

The Gospel in

Obadiah

*hope for believers
in God's wisdom and power*

Field  *Notes*

Survey the Land

Obadiah

A family conflict became a long war of nations

FIELD STUDY 1

Introduction

FIELD STUDY 1

Why should we study Obadiah?

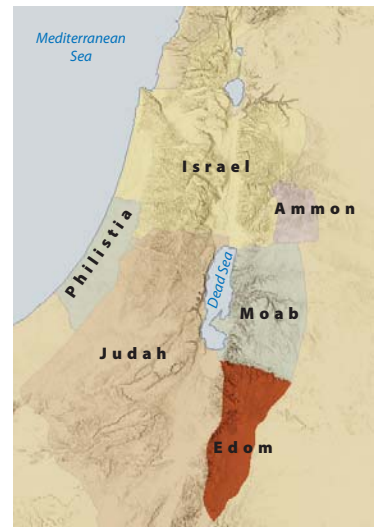
Let us now begin the survey of this ancient land. A land full of powerful emotions: arrogance, betrayal, murder, revenge. All these elements make up intriguing fiction, but these are also the themes addressed by the prophet Obadiah. His small Old Testament book contains a dreadful prophecy against Edom, a nation once located at the southeast border of Israel. This message of doom was announced against Edom because of its hostility towards Israel, God's chosen nation.

As a prophet of Almighty God, Obadiah's job was to make the invisible God audible. Like all of the other prophets, Obadiah interprets the nation of Israel's history and shows how God is faithful to keep his covenantal promises to his people. Amongst the twelve minor or shorter-writing prophets, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah share similar themes and are therefore grouped together in our Bibles. Obadiah reinforces the timeless message of God's sovereignty over all of the nations of the world and the fact that God always keeps his promises.

In order to understand the message of the prophet Obadiah, and therefore its relationship to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must first be aware of the family-feud involving Israel and Edom. The story begins at the book of all beginnings, Genesis. It involved the birth of two brothers, the twins Esau and Jacob, born to Isaac and Rebekah around 2000 B.C. This was a fulfillment, through Isaac, of the promise to build a great nation. God had originally made this promise or covenant to Isaac's father Abraham in Genesis 12.

Ancient Discovery

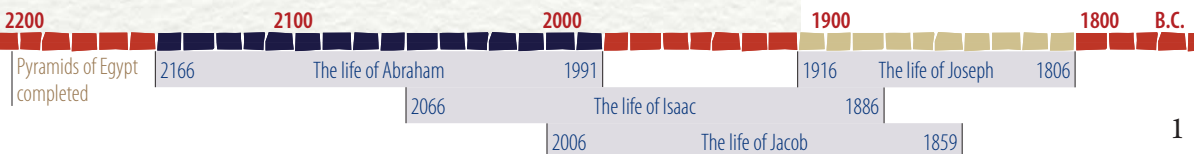
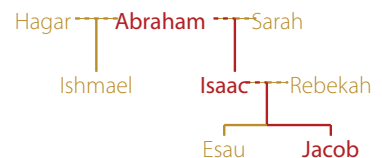
Be sure to read the introductory section, "How does this book work?" before proceeding with this study.



Israel, Judah and Edom

Many of the conflicts that Israel and Judah had with Edom occurred in the land of southern Judah.

Geneology of Abraham





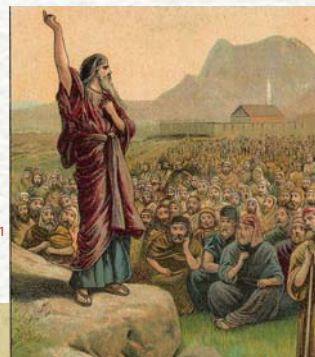
Numbers 20:14–21

Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: “This is what your brother Israel says: You know all the hardships that we have experienced. How our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there a long time. The Egyptians treated us and our fathers harshly, but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent a messenger and brought us out of Egypt. Now we are here at Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through any field or vineyard, or even drink water from a well. We will travel along the king’s highway and not go to the right or the left until we have passed through your territory.” But Edom said to him, “You will not pass through here, or we will come out and attack you with the sword.” The Israelites said to him, “We will go along the main highway, and if we or our cattle drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot, nothing more.” But he said, “You may not pass through.” Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. So Edom refused to allow them to pass through their territory, so Israel turned away from them.

Timeline of Isaac’s Family

Date B.C.	Event	Age in years	References in Genesis
1876	Jacob’s family moves to Egypt	Jacob, 130	46–47; 47:9–28
1859	Jacob dies	Jacob, 147	47:28

If we fast-forward our story, the book of Exodus tells us that 450 years after Jacob and Esau, the Israelites were living as slaves in Egypt. God sent Moses to deliver Israel from slavery and lead them on an exodus, a journey out of slavery, into the Promised Land. The fastest roadway between Egypt and the Promised Land was called the *King’s Way*. It crossed through Seir, the land of Edom. Even several centuries later, the bitterness of Esau against Jacob was still present in their descendants. The book of Numbers¹ describes how Moses requested



Providence Lithograph Company, 1907

Moses pleads with Israel

Moses instructs the nation of Israel as he leads them towards the Promised Land.



Moses leads the people toward the Promised Land

The solid line from Kadesh-barnea to Punon represents the route that the Israelites may have been traveling. When the Edomites refused access to the King’s Highway, Israel was forced south to get around Edom.

1. See also Deuteronomy 2:1–6
2. Deuteronomy 23:7

permission from the king of Edom to pass through his land. Moses assured the king that the Israelites would not depart from the main road and even offered to pay for the water they might use. The Edomites refused; they still remembered how Jacob stole the blessing of Isaac from Esau. The fire of this family feud had been lit almost 500 years ago. Now against the command of God² it was rekindled.

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

1400

1250

2006 Life of Jacob 1859

1526–1406 Life of Moses

1446–1406 The exodus?

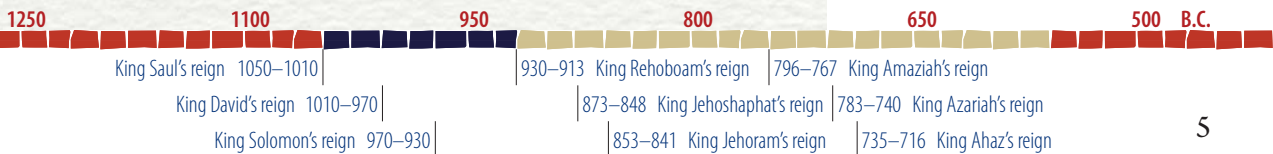


So the Israelites had no choice but to walk the long way around. This struggle continued throughout the period of the kings.

Observe the following table:

Conflict Between Israel and Edom

Bible passage	King	Date	Event
The United Kingdom of Israel			
1 Samuel 14:47–48	King Saul	1050–1010 B.C.	King Saul fought against the Edomites and drove them back.
2 Samuel 8:14 1 Kings 11:15–17 1 Chronicles 18:12–13 Psalm 60	King David	1010–970 B.C.	King David defeated 18,000 Edomites and enslaved them. David's commander Joab killed 12,000 Edomites. The Edomite king's young son, Hadad, escaped with some officials to Egypt. Later Hadad returned to Edom as a grown man and was a constant source of trouble to Israel.
1 Kings 9:26–28 1 Kings 11:1 2 Chronicles 8:17	King Solomon	970–930 B.C.	King Solomon established a navy on the Red Sea, in the Edomite port of Elath. He disobeyed God by marrying foreign women included Edomite women. They worshiped other gods and turned his heart away from the Lord God of Israel.
The Divided Kingdom of Israel (north) and Judah (south)			
1 Kings 12:1–33 2 Chronicles 10:1–19	King Rehoboam	930–913 B.C.	Israel divided under Rehoboam and the south maintained control of Edom.
2 Kings 3:4–27 2 Chronicles 20:1–30	King Jehoshaphat	873–848 B.C.	Jehoshaphat (southern king) allied with King Jehoram (northern king) and the king of Edom to fight against Moab. Later, Moab, Ammon and Edom allied to attack the southern kingdom but God delivered them.
2 Kings 8:20–22	King Jehoram	849 B.C.	Edom revolted and the southern kingdom lost control of the Edomites.
2 Kings 14:7 2 Chronicles 25:14–20	King Amaziah	796–767 B.C.	King Amaziah (southern kingdom) attacked the Edomites and killed 10,000 soldiers in the Valley of Salt. He renamed Sela, Joktheel.
2 Kings 14:22	King Azariah	783–740 B.C.	King Azariah recaptured the Edomite port of Elath.
2 Kings 16:6 2 Chronicles 28:16–18	King Ahaz	735–716 B.C.	Edom fought back during the reign of King Ahaz (southern king), and recovered the city of Elath. King Ahaz appealed to the northern nation of Assyria and asked for help. Assyria responded by demanding tribute from Edom and by forcing the Edomites to become a vassal state of the Assyrian Empire.





Prophecies About Edom

Text	Judgment on Edom
Isaiah 11:14	Will be plundered and subdued by Israel
Isaiah 21:11–12	Will suffer prolonged darkness and trouble
Jeremiah 25:21	Will drink from the cup of wrath of God
Jeremiah 49:7–22	Will be completely destroyed, it will become perpetual waste, It will be despised among the nations.
Lamentations 4:21	Will drink the cup of wrath and suffer confusion and shame.
Ezekiel 25:12–14	All men and beasts will be cut off. It will become desolate.
Ezekiel 35	Will become a waste. It will be desolate
Joel 3:19	Will become a desolate wilderness
Amos 1:11–12	Will be set on fire and devoured
Obadiah	Will be completely destroyed and set on fire.
Malachi 1:2–5	Will never be rebuilt or restored again after its judgment

Obadiah in the Old Testament, but there is no convincing evidence that proves any of them wrote this prophecy. In the Bible, the meaning of one's name is usually significant to the setting of the story. The name Obadiah means “servant of Yahweh” or “worshipper of Yahweh.” Just like Jesus, Obadiah's name should

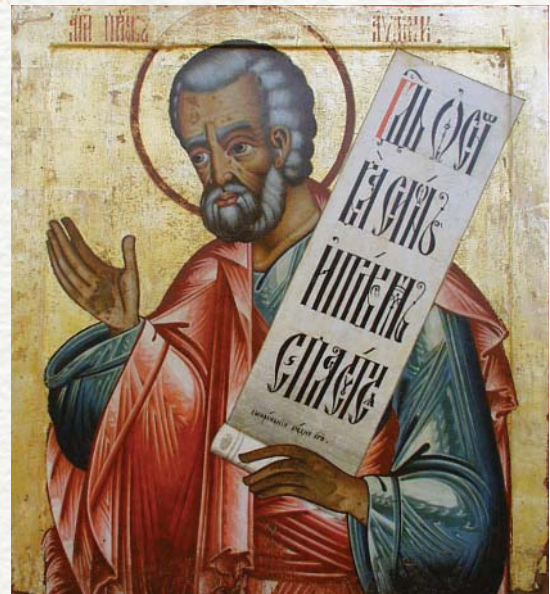
1. Amos 1:11–12
2. Psalm 137:7

Many of the prophets of Israel proclaimed messages against Edom. The prophet Amos¹ accused the Edomites of hostility against their own brother. In the same way, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Obadiah spoke against the sinful atrocities of Edom. In the Psalms, the writer demands that the Lord remember how Edom sought Israel's destruction.²

The condemning prophecy of Obadiah was spoken out of this context of a long history of hate, bitterness, and war between Israel and Edom. The family feud that began with two brothers in 2000 B.C. became an international battle for between 1200 to 1500 years.

Who wrote this prophecy?

Other than his name, we do not know much about the prophet Obadiah. He does not tell us where he is from, or anything about his family. There are several other people named



Icon of the prophet Obadiah, Kizhi monastery, Karelia, north Russia, 18th Century

The Prophet Obadiah

This Russian icon of the prophet Obadiah represents an Eastern tradition of creating images of the prophets of God.

B.C. 1000

950

900

850

800

750

1050–1010 King Saul's reign

870–845 Elijah

835 Joel?

760 Isaiah

6

1010–970 King David's reign

845–800 Elisha

765–754 Amos

970–930 King Solomon's reign

853 Obadiah?

781 Jonah?

remind us of his humble status as a servant of God bringing hope to his people and judgment to his enemies. God decided that Obadiah's name was all we needed to know to understand his message.

When did this happen?

Although we are missing details about Obadiah's life and his historical context, from Obadiah verses 10 through 14, we know his prophecy occurred immediately after a major attack on Jerusalem. Bible experts agree that it is impossible to determine exactly which of the several attacks suffered by Jerusalem is the one to which Obadiah refers. However, if one were to study the historical and archeological evidence relating to Edom, several dates are good possibilities.

Of all the options, two are the most probable. The first option is 853–841 B.C. during the reign of King Jehoram of Judah. The second is around 587–586 B.C. during the reign of King Zedekiah. Both periods have evidence for and against them. Even though it is not possible to pinpoint exactly when the book was written, it does not affect the message Obadiah proclaimed.

What was going on at the time?

The history of the family of Jacob and Esau provides plenty of information on the background of Obadiah. However, if you ask the question, “What specific events in history provoked the proclamation of this prophecy?” the answer does not come so easily. The two most probable dates for its writing give two options. As a first option, it is possible that the prophecy was announced after the Arabs attacked Jerusalem during the reign of King Jehoram of Judah—around 853 B.C. According to the Bible, this attack occurred shortly after the Edomites rebelled against Israel.³ Jehoram was an evil king.⁴ He promoted idolatry in Judah by encouraging the nation to worship Baal, the false god of the Canaanites.⁵ The prophet Elijah even wrote him a letter denouncing his sin.⁶ Therefore, this attack was probably an act of divine discipline due to Judah's disobedience.

The second possibility is found in the fall of

3. 2 Chronicles 21:8–17

4. 2 Kings 8:18

5. 2 Chronicles 18:11–13

6. 2 Chronicles 21:12–15



The Babylonian Empire

This map shows the size of the vast Babylonian Empire while Judah was in exile for 70 years. Babylon ruled over all of Israel, Judah, Edom and surrounding areas.



Rembrandt, 1630

Jeremiah Lamenting

This is Rembrandt van Rijn's version of the prophet Jeremiah weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem. Depending on when Obadiah was written, it is possible that Jeremiah and Obadiah were contemporaries.





Notes, Observations & Questions

deal with any known pride. Also, pray with thanksgiving that God is sovereign over all things. He is worthy of our praise and adoration because he is in control. Remember to praise him for that as you pray. Consider this as a sample prayer:

Holy Father,

Lord, I thank you today that you are sovereign over all the earth and nothing escapes your attention. You see the wrong that is done to people and you care about them. Father, I ask that you will continue to show me the pride in my life so I might confess it to you and repent. I also ask that you will help me be aware of the pride in my family, community, church and nation. I pray that in all things, your name will be lifted up and you will receive glory. Please forgive me of gloating over someone's day of distress whom I don't like. Please help me to love others and you love them and to always walk the path of humility as you will ultimately lift up the humble. I pray these things in Jesus name,

Amen.

Commit to praying each day about these issues with at least one other person. It could be a family member, a friend, or pastor. Even better would be to pray in a group, or as a church. Corporate prayer binds our hearts together before the Lord. Pray.

Excavate the Site

Obadiah

Pride degenerates into violence and leads to destruction

FIELD STUDY 3

Obadiah 10–14

FIELD STUDY 3

How is the text arranged?

In this field study, we will study the second section of the book of Obadiah. It includes verses 10–14. In verses 1–9, we learn that the God of Israel is sovereign over the fate of individuals and nations. God decreed that because of the pride of the Edomites, he would bring Edom to complete destruction. The second section of Obadiah gives a detailed picture describing the multiple expressions of Edom's violent pride. It also demonstrates the risk of rejecting the good news of the gospel of Christ. Look at its structure.

Obadiah 10–14

Section	Bible Text
Overview of the crime and judgment	¹⁰ Because of the violence done against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you and you will be destroyed forever.
Detailed description of the crime	¹¹ On the day that you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were just like one of them. ¹² You should not gloat on your brother in the day he suffered calamity, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin, nor boast in their day of distress. ¹³ Do not enter the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor loot their wealth in the day of their distress. ¹⁴ You should not stand at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor capture their survivors in their day of distress.

Application

Have you ever experienced or are currently experiencing any tensions in your relationship with a close friend or family member? Do you know someone who has? Keep that conflict in mind while you study this text.

Violence

The Hebrew word employed to describe Edom's behavior means literally *wickedness* or *violent wrong*. Edom was vicious in its dealings with Judah.

Judah

In verse twelve, the descendants of Jacob are identified as Judah. This has led some experts to identify these events with the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. after the northern kingdom of Israel had already been conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.



Nicholas Farnham, 1670

Destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon

In 586 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonian attack against Jerusalem destroying the wall, the temple and the rest of the city and carrying off the remaining people into exile. It was an exile that would last 70 years.

Question

Friendly sins are a common reality. Have you ever experienced this type of sin? If so, how?

We can say that Obadiah 10–14 describe the particular details of the *cause* behind the *effect* previously described in verses 1–9. Obadiah has declared that the oncoming doom of Edom is the result of its pride. Here we see the violent quality of such pride. Observe the description carefully. It is a violent pride done against Esau's own blood, his brother Jacob. God's judgment is neither capricious nor random. Edom's behavior was outrageous and ruthless, especially since Edom and Israel descended from twin brothers.

In this second section of the prophecy, Obadiah presents for us a convincing case against the nation of Edom. The section starts with a brief description of Edom's

crime and its coming judgment. Then in verses 11–14, we discover the particular details of Edom's violent behavior against Jacob. Edom's violence follows a progression of ever-growing wickedness. From hostile passivity to violent murder and betrayal, Esau treated his brother Jacob as a despicable foreigner.

What is the passage saying?

What are the key terms?

This section contains several language elements that we must recognize and understand. They contain its essence of meaning. Observe the following words and phrases and take note of their significance to the message of the book.

Meaning of key terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Against your brother Jacob	The prophet seeks to clearly establish the familiar relationship that existed between Edom and Israel. The two nations descended from the same family. Their ancestors were twins. The use of the words <i>brother</i> and <i>Jacob</i> allows you to understand the close relationship that existed between these nations so you can better appreciate the magnitude of the sin.

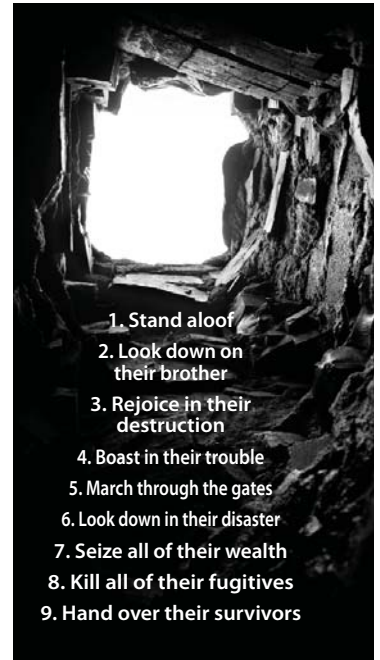


Meaning of key terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
You were just like one of them (a stranger)	Even to this day, you would expect a brother to act in love towards his own family by providing support, help, protection, and consolation in times of distress. Esau, however, acted as if he were a <i>stranger</i> , a foreigner that ruthlessly attacks with vengeance those he does not know or love.
You will be destroyed forever	Observe the severity of the judgment. Edom's actions were serious. They carried with them tragic consequences. God's punishment was not disciplinary. It was condemnatory. Edom would never recover from God's judgment.
Day	If you observe the text carefully, you will find eight different occasions in which the word <i>day</i> is used. It is important to notice that the events described in the prophecy do not refer to events that took place during a period of 24 hours. The Bible many times uses the word <i>day</i> to describe a period of considerable extension. This concept would be similar to our use of the words <i>season</i> , <i>epoch</i> , or <i>time</i> , or to the more common phrases, <i>during this time</i> , or <i>in this day and age</i> .
The day of distress, the day of disaster	Edom's violent behavior came upon his brother Jacob during Judah's time of misfortune or distress. During a time when a brother was most needed, Edom behaved like any other enemy.
You should not	Verses 12–14 use the phrase <i>you should not have</i> in the beginning of most of the accusations contained in this section. This repetition is called <i>parallelism</i> and it is a common way in which the Hebrew language gives emphasis to a particular idea. Edom had no excuse to act the way it did no matter what Jacob had done to them before.
Shame	The prophet proclaims that the result of Edom's prideful violence would be shame. God's punishment fits the sin. Pride will result in shame. The shame described in verses 10, 15–21 is the shame of everlasting destruction.
The progression of violence from verse 11 to verse 14	Observe how this text presents a progression in the activity and expression of violence. In verse 11 Edom begins passively <i>standing aloof</i>, but later the nation is described as actively participating in their siege by <i>being like one of them</i>, that is, like the nation that was causing the destruction of Judah. Note that verses 12–14 go on to describe in detail Edom's active involvement in the distress of his brother. Edom goes from being a malicious bystander to expressing emotions of joy due to Israelite's calamity, to rejoicing and mocking out loud at their disaster, to participating in the siege of the city, and finally to handing over fugitives to the enemy and even murdering some of them.

Destroyed forever

After A.D. 70, there is not a single reference to the existence of the Edomites in all of history. God truly destroys them forever. Continue reading to find out how.



1. Stand aloof
2. Look down on their brother
3. Rejoice in their destruction
4. Boast in their trouble
5. March through the gates
6. Look down in their disaster
7. Seize all of their wealth
8. Kill all of their fugitives
9. Hand over their survivors

The Progression of Violence

Verses 11–14 describe Edom's violence as descends from passivity to murder.



Jerusalem

In the days of King David, ancient Jerusalem could fit inside most modern sports stadiums. In the days of King Hezekiah, some estimate that Jerusalem swelled to about 125 acres or 50 hectares and approximately 25,000 people. That is still a very small city by today's standards.

The Divided Nation of Israel

Notice Jerusalem in the northern part of Judah in comparison with Edom's capital of Sela in northern Edom.



What about the culture?

Buried inside verse 11 you will find a small cultural comment that illustrates vividly the wickedness of the Edomites and those who attacked Israel. The verse describes how the invaders *cast lots* over Jerusalem. The practice was common in both Babylonia and Assyria. It was done as part of a divination process that was used to solve a major problem among soldiers: greed. The greed of the invaders was so great that they had to cast lots so that it would be the gods' decision how the spoils of victory would be distributed among the army. How interesting that a practice with such selfish and greedy motivations would be cloaked under the appearance of divine submission. Sadly, Edom had been just like one of these pagan nations. The Edomites had been willing to cast lots in order to satisfy their greed at the expense of their brother nation.

What about the geography?

Verse 11 indicates that Edom's violent behavior was conducted against the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah founded by King David and established by his son Solomon around 1000 B.C. Observe the locations of Jerusalem and Sela, the capital city of Edom, on the map so you can have a better idea of the distances involved. The reference to Jerusalem does not imply this was the only place conquered by Judah's enemies. It merely announces that, being the capital city, it was the focal point of the conflict.

Jerusalem was a small city. At its pinnacle during the reign of King Hezekiah, Jerusalem covered an area of about 125 acres and had a population of about 25,000. It was not a major city by any modern standards but with respect to salvation, it was the most important city in the history of humankind.

What is God saying?

Sadly, violence between family members is not a strange phenomenon. In fact, it goes back to the very first family of humankind. The Bible contains plenty of examples that we can use as case studies to explore and

B.C. 1100 1000 900 800 700

1050–1010 King Saul's reign

Northern kingdom falls to the Assyrians 722

1010–970 King David's reign

King Hezekiah's reign 715–686

David establishes Jerusalem 1010

970–930 King Solomon's reign



illustrate this principle proclaimed by Obadiah. Prideful violence does not go unnoticed by God, especially between members of the same family.

Where else does the Bible teach about family violence?

Unfortunately, Obadiah does not record the only instance of family violence in the Bible. King David, the man after God's own heart, both caused and experienced violence within his own family. Consider the story of Absalom and his brothers in 2 Samuel 13–18. There are several other passages on family violence that you can explore in the *Probing Deeper* section of the *Discoveries* for this *Field Study*.

Where else does this happen in history?

Family violence is not only found in the Bible but also throughout history. Consider the following destructive tendencies of the English Tudor family:

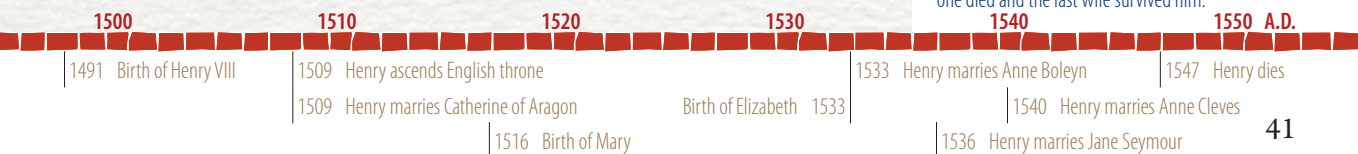
One famous example of family violence is King Henry VIII, the King of England from 1509–1547. Among other things, Henry is probably most noted for his horrendous treatment of his six wives. His first wife was Catherine of Aragon who did not produce a male heir and eventually Henry had the marriage annulled. He then married one of his mistresses Anne Boleyn, who also was not able to produce a male heir. Catherine eventually died and Henry executed Anne along with some of her family, so he could marry another mistress, Jane Seymour. She produced a male heir but died shortly after Prince Edward was born. For the sake of political alliances, Henry then married Anne of Cleves but detested her and eventually had the marriage annulled. Henry then married Catherine Howard who was eventually convicted of adultery and executed. His final wife, Catherine Parr outlasted Henry who died from multiple medical ailments at the age of 55. His tumultuous relationship with his many wives reflected his brutality throughout his reign as king. Scholars differ on how many thousands of people were executed, poisoned, or falsely accused and imprisoned by Henry. In the end, his only male heir took the throne at age 9 and died six years later. King Henry VIII's dysfunctional home life and violence against his wives ultimately destroyed his health, his reign and his life, along with the lives of thousands of others.



Hans Holbein the Younger, 1539–1540

King Henry VIII

King Henry VIII of England is most remembered for his many wives. Henry divorced two, beheaded two, one died and the last wife survived him.





Violence can be stopped

Bloody Mary succumbed to her father's example of violence however, Henry's daughter Elizabeth was able to break out of this evil cycle. She eventually came to the throne and brought about a peaceful and prosperous era.



Hans Eworth, 1554

Queen Mary I of England

Better known as *Bloody Mary*, Queen Mary was the eldest daughter of King Henry VIII and the only surviving child of Catherine of Aragon. She burned almost 300 dissenters at the stake as she continued in her father's pattern of violence.

Henry's daughter Mary, from his first wife Catherine eventually became Queen of England and perpetuated her father's violence, especially against the protestant Church. The family violence that Mary learned from her father, eventually earned her the title, *Bloody Mary*.

Family violence reaches all levels of society from the reign of many kings and queens to their poorest subjects. Generally it stems from pride and often leads to the perpetrators' destruction.

What does God want?

This section of Obadiah presents several important principles that should guide our life-change because of our study:

- Pride often manifests itself in violence and abuse towards others.
- Violence never goes unnoticed by God. The judgment of Edom should remind us that familial violence in particular is clearly condemned by God and deserves the most extreme form of punishment. God will take care of injustice in due time, either through the grace of the gospel or in the judgment and punishment of the sinful.
- The violence of pride escalates as time passes. Pride is always a downward spiral. Be watchful and observant of indicators of progressive violence in your heart and actions.
- Injustice will happen. Violence and scorn come frequently from those whom we least expect. Jesus' trial and crucifixion was the ultimate example of injustice and must warn us and encourage us to look to God and hope in him when we experience such treatment.



Discoveries

Now that you have completed your second dig into the ancient riches of God's word found in Obadiah, it's time to sift through your *Discoveries* and see what you have learned. Find the questions that are most helpful for you and your group.

Connecting with the community

These discussion questions will help you to better understand the text. Consider each of these questions in terms of yourself, your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. What reason does verse 10 present for the impending destruction of Edom?
2. What relationship exists between Edom's violence and its pride? How are these related? Could you identify times when pride in your own heart has manifested itself in violence?
3. List the different types of violence that were expressed by Edom in this section of Obadiah.
4. In verse 11 God accuses Edom of being just like a stranger to his own brother. What would it be like to act like a stranger to your father or brother today? Are you acting like a stranger to anyone in your family?
5. We often compare others to people we do not like using phrases like the one in verse 11, "you were just like one of them". Consider the actions of Esau towards his brother Jacob in these verses. Could someone accuse you of being "just like one of them", as a stranger or enemy to someone you should love? Knowing the grace of the gospel, is there really anyone you should hate or treat like a foreigner?
6. List all of the things that Edom did on the day that their bother was attacked. Why are we indifferent to the sufferings of those around us? Meditate on the power of pride and its destructive tendency to affect our actions towards those closest to us.

Notes, Observations & Questions



Notes, Observations & Questions

7. What does this section of Scripture teach us about the character of God? What does God reveal about himself?
8. Have you ever heard the saying, the punishment fits the crime? Notice how verse 10 states that shame was God's prescribed punishment to Edom's pride. What was God trying to teach Edom and us in bringing shame upon the proud? Is God vengeful in heaping shame upon the proud? Consider Deuteronomy 32:35–36.
9. Highlight each instance of the word *day* in verses 10–14. Why do you think the prophecy puts such emphasis on the word *day*. Support your answer from the text.
10. Notice the progression of violence from verse 11 to verse 14. Why did Edom's violence increase when they began by being apathetic? Are there any patterns of progressive violence in you, your community or even your nation towards any group? If so, what must be done in order to reverse that downward progression?
11. Edom began by being indifferent to the plight of their brother nation but degraded to murder. Have you ever considered yourself incapable of committing a major crime, much less a crime against a family member? What can you learn from the increasing evil brought on by Edom's pride?
12. Reread the section on casting lots in verse 11. Are there any habits in your life that you know are sinful and yet, you assume God will overlook? Consider the sin of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11.
13. Jerusalem was not a large city in Old Testament times. Why is it so important, and why has there been so much quarreling over Jerusalem throughout history? Consider Psalm 48.
14. While Obadiah 10–14 speak of the actions of Edom, they are written to the people of Judah who are enduring injustice from their brother nation. How are you being called to endure injustice as an individual, a family, a community, a nation or a church?



Probing deeper

Family violence is a sin that has occurred ever since the first sin in the garden of Eden. Consider exploring the theme of family violence for your continued study of Scripture that go beyond the text of Obadiah.

Family violence in the Bible

Section	Passage
Old Testament law and history	Family violence began with the first family. Read the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Can you discern the relationship between pride and violence and the actions and words of Cain? Explain.
	Read the story of the sons of Jacob in Genesis 37. Make a list of the actions of Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's brothers. Observe your list and describe the way these actions lead to violence. Can you perceive some of these actions and this attitude in your life, your family or your local church? Could you create a new hypothetical list of actions that would have prevented the violence? Knowing that violence happens, is there hope in this story even in the midst of human failure? Explain.
	Read Numbers 12 attentively and meditate carefully about the following questions. What was the reason behind the attitudes and actions of Aaron and Miriam towards Moses? Was Moses in any way at fault? Explain the relationship between violence and pride in this story. How was violence expressed in this story? Do you see yourself in any part of it?
	Read the story of David and Uriah in 2 Samuel 12. Make a list of the sins of David that lead to the murder of Uriah. Read the progression of Edom's violence found in this field study of your Field Notes. Create a similar graph that shows the connection and progression of David's sin. How could this downfall be interrupted? What quality of character was David lacking that could have saved him from reaching the point of violence and murder?
	Read the stories of the sons of David in 2 Samuel 13–18. They are full of conflict and family violence. Choose one of the stories and make a list of observations about the actions of the characters involved. What actions and attitudes are characteristic of families who are quarrelsome and live in disharmony? Make a list of things to avoid in your family relationships.

Notes, Observations & Questions



Notes, Observations & Questions

Family violence in the Bible

Section	Passage
Old Testament poetry	If you are familiar with the story of Job, you can recall how much verbal violence Job endured from his friends. His reaction to their words is found in places like Job 12:1–4; 13:2–15. Read the epilogue to the story of Job in Job 42:7–10. What can we learn from this text about solving previous conflicts among friends and family members? How does God give you an example to follow so peace can be restored in your relationships?
	Read Psalm 55. Who are the enemies of the psalmist in this psalm? Make a list of the emotions experienced by the psalmist when facing these injustices. Is his response violent? How does he solve this situation? Reread verses 22–23. How do these texts offer you an alternative to violence when suffering injustice?
Old Testament prophets	Those who are faithful to God are sometimes subject to violence and abuse from their friends, family and neighbors. Read Jeremiah 20. Have you ever felt that way? If yes, how have you reacted? If not, why do you think that is the case? Would you be willing to suffer violence for the sake of God's name? Read Jeremiah 1:1–10. What can you learn from these two chapters with respect to God's purposes for the lives of his children?
	Read the story of Daniel in the lion's den in Daniel 6. In this story, Daniel was betrayed by his coworkers and also, accidentally, by his king who truly loved him. Make a list of the actions and words of Daniel in this chapter. Compare and contrast those actions with the actions of Edom. What can you learn from the example of Daniel?
The Gospels and Church history	Read John 7:1–8, then read Mark 13:5–13. Violence sometimes arises in the family because of the gospel. Prayerfully meditate in Mark 13:13. Would you be willing to lose your family and be murdered by a close relative for the sake of the gospel? Is the Christian called to endure some types of violence, no matter the injustice involved, for the sake of the gospel? How could you detect pride or humility in a person that is suffering rejection because of the name of Christ? How would their attitudes and actions differ?
	Read Luke 15:11–32. In this story, the two brothers are examples of pride that leads to different types of violence. Describe the pride and violence manifested in the actions of each brother. The father is an example of humility and mercy. Describe and contrast his actions to the actions of his sons. Meditate on your own family in the light of the actions of the father and his sons. How is your family similar? How is it different? What changes can you make in your family from what you learn in this passage?



Family violence in the Bible

Section	Passage
New Testament letters	Read Galatians 5. Meditate specifically on verses 13–15. Explain how the entire chapter relates to the exhortation of these verses. What two opposite ways of living are described in verses 19–21 and 22–25. Now read verse 26. How is the violence in the church of Galatia related to pride according to this verse? How does your church or family compare to the experience of the Galatians?
Prophecy	Read Revelation 18 and 19. Make a list of the descriptions made about the Great Babylon. How do these descriptions relate to pride? Make a list of the lamentations of all of those that are partakers of Babylon and its luxuries. Then make a list of the reasons for joy and praise given to the saints of God. Compare these lists. How do they offer hope in present times of violence and injustice? How can you live in the present in the light of this future hope?

Notes, Observations & Questions

Bringing the story to life

On the following page is an illustration with nine steps representing the moral descent of Edom described in Obadiah 11–14. This text shows that the Edomites started as indifferent to the plight of their brother nation. However, they quickly moved from indifference to active participation in pillage and murder. This theme of rapid moral decay has expressed itself in many ways in our culture. Many books, films and stories have been written conveying this exact scenario. They begin in innocence and apathy towards a situation and end in endorsement, participation, and murder.

To combat this moral descent we must pray. Fill in each of the steps with what Edom did in verses 11–14 on that day. Then think of a similar situation that you are aware of. It may be in your own life, the life of your family, your community, your nation or your church. Compare the situation that you are aware of or involved in with the Edomites. Are their similarities? How does this ancient text apply to our situations today? Take time to pray down each step that the Lord would intervene in that situation and stop the moral descent. Continue to pray for your situation that God will intervene and that whoever is involved, would not descend all the way down to their own destruction.



The Descent of Edom

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Observation journaling

This section will prepare you for field study 4 by reading through the final section of Obadiah. These are three types of exercises: some for before you read, some for while you are reading, and some for after you have completed the reading.

Before you read

Go back and reread Obadiah 10–14. Make a list all of the occurrences of the word *day* and everything the Edomites did in that day. Since repetition is used for emphasis in the Old Testament, what is the author trying to emphasize? What do you expect God's response will be to what Edom did that day?



Occurrences of the word *day* in Obadiah 10–14:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

What does Obadiah emphasize?

How will God respond?

While you are reading

On the following page the biblical text is laid out with wide margins so you can mark the text with questions, key terms, notes and structures. All of the verse markings have been removed so you can read it without distractions. The lines of text are indented to help you see how the lines are related. Review the guidelines on The art of active learning section, page xi at the beginning of your *Field Notes* for some suggestions on reading, learning and marking the text effectively.

Notes, Observations & Questions



Obadiah 15-21

Notes, Observations & Questions

For the day of the LORD is approaching for all nations.

As you have done, it will be done to you;
your dealings will return upon your own head.

Just as you drank on my holy mountain,
all the nations will drink continually;
they will drink and swallow
and become as if they had never existed.

But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,
and it will be holy,
and the house of Jacob will possess their own possessions.

The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame;
the house of Esau will be like stubble,
and they will burn them and consume them.

There will be no survivors in the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.

The people from the Negev will possess the mountains of Esau,
and people from Shephelah will possess the land of the
Philistines.

They will occupy the land of Ephraim and Samaria,
and Benjamin will possess Gilead.

The exiles of this company of Israelites will possess the land
of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,
and the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
will possess the cities of the Negev.

The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to rule the mountains of Esau,
and the kingdom will be the LORD's.

Summarize the text here



Notes, Observations & Questions

Pray

As we learn the word of God, it is essential that we communicate with him through prayer. First, consider writing out a prayer or psalm or poem to God. Writing it out will help you reflect on the issues of family violence and moral decay. Do you struggle with pride that leads to violence against your own family? Are you aware of any situations like that in your community, your nation or your church? Commit to praying throughout the week that you will treat your family with love and respect. This includes your extended family, your community, your nation and your church. Consider this as a sample prayer:

Gracious Father,

I come in thanksgiving today for your word and your message through the prophet Obadiah. I thank you that your kingdom will come on earth and people's deeds will be judged according to your righteousness. Lord I ask that you will search my heart today and show me who I have not reconciled with and who I have offended by my words and actions. As you have shown me grace, I pray that you will help me show grace to others in my family, my church and my community. Help me to always treat people, especially my family members with love and respect. Thank you for my family. Thank you for my friends. I pray that my thoughts, words, and actions will please you today as I interact with my community. In the name of Jesus and through the power of the Spirit I pray,

Amen.

Commit to praying each day about these issues with at least one other person. It could be a family member, friend or pastor. Even better would be to pray in a group or as a church. Corporate prayer binds our hearts together before the Lord. Pray.

Excavate the Site

Obadiah

The day of the LORD will come to all

FIELD STUDY 4

Obadiah 15–21

FIELD STUDY 4

How is the text arranged?

In this field study, we will explore the last portion of Obadiah's prophecy. The message of this biblical text focuses directly on the fate of all nations and the restoration of God's people in a future time described as the *day of the LORD*. This theme once again finds its full significance in the gospel of Christ. He is the Lord who will bring about the blessings and judgments of this prophetic event. Look at the structure of these verses:

Obadiah 15–21

Section	Bible Text
The judgment of all nations in the day of the LORD	
All nations will be judged	¹⁵ For the day of the LORD is approaching for all nations.
Edom will be judged	As you have done, it will be done to you; your dealings will return upon your own head.
All nations will be judged	¹⁶ Just as you drank on my holy mountain, all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and swallow and become as if they had never existed.
Reversal of fortune of God's people and Edom on the day of the LORD	
Mount Zion will be restored to holiness	¹⁷ But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy,
Israel will repossess the Promised Land	and the house of Jacob will possess their own possessions.

Holy hill

This is a reference to Mount Zion, the mount of the temple in Jerusalem. While the exact meaning of the name Zion is not known, it is used in a variety of ways to refer to Jerusalem, the temple, or even Judah. Mount Zion however always refers to the holy hill in Jerusalem where God dwells.

House of Jacob

Together with *house of Judah* or *house of Jacob*, *house of Joseph* serves as a description of the entire covenant community of God. Similarly, the *house of Esau* represents the entire nation of Edom, and ultimately, in the day of the Lord, all nations that act as enemies of God and his people.



Giorgione, 1500–1510

The Nativity of Christ

The shepherds came to worship the newborn baby as recorded in Luke 2:8–20.

Philip Yancey in his book *The Jesus I Never Knew* describes it this way:

Before Jesus, almost no pagan author had used “humble” as a compliment. Yet the events of Christmas point inescapably to what seems like an oxymoron: a humble God. The God who came to earth came not in a raging whirlwind, nor in a devouring fire. Unimaginably, the Maker of all things shrank down, down, down, so small as to become an ovum, a single fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye. An egg that would divide and redivide until a fetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager.

(Taken from *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey. Copyright © 1995 by Philip Yancey. Used by permission of Zondervan, www.zondervan.com)

Much of the failure in society today has its source in the loss of a sense of kinship or brotherhood. Edom was Israel's brother by blood, but Christians are part of an even broader and deeper familial relationship. If we study the teachings of Jesus, we will find that he forbade anger toward a *brother*,¹ encouraged reconciliation,² and discouraged criticism.³ Jesus said that his family members are those who do the Father's will.⁴ There is no room in Jesus' teaching for gloating over the misfortunes of another member of the family of God. Jesus also encouraged compassion towards the less fortunate, without regard for race or family of origin.⁵ The behavior of Edom should be contrasted to the teachings of our Lord and therefore avoided and condemned.

While we see God's judgment of the proud and violent, we also see that it proclaims a blessed hope for God's people in the day of the Lord. When considered through the lens of all of Scripture, and particularly the fulfillment of prophecy in the person and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, these principles appear clearly as Christ-centered. The fulfillment of God's prophetic promises always finds consummation in the work of God through Jesus.

1. Matthew 5:22
2. Matthew 5:24
3. Matthew 7:3
4. Matthew 12:50
5. Luke 10:29–37



Jesus: righteous Judge and sovereign King

Obadiah presents God as the righteous Judge in verse one and sovereign King in verse 21. These two qualities lead our hearts and minds to Jesus our Lord. Consider the following passages:

Romans 2:12-16

For all who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but it is the doers of the law who will be declared righteous. For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, their consciences bear witness, and their conflicting thoughts now accusing, or even defend them. On the day according to my gospel, when God will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds the church in Rome that God's means of judgment will be executed through our Savior Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:1-2

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke and encourage with great patience and instruction.

Revelation 11:15

When the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever."

The New Testament makes it clear that God's judgment and kingdom are exercised by Jesus, his Son. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of Obadiah 21. Jesus is the Divine Judge and the righteous King.

Jesus: the reason for our hope

There is one more very important christological aspect of Obadiah that we must now explore. Jesus is the basis and reason of the future hope of the people of God. He is the reason for our hopeful expectation in the glorious future kingdom of God.

John 5:22-23

For the Father judges no one, but has assigned all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Revelation 17:14

They will make war on the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with him are the called, chosen and faithful.



Adoration of the Lamb

An artist's interpretation of the worship of the Lamb of God.

Jan van Eyck "Ghent Altarpiece", 1432



What does God want?

God wants us to see his character and the consistency with which he acts throughout history. The book of Obadiah reminds us of God's hatred of pride and violence. There will come a day when God will judge all nations holding them accountable for their actions. Remember these principles:

- Sibling rivalry grew throughout history—from the hostility in the womb between Esau and Jacob to the antagonism of Herod the Great against Jesus in Matthew 2:16. The book of Obadiah gives us but one glimpse into the history of such animosity and warns us against such rivalry in familial relationships.
- More directly, Obadiah, as well as other Scriptures, shows us that pride precedes destruction, and arrogance comes before the fall (Proverbs 16:18). God punishes a prideful heart. Man's wisdom and pride will fall (1 Corinthians 1:25; 3:19).
- Obadiah also instructs us how to treat people, particularly God's people. The Edomites were destroyed because of how they treated Judah. God will curse those who curse his people.
- Obadiah provides comfort. It reminds us that God is sovereign over the affairs of the world, that he does judge fairly, and that his kingdom will one day be established. A day will come when he will right all wrongs.
- Obadiah contributes to the story of Scripture by finding fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The word gospel means good news. The good news is that in Jesus' death and resurrection we find forgiveness for our sins if we confess and believe. Obadiah points us towards the coming of Christ. He is our righteous God and King of kings. In him we have hope through the gospel. Obadiah is part of a much bigger story—the complete revelation of God through Scripture.



Discoveries

Now we have completed the analysis of the book of Obadiah, it is time to carefully examine what we have learned and the difference it makes to us.

Connecting with the community

These discussion questions will help you better understand the text. Do not merely reflect on them as an individual but rather think each of each question also in terms of your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

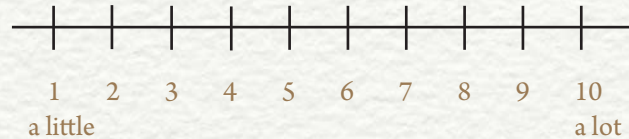
1. Who was Obadiah writing to? Why is this so important in understanding this book?
2. What is the contribution of Obadiah to the story of the Bible?
3. What was the most prominent sin of Edom? How was this sin manifested in its actions against Judah?
4. What can we learn from this prophecy about Christ and the gospel?
5. Obadiah presents God as both righteous Judge and sovereign King. Explain how these two divine roles are fulfilled in Christ. Support your answer with biblical references.
6. Go back through the book of Obadiah and highlight the concepts of kingdom, nearness, judgment, and hope. What do these concepts teach us about the nature of God? Is the day of the Lord near for all nations? Support your answer with biblical references.
7. Now that you have completed the entire prophecy of Obadiah, what do you think Obadiah wanted his audience to understand? What is the message that we are to understand today?
8. What does the book of Obadiah teach us about the character of God?

Notes, Observations & Questions

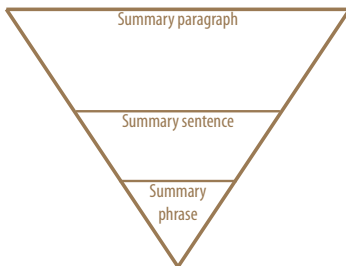


Notes, Observations & Questions

9. What can we learn about our Savior Jesus Christ from the book of Obadiah, even though Jesus is never mentioned?
10. What does Obadiah teach nations today about how to get along with their neighbors? What does Jesus say about how we should treat our neighbors? Who is our neighbor?
11. We have already stated that in Old Testament times the names of places and people often carried significance to their message. In light of your study of the book of Obadiah, how does the meaning of the prophet's name relate to his message?
12. What image or artifact best represents the book of Obadiah? An example might be that Obadiah is like a mirror that reflects back on our own pride. Another example could be that Obadiah is best represented by the image of a lion because a lion is over all the animals of the jungle and God is over all the nations of the world. What image or artifact would you pick to represent the message of Obadiah?
13. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing a little and 10 representing a lot, rate again your own knowledge of the book of Obadiah. Did it improve over the course of this study? What will stand out in your mind one year from now when you think of the prophet Obadiah?



14. Learning how to summarize new information is a very important skill. Summarizing helps you to catch the essence of meaning from the text. Now that you have completed the study of the book of Obadiah, create a large triangle chart like the one you see to the left. Fill it in first with a summary paragraph of all of Obadiah. Then create a summary sentence from the paragraph and finally a phrase from the sentence. Have you captured the meaning of the prophet?





15. Now that you have summarized Obadiah, it is important that you remember how this ancient prophecy fits in with the rest of Scripture. Create a larger version of the chart on the right. The main topic is the prophecy of Obadiah. In the large box fill in all of the relevant information about the message of Obadiah. Then in the largest box, tell how the message of Obadiah fits into the story of Scripture. Even though Obadiah does not mention Christ explicitly, how does the prophet's message point towards the coming of Christ? How is Jesus a fulfillment of Obadiah? This will help you remember how Obadiah contributes to the story of Scripture.

Probing deeper

These exercises are for your continued study of Scripture and go beyond the text of Obadiah. They trace themes found in Obadiah through other parts of Scripture.

1. Go back to the *Discoveries* section of field study 1 and complete your prediction chart by writing what actually happened. Was it what you expected? Does this teach you anything about how God works?
2. Write a paragraph or a list of ideas that summarizes the history of the conflict between Israel and Edom as it relates to the message of Obadiah.
3. Meditate for a few minutes on Philip Yancey's quote found in the section called, "What does this have to do with Jesus?" What surprises you the most about Yancey's affirmation about the humility of Christ and the character of God? How does this understanding about humility compare to the attitudes prevalent in your culture? Is the attitude of your church and family distinct from the cultural norm? Compare and contrast both attitudes in a chart.
4. What historical evidence exists of the fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy against Edom? When were the Edomites finally destroyed? Did God fulfill his word?
5. Write down five major lessons you have learned throughout the course of this study. For each lesson, describe at least one practical implication that such teaching will have in your daily life.

How does Obadiah point to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What do I know about Obadiah?

The prophecy of Obadiah

Notes, Observations & Questions

A five lesson study through the ancient prophecies of Obadiah

*Revealing God's grace...
...pointing us to Christ*



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