

Minor Prophets: Obadiah

Introduction

This shortest book of the Old Testament produces a quick and elusive response to one of the many adversarial acts of the Edomites against Israel in the midst of battle. Because the book is so short and lacking in great historical detail, many scholars vigorously debate everything from the historical situation to the date of the book even to the author. But for the intents and purposes of this study, we are going to consider it the earliest of the minor prophetic writings.

About Obadiah the Prophet

Little is known about this prophet. If the early date is accepted, the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was Ahaziah while the king of Judah, probably Obadiah's home nation, was Jehoshaphat. His name means "Servant of Yahweh" and it is a common name in the Old Testament. No other biographical information is known about him. Many scholars have tried to link him with other people with the same name in the Hebrew Scriptures, but this would be like trying to figure out which "Jim" we're talking about. We know that he had the faith to see God's kingdom in the midst of a horrible experience, the sacking of Jerusalem.

Two Possible Dates and Historical Situations

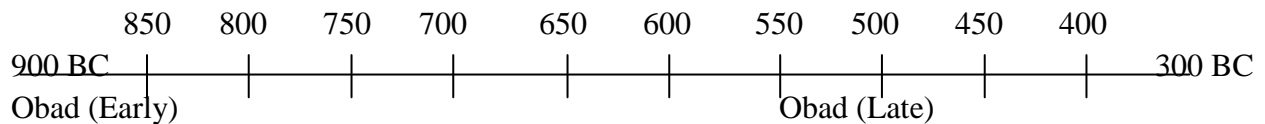
The first possible situation places Obadiah around 845 BC in the midst of a brutal uprising by the nations surrounding Judah. The Philistines and their allies were attempting to sack Jerusalem, a rarity in antiquity. The Edomites were involved up to the point that as a neighboring nation, they did not even lift a finger to help the Israelites in their struggle. In fact, Obadiah states that they were complicit in collaborating with the demise of Jerusalem. For this reason, he prophesies about their coming doom that would happen after another sacking of Jerusalem around 586 BC where Babylon carried off the Israelites and scattered the Hebrews. Edom does have record of a rebellion against King Jehoram in 2 Kings 8:20-22. The history between these two nations of conflict is long and contains many such skirmishes.

The second possible situation focuses in on the sacking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Instead of coming to the aid and rescue of the Hebrews, the Edomites even helped to ransack the city and supported the entire endeavor. In the near future, the people of the Negeb. Nabonidus has a possible reference in his chronicle that details his burning and pillaging of the land of Edom in 552 BC, shortly after Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians in 586 BC. This would be the fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy.

	Early Date 845 BC	Late Date 580-550 BC
Pros to each date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems to fit a smaller incursion against Jerusalem • Includes the Edomites specifically in rebellion against Jerusalem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Edomites did not stand up to the Babylonians when they sacked Jerusalem • Shortly after their complicity with Babylon against Jerusalem, they were taken captive in 552
Cons to each date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not specific enough to complete the details given in Obadiah • Leaves much time before prophesied doom of Edom and fulfillment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obadiah's witness does not seem as catastrophic and all-encompassing as the Babylonian experience.

Obadiah in Historical Timelines

* I am using James Smith's Survey of the Minor Prophets as a guide.



Outline of the Book

- I. God will deal with the Edomites because of their sins against Israel (1-14).
 - A. The Lord will destroy Edom quickly using another nation (1-9).
 1. God will humble the Edomites through ravaging war (1-4).
 2. The enemies of Edom will leave no resource untouched (5-7).
 3. God will destroy them from greatest to least (8-9).
 - B. Because of their arrogance and deception, Edom will fall (10-14).
 1. The Edomites stood idly by while Israel was ransacked (10-11).
 2. Obadiah warns the Edomites against haughty sayings (12-14).
- II. God will reign with order in the midst of this chaos (15-21).
 - A. The Day of the Lord will come upon all nations (15-18).
 1. Retribution will be paid to the prideful nations (15-16).
 2. Israel will be strong while Edom is weak (17-18).
 - B. The Kingdom of God will inhabit Israel's enemies (19-21).
 1. Edom will fall to the people of the Negeb (19).
 2. Israel will take back its lands (20).
 3. The Lord will reign over the earth (21).

Obadiah's Prophetic Message

1:1 Obadiah's vision:

**Thus says the Lord God to Edom,
“We have heard the Lord's report
And a messenger was sent to the nations.
Arise! Let us rise against her in battle!”**

Immediately we receive the context for the whole oracle, this scathing rebuke of Edom for its indiscretion during battle. A long history separates these twin nations. Edom descends directly from Esau and Israel from Jacob. In the book of Genesis, their legendary distaste for one another can be observed on a national scale throughout recorded history.

The invasion of Edom for its wickedness against Israel is initiated by the Lord. The phrase, “Thus says the Lord God” automatically contends that these are the very words of God, not merely the prophet. Obadiah writes a compound name for God here: Adonia, a simple term of respect, coupled with YHWH, the tetragrammen that signifies God's covenantal relationship with the people of Israel, His chosen nation. Obadiah is doing nothing short of evoking God's authority on the command to hunt the hunted, to turn on the head the deceptive schemes of Edom against Israel.

Just as Israel had endured the torment of Edom consorting with other nations for her downfall, so now the Lord desires to return the favor, with interest. The nature of the wrongs and evils that Edom stands guilty for are not yet known, but Obadiah wastes no words in the opening of his remarks. The pronouncement, “Thus says the Lord” is a marker of the beginning of prophetic utterance. The very next words are “We have heard.” The group that has heard are the Israelites and their ally nations.

Thus says the Lord is merely an attention marker, an authoritative call with the Lord's character and reputation behind what is now spoken. Obadiah sets up the call of the Lord to arms against Edom by proclaiming its recipients. Who will be involved in this coming doom upon Edom? Israel has heard that several nations will be involved. While Obadiah is not specific here in his prophecy, the mere thought of a war on several fronts would frighten any king.

The message that has been heard about Edom, the decree of the Lord that has rung in the ears of these nations' kings follows. Rise up. It is said twice here. Rise up. Battle is coming. The nations are preparing for war and Edom is the target. The Lord with all of His splendor and authority calls the nations to battle with Edom, to bring her low for her grave sins against His people.

**1:2 Behold, I will make you small among the nations;
 You will be greatly despised.**

One of the worst things that could happen to a nation was their reputation being tarnished at any level. Here, that is exactly the judgment of the Lord. Edom will suffer for its wrongs against Israel. The word behold is yet another attention grabber. It's as if Obadiah was yelling, "Look! Look! See what God will do to Edom!" He is drawing attention to the nation as it begins to feel the distress of shame, a very powerful punitive weapon in the Near East.

This is still the direct quoted words of the Lord, in which His dialogue started with the command to rise. He will take full credit, no matter through which nation their downfall comes. He is the one belittling the nation, making it small. This is meant as literally and figuratively making them small. Through attacks and battle, the nation will dwindle in its population. However, God is also attacking and targeting the nation's reputation among other nations. The punishment is two-fold. The nation suffers physical destruction and the destruction of its own reputation.

We cannot be completely certain whether the perfect verbs here should be translated typically, I made or have made, or if they should be translated as a futurist perfect, I will make. For the prophet, this event is already a done deal. He has received the word from the Lord, so there is no question in his mind that it is done in the scheme of time. It is quite probable however that whether you consider the early or the late date, this event has not actually occurred yet.

The second line of this verse, "You shall be utterly despised," further moves the thought from the immediate shrinking of the nation's resources and people to its disposition among other nations as the despised nation. In a real sense, Edom was much like a pirate nation. Wherever the people would politically receive the least harshest treatment, there would lie its decision. When it was profitable to not stand united with Jerusalem against the Babylonians (if you accept the late date) or when it was most expedient to join in as a vulture or wolf in the attacks of other nations, this is the course that Edom would take. It was the betrayer of nations on the world's stage. For that quality, this nation would be despised and left in a situation where no nation could trust it..

1:3 **The pride of your heart deceived you,**
 You who dwell in the clefts of rock
 To dwell in the heavens.
 He said in his heart, "Who will bring me down to the earth?"

The proclamation continues against Edom from the Lord as He declares that their pride will cause their downfall. Obadiah uses images of high dwellings, such as the clefts in the rocks of mountains. Such a lofty dwelling would be free from danger and secure. It would be a place of comfort for the Edomites. Geographically, Edom is in the mountains and suffers rough terrain. Anyone attempting to take their nation would deal with little water and surprise attacks out of mountainous regions and cave dwellings. Inside of these areas where ambushes would be set, it was nice and cool for the Edomites. They had an easily defensible land. Figuratively, their pride has made them feel invincible.

The people of Edom believe that they are untouchable, that no one can get to them, especially the Israelites. They have stood with the Israelites' enemies and have taken advantage of Israel in its defeat. They have kicked the nation when it was already down. Now Obadiah declares by the authority of the Lord that God will now turn to their punishment. The sin is their arrogance as God has used them. They were a tool of the Lord against His children in Israel, but because of the way they carried out His will, God will now put them back in their place.

Part of their arrogance can be seen in the words they say. These Edomites do not expect anyone can humble them, least of all Israel because of its current conditions. So the boasting continues as an out spout of what is in their hearts. But their comfortable and lofty position, the security they have placed in their pride will be punished. The link of the pride being their innermost thoughts spoken at the end of verse three is tied to the double use of the word heart.

Their words are a taunt mostly to Israel. It is much like the bully who stands over a kid on a playground whom he has knocked over. Then he stands over the kid and makes fun of him. This is what Edom is doing here. But their rhetorical question of who will bring them down to the ground is answered by the same Lord who used them. Height in the cleft of the rock is contrasted with being brought "down to the ground." The Lord is the agent of the humbling. He will use another nation, as we will soon discover, to do His bidding and bring Edom back to earth.

**1:4 Though you soar like the eagle,
 And though your nest is set between the stars,
 I will bring you down from there!" declares the Lord.**

This verse reiterates what Obadiah has said already with more vivid imagery. Eagles soar high in the skies and look out over all the earth. They are actually used in our country for this imagery. They are viewed in some context throughout the Bible as an image for arrogance. An eagle sets its nest up on the highest point. This protects its young from predators. There is a security in having the nest much higher than other birds. Its enemies must find ways to hunt its young. It fits well with this mountainous terrain in Edom as well. Obadiah, as many other prophets, takes advantage of the physical and geographical place to make figurative and poetic inference about spiritual matters. He is taking the concrete images to explain the abstract. As the nation sits in a high place, so the arrogance of the people has gotten out of hand.

These images are used of the Edomites. Because they are so arrogant, it is as if they are soaring above the other nations and can't be hunted. It is as if their nest, their homeland can withstand any attack. They are at the top of their game, and they know it. So they do not fear any warnings, such as this warning by Obadiah. His prophecy will not be fulfilled until around 550 BC, even after the fall of his own country. But the warning is issued with plenty of time, proving God's sovereignty as He warns what He will do instead of taking credit for an event after the fact as the idols would. God vows His vengeance, bringing down the great eagle of a nation to the ground.

Being among the stars also has other implications. It may even refer to their pride extending beyond themselves, making them believe they are greater than they actually are. God is sovereign in the realm of the heavens, and they clearly believe they have some dwelling with Him there. Their high geography has given them the idea in their minds that they can rival anyone, as in their statement that no one can stop them or put them in their place. This is arrogance of the utmost that even usurps God's role and Person.

1:5 **Though thieves came to you,
Even destroyers by night!
How you were destroyed!
Did they not steal enough?
Though harvesters came to you
Were there no gleanings left?**

1:6 **How they searched out Esau!
They pillaged his hidden treasures.**

How exactly might God bring down this lofty and arrogant people? We begin to get a picture of His methods as we read on in verse five. First Obadiah speaks of raiders and thieves. These thieves will come and take the prized possessions of Edom. Just as much as Edom's location seemed to be something worth being prideful about, so also their wealth would become a hindrance to them.

Some scholars suggest that Edom's land would have had a storehouse of precious metals because of the mountains and caves. Either way, Edom, like every nation, had something that produced wealth in which they took pride. That very thing would be removed from them. Thieves would come in the night and plunder their vast resources. Obadiah is asking if the people think that the thieves will stop plundering after they receive what they need or if the plunderers will become greedy and take everything. The answer to the rhetorical question is everything.

The exclamation of verse six shows how everyone that envied Edom for its wealth will now turn and pity Edom. Obadiah uses Esau to name Edom for a particular historical reason. Edomites are the descendants of Esau. In biblical history, Esau and Jacob fought even in their mother's womb! It's no surprise that Israel and Edom are always either shaken hands or clasping hands around one another's throats.

Because Esau, the one who sold his birthright to Jacob, is the descendant of the Edomites, here Obadiah reminds them of their heritage. They are the ones who had given away the birthright and now they are in constant battle with Israel. But when they are pillaged, the nations will only have pity for them. Because they boasted about their treasures, the nation that ravages them will take their treasure and nothing will be left for them but pity.

We must never boast in our wealth. Wealth only promises that someone is finding a way to take what we have, especially if the wealth is ill-gotten. In Edom's case, probably some of

their wealth came from their plundering of Israel's cities during the rebellion. Wealth should never be a source of pride because it can be depleted by several means. The warning to Edom must be a warning to all. Be careful what you place your security and trust in.

1:7 **They sent you back over the border;
All the men of your covenant have deceived you.
They prevailed over you, men of your peace
Your bread, they placed an ambush under you.
There is no understanding among you.**

Next, all of Edom's allies in which they put their trust and security, their arrogance for having such treaties and allies will disappear. In fact, allies will not just cease to be allies, they will also go to war against Edom. The Lord will use those who used to be Edom's friends against the nation.

The allies Edom thinks it has are actually double-agents. They are feigning being allies so that they can lull the nation into a false sense of security. They will be the jackals who attack when the time is right. These nations who were their friends will rise up against them. Obadiah declares that these allies will run over Edom, that they will force the Edomites to their borders with their fighting.

Worse than all, the Edomites who shared bread with these "allies" will now find themselves betrayed by these turncoats. Eating bread was a sign of friendship and fellowship. While they were buttering up the Edomites, they were preparing for war and "painting their sites." In the military, a unit can move in and "paint" a target for bombing from aircraft.

We can see another example of this in Hezekiah's showing of the Temple treasury to the Babylonians. Israel would later fall and be plundered. And Hezekiah received a striking rebuke from Isaiah for showing off the treasure. The same is the case for Edom. This is why the verse finishes by saying that the Edomites have no understanding. They think they are making friends when they are only setting up their enemies with a motive for war.

We must not be so afraid to show people anything about us or our treasures. But we must also be shrewd in the way we deal with our resources and in the way that we make friends. Unfortunately, because humans are flawed and sinful, we cannot place our full trust in them. This would be dangerous not just to us but even our families and other friends. We must have a discerning spirit about the people with which we are acquainted. There must be a healthy balance of trust and wariness.

1:8 **Will I not on that day, declares the Lord,
Exterminate the wise from Edom
And the understanding from Mount Esau?
1:9** **Then your mighty were dismayed, O Teman!
Because he cut off every man from Mount Esau by slaughter**

Now we see the situation in the history of Israel that angers the Lord. This incident happened when another nation was able to sack the city of Jerusalem. This is not a regular occurrence in history, so it narrows down the time of this prophecy. Either it can be the sacking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, which is unlikely because this does not have the other elements of that sacking, or it is the sacking of Jerusalem by a coalition of the Philistines and their allies, which fits this image much better and results in a time closer to the prophet's prophecy in or around 845 BC.

On the same day or in the same time of this rare sacking of Jerusalem, a well-defended city on a mountain, while the Philistines were plundering the city, the Edomites were stealing land to the south in Judah and taking some plunder in the background for themselves. Edom did not help Jerusalem. They stood off, stood aloof and watched it happen. They watched the strangers take Judah's wealth and strength. They watched foreigners enter the gates of the city, and entered themselves when the distractions were right.

They were not aggressors in their own right, but they did not come to the aid of their brother nation and they did not in any way provide relief from the calamity of that day. It was shameful for foreigners and strangers to enter a defeated city's gates and plunder the city. Casting lots for Jerusalem points to the Edomites taking plunder in the background of the greater plundering and stealing territory from Israel in the south lands, as well as possibly helping the nations of the Philistines that experienced success against the city.

It is in this facet of Edom's participation that the Lord points to. They are not actively involved and therefore guilty. They are guilty by association, accomplices who stood by and did nothing to help their brother nation. Their duplicity is in their complicity. Their sin is in not helping, a sin of omission. They are guilty of God's rightful wrath because they did not do the neighborly and brotherly duty of helping Israel in any way, and in fact even made the shame of the matter worse! In their inaction, Edom was no different in its impact on Jerusalem than the Philistines were.

1:12 But do not gloat in the day of your brother, in the day of his misfortune.

And do not rejoice against the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction.

And do not boast with your mouth in the day of distress.

Beyond these actions, Edom gloated and rejoiced at what happened to Judah. They reveled in Judah's fall to the Philistines. This grieved and angered the Lord as well. They actually sought the destruction and distress that Israel received on that day. The Edomites enjoyed the fact that Israel fell. This is the same exact feeling and action as when in sports an opposing team enjoys seeing the other team lose a game, but it was no game. This was real life happening that Edom enjoyed, seeing the destruction of Jerusalem and its people. No one should ever wish such things on anyone!

You can see even in English the poetic liners here, having the same form and even the same cadence. This was done on purpose by Obadiah for effect. The last phrase literally says,

“do not enlarge your mouth...” This is where we get the idea of boasting, the swelling of pride expressed by the tongue, the gloating and boasting that others do to those who face destruction. They were taunting Israel because of a long-endured hatred between brother nations. They were holding their grudge for eons!

**1:13 Do not go into the gate of My people in the day of their disaster.
 Do not gloat, even you, in his misery in the day of his disaster.
 And do not loot his wealth in the day of his disaster.**

Here we see the specific and active involvement of the Edomites. They go from watching from afar to gloating over the demise of Jerusalem to now going into the gates as the Philistines were doing to take plunder for themselves. Now they are actively involved, fully engaged, in being just like the Philistines. All of these commands to not do these things are presented as commands, yet would historically sound like the Lord pleading with Edom as the destruction is happening, almost like a one-sided conversation.

The Edomites surmise that they will make fun of Israel for what is coming upon them and it's almost as if the Lord pleads with them, “Don't boast in the destruction of your brother nation!” But they do not listen and take it further. Although it is poetically presented in this manner, these events have already taken place because the prophet stands before the Edomites proclaiming God's response to what they have already done.

There is an emphatic, “even you!” in the second line that points to the Edomites. It unnaturally finds itself in the midst of the commandment, bringing its emphasis even more to the forefront. They go into the gates and they loot the wealth of Israel along with the Philistines who actually did the work of sacking the city. Edom acts as a mercenary against Israel. The structure of this verse maintains the unity of these negative commands in that each line starts and ends the same way structurally.

**1:14 And do not stand in the crossroads to cut off his refugees,
 And do not surrender his survivors in the day of his distress.**

Not only did Edom first just enjoy the uprooting of Jerusalem, and then boast about it and revel in it publicly, and then begin to join in the plundering and looting, but now they have also apprehended those who were escaping from the calamity, women and children and feeble men who could not fight. These were people, refugees, who were trying to escape the calamity and were stopped in the roads of escape and handed over to the enemy by the Edomites!

Cut off here only means to cut them off from their routes to freedom from disaster. It is used throughout this passage as a tie between actions. But the refugees and survivors get no rest in their weariness because their neighboring and brother nation Edom turns them in when they catch them escaping. Edom has gone so far as to kick the nation after it's already down and shamed. For that, the Lord will bring wrath upon the Edomites in the Day of the Lord.

1:15 **“For the Day of the Lord is near for all the nations.
Just as you do, it will be done to you.
Your deeds will return upon your own head.**

The setting of this final section of Obadiah’s prophecy concerns the coming day of the Lord. Part of this prophecy has fulfillment immediately in historical settings, but most of it refers to the Day of the Lord as part of the eschaton. Sometimes in Hebrew prophecy it is hard to distinguish between partial and complete fulfillment. One must never become dogmatic about a complete fulfillment of prophecy unless confirmed in the pages of Scripture, such as the prophecies Christ fulfilled in His birth, ministry, death and resurrection.

Even with prophecies of the Day of the Lord, for different prophetic audiences, there are different meanings in fulfillment. For instance, 30 years before the Northern Kingdom of Israel is taken by the Assyrians and the completion of the Exile is carried out, Amos preaches to the Israelites and tells them the day of the Lord is against them for their sins. In that context, the day of the Lord is exile, not the Day of the Lord in the eschaton. Also, Joel takes an image of locusts taking the future of Israel away and says it will be like the Day of the Lord, envisioning the fulfillment and enacting of the Day of the Lord in the eschaton.

Here Obadiah brings up the Day of the Lord, but he is referring to the soon coming destruction of Edom by other nations, not necessarily the eschaton. However, there will be inklings of a larger and bigger day of the Lord that will be the eschaton. As earlier mentioned, we must not become too dogmatic about these events. More than likely, they will be fulfilled in multiple ways and times until an ultimate and final fulfillment.

Obadiah says that the Day of the Lord, a day of judgment for the wicked and justice for the righteous, is already near. Most immediately, Edom will be repaid for its treachery against Judah and Judah will be king of the nations once again, an event that probably has taken place in stages throughout history, but has its ultimate fulfillment in the end times. Remember that the Day of the Lord is about judgment and justice, wickedness and righteousness, a moral reckoning.

The reason I remind us of this is because the very next line could be taken as the foreign concept of karma if one does not realize the moral element unique to the Bible. Karma has no moral framework. It is not about morality. It is about selfishly ascending to the next rung in the ladder in the next life. But this version of the golden rule of Jesus is written in light of the Day of the Lord, in light of God’s moral vengeance for wickedness. The sin of the wicked will be returned to them upon their heads. God will be the one punishing. It is a retributive and punitive response. Their moral wickedness is rewarding them with the judgment of God.

1:16 **“For just as you have drunk on My holy mountain,
all the nations will continually drink.
They will drink and will swallow and will be like they have never been.**

Israel will rise up and consume the nation and take it as its inheritance and prize. While the nation of Israel will be like a great fire, Esau's nation, the Edomites, will be like stubble, which is easily flammable. The disaster that will follow Edom's demise at the hands of Israel will be speedy and unfathomable. Esau will fall quickly to Jacob.

And there will be no mercy for the Edomites, just as they showed no mercy even to the refugees and survivors of this historical sacking of Jerusalem. Edom will be burned to the ground by the strength and military might of Israel with no escaping and no recourse. They will be hunted as they hunted.

They will be devoured by the fires of Israel. They will be taken without ability to defend themselves. Many times throughout Scripture, the image of fire consuming or eating like one eats a meal is used to show the brevity of an action. It is clear through image and through the final statement of this verse, as promised by the Lord Himself who sovereignly decides all things, that Edom will not escape even with one person, the full brunt of punishment at the hands of the Israelites.

1:19 **Then the Negev will possess Mount Esau**
 And the Shephelah will possess the land of the Philistines,
 And they will possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria.
 Yet Benjamin *will possess* Gilead.

Many territories are mentioned here and we have a fairly firm grasp on where most of these places were in Obadiah's time, but so often, cities are changed and built on top of throughout antiquity. The Negev is a name for the region of Judah and the southern parts of Judah. The Shephelah is a hilly country, a narrow passage in the northern kingdom. The Negev, or southern Judah, will take Edom to its south once again and control that land that has taken advantage of it. Those in the foothills will expand west toward Philistia, a land of Canaan owned by the Philistines, who originally were a coastland people, a sea-faring people. Those of the houses of Judah and Israel will also possess the northern regions and Samaria. The kingdoms may even unite to perform these victories.

The tribe of Benjamin referred to in this verse is more of a regional reference to the middle part between the Northern and Southern kingdoms. Ephraim and Samaria are in the most northern parts of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Essentially, Obadiah is prophesying either the return of the exiles to these lands and their conquering or winning back the lands that were formerly under Israelite control, or the remnant in the land, those not taken in the deportation will win the lands back and the exiles will come back to help them control these parts. Benjamin, the middle region, will expand past the Jordan river and seize the areas of the Transjordan to Gilead.

1:20 Then the exiles of this host of the people of Israel will possess what belongs to Canaan up to Zarephath. Then the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the land of the Negev.

When these possessions begin to occur either by the hands of the remnants or the first returning exiles, exiles from all around the kingdom will return to help control the regions. This is a prophecy of hope and unity that will indeed come to pass after the exile. The exiles will possess that which belonged to Canaan, the lands taken in the northern regions by the Assyrians in the 720s BC. They will take back the land up to Zarephath, the city from which the woman who helped Elijah by giving him a place to stay in his travels.

Zarephath was a coastal city wedged between Tyre and Sidon in the upper north area. So Israel will once again control from there in the north, over to the area in Gilead across the Jordan, down to Edom and over the coastal lands of the Philistines. Israel's expansion comes in the day of the Lord when it rightly holds the land given as a promise to Abraham. The hope has yet to continue in the prophet's words, though!

He's not done giving rays of hope to the people. Even though the exile happened, or rather is about to happen, and it will be a day of abject horror, there is coming an even greater day in history, in which the Lord will not only return the land to a faithful nation, but He will also return the people to that land.

Even exiles who used to live in the holy city of Jerusalem and were taken to the farthest reaches of the exiled community the whole way to Sepharad will return to their home country of Judah and once again be in the Negev, the place where Judah is located. Sepharad has several possible locations, but most place it far in the depths of the kingdom of the Persians and Medes, who were the empire after Babylon, which also allowed exiles to begin returning to the land.

No matter how far the Lord's judgment in exile takes His people or how far they are pushed out of the land, they will indeed return and the land will be theirs again when they learn to obey the Lord and worship Him alone. It is when they live the covenant once again with obedience that they will receive back all that was lost in their pride and sin.

1:21 And saviors will go up on Mount Zion to judge Mount Esau, and it will be for the Lord's kingdom.

Where human wisdom would say, "It is enough to return the things lost," the Lord has an even greater vision! He does not just want to restore what was lost to Israel. He has a greater plan to save Israel and the whole of His creation. The saviors pointed to here mean more than just one. Indeed there will be a long line of saviors before Jesus the Savior comes to earth. Throughout Israel's history as they return to the land after exile, a number of leaders will arise to save Israel throughout the years.

But that word for savior also has the meaning of deliverer, which rings even truer to the idea of the Judges when we see the word for rule, which in Hebrew is the word for judge. There

will be deliverers or saviors who will judge on Mount Zion, that is the land of Israel, quite possibly specifically the city of Jerusalem.

These deliverers will rule as the judges of old did, through judgments and governmental rulings. They will judge those of the Edomites and those like the Edomites who commit atrocities against God's people. They have been given authority from God to do so. The Lord's Kingdom will receive the benefit of these saviors and deliverers judging the nations. We look forward to the Day of the Lord, after which most similarly saints will rule with Christ in His millennial reign. The Lord's Kingdom is empowered and grown through such means. Obadiah looks ahead to the complete fulfillment of the Day of the Lord, and so shall we.