

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

OBADIAH 1

Family feuds... history is full of them...

From *European kings* to *Oriental emperors* – families have squared off with families, and fought with each other for generations. These conflicts are often called “*vendettas*” - an Italian word that means “*blood feud.*”

If you’ve read Shakespeare’s classic, “*Romeo and Juliet,*” you know of the fictional feud between the *Capulets* and the *Montagues*... American folklore made famous the Appalachian border war between the *Hatfields of West Virginia* and the *McCoys of Kentucky.*

One weekend a year college football showcases its *border wars.* It’s a Saturday full of interstate rivalries or family feuds - *Florida vs Florida State, Texas vs Texas A&M, Auburn vs Alabama, Georgia vs Georgia Tech.*

In fact, for over 40 years, families have squared off each night on the popular TV show, “*Family Feud.*”

Obadiah is also all about a long-running *family feud.*

In Genesis 25 a *vendetta, or blood feud,* erupted in the family of Isaac - a feud between brothers, Jacob and Esau. The younger son, Jake, bought his brother’s birthright; then deceived his father to make it stick.

Esau was a *manly man.* Jacob was a *mama’s boy.*

Esau had been hunting all morning. He was hungry... *no, he was famished.* And Jacob had a stew cooking on the fire.

Jacob should've offered his older brother, Esau, a cup of chili for free - *but he didn't.*

He baited Esau, to swap *a bowl* for *his birthright.*

If Esau had valued ultimate blessings as much as he did a belly-full of stew he would've said, "*no.*" But he didn't. His hunger pangs were *physical - not spiritual.*

Perhaps Esau never took his kid brother seriously. *He figured he could bully little Jacob - eat the stew AND keep his birthright.* Esau never imagined Jacob had the hutzpah to impersonate him, and deceive dad.

Esau had Jacob pegged wrong. The kid Velcro-ed hair to his arms and legs - pretended to be the older, maturer, hairier Esau. Father Isaac took the bait. He blessed his *younger son* over Esau, *the older sibling.*

And it's interesting, even after Isaac realized he'd been had, he refused to reverse the blessing. By faith Isaac saw the hand of God at work in the outcome.

In this family feud both brothers were at fault. Jacob was a deceiver. Esau was carnal and short-sighted.

Later, Jacob admitted his error. **Esau never did.** He was a proud man. He became bitter... very, very bitter.

Hebrews 12:17 says bitterness took such a hold on Esau's heart, "*afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*"

Esau was sorry for his loss, but he remained too bitter over his brother's double-cross to admit his own fault in the matter.

Esau never found *repentance* because he could never shake his *resentment*.

And here's the greater tragedy - this feud didn't end with the brothers. It continued with their descendants.

The Edomites, or offspring of Esau - and the children of Jacob, or Israel - fought and quarreled for centuries.

This family feud became a border war, a blood feud - a vendetta that carried on for several thousand years.

Obadiah was the prophet God sent to confront the nation of Edom. This short, succinct message, reveals their underlying sin, and the behavior it produced. God will *conclude this feud*. He'll judge the sons of Esau.

The first 16 verses reveal **the destruction of Edom**, and the last 5 verses discuss **the deliverance of Zion**.

Here's a great example of why we call these last twelve books of the OT the "**Minor Prophets**." Obadiah is *minor* in its length - just 21 verses. It's the shortest book in the OT, yet it carries a strategic message.

"Minor" is a label that denotes *size* not *significance*.

The Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel average 46 chapters - the Minor Prophets just six. Yet Obadiah's 21 verses are just as inspired by God, and vital to us, as Isaiah's 66 chapters.

"The minor prophets pack a major message."

The book begins, “**The vision of Obadiah.**” Obadiah was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah, *but let me introduce you to the prophet’s neighborhood...*

The **Philistines** who lived on the western seacoast, worshipped Dagon, half-man, half-fish. *Their worship was a little fishy...* The **northern Canaanites** bowed to Ba’al the bull - he was just that, *a lot of bull...* **Ammon**, also east of the Jordan, worshipped a false goddess named Chemosh, indulging in a Fifty Shades of Gray kind of sexuality... The **Moabites** to the east were the pro-choice crowd, they sacrificed children to Molech...

Everybody had their idol! Except for two nations: *the descendants of Jacob and the descendants of Esau...*

Jacob and the Jews worshipped Yahweh, the one true God... But the Edomites worshipped *no* god.

They were atheists. Rather than trust in a god, they relied on themselves. Instead of a deity they were *do-it-yourselfers*. The Edomites were their own god.

The Edomites were a lot like modern-day Americans.

We’re also guilty of idolizing initiative, and ingenuity, and technology... The Edomites were the **original “can-do people.”** They were industrious and innovative.

These people carved cities out of the cliffs south of the Dead Sea. Their most famous effort was the rock-fortress of Petra. The Edomites figured **they** could defend themselves. They thought God was irrelevant.

Just like their forefather, Esau, who saw more nutrition in a bowl of stew than in God's blessing – the Edomites failed to recognize their need for God...

“Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom (we have heard a report from the Lord, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, “Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle”): “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised.” Here was God's beef with the Edomites, **they were proud.** And because they got the bighead, God says He'll “*make them small among the nations.*”

He's raising up an army to come against Edom.

Obadiah tells Edom in verse 3, “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’ Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” says the LORD.” Edom thought he was high and mighty. But God tells him, “*You're going down!*”

The Edomites saw themselves as *a soaring eagle*, but God will bring them down like *a dead duck*.

The territory of Edom was a swath of land southeast of the Dead Sea. It was an area about 30 miles wide by 100 miles long. The people of Esau made their homes in the cliffs and caves of the rocky highlands.

Edom's capitol was Petra - perched 5000 feet above the Dead Sea. If you saw the movie "[Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade](#)" you've seen the featured attraction of the city of Petra - it's called *the Treasury*.

Here's a photo of Indiana Adams riding out of Petra.

In the movie, the Treasury is the cave where they find the Holy Grail. In reality, it's merely a rock facade.

Go inside and it's a small room. But *the Treasury* is just the first of hundreds of structures scattered along the mountainside. It's a vast architectural complex.

And the feature that made Petra so formidable was its entranceway. It's called the "[Siq.](#)" It's a passageway 15 feet wide, by a mile long, by hundreds of feet high.

For an invading army to reach the city it had to pass through this long, narrow gorge. The army had to walk a few men abreast. Many war chariots were too wide to navigate the Siq. This made it easy for the Edomites to pick off their invaders one by one, and defend their city.

Petra was considered impregnable to attack.

This made the Edomites a cocky bunch. They acted as if they were their own god. They were proud and fiercely independent. [Edom had gotten too big for its britches, and God wanted to whittle them down to size.](#)

It reminds me of the conversation heard one night in the insane asylum. One of the patients shouted, "[I am Napoleon Bonaparte.](#)" The nurse attendant asked, "[How do you know you're Napoleon?](#)" He responded, "[God told me.](#)" Suddenly,

another voice from down the hall shouted, “**I did not!**” The Bible tells us any person who acts like he’s his own god is certifiably nuts.

Psalm 14:1 declares the truth, “**The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’**” Independence from God, self-sufficiency, human arrogance, is sheer insanity.

The notion any of us can fend for ourselves is an illusion. There’s no such thing as *a self-made man or woman*. The most successful people stand on the shoulders of others. I am what I am by God’s grace.

I don’t care *who you are, or where you’ve been, or what you’ve done - or how big you think you’ve become* - every last one of us needs God for the air we breathe and for the ability to take our next breath.

If you haven’t noticed, we live in a world of amazing order and complex symmetry. Our planet Earth is perfectly positioned to sustain and support life.

The third rock is 93 million miles from the sun. Do you realize if it were 10% closer we’d burn to a crisp. If it were 10% further away we’d turn into an ice cube.

On Earth the air pressure at sea level is 14.7 pounds per square inch. If it were 25 pounds the air around us would crush our body. At 5 pounds we would explode.

Everywhere you look in nature you see the evidence of design. It makes no sense to chalk up our existence to chance occurrences of accidental circumstances. **In a world of intricate design there has to be a Designer.**

One of the most fascinating proofs of design in nature is our own human DNA. Human genetics are chemically arranged in codes and symbols. Genes overlap in different ways to send messages to the cells of our body that produce different characteristics.

Your sexuality, hair color, height, body frame, etc., are predetermined. We can read the code in a pre-born baby's genes, and learn much about them in-utero.

But who developed the code? Organized code isn't the result of trial and error repetition. Symbolic code requires intelligence. Human DNA requires a Designer.

I once saw a cartoon entitled, "[Agnostic Fleas.](#)" Two fleas are standing on the back of a canine - one asks the other, "[You mean you actually believe in dog?](#)"

A flea has a pretty limited perspective. He can't see what's obvious. And this was the problem with Edom.

They were flea-minded. It's been said, "[Earth houses atheists many. Hell is not occupied by any.](#)" Ultimately, we all will admit the obvious - *we really do need God.*

Edom's boast reminds me of Muhammad Ali in his boxing hey-day. Once he boarded a plane, and was asked by the flight attendant to buckle his seat belt.

Ali replied, "[Superman, don't need no seat belt.](#)"

That's when the attendant answered, "[Superman, don't need no airplane.](#)" A humbled Ali buckled his seat belt. The Edomites also thought they were superman. Obadiah says God will prove you're super-chicken.

Verse 5, “If thieves had come to you, if robbers by night - Oh, how you will be cut off! - Would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings? Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after!”

When thieves hit a house they take only the valuables. They always leave some items behind. Likewise, grape-gathers, pick only the best grapes. They also leave behind a few gleanings for the poor.

Yet the nations that invade Edom will take it all. Their *hidden treasures* will be *ripped off*. Edom will be *cut off*.

The area of Petra is such a huge and intricate series of canyons and caves there would be no shortage of hiding places for Edom’s treasures. Yet one day all their hidden treasure will be searched out and looted.

They’ll even be betrayed by their so-called allies...

“All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; the men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it.

“Will I not in that day,” says the Lord, “even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau? Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.”

And here's God's reason for cutting off Edom - verse 10, "For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever..."

Esau never got over his bitterness toward Jacob. Even Esau's descendants perpetuated his hatred. The Edomites were *a perpetual rock in the shoe of the Jew*.

One commentator said of Edom's attitude toward his northern neighbors, *"The only thing about Edom that bordered on religious fervor was their concentrated, persistent, bitter hatred against the Hebrews."* It reminds us of the Palestinian hatred that exists today.

Remember, when Israel came out of Egypt and headed for the Promised Land, it was Edom who refused to allow Moses to pass through their borders.

Throughout their history, Edom was an antagonist to Israel. King Saul, David, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Amaziah, Ahaz, and Zedekiah - all battled with Edom.

The conflict with Edom was constant - *always under the surface*. This was a long-running family feud.

In fact, you can't even celebrate Christmas without reliving the friction between Esau and Jacob. Jesus, the newborn king of Israel, was born in Bethlehem. The king in Jerusalem at the time was a man named Herod.

When the wise men asked about the king's birth, Herod was jealous of a rival. He ordered the execution of all the male babies under 2 years old in Bethlehem.

Herod claimed to be King of the Jews, but he wasn't born a Jew. He was a convert to Judaism. *Guess what his birth*

certificate read? **Edomite**. King Herod was from Esau's bitter bloodline. The family feud addressed in Obadiah becomes a backdrop for the first Christmas.

Yet verse 11 refers to another *episode in this feud*, "In the day that you stood on the other side - in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem - even you were as one of them." Whenever another nation invaded Jerusalem, Edom was always quick to pile on, and take advantage of her distress.

Though Obadiah doesn't provide a historical context here, he definitely has a particular incident in mind.

There're actually a dozen Obadiah's in the OT. We're not sure *which one this Obadiah was or when he served*. Depending on the date, there are several possibilities for when foreigners invaded Jerusalem.

Some scholars place this in the middle of the 9th century BC. Edom rebelled against King Jehoram, and Jerusalem was attacked by the Philistines and Arabians. It could be Edom joined them at the time.

Other scholars lean toward Babylon's invasion of Judah, which occurred much later, 586 BC. We know when Babylon conquered Jerusalem, *Edom rejoiced!*

Psalm 137:7 records the reaction, "Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, 'Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!'"

The Edomites became Babylonian cheerleaders.

The walls of Jerusalem were toppled - the Temple was burned - his brother, Jacob, was reeling, about to be taken into captivity... yet Edom stood on the sidelines and egged on the Babylonians. They cried out for more and more carnage. They wanted to run up the score - pour it on. They seethed with bitterness.

There's a verse in the Apocrypha, 1 Esdras 4:45.

Understand, the Apocrypha is not inspired Scripture, just interesting history. 1 Esdras was written after the fall of Babylon to Persia. The Jews were about to end their 70 year captivity and return to their homeland.

That's when a Jew named, *Zerubbabel*, reminds the King of Persia. "You also vowed to build the Temple, which the Edomites burned when Judea was laid waste by the Chaldeans." Notice, Zerubbabel says that Edom helped the Babylonians set fire to God's Temple.

It just shows the intensity of Edom's bitterness.

Next, Obadiah peppers the Edomites with a series of "*should not*s." Verse 12 begins, "But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity." They entered the

city like scavengers to pick through their brother's remaining belongings.

“You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress.” The Edomites even patrolled the caravan routes leading south out of Jerusalem for Egypt, to arrest any Jews who were trying to escape.

When Judah was at his lowest point, his own brother kicked him in the ribs. *Edom's sin was rubbing in.*

They took pleasure in their brother's demise. They enjoyed seeing the Jews squirm, sweat, and suffer.

Edom did nothing to help the Jews, but applauded as they were led away in chains. *And here's a word to all Georgia Tech fans... who happened to beat the Bulldogs this past year. Beware of the sin of rubbing it in.* Don't be Edomites and rejoice in your foe's demise.

I once had a supervisor named Ralph. We worked together at the Dupont Distribution Center. One Friday afternoon I was locking up. We were getting ready to wrap it up and head home - when I found a hobo - a homeless man - who'd come in on a railcar. He was lying in a drunken stupor on our warehouse dock.

According to company policy, Ralph should've run the fellow off the property. Instead, at Ralph's suggestion, I made the hobo a bed out of foam packing material. I went to the break room and bought him crackers and a soft drink. I laid them by

the foam mat so he'd have something to eat when he woke up.

I'll never forget what Ralph told me before we left that afternoon "Sandy, never kick a man when he's down. You never know when you might be that man."

Edom should've had mercy on his fallen brother. But instead the nation poured salt on the wound - kicked Judah while he was down. *Seven times in three verses*, verses 12-14, God says to Edom, "You should not have..." God was angry at Edom for the cruelty she showed Judah, and would punish them as a result.

Verse 15, "For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head."

Here's God's message to Edom - **what goes around comes around!** Since Edom kicked Israel, Edom will also get the boot... History tells us Babylon eventually turned on the Edomites... In addition, 200 years later, around 300 BC - between the OT and NT - Edom was conquered by the Greek army of Alexander the Great.

Eventually the Jews gained their independence from the Greeks. That's when Israel, and their Maccabean kings, conquered and scattered the Edomites among the surrounding nations. By the 3rd century AD Edom was spoken of as a people that no longer existed.

As verse 16 tells us, "For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been." From the time Edom kicked a downtrodden

Israel, onward, they became a nation “*small and despised*” just as Obadiah predicted.

But Obadiah’s prophecy isn’t over... *What about the target of Esau’s hatred and resentment?* Israel was the victim of Edom’s antagonism. And in the last verses of Obadiah, God promises to bless and deliver the Jews.

Edom’s hidden riches will be *ripped off*, but the Hebrew’s treasures will be *recovered and restored*.

I love verse 17, to me it’s one of the most provocative verses in the Bible. “**On Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.**”

What does it mean to *possess your possessions?*

It would seem to me, if something is your possession don’t you already possess it? *Not necessarily...*

William Randolph Hearst was a wealthy tycoon. He made his money in the newspaper business. He was also an avid art collector. A number of years ago Kathy and I visited his castle and saw some of his collection.

One day Hearst was thumbing through a magazine and saw a beautiful painting. He called in an assistant and made it his mission to find and purchase this painting. After combing galleries all over the world he returned to report the results of his failed search.

Hearst was angry. He wouldn’t take no for an answer. He sent him out again, and told him not to return without the

coveted addition. Finally, the painting was located... *in one of Hearst's own warehouses.*

William Randolph Hearst had owned the painting the whole time, but he failed to *possess his possession*. And there are followers of Jesus in the same boat...

All that you need, Jesus has already provided.

Ephesians 1:3 tells us, by His death on the cross our Lord Jesus has purchased for us *all spiritual blessings*.

Sitting in God's warehouse is *unlimited power, and unquenchable love, and inexpressible joy, and unexplainable peace, and other-worldly wisdom.*

And your name is on exactly what you need. It was purchased with you in mind. All you have to do is snatch it off the shelf. *But have you grabbed it up? Is it in your actual possession, and if not, then why not?*

Faith is the tentacle - the suction cup - that takes hold of spiritual treasures. Faith makes *the spiritual tangible, and heavenly touchable, and eternal timely.*

Don't be content to come to church - *and sing about, and read about, and talk about* - the advantages of the Christian life. If you believe it's true, then *"possess your possessions."* Rise up in faith, and seize what God has for you. Treat the fruits, and gifts, and graces of His Spirit as your own personal possessions - *for they are.*

Why do you allow the *skepticism of others, or your own feelings of unworthiness, or demonic doubts* to rob you of enjoying what the blood of Jesus purchased for you? It's time for us to *possess our possessions.*

The rest of Obadiah describes how Judah will burn brightly, while Edom flames out. “The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,” for the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 16 is an interesting prophecy concerning Petra. In the last days, prior to Jesus’ second coming, outcasts from Judah will flee from the Antichrist into the wilderness and take refuge in the rock city of Petra.

Ironically, in the midst of God’s final judgments the cliffs and caves that Edom once trusted to save them, *but did not* - will be used by their rivals as a place of safety. In the end the nation of Edom will be no more, but the people of Israel will govern God’s land.

And verse 19 explains how Israel will rule over what was once the jurisdiction of Edom. “The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. Benjamin shall possess Gilead (land east of the Jordan River). And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South.”

Verse 21 applies to the judgment of nations prior to the Kingdom Age... “Then saviors (or judges) shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom

shall be the Lord's." Notice again that last line... *"The kingdom shall be the LORD'S."*

In the end, who wins this family feud? You might assume it was Israel, but it's God who wins. And since Israel was aligned with God he shared in God's victory.

Edom learned the hard way what's true in every conflict - neither you nor I are the winning side. Victory belongs to the Lord. The question is never, *"Is God on your side?"* - but *"Are you and I on God's side?"*

When you think about Esau and Jacob and their long running feud, it's amazing how what starts out a fuss between two brothers over a bowl of stew, can boil over into the slaughter of all Bethlehem's male babies, *and eventually the survival and fall of two nations.*

They say the feud between the Hatfields and McCoys started when McCoy's hog wandered onto Hatfield land. Hatfield claimed ownership - but McCoy said it was his. The family conflict started to escalate.

Thirteen years and twelve killings later both families called for a cease fire. Sadly, family feuds *spill over... they grow... they compound... they intensify...*

Perhaps you've been feuding with a brother, or sister, or parent, or child? In recent days it's escalated... It could be hostility between you and your spouse. *Harmony* has degenerated into *rivalry*. Maybe you're in a border war with a neighbor or co-worker.

Even churches aren't immune from tribal wars. People get upset with people, they break community and go across the street to start the **Second Church**.

Christians can *stop fellowshipping* and *start feuding*. In all relationships a simmering hostility can boil over.

Here's the thought I want to leave with you. It's the big idea in Obadiah. *We will annoy each other - be inconsiderate - have misunderstandings - slight each other - engage in squabbles - have our differences...*

But simple stuff, like a bowl of chili, turns into major breeches and *family feuds* for one reason, **pride!** *Pride divides!* It causes little fissures to turn into chasms.

Obadiah promised Edom if he insisted on thinking he was big stuff, God would make him small. He'll be *big* alright - *a big whoop-de-do* - he'll end up despised not esteemed. *And God will do the same to any of us...*

Humble yourself. Stop focusing on how you've *been wronged* and realize that you've *done wrong*.

Deal with your own sin. God will right the wrongs that need to be righted, if you'll get your own heart right.

Today, do you need to swallow your pride? Is there a friend, or a family member, or a co-worker to whom you should apologize and make amends? Remember the adage, **"You'll never get heartburn eating humble pie."**

Don't ever forget what comes *after pride*? **A fall.**

Pride sets you up for a humble tumble. Proverbs 16:18 says it best, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Just ask the Edomites.

I like this quote, “A man who acts too big for his britches will be exposed in the end.” Jesus said in Matthew 23:12, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

In 1971, “The Fight of the Century,” took place in New York’s Madison Square Garden. *Muhammed Ali* squared off with the champ, *Smoking Joe Frazier*.

Life Magazine quoted the boast Ali made prior to the fight. “We’re going to decide once and for all who is the king... There’s not a man alive who can whup me. I’m too smart. I’m too pretty. I’m the greatest. I’m the king. I should be a postage stamp. That’s the only way I could get licked.” But that night Ali did get licked.

Frazier KO’d him. 1 Corinthians 10:12 rang true “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

Here’s the problem with pride... Pride puts you first - first in your family, first at work, first at church, first in life, first with your friends, first before God - and when you put anything first before God that’s called *worship*.

God hates pride because He wants our worship.

It’s time for some of us to renounce our pride, and bow our knees to God. Acknowledge your neediness! Call on Jesus and by faith *possess your possessions*.

Remember, pride is the great divider.

Trust Jesus, and He'll end the feud between you and that other person... *AND between you and God...*