

Obadiah 1:15-16

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/obad/obad-1/obadiah-115-16/>

Obadiah announces the day of the LORD, the time when God will intervene in human affairs to judge the nations. Edom's judgment serves as an illustration of the judgments that will fall on all the nations that rebel against God.

Having announced Edom's judgment (vv. 2–10) and having spelled out the crimes for which she would be judged (vv. 10–14), the LORD shifted His attention to the day of judgment. Up to this point, the LORD has only mentioned Edom as the object of His wrath. Now, God's judgment would not be confined to Edom, *for the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations.*

The phrase *day of the LORD* generally refers to any specific time when the LORD openly intervenes in human affairs to judge wickedness and establish righteousness on earth. That announcement was good news for the people of Judah who suffered at the hands of the Edomites and the other *nations*. The LORD would punish *all the Gentile nations* for their sinful deeds.

The LORD then used Edom as an example for all the pagan nations and declared, *As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.* God's judgment will be an application of the second great commandment, which commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. The inverse is that if we wish harm on our neighbor, God's justice will cause that harm to fall upon us. When we love our neighbor, we are the greatest beneficiary. When we hate our neighbor, we are the biggest loser.

The pronoun *you* in the phrase *as you have done, it will be done to you* is singular, referring to the nation of Edom. The word translated as *dealings* in the phrase *your dealings will return on your own head* means reward, benefit, or recompense. Edom's reward for their evil deeds against Judah would be to receive the same evil they executed on Judah upon themselves. Such evil deeds would return on Edom's *head* on the day of God's judgment.

What are the evil deeds of Edom? Edom committed several crimes against Judah. In each case, the crime she committed would be repaid in kind:

- She laughed at Judah and boasted in the day of her distress (v. 12)

Accordingly, she would receive the shame she wished upon Judah back upon her own head. She would be covered "with shame and humiliation" (v. 10).

- She gloated over Judah's calamity and looted her wealth (v. 13)

Accordingly, Edom would be "ransacked" herself (v. 6).

- Edom "cut down" Judah's fugitives (v. 14), meaning she killed those fleeing Judah.

Accordingly, justice upon Edom would be that every citizen of Edom would “be cut off by slaughter (v. 10).

Edom mistreated the people of Judah. She initially drank in celebration of Jerusalem’s destruction. Her evil deeds would thus return on her head. As the LORD declared, *Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, all the nations will drink continually.* The phrase *My holy mountain* refers to Mount Zion, which is in Jerusalem (Joel 2:1; 3:17). Jerusalem is the city where the LORD dwells (Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 3:11). The idea here seems to be that *all the nations* seek the demise of Israel, just as Edom has sought its demise. This is to be an expected, ongoing circumstance.

This basic approach by *all the nations* would seem to culminate in the book of Revelation, when “the kings of the whole world” gather to war against Israel (Revelation 16:14).

The LORD will punish Edom and her allies measure for measure. He will cause them to drink from His cup of wrath. As a result, *they will drink and swallow and become as if they had never existed.* The nations might have intended to drink a cup of celebration, toasting Israel’s demise. But instead, their cup will turn into a cup of wrath, resulting in their demise. For, as the psalmist said, “a cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; it is well mixed, and He pours out of this. Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain *and* drink down its dregs” (Psalm 75:8).

Was Obadiah’s prophecy concerning Edom fulfilled? By the time of the prophet Malachi, in the fifth century BC, the land of Edom was made a desolation (Malachi 1:3). The Edomites, descendants of Esau, were defeated. Their former territory was overtaken by the Nabateans, an Arabian tribe, a century later. The Nabateans built the famous tourist destination Petra. Therefore, even though descendants of Esau continued, the nation of Edom as a descendant of Esau ceased to exist in that territory.

Biblical Text

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