

Obadiah 1:10-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/obad/obad-1/obadiah-110-14/>

The LORD will judge Edom because she gloated over the destruction of Judah and actively engaged in her destruction.

In the previous sections, the LORD announced judgment on Edom (vv. 2–9). Here in this section, He laid out the reason for the judgment as He listed Edom’s crimes against Judah. He began by saying, *Because of violence to your brother Jacob.*

The term used here for *violence* ranges from wickedness to murder. The term *brother* is used to remind Edom of his family relationship with Judah. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the brother of *Jacob* (Genesis 25). And *Jacob* was the father of the nation Israel (including the tribe of Judah). Thus, Edom and Judah were kinsmen.

The name *Jacob* stands for the nation of Judah. The LORD used the birth-name of *Jacob* to point out the heinous character of Edom’s guilt. Brothers ought to help each other. They are to show brotherly love. But Edom failed to show love and compassion to Judah because he committed *violence* against him. Violence is a serious matter because human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26; 9:6). But *violence* done against one’s *brother* is even worse. Therefore, God said to Edom, *You will be covered with shame.*

Edom was proud and arrogant. Now the LORD would defeat her to humble her. But worse than shame and humiliation, Edom *will be cut off forever*. That means that Edom would become extinct. She would no longer exist as a nation. Since Edom was Israel’s adversary, she was also God’s enemy because Israel was the covenant nation of God (Exodus 19:4–6). Therefore, Edom’s final national destiny was destruction.

The LORD now proceeded to list specific crimes for which He would punish Edom. The first crime was that Edom *stood aloof*, meaning that she stood apart or remained indifferent when Judah needed help. The verse reads, *On the day you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem.*

The term *day* refers to a time during which an event took place or will take place. The pronoun *his* is used for Jacob, who stands for the nation of Judah (v. 10). The verse tells us that Edom refused to help Judah during a troubled time in his life when outsiders broke the *gate* that protected him and *carried off his wealth*.

In the ancient world, the locking system on gates and doors usually included a bar made of wood or metal that slid into openings in posts. This bar would keep the *gate* closed to prevent someone from entering to hurt others. To ensure the *gate* was secure, people sometimes used brackets made of “bronze or iron,” making it much harder to break through (Deuteronomy 33:25). However, Judah’s invaders persisted until they broke the *gate* bar. Having entered the country of

Judah, the outsiders gained access to the country's *wealth*. So, they *cast lots for Jerusalem*, the capital city of Judah.

Casting lots was like drawing straws or throwing dice. It was a chance throw to make a selection. In biblical times, people who cast lots believed the result reflected the divine will. In the Old Testament, the Israelites used this practice in a variety of circumstances, including (1) the allocation of the tribal inheritance in the land of Canaan (Numbers 26:55-56), (2) the order of the priests and their duties (1 Chronicles 24:5-19; Nehemiah 10:34), and (3) the determination of guilt (Joshua 7:14-18; Proverbs 18:18). In our passage, Judah's foes used the casting of *lots* to decide who would get to possess the captives of Judah.

All this happened before Edom's eyes. Rather than providing help to Judah, Edom watched while *strangers* pillaged Judah. She remained passive when *foreigners cast lots for Jerusalem* to divide the spoil (Joel 3:3). Edom's passivity at Judah's misfortune makes her like one of the invaders themselves. As the LORD stated, *You too were as one of them*. This statement is appropriate because refusing to help is abetting the violence.

The following verses consist of a series of eight negative commands, each of which begins with the phrase "Do not." These prohibitions suggest that Edom went beyond watching Judah's defeat to mocking and opposing her. Therefore, the LORD issued these negative commands to chastise Edom for her adverse attitudes toward her brother Judah.

The first three prohibitions make up verse 12:

- *Do not gloat over your brother's day, the day of his misfortune.*
- *And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction;*
- *Yes, do not boast in the day of their distress.*

To *gloat* means to contemplate on someone's calamity, to rejoice in their misery. Edom rejoiced over Judah's misfortune when she should have helped her.

The term *brother* again emphasizes the heinous nature of Edom's behavior. Rather than helping Judah, Edom rejoiced when the invaders destroyed the country of Judah. Edom boasted (literally, they "made their mouth big") about Judah's calamity. The phrase *in the day of their destruction/distress/disaster* occurs throughout this section. It reminds Edom of that specific moment in history when he mistreated his brother Judah.

Starting in verse 13, Edom progressed from mere internal attitudes to outward actions. So, God issued three more prohibitions here:

- *Do not enter the gate of My people in the day of their disaster.*
- *Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity in the day of their disaster.*
- *And do not loot their wealth in the day of their disaster.*

Edom went beyond rejoicing over Judah's misfortune to actively engaging in her destruction.

To *enter the gate* means to enter the city. To *loot* means to steal goods from a place, especially during a war. The verb *gloat*, which occurs in this verse, recalls the previous verse (v. 12). There, Edom looked at Judah from a distance and rejoiced over her misfortune. Here, however, Edom came closer, first to laugh at Judah and then to steal her wealth on the day of her *disaster*. God commanded Edom to stop playing that game and reminded her that Judah is *My people*. He chose Judah (and Israel) to be His “own possession among all the peoples” (Exodus 19:5). Therefore, He reserved the right to avenge them.

The last verse of this section continues the catalog of Edom’s wicked deeds toward Judah. It contains two more negative commands:

- *Do not stand at the fork of the road to cut down their fugitives; and*
- *do not imprison their survivors in the day of their distress.*

The expression ‘to stand at the fork’ refers to the place where a road splits and goes in two directions. Edom not only gloated over Judah’s calamity and joined in the looting of Jerusalem, but she also waited in ambush to kill the escaping refugees and turn captives over to the adversaries. By doing so, Edom added many insults to Judah’s injury.

Thus, God’s judgment on her would be severe but appropriate (vv. 2–9). God will give to Edom what she wished upon Judah.

When did all this happen? This may refer to an event that occurred during the reign of Jehoram, king of Judah, when “the Philistines and the Arabs” invaded Judah and “carried away all the possessions found in the king’s house together with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons” (2 Chronicles 21:16–17; Obadiah 1:11). Edom, as a closely related nation, was supposed to help Judah but failed to do so. Edom had “revolted against the rule of Judah and set up a king over themselves” just prior to this event (2 Chronicles 21:8).

So Edom might have viewed Judah’s demise as their benefit, which God is making clear was incredibly short-sighted. Some date the reign of Jehoram as 853-841 BC.

Another option for the timing of this event relates to the sacking of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC. (See introduction for more information on the likely timing of Obadiah).

Biblical Text

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You will be covered *with* shame,

And you will be cut off forever.

¹¹ **“On the day that you stood aloof,**

On the day that strangers carried off his wealth,

And foreigners entered his gate

And cast lots for Jerusalem—

You too were as one of them.

¹² **“Do not gloat over your brother’s day,
The day of his misfortune.
And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah
In the day of their destruction;
Yes, do not boast
In the day of *their* distress.**

¹³ **“Do not enter the gate of My people
In the day of their disaster.
Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity
In the day of their disaster.
And do not loot their wealth
In the day of their disaster.**

¹⁴ **“Do not stand at the fork of the road
To cut down their fugitives;
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