

Obadiah 1:17-21

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/obad/obad-1/obadiah-117-21/>

While Edom will be crushed by God's judgment on the day of the LORD, Israel and Judah will be restored.

The book of Obadiah closes on a positive note for the covenant people of God. It describes the restoration of Israel in the coming day of the LORD. While God will destroy Edom in His wrath (vv. 15–16), He will restore Israel. Thus, *on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy*. *Mount Zion* is used here as a synonym for Jerusalem (e.g. 2 Samuel 5:7; Zephaniah 3:14).

Mount *Zion* is in the southeastern part of the city of Jerusalem, which is in the southern kingdom of Judah. It was the place where David lived. God is said to dwell on Mount *Zion* because it is the seat of authority in Israel ([Isaiah 8:18](#)). It represented the place where God lived among His people.

The phrase *on Mount Zion there will be those who escape* may refer to the survival of the people of Israel from the distress they will encounter. The fact that *it will be holy* may refer to a future time when the temple will be restored in Jerusalem, and the Messiah will sit on the throne of Israel. This is prophesied in Ezekiel 40-44 and Zechariah 14:9-21.

Although Edom entered the gate of Jerusalem and “looted their wealth” (v. 13), the city will *be holy* again in the end times (Zechariah 14:20–21). In those days, *the house of Jacob will possess their possessions*. That Israel will *possess their possessions* would seem to mean they will be restored to their land and dwell in security (Romans 11:26). Ultimately, there will be a New Jerusalem where Jesus Himself is the temple, and where righteousness dwells (Revelation 21:22; 2 Peter 3:13).

Then *the house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame*. The phrase *house of Joseph* likely stands for the northern kingdom of Israel with the ten tribes. The dominant northern tribe is Ephraim, who was an offspring of Joseph. The *house of Jacob* could refer to the southern kingdom of Judah or to all of Israel. In either case, this could speak of a time when Israel and Judah will be regathered and reunited (Hosea 1:11). This is affirmed in Revelation 7, where representatives of every tribe save Dan are present in the end times. However, it could also speak of a time when Judah and Israel are in an alliance against Edom.

The term *fire* denotes the physical manifestation of burning, whereas the term *flame* refers to the gaseous part of the *fire*, which is visible to human eyes (Joel 1:19; 2:3). The LORD used these terms here symbolically to portray His judgment on Edom (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5). When *fire* attacks a field, it usually leaves it barren and desolate. In the same way, God will use survivors from both Israel and Judah as His instrument of judgment to destroy the land of Edom. As a result, *the house of Esau will be as stubble*.

The term *stubble* refers to the cut stalks of grain plants left in the fields after the harvest of the grains. Since it burns rapidly, it is used here to portray the destruction of the Edomites. Israel and Judah *will set them on fire and consume them, so that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau*. Their destruction will be complete and final *for the LORD has spoken*. If this is speaking of a time when the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah are in alliance against Edom, that would mean Edom's demise took place at their hands prior to the fall of Israel in 722 BC. If it is speaking of an end time event when Israel is united and restored, then this could take place in the end time battles. (As is always the case with biblical prophecy, it could be both).

In the future (as of this writing) when the Suzerain God restores Israel and Judah, they will reclaim the territories that once belonged to them. The repartition will be as follows: *those of the Negev*, that is, the Israelites in the south, *will possess the mountain of Esau* that had at one time belonged to Edom. And *those of the Shephelah* (literally, "foothills") will move into the *Philistine plain*, which refers to the coastal plains in the west. Some unnamed groups (perhaps the remnant of the northern tribes) will *possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria*. (Please see maps on sidebar).

The name *Ephraim* is used for the northern kingdom of Israel because *Ephraim* was the most prominent tribe there in those days (Hosea 13:1). Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom, which caused the northern kingdom to sometimes be referred to as Samaria (1 Kings 16:24–29; Amos 4:1). Those living in *Benjamin* will possess Gilead, a mountainous region east of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 3:13). *Benjamin* was one of two tribes that made up the kingdom of Judah (along with the tribe of Judah).

Finally, *the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel, who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the cities of the Negev*.

Zarephath was an ancient city located on the coastal highway between Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia. It is the place where the widow fed Elijah (1 Kings 17:1–9). The identity of *Sepharad* is unknown to us. Some think it is Spain. Others think it is Sardis in western Asia Minor. At any rate, the text tells us that those in this region will settle in southern Israel.

When the LORD restores His covenant people, *the deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau*. The term *delivers* likely refers to the returning exiles from the southern kingdom of Judah. Mount Zion is used again as a synonym for Jerusalem. That is, the *deliverers* from Jerusalem will rule over the land that once belonged to Edom *and the kingdom will be the LORD's*. One day, God will defeat His adversaries, restore His covenant people, and establish His universal kingdom.

The prophecy of Obadiah features the LORD's acts of judgment and restoration in the coming Day of the LORD. God will judge Edom and all the Gentile nations for their disobedience and rebellion. But He will restore Israel and Judah. This prophecy served to comfort the people of Judah by reminding them of God's covenant love for them. It thus provides hope for Judah. This hope is also available to all those who place their trust in Jesus Christ today. For when we accept

Jesus, God adopts us into His family (Ephesians 1:5). As such, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28). We are all one in the body of Christ.

Biblical Text

¹⁷ **“But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,
And it will be holy.**

And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

¹⁸ **“Then the house of Jacob will be a fire**

And the house of Joseph a flame;

But the house of Esau *will be* as stubble.

And they will set ^hem on fire and consume them,

So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,”

For the Lord has spoken.

¹⁹ **Then *those of* the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau,**

And *those of* the Shephelah the Philistine *plain*;

Also, possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria,

And Benjamin *will possess* Gilead.

²⁰ **And the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel,**

Who are *among* the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,

And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad

Will possess the cities of the Negev.

²¹ **The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion**

To judge the mountain of Esau,

And the kingdom will be the LORD’s.