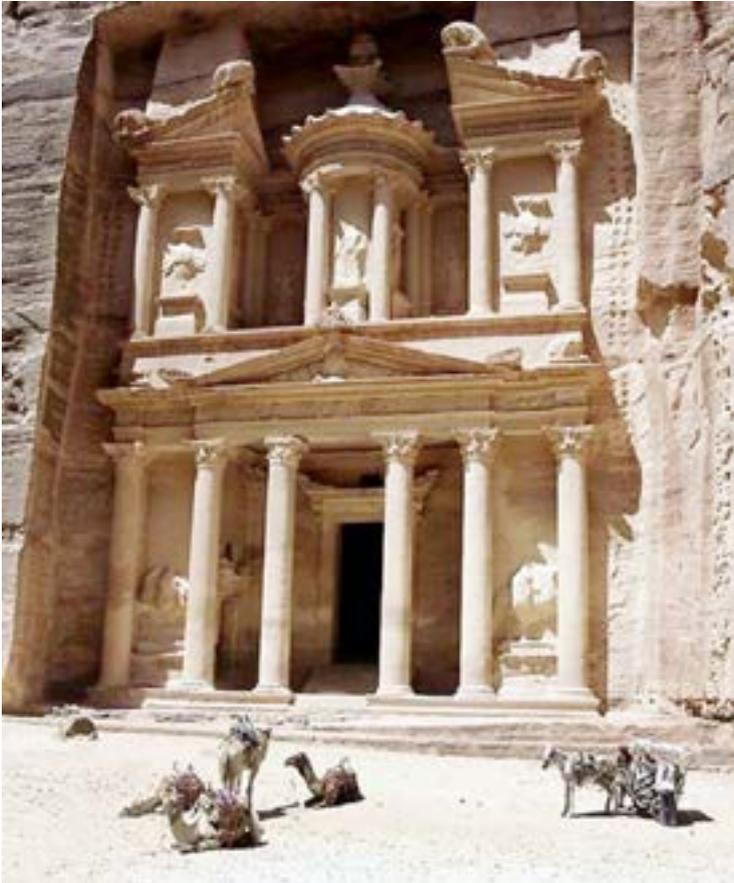


The Prophecy of Obadiah

John R. Ecob D.D.



The Treasury Building
One of the buildings carved out of the rock in
the ancient Edomite city of Petra

The Book of Obadiah

The prophecy of Obadiah announces the judgment of God on the Edomites for their pride and for their hatred of the children of Israel:

*“Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, **thence will I bring thee down**, saith the LORD” (Obadiah 1:2-4).*

When Did Obadiah Prophecy?

We are not told exactly when Obadiah wrote his short prophecy against the Edomites and there is no mention of any king of Judah or Israel in his book but this would suggest the prophecy was written after the fall of Jerusalem **when there was no king**. Zedekiah was the last king to sit on the throne of David and Ezekiel plainly stated that, after it was overthrown three times by the Babylonians, *“it shall be no more, **until He come whose right it is**; and I will give it him” (Ezek.21:27).*

The message of Obadiah resonates with prophecies by Ezekiel (Ezek.25:12-14; 35:1-15) and Jeremiah (Jer.49:7-22). These prophesied around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC. Jeremiah wrote:

“Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman?...If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough” (Jer.49:7-9).

Obadiah wrote similar words:

“If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? (Obadiah 1:5).

Both Obadiah and Jeremiah refer to a rumour that had been heard of impending judgment on the Edomites which we know was the uprising by the Nabateans against the Edomites. Obadiah wrote:

“The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom;”

We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised” (Obadiah 1:1-2).

Jeremiah wrote almost identical words:

“I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men” (Jer.49:14-15).

Jeremiah states *“I have heard”* a rumour from the Lord, and Obadiah states *“WE have heard”*, so it seems the passage originated with Jeremiah and Obadiah was repeating the message that God gave to Jeremiah.

We know that Jeremiah received his message from the Lord, *“before Pharaoh smote Gaza”* (Jer.47:1) and this occurred in 601B.C.

After Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh-necho at Carchemish in 606B.C. (the 4th year of Jehoiakim Jer.46:2), he pursued him to the border of Egypt. The same year, Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem but then returned to Babylon to be crowned king on receiving news of the death of his father, Nabopolassar.

After the withdrawal of the Babylonian forces, the city of Ashkelon rebelled, in anticipation of Egyptian assistance which did not materialize. Nebuchadnezzar came again but was met by Pharaoh-necho who successfully defended Egypt **and smote Gaza**. According to *Wikipedia*, this occurred about 601B.C. which was 15 years **before** the destruction of Jerusalem in 586B.C. and would have been while the Edomites were feeling secure in Mount Seir. However, when Obadiah prophesied, Jerusalem **had been destroyed** and the Temple burned for he charged the Edomites with taking spoil from Jerusalem (Obadiah 1:13).

Much earlier, about 700BC, Isaiah had foretold the ultimate desolation of Edom (Isa.34:1-17) and Malachi, prophesying about 400BC, spoke of the desolation of Edom in **the past tense**.

“And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are

*impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, **but I will throw down**; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever” (Malachi 1:3-4).*

From the timing of these prophecies we therefore conclude that Obadiah prophesied **after the fall of Jerusalem in 586BC and before the destruction of the Edomites**. The question then arises, When and how were the Edomites destroyed? It must have been after the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem because they assisted the Babylonians.

Psalms 137 was written by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity for it begins with,

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion” (Ps.137:1).

At that time the remnant captives prayed:

*“Remember, O LORD, **the children of Edom** in the day of Jerusalem; who said, **Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof**” (Ps.137:7).*

It is clear from this psalm that the Edomites were more than spectators in 586BC when Jerusalem was burned by the Babylonians. In one of the Apocryphal books, the *First Book of Esdras* which records events from the time of King Josiah to the 7th year of Artaxerxes (458BC), Zerubbabel reminds Darius the Great of a vow he had made before he became King of Persia, that he would rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem which he said,

*“the **Edomites burned** when Judea was made desolate by the Chaldees” (1Esdras 4:45).*

According to the Book of Esdras, Zerubbabel was one of Darius’ three bodyguards and because of his great wisdom, was exalted to the place of the King’s cousin sitting at Darius’ right hand (1Esdras 3:1-5).

It seems that in 586BC the besieging Babylonian army allowed the Edomites to participate in the destruction of Jerusalem just as the Romans allowed the Arabs to participate in the siege of Jerusalem in AD70. Josephus mentions two occasions when Arabs were involved; once when an Arab killed a Jew with an arrow and

another occasion when the Arabs ripped open the stomachs of fleeing Jews to recover gold that had been swallowed. Titus, the Roman General, put a stop to the barbaric practice.

Thus Esdras confirms that Edomites were present at Jerusalem in 586BC to help themselves to the spoils and vent their fury on the Jews. The psalmist recalls this and asks the Lord to remember what the Edomites had done.

In the Lamentations of Jeremiah written after the fall of Jerusalem he said:

“Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins” (Lam.4:21-22).

In 586B.C. the punishment of Israel was finished and it was Edom’s turn to receive from the Lord what they deserved for their sin. The land of Uz was where Job lived somewhere between Babylon and Edom in the north of Arabia. The Edomites would be judged, **even those that lived in distant lands i.e. the land of Uz (north Arabia)**. It appears that the Edomites had occupied Uz at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Uz was a grandson of Shem and son of Aram and we know Aram settled in Syria. So the Edomites would be punished from their southern boundary at the Gulf of Aqaba to Syria in the north.



After the destruction of Jerusalem the Nabateans, a warlike desert people that conducted the gold, frankincense, and spice trade from southern Arabia to Damascus along the “Kings Highway” that ran

through Seir, drove the Edomites out of their land after 550B.C. into the south of Judah which had been overrun by the Babylonians. The Babylonians would not see the Edomites as a threat since they assisted them in the siege of Jerusalem.

After the 70 years of captivity in Babylon the Jews returned to rebuild the Temple and the *First Book of Esdras*, in the Apocrypha, indicates that the Persians made the Edomites return the villages that they had taken from the Jews in the south of Judah:

“And that all the country which they (the Jews) hold should be free without tribute; and that **the Edomites should give over the villages of the Jews which then they held**” (1 Esdras 4:50).

The Edomite's Hatred for Israel

Hatred existed between Esau and Jacob for much of their lives and continued in their descendants through the centuries that followed. The birthright was the right to the family inheritance which included the promises that God made to Abraham and Isaac. The Abrahamic Covenant guaranteed the blessing of God on Abraham and his seed for ever. It gave him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession and assured him that his descendants would one day rule all nations in Messiah's kingdom. Esau was the firstborn and had the birthright but he despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob for “*bread and pottage of lentiles*” (Gen.25:34).

Before Isaac died he pronounced the blessing of Abraham on his boys and was deceived into giving the blessing of the firstborn to Jacob instead of Esau. From that moment onward Esau hated Jacob and planned to kill him after Isaac had died (Gen.27:41). However, Jacob fled to Haran where he spent the next 20 years. When Jacob returned from Haran, Esau came from Mount Seir with 400 men but God intervened and Jacob was spared.

The grandson of Esau was Amalek who was an especially bitter enemy of Israel. When Israel came out of Egypt the Amalekites pursued them and fought against them at Rephidim (Exod.17:8-16). It was only the prayers of Moses that delivered them as Joshua led Israel in battle. At that time God said:

“*I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven*” (Exod.17:14).

When Israel wanted to pass through the land of Edom on the way to Canaan, the Edomites at first refused to allow them safe passage (Num.20:21). It seems that 38 years later the Edomites allowed Israel to pass (Deut.2:29) and Aaron was buried at the top of Mount Hor which was close to Petra, a city of the Edomites.

Edomites were always a threat to Israel. Doeg the Edomite was chief herdsman for King Saul and he betrayed David. At Saul's command Doeg slew 85 of the priests of the Lord.

David subdued the Edomites and

“throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants” (2Sam.8:14).

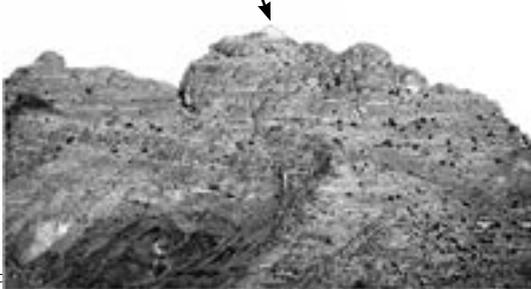
In Jehoshaphat's time the Edomites joined with the Ammonites and Moabites to invade Judah but God caused their armies to destroy each other.

The Land of Edom (Mount Seir)

The Land of Edom was the dwelling place of the descendants of Esau. In Gen.36:6-8 we read that Esau took his wives and dwelt in Mount Seir and it became known as the Land of Edom located east of the Dead Sea on the mountains between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba.

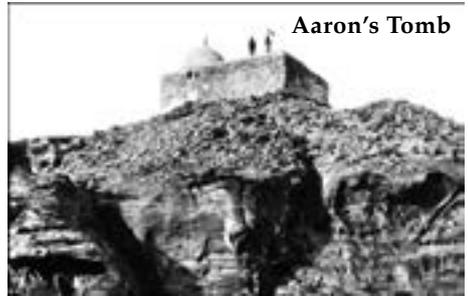


Aaron's Tomb at the top of Mount Hor



Mount Seir obtained its name from Seir the Horite who inhabited the land before Esau. Some suggest that the Horites were so called because they dwelt in caves and the word for cave is "Hor". Mount Hor is located on the west side of Petra and rises 4,780 feet above sea

level. Scripture states it is where Aaron died and there is a “Tomb of Aaron” at the top of Mount Hor as shown in the photo. The photo of Mount Hor shows it to be covered in caves.



Aaron's Tomb

*“Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, **thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall***

bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD” (Obadiah 1:2-4).



Entrance to Petra

The earliest mention we have of the Horites is in Gen.14:6 where we are told that “Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him” smote “the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.” This attack occurred when

Abram was at Hebron early in his sojourn

in the land. The Horites would have been among those rescued by Abram when he recovered Lot and the people of Sodom.

After the Edomites drove out the Horites they occupied all the land between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba including part of the Sinai Peninsula. The Amalekites, who were descendants of Edom, dwelt in the Sinai Peninsula and were perpetually the enemy of God’s people.

The Edomites considered they were safe in the city of Petra that was carved out



The Treasury carved into the rock face at Petra

Petra



of the rocks. Entrance to the city was through a narrow gorge that could be easily defended with a small garrison. Petra has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.

Wikipedia records:

“Pliny the Elder (died AD 79) and other writers identify Petra as the capital of the Nabataeans and the center of their caravan trade. Enclosed by towering rocks and watered by a perennial stream, Petra not only possessed the advantages of a fortress, but controlled the main commercial routes which

passed through it to Gaza in the west, to Bosra and Damascus in the north, to Aqaba and Leuce Come on the Red Sea, and across the desert to the Persian Gulf...The impressive **eastern entrance** leads steeply down through a dark, narrow gorge (in places only 3–4 m (9.8–13.1 ft) wide) called the Siq (“the shaft”), a natural geological feature formed from a deep split in the sandstone rocks and serving as a waterway flowing into Wadi Musa. At the end of the narrow gorge stands Petra’s most elaborate ruin, Al Khazneh (popularly known as and meaning “the Treasury”), hewn into the sandstone cliff.”

The Edomites Involvement with the Capture of Jerusalem

From the evidence already shown, the Edomites had joined with the Babylonians and, if the *First Book of Esdras* is correct, were actually responsible for burning the Temple of God. The Psalmist indicated that the Edomites cried, “**Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof**” (Ps.137:7).

It was the activity of the Edomites at this time that finally brought the judgment of God and Obadiah charged them as follows:

“For **thy violence against thy brother Jacob** shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

*In the day that **thou stoodest on the other side**, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered*

into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress” (Obadiah 1:10-14).

The Edomites were not just passive spectators watching the Babylonians slaughter the Jews; they had “*stood on the other side*”; that is, they identified with the Babylonians and stood with them against Israel. When the Babylonians entered Jerusalem and brought out the emaciated prisoners, the Edomites watched and “*was as one of them*” and “*rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction*”.

When the Babylonians took the spoils of Jerusalem the Edomites “*laid hands on their substance*” and when Jews fled the Edomites had not only prevented them from escaping but had either killed them or handed them over to the Babylonians.

All of these charges indicate just how actively the Edomites assisted the Babylonians in destroying the nation of Judah.

Sentence Passed on Edom

God had decreed that the Edomites would be “*cut off for ever*” (v.10). The prophecy begins with news of a “*rumour, from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her (Edom) in battle*” (v.1).

What was this rumour that was circulating among the heathen that posed a threat to Edom? Undoubtedly it was coming from the

Nabateans, a warlike desert people who had been oppressed by the Edomites.

The Nabateans were an ancient desert people that operated trade routes from the south of Arabia, Yemen as we know it, all the way to Damascus and across to Gaza on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The camel trains followed the “Kings’ Highway” through the land of Edom and the Edomites compelled them to pay protection money which had to be added to the price of the frankincense, spices, silver and gold which they traded.

The Nabateans were a Bedouin people that had established trade routes with a string of oases through the desert, constructing “bottle wells” to provide water for their camels. These wells had a small opening but a large cavern below ground level so that they could be easily concealed.

The “*rumour*” that was circulating was that the Nabatean Bedouin Traders were planning to rise up against the Edomites and drive them out of the heights of Mount Seir. This began in 550 B.C. while the Jews were captive in Babylon. The Nabateans were in fact God’s instrument of judgment to punish the Edomites for their treatment of Judah and remind us of God’s covenant promise to Abraham that He would bless those who blessed Abraham and his seed and would curse those who cursed Abraham’s seed (Gen.12:3).

History records that when the Nabateans rose up against the Edomites they drove them from their land in Mount Seir and the Edomites spread across the south of Judah which was formerly the land of the tribe of Simeon. The Jews were in no state to resist for the Babylonians had taken many captive to Babylon and many had been slain. However, when the 70 years of Babylonian captivity had run its course the Jews returned with the blessing of the Persian Emperors Cyrus (536BC) and Darius (522BC), to rebuild the Temple and to resettle the land.

The Nabatean Kingdom continued its lucrative trade from Damascus to the coast of Yemen until the Roman era but the Edomites, who had been divested of their land in Mount Seir, were compelled to submit to the Persian kings in the land of Judah.

During the Persian era the Jews were highly favoured. Daniel was made the Head over the presidents, Zerubbabel was made the right-hand man of Darius and one of his bodyguards, Esther was Queen in the time of Xerxes and Mordecai was Prime Minister. Haman, the Edomite, was hanged with all his family when he tried to kill all the Jews throughout the Empire and Artaxerxes sent Ezra back with all the vessels of the Temple in the 7th year of his reign (458BC). In the 20th year of his reign (445BC) he sent Nehemiah, his cup bearer, to rebuild Jerusalem.

Back in the land of Israel the Persians compelled the surrounding nations to support the Jews as they were rebuilding and as we have already noted, the *First Book of Esdras* stated that the Edomites who had moved into southern Judah were compelled to return **“the villages of the Jews which then they held”** (1 Esdras 4:50).

Thus the Edomites had been driven from their home in Mount Seir into the south of Judah and now were required **to surrender the villages they had taken from the Jews**; they were a homeless people and worse was to follow.

Obadiah states:

“All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; that they eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him” (Obadiah 1:7).

The Nabateans had long been at peace with the Edomites and had turned against them. Their kingdom continued until the time of the Roman Emperor Trajan when he made it a Roman Province in AD106.

During the wars of the Maccabees at the beginning of 163BC, Judas Maccabees attacked the Edomites in the south of Judah and in Gaza taking great spoil. They were later subdued by John Hyrcanus (c. 125 BC), who forcibly converted them, and incorporated them into the Jewish nation, despite the opposition of the Pharisees. The first

century Jewish historian Josephus gives us one account of Israel's defeat of Edom:

"The Idumeans (formerly the Edomites) surrendered to Hyrcanus who allowed them to live as long as they agreed to circumcise their sons and to abide by Jewish customs. This they did, and from that point on they followed the practices of the Jews" (*Antiquities.13:254, Wars of the Jews 1:62*).

The Maccabees had responded to attacks by the Edomites as the Second Book of Maccabees indicates:

"At the same time the Idumeans (Edomites), who held some important strongholds, were harassing the Jews; ...Maccabeus and his companions, after public prayers asking God to be their ally, moved quickly against the strongholds of the Idumeans. Attacking vigorously, they gained control of the places, drove back all who manned the walls, and cut down those who opposed them, killing as many as twenty thousand men" (2Maccabees 10:15-17).

The Edomites were thus compelled to become Jews and forced to circumcise their children. The Edomites therefore lost their national identity and were absorbed into Israel.

Pompey, the Roman General, captured Palestine for the Romans in 60BC and Herod was made King of the Jews in 30BC. Herod was an Idumean (Edomite) but in an effort to gain the favour of the Herod began reconstruction of the Temple about 20 B.C. It was in the finishing stages 46 years later when Jesus began His ministry (John 2:20).

According to Josephus, 20,000 Idumeans, under the leadership of John, Simeon, Phinehas, and Jacob, helped the Zealots fight for independence from Rome during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. After the Jewish wars there is **no mention of the Idumeans** (Edomites). The prophecy of Obadiah was fulfilled and the nation of Edom was cut off and ceased from being a nation. Obadiah's prophecy was fulfilled:

"There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau" (Obadiah 1:18).

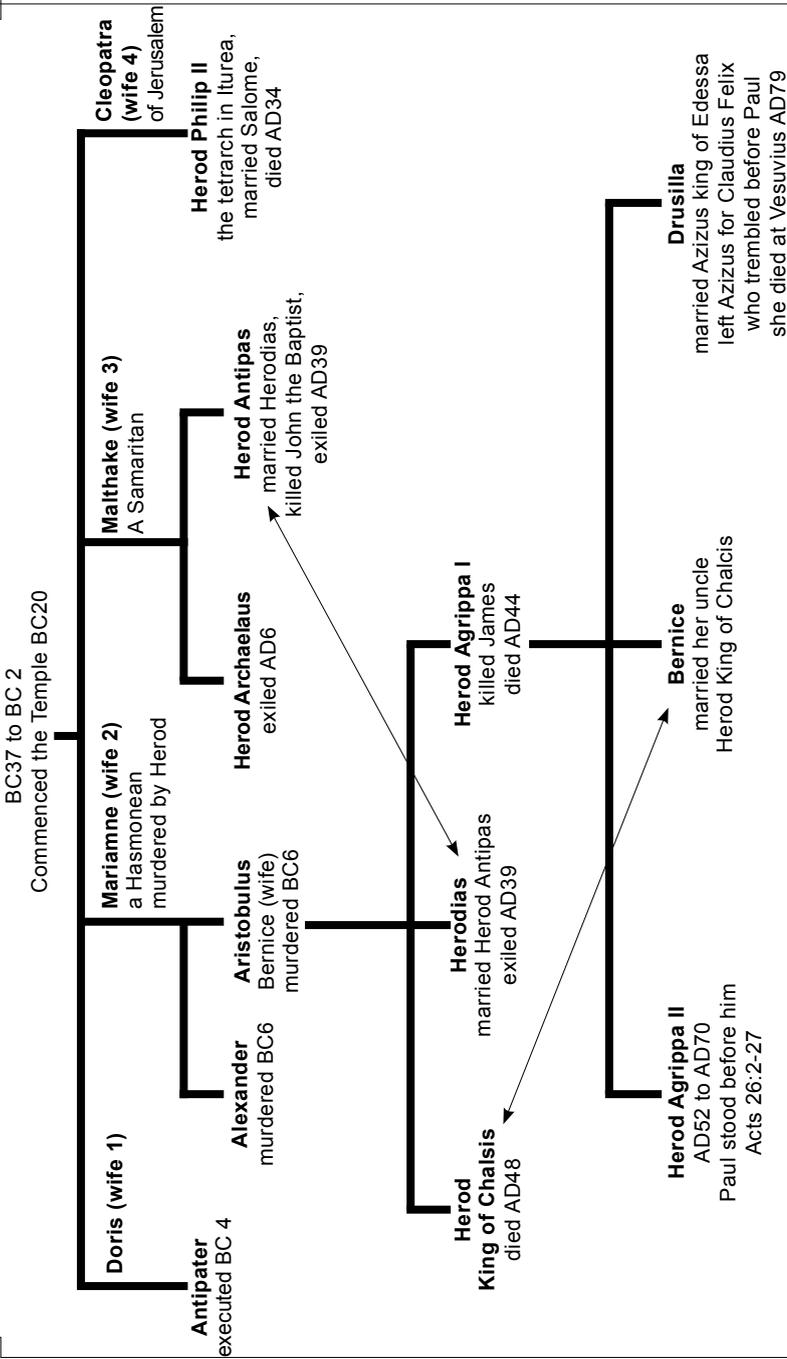
Israel's Ultimate Triumph - the Kingdom shall be the LORD's!

"But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath (Lebanon); and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. And saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's (Obadiah 1:17-21).

While Edom would be destroyed Israel would triumph. This prophecy has a near and far fulfilment. It was fulfilled when Israel returned to the land after Cyrus had captured Babylon and released the Jewish captives. Israel "possessed her possessions" though not all of them. Under the Maccabees, Judas and Hycranus, *"the house of Joseph (was) a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau."*

The Edomites were compelled to integrate into Israel and as a consequence there were not *"any remaining of the house of Esau."* Even King Herod tried hard to convince the Jews he had a Jewish heritage. However, his Edomite hatred for Israel was present at all times. One after another, the Herods met or knew of Jesus and his followers. One after another, they killed or tried to kill anyone connected to him. John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod Antipas and James was killed by Herod Agrippa I. When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, we read that *"Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate"* (Luke 23:11).

HEROD THE GREAT



Herod's Family as recorded by Josephus
(*Antiquities, Book 18, ch.5.*)

How anyone could be so close and yet so far is hard to understand. The Herod family, who were descended from Esau and Edom, simply fulfilled the prophecies (Gen. 25:23; Num. 24:17; Obad. 8-21) and the Edomites have ceased to exist.

The final words of this prophecy bring the history of Israel to a glorious conclusion: *“the kingdom shall be the LORD’s”* (Obadiah 1:21). This is not true today nor has it been entirely true since the Edomites were judged but it will be true when Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, returns to sit upon the throne of David and reign from Jerusalem.

The whole land from Dan to Beersheba, from the River Euphrates to the River of Egypt, will be possessed. All that land is theirs by right. It was promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and to their descendants as an everlasting possession. One day soon *“the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions”* and *“the kingdom shall be the LORD’s”*.

The final fulfilment of Obadiah’s prophecy is yet to become a reality when not just the Edomites, but all of Israel’s enemies, will be subdued. *“For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee (Israel) shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted”* (Isa.60:12).

Jesus shall reign where e’er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wain no more.

Lessons from the Life of Esau

Thus far we have examined the historical, prophetic and literal meaning of Obadiah's prophecy and there remains only a few references to Esau, the father of the Edomites, in the New Testament. We are told three things about Esau in the New Testament:

1) Esau was blessed by Isaac (Heb.11:20).

2) Esau sold his birthright "*for one morsel of meat*" and afterwards "*when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*" (Heb.12:17).

3) Esau was hated by God (Rom.9:13).

1) The Blessing of Esau

Esau and Jacob were born in answer to Isaac's prayer. God had promised to make a great nation of Abraham's seed but 20 years of married life had produced no offspring. Isaac prayed because he believed the promise of God and God gave Rebekah twin boys; Esau was the firstborn.

During the pregnancy Rebekah realised something unusual was happening in her womb and she enquired of the Lord who told her that she would give birth to twin boys and that the "*elder shall serve the younger*" (Gen.25:23). The future of these boys was known to God before they were born and this teaches us the truth of the **foreknowledge** of God.

The reason why the elder would serve the younger is not given to Rebekah but we know from subsequent events that Esau made wrong choices and it was the exercise of **his own free will** that brought about his demise. Every soul of man is a free-will agent before God and will make their own choices. Twins normally have a great affinity with each other but even twins stand as individuals before God.

Throughout the entire volume of Scripture we find that God has desired to bless mankind. God sends the rain upon the just and upon the unjust without discrimination. In spite of his rebellion and sinful life Esau was blessed for we read:

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come"
(Heb. 11:20).

Esau could not inherit the blessing promised to Abraham's seed because he did not possess the birthright which he sold to Jacob. Nevertheless there was a special blessing for him. We read:

*“And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, **thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above**; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck”* (Gen.27:38-40).

Esau despised his birthright but God was gracious to him and guaranteed to him *“the fatness of the earth”* while he served his brother.

Esau's heart was not right with God yet God's grace was bestowed upon him in order to lead him to repentance. Paul gave the hardend Jews a similar message:

*“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; **not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance**? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”* (Rom. 2:4-5).

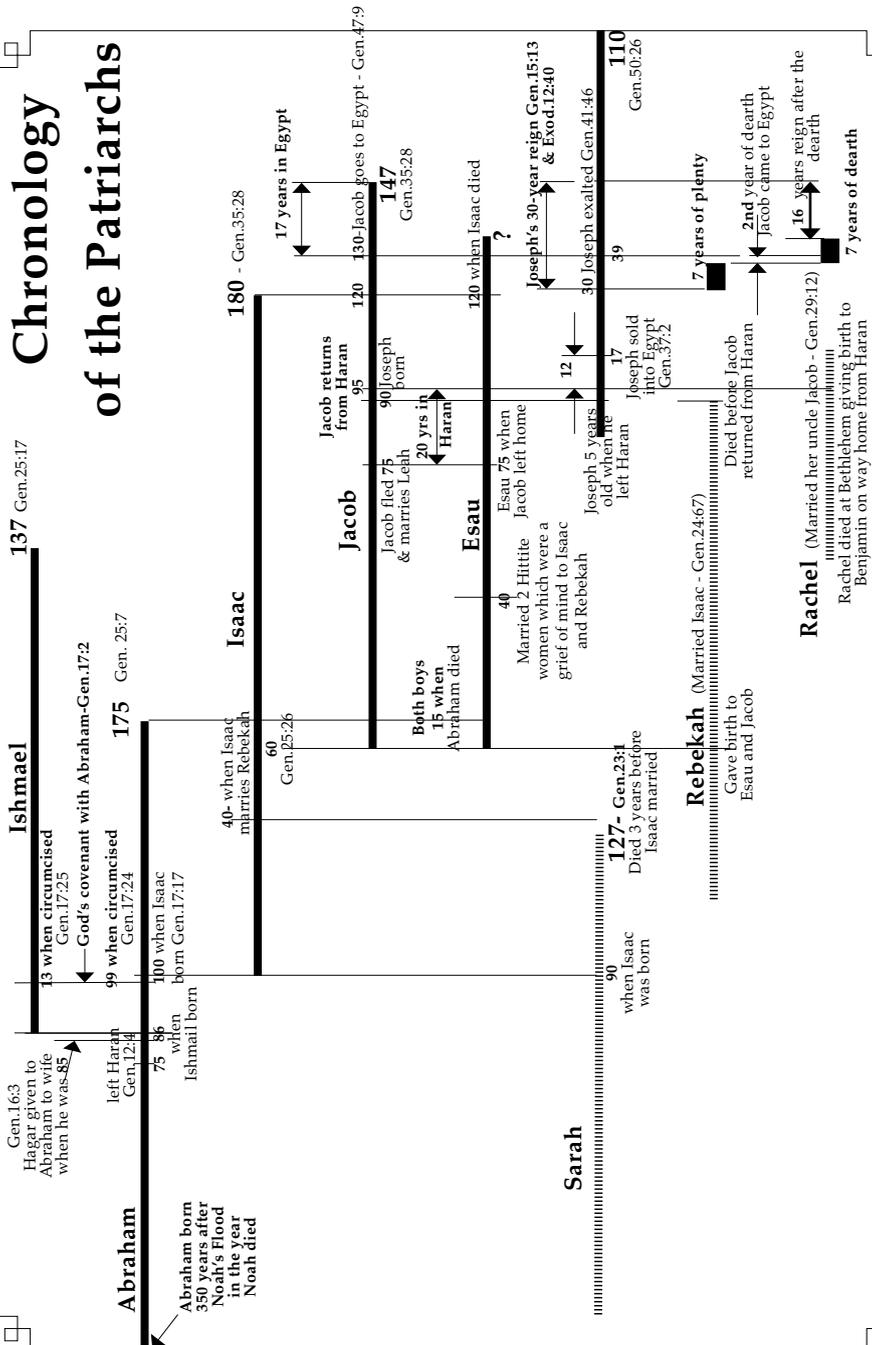
God is kind to sinners because He wants them to be saved:

*“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. **But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...**”* (Titus 3:3-5).

2) Esau Despised His Birthright

When God chose Abraham He intended that the descendants of Abraham would continue with the faith of Abraham and that through his family line the Truth would be preserved in the earth. Ultimately, God would bring into the world a perfect man out of Abraham's seed who would be the Saviour of the world. If the descendants of Abraham failed to value the great plan of redemption and turned aside to other gods, then God's plan would fail and all humanity would perish. Esau was the second link in the chain and sadly he *“despised his birthright”*. That was a personal choice.

Chronology of the Patriarchs



TIME BAR IN INCREMENTS OF 10 YEARS

This was a very serious situation and God, who knows the end from the beginning, knew beforehand that Esau would do this.

While Esau and Jacob were twin brothers they were different in every way. Esau was a hairy man; a man of the field; a cunning huntsman. Esau was his father's pride and joy. He brought home wild game he had caught, cooked it, and gave delicious meals to his father. He sought his father's favour but despised the favour of God.

There is no doubt that Isaac was faithful to the God of his father Abraham, and that he walked with God. In Isaac's mind, Esau was the one to take his place at the head of the family and to inherit the promised blessing of God because he was his first-born. Isaac undoubtedly talked with Abraham about God's plans for the family as the boys grew up. Jacob and Esau were 15 years old when Abraham died and they also must have heard from Abraham what God had promised, therefore Esau would have been **fully informed** of God's plan.

Isaac apparently was unaware however, of what God had told Rebekah or that Esau had sold his birthright. Had he known that the birthright had passed from Esau to Jacob he would not have instructed Esau to prepare venison pottage as a prelude to pronouncing the blessing of Abraham upon him.

We know that Isaac was however, concerned at choices Esau was making. When Abraham had sent his servant away to get a wife for Isaac he told his servant:

"Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son" (Gen.24:37-38).

The same rule must also apply to Isaac's sons but when Esau was 40 years old he took Canaanite wives that were a "grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah" (Gen.26:35). Jacob abstained from marriage and did not marry Leah until he was 75 years old. If the Canaanite women were no good for Isaac they certainly were no good for Jacob. The New Testament clearly states:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2Cor.6:14).

From these events we see that though Esau made wrong choices he was blessed by God which indicates that God loves sinners and

wants to bless them but if men wilfully pursue their own way in opposition to God as Esau did, then they bring judgment upon themselves. By despising the birthright Esau placed himself outside of God's plan.

The Epistle to the Hebrews warns of the danger of living for sensual pleasure and profane, heathen wickedness, for such behaviour will place the individual outside of the blessing of God. Holiness is an essential characteristic of the Christian experience and we read:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb.12:14).

Salvation is **from** sin and the work of regeneration brings a changed life in every believer. *"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2Cor.5:17).

The Lord solemnly warned that many will one day say,

"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt.7:22-23).

True faith in Christ comes from a repentant heart and an unrepentant heart cannot receive the gift of eternal life, of sins forgiven, and an inheritance in heaven. The awful realization come on Esau when he *"would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected"* (Heb.12:17).

3) Esau was hated by God (Rom.9:13)

"When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom.9:10-13).

When we first read the above verse it might appear that God chose Jacob to be saved and Esau to be lost before they were born but that is not what the text states.

The words, *"Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated"* are quoted from Malachi 1:2-4 which was written about 400BC which was more than 1,000 years **after** Jacob and Esau were born. We have already seen how the prophecy of Obadiah was fulfilled and God's

judgment had fallen on the Edomites. When Malachi wrote, it was **past history** and the Edomites had been driven out of their land by the Nabateans, they had occupied the south of Judah while Israel had been captive in Babylon but when Cyrus sent the Jews back to rebuild the Temple the Edomites were compelled to return to the Jews the villages they had occupied. They ultimately ceased to be a nation in fulfillment of the prophecy of Obadiah. The final reason for God's judgment on the Edomites was that they joined with the Babylonians in the destruction of Jerusalem, slew the Jews who tried to escape, burned the Temple, and joined in ransacking Jerusalem as Obadiah plainly indicates.

Those who quote Malachi 1:2-4 to support their Calvinistic views of "uncondition election" err greatly and twist the scriptures to such an extent that they change the character of God and the Gospel of God's grace. The fact that God told Rebekah, before the boys were born, that the "*elder shall serve the younger*" cannot by any legitimate rule of exegesis teach that God **ordained** the outcome of the prophecy outside the foreknowledge of God. It was a statement of fact known to God because God has foreknowledge.

The words spoken to Rebekah did not consign Esau to eternal damnation otherwise we would have to conclude that only the ruling class can be saved. They spoke of service not salvation.

The question of the salvation of the Edomites was determined by their own actions as Obadiah plainly indicates. God was longsuffering with the Edomites but when they stood with the idolatrous Babylonians at Jerusalem and cried, "*Rase it, rase it!*" (Ps.137:7) they brought upon themselves the wrath of God and more than 100 years later Malachi could speak of God's hatred for Esau in the **past tense**.

Paul goes on to say how Moses was told by God, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*" but this was in the context of Moses offering to be blotted out of the Book of life if Israel could be saved. God said, "*Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*" (Exod.32:33). In Romans chapters 9 through 11 Paul is showing that God had chosen Israel as a nation to be His vehicle to bless all

nations but because of their sin God had put them aside and turned to the Gentiles in the Church. God is sovereign and has the right to put Israel aside if the nation is in unbelief. However, when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in and the Church is complete, then Israel will turn back to the Lord and again be blessed. In the meanwhile, in this Church age,

*“Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For **whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**” (Rom.10:11-13).*

Salvation is for whosoever will call on the Lord but God has foreknowledge and He knows who will and who won't believe. He knew that Esau would turn away from the promises made to Abraham and despise the birthright and so He advised Rebekah beforehand that His blessing would rest on Jacob. Malachi wrote **after the event** and after history had unfolded, to demonstrate that what God had said before they were born had eventuated. It is entirely contrary to the whole of Divine revelation to suggest that God determines before people are born that some will be saved and some will be lost.

Calvinist teaching is a system of logic rather than an exposition of Scripture. It wrongly assumes that unsaved man cannot call on the Lord for salvation and if this be the case, then for anybody to be saved there must first be a sovereign **choice**. This must be followed by a sovereign **act** to save the elect without any exercise of faith by the sinner. On this basis Christ could not die for the world but only for the elect and no elected person can resist God. The unelected therefore have no opportunity or possibility of salvation.

Calvinism teaches salvation by **selection** whereas the Bible teaches that we are save by grace through faith and God offers salvation as a free gift to every sinner. *“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev.22:17). “God is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish **but that all should come to repentance**” (2Pet.3:9). God hated Esau because Esau exhausted the longsuffering of God.*

Amen.