נִכְרוּ (*nokhro*,  
"his calamity") is probably a word-play on נְכָרִים (*nokherim*,  
"foreigners") in v. 11.

**19 tn** Heb "in the day of their destruction" (so KJV, NASB,  
NIV); NAB, NRSV "on the day of their ruin."

**20 tn** Or "boasted with your mouth." The Hebrew text in-  
cludes the phrase "with your mouth," which is redundant in  
English and has been left untranslated.

**21 tn** Heb "in the day of adversity"; NASB "in the day of their  
distress."

**22 tn** Heb "the gate." The term "gate" here functions as a  
synecdoche for the city as a whole, which the Edomites plundered.

**23 tn** Heb "in the day of their distress." The phrase is  
used three times in this verse; the Hebrew word translated  
"distress" (אִשְׁלַחַהּ, *'adam*) is a wordplay on the name Edom.  
For stylistic reasons and to avoid monotony, in the present  
translation this phrase is rendered: "when they experienced  
distress," "when they suffered distress," and "when they en-  
dured distress."

**24 tn** Heb "you, also you."

**25 tn** Heb "in the day of his distress." In this and the follow-  
ing phrase at the end of v. 13 the suffix is 3rd person mas-  
culine singular. As collective singulars both occurrences have  
been translated as plurals ("they suffered distress...endured  
distress") rather than "he suffered distress...endured dis-  
tress").

**26 tc** In the MT the verb is feminine plural, but the antec-  
edent is unclear. The Hebrew phrase תִּשְׁלַחְמָהּ (*tishlakmah*)  
here should probably be emended to תִּשְׁלַחַהּ (*tishlakh*  
*yad*), although *yad* ("hand") is not absolutely essential to this  
idiom.

**27 tn** See the note on the phrase "suffered distress" in the  
previous line.

**28 tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word פֶּרֶק (*perek*; here  
translated "fork in the road") is uncertain. The word is found  
in the Hebrew Bible only here and in Nah 3:1, where it means  
"plunder." In the present context it seems to refer to a strate-  
gic intersection or fork in a road where bands of Edomites  
apprehended Israelites who were fleeing from the attack on  
Jerusalem. Cf. NAB, NIV, NLT "crossroads"; NRSV "crossings."

**29 tn** Heb "to cut off" (so KJV, NRSV); NASB, NIV "to cut  
down."

**30 tn** Heb "his fugitives"; NAB, CEV "refugees."

**31 tn** Heb "in the day of distress" (so KJV, ASV).

*The Coming Day of the Lord*

**1:15** “For the day of the LORD<sup>1</sup> is approaching<sup>2</sup> for all the nations!<sup>3</sup> Just as you have done, so it will be done to you.

You will get exactly what your deeds deserve.<sup>4</sup>

**1:16** For just as you<sup>5</sup> have drunk<sup>6</sup> on my holy mountain,

so all the nations will drink continually.<sup>7</sup> They will drink, and they will gulp down; they will be as though they had never been.

**1:17** But on Mount Zion there will be a remnant of those who escape,<sup>8</sup> and it will be a holy place once again. The descendants<sup>9</sup> of Jacob will conquer<sup>10</sup> those who had conquered them.<sup>11</sup>

**1:18** The descendants of Jacob will be a fire, and the descendants of Joseph a flame. The descendants of Esau will be like stubble.

They will burn them up and devour them. There will not be a single survivor<sup>12</sup> of the descendants of Esau!<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the LORD has spoken it.

**1:19** The people of the Negev<sup>14</sup> will take possession<sup>14</sup> of Esau’s mountain, and the people of the Shephelah<sup>15</sup> will take

<sup>1</sup> **sn** The term יום (*yom*, “day”) is repeated ten times in vv. 11-14 referring to the time period when Judah/Jerusalem suffered calamity which Edom exploited for its own sinful gain. In each of those cases יום was qualified by a following genitive to describe Judah’s plight, e.g., “in the day of your brother’s calamity” (v. 12). Here it appears again but now followed by the divine name to describe the time of God’s judgment against Edom for its crimes against humanity: “the day of the LORD.” In the present translation, the expression בְּיוֹם (*b’yom*; literally, “in the day of”) was rendered “When...” in vv. 11-14. However, here it is translated more literally because the expression “the day of the LORD” is a well-known technical expression for a time of divine intervention in judgment. While this expression sometimes refers to the final eschatological day of God’s judgment, it may also refer occasionally to historical acts of judgment.

<sup>2</sup> **tn** *Heb* “near” (so KJV, NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT); NCV “is coming soon.”

<sup>3</sup> **sn** God’s judgment would not be confined to Edom. Edom would certainly be punished in just measure for its wrongdoing, but “the day of the Lord” would also encompass judgment of the nations (v. 15).

<sup>4</sup> **tn** *Heb* “your deed will return on your own head.” Verses 15 and 16 provide an example of ironic reversal, whereby the tables are turned and poetic justice is served. This is a motif that is common in prophetic oracles against foreign nations.

<sup>5</sup> **tn** The identification of the referent of “you” in v. 16a is uncertain. There are three major options: (1) On the surface, it would appear to be Edom, which is addressed in v. 15b and throughout the prophecy. However, when Edom is addressed, second person singular forms are normally used in the Hebrew. In v. 16a the Hebrew verb “you drank” is a plural form שָׁתוּתֶם (*sh’tutem*), perhaps suggesting that Edom is no longer addressed, at least solely. Perhaps Edom and the nations, mentioned in v. 15a, are both addressed in v. 16a. However, since the nations are referred to in the third person in v. 16b, it seems unlikely that they are addressed here. (2) Another option is to take the final *mem* (ם) on the Hebrew verb form (שָׁתוּתֶם) as an enclitic particle and revocalize the form as a singular verb (שָׁתוּתֶךָ, *shatuta*) addressed to Edom. In this case v. 16a would allude to the time when Edom celebrated Jerusalem’s defeat on Mount Zion, God’s “holy hill.” Verse 16b would then make the ironic point that just as Edom once drank in victory, so the nations (Edom included) would someday drink the cup of judgment. However, this interpretation is problematic for it necessitates taking the drinking metaphor in different ways (as signifying celebration and then judgment) within the same verse. (3) Another option is that the exiled people of Judah are addressed. Just as God’s people were forced to drink the intoxicating wine of divine judgment, so the nations, including those who humiliated Judah, would be forced to drink this same wine. However, the problem here is that God’s people are never addressed elsewhere in the prophecy, making this approach problematic as well.

<sup>6</sup> **sn** This reference to drinking portrays the profane activities of those who had violated Jerusalem’s sanctity. The following reference to drinking on the part of the nations portrays God’s judgment upon them. They will drink, as it were, from the cup of divine retribution.

<sup>7</sup> **sn** The judgment is compared here to intoxicating wine, which the nations are forced to keep drinking (v. 16). Just as an intoxicating beverage eventually causes the one drinking it to become disoriented and to stagger, so God’s judgment would cause the panic-stricken nations to stumble around in confusion. This extended metaphor is paralleled in Jer 49:12 which describes God’s imminent judgment on Edom, “If even those who did not deserve to drink from the cup of my wrath have to drink from it, do you think you will go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, but you also will certainly drink from the cup of my wrath.” There are numerous parallels between Obadiah and the oracle against Edom in Jer 49:1-22, so perhaps the latter should be used to help understand the enigmatic metaphor here in v. 16.

<sup>8</sup> **tn** *Heb* “will be a fugitive.” This is a collective singular. Cf. NCV “some will escape the judgment.”

<sup>9</sup> **tn** *Heb* “house” (so most English versions); NCV, TEV “the people of Jacob.” The word “house” also occurs four times in v. 18.

<sup>10</sup> **tn** *Heb* “dispossess.” This root is repeated in the following line to emphasize poetic justice: The punishment will fit the crime.

<sup>11</sup> **tc** The present translation follows the reading מוֹרִישֵׁהֶם (*morishehem*; literally, “those dispossessing them”); cf. NAB, NRSV, CEV) rather than מוֹרִשֵׁהֶם (*morashehem*, “their possessions”) of the MT (cf. LXX, Syriac, and Vg, followed by KJV, ASV, NASB).

<sup>12</sup> **tn** *Heb* “will be no survivor”; NAB “none shall survive.”

<sup>13</sup> **tn** *Heb* “the Negev”; ASV “the South”; NCV, TEV “southern Judah.” The Hebrew text does not have the words “the people of,” but these words have been supplied in the translation for clarity. The place name “the Negev” functions as a synecdoche (container for contents) for the people living in the Negev.

**sn** The Negev is a dry, hot, arid region in the southern portion of Judah.

<sup>14</sup> **sn** The verb יָרַשׁ (*yarash*, “to take possession of [something]”) which is repeated three times in vv. 19-20 for emphasis, often implies a violent means of acquisition, such as through military conquest. Obadiah here pictures a dramatic reversal: Judah’s enemies, who conquered them then looted all her valuable possessions, will soon be conquered by the Judeans who will in turn take possession of their valuables. The punishment will fit the crime.

<sup>15</sup> **tn** The Hebrew text does not have the words “the people of,” but they are supplied in the translation since “the Shephelah” functions as a synecdoche referring to residents of this region.

**sn** The *Shephelah* as a region refers to the Palestinian foothills that rise from the coastal plain. In much of Old Testament times they served as a divide between the people of

possession<sup>1</sup> of the land of<sup>2</sup> the Philistines. They will also take possession of the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, and the people of Benjamin will take possession<sup>3</sup> of Gilead.<sup>4</sup>  
**1:20** The exiles of this fortress<sup>5</sup> of the people of Israel will take possession<sup>6</sup> of what belongs to

the people of Canaan, as far as Zarephath,<sup>7</sup> and the exiles of Jerusalem<sup>8</sup> who are in Sepharad<sup>9</sup> will take possession of the towns of the Negev.  
**1:21** Those who have been delivered<sup>10</sup> will go up on Mount Zion in order to rule over<sup>11</sup> Esau's mountain. Then the LORD will reign as King!<sup>12</sup>

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Judah and the Philistines.

**1 tn** The phrase “will take possession” does not appear in this clause, but is implied from its previous use in this verse. It is supplied in the translation for the sake of smoothness.

**2 tn** The words “the land of” are not present in the Hebrew text. They are supplied in the translation for clarity.

**3 tn** The phrase “will take possession” does not appear in this clause, but is implied from its previous use in this verse. It is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

**4 sn** *Gilead* is a mountainous region on the eastern side of the Jordan River in what is today the country of Jordan.

**5 tn** Or “army” (TEV); KJV, NAB, NASB “host”; NIV “company.” Some text critics suggest revocalizing MT הַחֵלֶל (*hakhel*, “the fortress”) to the place-name הָלָה (*halah*, “Halah”; so NRSV), the location to which many of the Israelite exiles were sent in the 8th century (2 Kgs 7:6; 18:11; 1 Chr 5:26). The MT form is from הָיִל (*hayil*, “strength”), which is used elsewhere to refer to an army (Exod 14:17; 1 Sam 17:20; 2 Sam 8:9), military fortress (2 Sam 20:15; 22:33), leaders (Exod 18:21) and even wealth or possessions (Obad 1:11, 13).

**6 tn** The Hebrew text has no verb here. The words “will possess” have been supplied from the context.

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**7 sn** *Zarephath* was a Phoenician coastal city located some ten miles south of Sidon.

**8 map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

**9 sn** The exact location of *Sepharad* is uncertain. Suggestions include a location in Spain, or perhaps Sparta in Greece, or perhaps Sardis in Asia Minor. For inscriptional evidence that bears on this question see E. Lipiński, “Obadiah 20,” VT 23 (1973): 368-70. The reason for mentioning this location in v. 20 seems to be that even though it was far removed from Jerusalem, the Lord will nonetheless enable the Jewish exiles there to return and participate in the restoration of Israel that Obadiah describes.

**10 tc** The present translation follows the reading מוֹשְׁעִים (*musha'im*, “those who have been delivered”; cf. NRSV, CEV) rather than מוֹשְׁעִים (*moshi'im*, “deliverers”; cf. NASB, NIV, NLT) of the MT (cf. LXX, Aquila, Theodotion, and Syriac).

**11 tn** *Heb* “to judge.” In this context the term does not mean “to render judgment on,” but “to rule over” (cf. NAB “to rule”; NIV “to govern”).

**12 tn** *Heb* “then the kingdom will belong to the LORD.”