

# Route 66

## *Obadiah: Deceived by Pride*

Part 31 – March 7, 2010

Obadiah is the shortest book in the O.T. And we know *nothing* about the writer. We're not even sure if *Obadiah* is a name or a description; it means "Servant of God." It was written *after* the destruction of Judah, while the Jews were exiled in Babylon. But, it *isn't* directed at the Jews. It's directed at a very distinctive neighboring nation.



The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign Lord says about **Edom** ... - *Obadiah 1a NIV*

Edom was Judah's southern neighbor. When Moses was leading his people from Egypt into the Promised Land, God *protected* the Edomites and warned the Israelites to leave 'em at alone.

Do not provoke [the Edomites] to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. - *Deuteronomy 2:5a NIV*

And when Israel subdued their enemies and began divvying up the Promised Land to the twelve tribes, they respected God's order.

The allotment for the tribe of Judah, clan by clan, extended down to the territory of Edom ... - *Joshua 15:1 NIV*

So, who *are* these people?! And, why are they so special? The Jewish patriarchs are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And Jacob had a fraternal twin named Esau (who was born first). But, when they were older, Jacob manipulated a very hungry Esau into trading his birthright for some stew; and then he deceived his old, blind father, Isaac, into giving him Esau's blessing. Both brothers ended up with nicknames:

Then [the Lord] said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but **Israel** [*i.e.* "*he struggles with God*"] ..." - *Genesis 32:28 NIV*

Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew you've made." (This was how Esau got his other name, **Edom** – "Red.") - *Genesis 25:30 NLT*



Hill Country of Ancient Seir

Well, this little incident caused a lot of bitterness. And Esau vowed to kill Jacob (*Gen 27:41*). And even though they eventually made up (14 *years* later!) they still kept their distance.

Esau moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. ... So Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir. - *Genesis 36:6;8 NIV*

And God blessed the family of Esau and they grew in numbers and power and conquered the land that God had given them.

Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the Lord gave them as their possession.) - *Deuteronomy 2:12 NIV*

And this became the nation of Edom. And God gave the Israelites a strict, straightforward command regarding these people:

Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. - *Deuteronomy 23:7a NIV*

But when the Israelites were still wandering in the wilderness, and Moses asked the king of Edom for permission to pass through their land, their brother-nation refused.

Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them. - *Numbers 20:20-21 NIV*

And what began as a grudge-match between two brothers, ended up as a perpetual feud between two nations. Way back when Jacob and Esau's mother, Rebekah, was pregnant with them, the two boys had pushed and shoved so much in her womb that she asked the Lord what in the world was going on.

The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." - *Genesis 25:23 NIV*

And when Nebuchadnezzar came to destroy what was left of Judah, the Edomites should have come to their aid. But instead they cheered on the Babylonians, as the Psalmist recalls:

Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!" - *Psalms 137:7 NIV*

They didn't just stop at rejoicing over their misfortune. They murdered many of the fleeing refugees as they poured across the boarder. They arrested others and turned them over to the Babylonians. And then they plundered what was left of Judah.

Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. - *Obadiah 10-11 NIV*

Esau's grudge had spread like an infection until it compelled an entire nation to sin against their brothers. Pride was driving them and *deceiving* them:

“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’” - *Obadiah 3 NIV*

For centuries this allusion to: “[those] who live in the clefts of the rocks and make [their] home on the heights” was just the stuff of legends and folklore. Many scholars believed it was a figment of Obadiah’s imagination, and offered it as proof of the “unreliability” of scripture. But Then, in 1812 a Swiss adventurer named Johann Burckhardt was winding his way through this long, narrow gorge in the land of ancient Edom, when he stumbled upon the very city Obadiah had prophesied about.

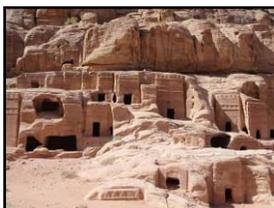


This is Petra, the principle stronghold of the Edomites. It has served as a backdrop for Indiana Jones, Transformers, and The Mummy Returns. And its ruins are one of the biggest tourist attractions in Jordan. And as you can see its people did *indeed* make their homes in the clefts of the rocks.

Obadiah says: “The pride of your heart has deceived you”. In arrogant confidence of their seemingly impregnable mountain fortress they thought that God Himself couldn’t bring them down! Our egos want us to think we’re independent and self-sufficient. That’s a lie. We’re dependent for every breath and heart-beat!

But that’s just the tip of pride’s deception. Pride gives rise to an attitude of entitled vengeance. The more prideful we become the more *right* we think we have to strike back at those who wrong us. That’s why egotistical stars throw phones, and say things like, “Don’t you know *who* I am?!” And the more pride you have the more you hate it in others! Everybody's pride is in competition with everybody else's pride.

Pride *claims* to give us pleasure from having things (like riches, talent, and good looks). But that’s a lie too! The “pleasure” only comes from having *more* of it than the next person. Pride is competitive by nature. Pride comes from being *richer, talented, and good-looking!* If everyone became *equally* rich, talented, or good-looking, conceit would begin to “starve”.



Petra: Street of Facades

It’s the *comparison* that feeds inappropriate pride: the “pleasure” of being above the rest! This is how it was with the Edomites. They were literally *above* the rest; so Obadiah declares:

“Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the Lord. - *Obadiah 4 NIV*

Proverbs (16:18) says that “Pride goes before destruction”. And Obadiah tells the Edomites just how thorough their ruin will be:

If thieves came to you, if robbers in the night – Oh, what a disaster awaits you – would they not steal only as much as they wanted? If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged! – *Obadiah 5-6 NIV*

And so they were. Thirty-three years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Edom would suffer the same fate from the Babylonians.

As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. – *Obadiah 15 NIV*

If I’m a proud man (*not the healthy pride of satisfaction or self-respect*), as long as there’s one other in the world who is richer or more powerful than me, he’s my rival and my enemy. This is why the Edomites so *relished* the destruction of Judah.

You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. – *Obadiah 12 NIV*

Why do we derive pleasure from the misfortune of others? Because, we *do!* It’s why children love tattling, and why adults love tabloids: ‘Stars with Cellulite: *Who’s Thighs Are These?!*’ ‘Plastic Surgery Shockers!’ ‘Brad and Angelina Are Splitting Up!’ ‘Octo-Mom Was a Stripper!’

Our pride doesn’t want us to stop and think about *why* this gives us so much pleasure. But, there’s a very specific *prideful* reason that we *relish* watching others fail: It soothes our inadequacies and magnifies our successes. That’s why we don’t gossip about the attributes of others that make us appear ‘less’ by comparison: “Did you hear that Gerry and Julie have a *great* marriage?! I hear they’re very happy!”

There are two basic themes in Obadiah: the doom of the proud, and the deliverance of the humble. Like the vast majority of the O.T. prophets, Obadiah ends with good news for the Jews. The crimes committed against them will not go unpunished, and their nation will one day be restored.

And he points to a day when the Lord Himself will reign as King.

But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. ... There will be no survivors from the house of Esau. ... And the kingdom will be the Lord’s. – *Obadiah 17;18b;21b NIV*

Today, Israel has been restored as a great nation, and poor Edom (deceived by the pride of its own heart) has been reduced to nothing more than a ghost-town tourist attraction.