



Carnegie Shul Chatter

December 8, 2022



Light candles 4:35pm

Shabbat Services 9:30am

Shabbat Services

The Carnegie Shul continues to offer hybrid Shabbat services. Please join us in the sanctuary, providing you have been vaccinated for Covid 19. Masks are optional. To attend virtually, watch for a Zoom link in your email. If you don't receive it, contact Rosalyn Hoffman at rjlynman@yahoo.com. The complete Torah reading, in Hebrew and English, can be found on line at https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading_cdo/aid/2492515/jewish/Vayishlach-Torah-Reading.htm

It's Too Much!

With Mike doing his duty this week at Pirates Fantasy Camp, you get Ellen's thoughts.

I'm often frustrated by these early chapters in Bereishis. All of creation in one parsha? *Come on!* It's simply too much to process. More of the same with the succeeding parshas: Abraham gives us monotheism... Sarah miraculously gives birth at age 90... We have the near sacrifice of Isaac, Isaac's marriage and the birth of his sons, Jacob taking Esau's birthright, then going off to Laban in search of a wife... and all the drama there.

Whew! How do you focus on only one part of a parsha filled with so much?

One portion of this parsha that always strikes me is the story of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife — the wife he worked an additional seven years to marry after Laban betrayed him by substituting Leah at Jacob's first wedding.

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This week Rachel, who we've just met, dies in childbirth. How she struggled to conceive, as she watched her sister and Jacob's handmaids bear him one child after another. Finally she has Joseph. Then she dies without ever knowing her second child, Benjamin. I struggle with these kinds of stories. What are we supposed to take from a tale that would have us saying, *But, that's so unfair!*

Maybe that *is* the lesson. Life isn't fair. Even the best of us will be challenged, face adversity, endure pain. In the end, what do we have but our faith? Without that there is no hope. Without hope, how do you keep going?

And that may be the greatest lesson we can learn.

Vayishlach in a Nutshell

Genesis 32:4–36:43

From Chabad.org

Jacob returns to the Holy Land after a 20-year stay in Charan, and sends angel-emissaries to Esau in hope of a reconciliation, but his messengers report that his brother is on the warpath with 400 armed men. Jacob prepares for war, prays, and sends Esau a large gift (consisting of hundreds of heads of livestock) to appease him.

That night, Jacob ferries his family and possessions across the Jabbok River; he, however, remains behind and encounters the angel that embodies the spirit of Esau, with whom he wrestles until daybreak. Jacob suffers a dislocated hip but vanquishes the supernal creature, who bestows on him the name Israel, which means “he who prevails over the divine.”

Jacob and Esau meet, embrace and kiss, but part ways. Jacob purchases a plot of land near Shechem, whose crown prince—also called Shechem—abducts and rapes Jacob's daughter Dinah. Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi avenge the deed by killing all male inhabitants of the city, after rendering them vulnerable by convincing them to circumcise themselves.

Jacob journeys on. Rachel dies while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, and is buried in a roadside grave near Bethlehem. Reuben loses the birthright because he interferes with his father's marital life. Jacob arrives in Hebron, to his father Isaac, who later dies at age 180. (Rebecca has passed away before Jacob's arrival.)

Our Parshah concludes with a detailed account of Esau's wives, children and grandchildren; the family histories of the people of Seir, among whom Esau settled; and a list of the eight kings who ruled Edom, the land of Esau's and Seir's descendants.



Haftorah in a Nutshell

Obadiah 1:1-21

This week's haftorah mentions the punishment of Edom, the descendants of Esau, whose conflict with Jacob is chronicled in this week's Torah reading.

The prophet Obadiah, himself an Edomian convert to Judaism, describes the punishment destined for the nation of Edom. The Edomites did not come to Judea's aid when she was being destroyed by the Babylonians, and even joined in the carnage. Many years later the Edomites (the Roman Empire) themselves destroyed the Second Temple and mercilessly killed and enslaved their Jewish cousins.



Though the Roman Empire was one of the mightiest to ever inhabit the earth, the prophet forewarns: "If you go up high like an eagle, and if you place your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord. . . And the house of Jacob shall be fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau shall become stubble, and they shall ignite them and consume them, and the house of Esau shall have no survivors, for the Lord has spoken."

After describing the division of Esau's lands amongst the returning Judean exiles, the haftorah concludes with the well known phrase: "And saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the Lord shall have the kingdom."

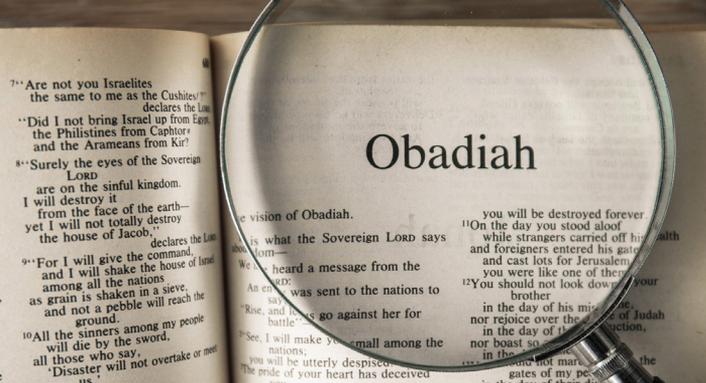
Haftorah Commentary

Ob-La-Di Obadiah

By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz

OVADYA (Obadiah) first appeared in I Kings 18. When Izevel (Queen Jezebel) was killing prophets, Obadiah hid 100 of them in caves at personal risk, for which he was rewarded with the gift of prophecy himself. Obadiah was also a convert from the nation of Edom, who were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 39b) says that Obadiah is like an axe whose handle is carved from one of those trees. The forest is brought down by something that came from within it.

The Edom of Obadiah's prophecy can refer to the Biblical nation of Edom and the first Temple



era, to Rome and the second Temple (which was destroyed by the Romans), or to the Christian world in general. (If Edom means that, then the book would be prophesying an event in our future, presumably the war of Gog and Magog.)

G-d has sent a message about Edom. The nations will go to war against her; they consider her insignificant. (Rashi quotes the Talmud in Avodah Zarah 10a that the

other nations looked down on Edom because they didn't have their own script or language.) Edom let the evil in her heart seduce her into speaking out against Israel. They "live in the cracks of the rocks of (their) high dwelling," meaning that Edom relies on the merits of our common ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, though that won't be enough to save them.

Edom is full of herself, asking "Who could possibly bring me back down to earth?" G-d says that even if they put their "nest" between the stars, He will bring them down from there. If burglars came by night, they would only rob until they had enough. This will not be the case with Edom, who will be picked clean by their enemies. Their allies will betray them.

What did Edom do to deserve this punishment? They oppressed their brother Jacob (Israel), either actively in the destruction of the Second Temple, or tacitly in the destruction of the first. Assuming we are speaking of the first Temple, they stood far off, offering no help against the Babylonians. If anything, they rejoiced in Israel's downfall and stretched out their hands to plunder their wealth. The day of G-d over all nations is close at hand; as Edom did to others will be done to them. Payback for their actions will be deposited on their heads.

On Mt. Zion there will be a refuge and it will be holy. ("It" could refer either to the mountain or to the group of people there.) Israel will inherit that which they inherited before, plus they will inherit from Edom, Moav and the Philistines. The house of Jacob will be fire, the house of Joseph will be flame and the house of Esau (Edom) will be like straw; they will be consumed. (Why is Joseph singled out? The Talmud in Baba Basra 123b says that only Joseph's descendants will be able to defeat Esau's descendants. If any other Tribe asked Edom, "Why did you persecute your brother?" they could reply "YOU persecuted YOUR brother!" Joseph, however, could say "I forgave my brothers for harming me, why don't you forgive yours?")

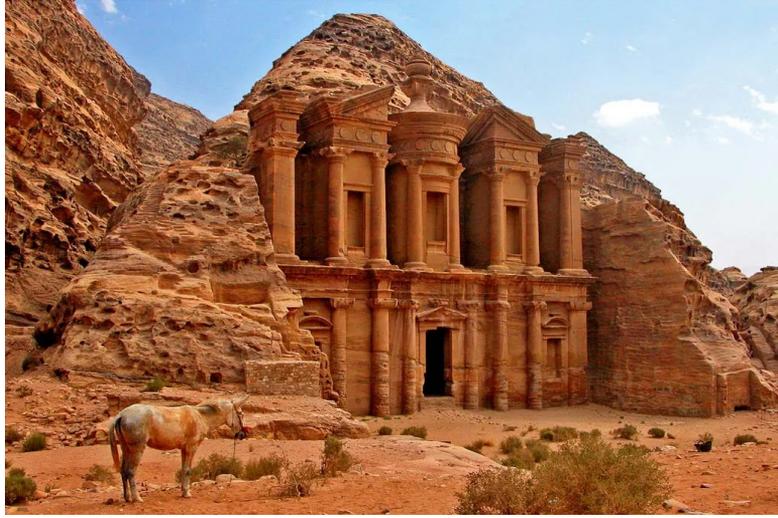
There will be no survivor from Edom, for G-d has spoken. The people of Israel will inherit the mountain of Esau, the Philistines, and other lands. The masses of Jews exiled as far as France and Spain will inherit the cities of the south. Saviors – possibly referring to Moshiach (the Messiah) and other great leaders of Jewish history – will ascend Mt. Zion to judge Edom. At that time, the whole world will recognize the kingship of G-d.

Rabbi Jack Abramowitz is Torah Content Editor at the Orthodox Union. He is the author of seven books, including The Tzniyus Book, The Taryag Companion and The God Book. His latest work, Ask Rabbi Jack, is available from Kodesh Press as well as on Amazon.

Edom's Lofty Dwellings

Commentary by David Emanuel

Tucked away in the mountains of eastern Jordan lie the remains of the ancient city of Petra, in the territory of biblical Edom. The name Edom, which means 'red' in Hebrew, reflects the hue of the sandstone from which the city was constructed. Perhaps the most impressive surviving feature of the ruins is the towering Al Khazneh or 'Treasury', a carved edifice that stands over thirty metres tall. Although the structure is commonly referred to as the Treasury, it is believed originally to have served as the mausoleum of the Nabataean King Aretas IV in the first century CE.



When addressing the Edomites, Obadiah refers to them as, 'You who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high' (v.3). At the time of Obadiah's prophecy, the Edomites had built their settlements in the region of Petra, creating for themselves an elevated dwelling that was naturally easy to defend. The wording of Obadiah 3, 'in the clefts of the rock', additionally suggests the Edomites, like the Nabataeans after them, carved out their accommodations from the sandstone and used natural caves to create secure living spaces. So although Al Khazneh was constructed approximately 500 years after Obadiah prophesied, it remains a stunning visual representation of Edom's dwelling places, bringing Obadiah's words vividly to life.

It appears that the location's perceived defences engendered a false sense of security among the inhabitants of Edom, to the point that they felt untouchable. Obadiah's words in verse 3 expose this sentiment. He addresses the Edomites as 'You ... who say in your heart, "who will bring me down to the ground?"'.



Despite the ostensible security of their dwellings and the pride of their hearts, Obadiah's words to ancient Edom proclaimed destruction against them; even though they were lodged in high mountain fortresses, the God of Israel would bring them down, 'Though your nest is set among the stars, thence I will bring you down' (v.4).

Yahrtzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrtzeits of:

Ben E. Sherman

Bernard William

Robert Adler

Anton A. Denes

Lynn Liberman Roth

Joseph Leon Hirsh

John Jack Ketler

Hannah Moskowitz

Ervin H. Peresman

Jack Levine

Julius Shutzberg

May their memories be for a blessing.

Donations

The Carnegie Shul is most grateful for the following recent donation:

Roger Wilk

In Memory of Dr. Zayne Wilkn