

the ideal of beauty and protection for a fortress of trade and commerce to satisfy an oriental nomad."

THAT SAITH . . . WHO SHALL BRING ME DOWN TO THE GROUND?; Edom's pride and boasting rested on her assumption of strategic impregnability. One explorer of the territory has stated that a handful of men stationed in the *Sik* could easily hold off a whole army of invaders. The solid stone cliffs were not only perpendicular, they furnished no niches for scaling them at any place. Her self-satisfied security also found credence in her position along the heavily traveled trade route of that time. Through its weird ravines passed camel caravans headed for Egypt and the Mediterranean where their goods were eventually shipped to Greece and Rome. Dromedarians from everywhere paid customs duties and tribute at the gates of Petra for the privilege of passage and protection. As a consequence the inhabitants of Petra assumed commanding importance on trade routes, its citizens were prosperous, its coffers bulging with gold and silver. Its wealth was reputed to be fabulous. Edom's presumptuous boasting in her defenses and her wealth reminds us of many nations, both past and present, whose proud necks have been bowed by the Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe.

v. 4 HIGH AS THE EAGLE . . . NEST . . . AMONG THE STARS; There are a number of references to the eagle as representing power, swiftness and invincibility (cf. Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Ps. 103:5; Isa. 40:31; Jer. 4:13; Dan. 7:4; Matt. 24:28). The hyperbolic figure of "setting one's nest among the stars" is used by other prophets to express human pride (cf. Amos. 9:2ff and Isa. 14:13ff).

QUIZ

1. What is a "vision"?
2. What is the significance of God's tidings for Israel?
3. Why was an "ambassador" sent among the "nations"?
4. How was Edom "made small" and "despised"?
5. Describe the "dwelling" place of Edom.
6. What, besides her dwelling place, probably gave Edom cause for pride?

THE EXTENT OF EDMON'S JUDGMENT

TEXT: v. 5-9

- 5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not steal only till they had enough? if grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes?

- 6 How are the things of Esau searched! how are his hidden treasures sought out!
- 7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee on thy way, even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread lay a snare under thee: there is no understanding in him.
- 8 Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?
- 9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one may be cut off from the mount of Esau by slaughter.

QUERIES

- a. What is the significance of the figures of speech, v. 5?
- b. How did Edom's allies deceive her?
- c. Who were the "wise men" of Edom?

PARAPHRASE

Alas! How you are going to be destroyed! Why, even if thieves or night raiders came upon you, they would steal only as much as they could use or find would they not? Or, imagine yourself a vineyard—would not even the harvesters fail to gather some of the grapes? But it would not be so with God; His devastating judgment will be complete in all the things of Esau. How completely He will search out and take away all the hidden treasures of Esau! All the allies with whom you have made treaties and pacts will betray you, join with your enemies and drive you across the borders of your own land into the hands of your enemies. Even your most trusted friends while making covenants of peace with you will, at the same time, be secretly plotting a trap for you. The calamity which comes upon you will be so secretive, sudden and complete none will have the wisdom or understanding to offer defense or help. And it shall most certainly come to pass on that day, says Jehovah, I will utterly destroy the wise men and their wisdom out of Edom. In that day also your heroes and mighty men of valor, O Teman, will become cowards and as a result they will be helpless to prevent the terrible slaughter that is coming upon the inhabitants of Edom.

SUMMARY

Edom's devastation will be absolutely complete! Her destruction will originate with the God of all the earth who will bring it about through His ministers—both the allies and enemies of Edom.

COMMENT

v. 5 THIEVES . . . STEAL ONLY . . . ENOUGH? GRAPE-GATHERERS . . . LEAVE SOME? God, speaking through Obadiah, asks rhetorical questions (expecting "yes" answers). Actually these are interrogative declarations. The whole point is the contrast between what man would do to Edom and what God is going to do. If the plundering of Edom were designed and executed by men only there would be some "gleanings" left after the plundering. But it shall not be so when God's plundering is finished! Nothing will be left. Isaiah prophesies, ". . . they shall name it, No Kingdom There." (read in connection with Edom's plundering, Isa. 34:5-17; Jer. 49:17-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; Mal. 1:1-5). Edom's history, as long as she existed after this prophecy, was one long story of subjugation and plundering. Her glorious culture, one of the richest of the world then, was plundered by nation after nation. Her people were taken time after time and sold into slavery. The nation was driven from its homeland into the southern deserts of Palestine.

v. 7 MEN OF THY CONFEDERACY . . . HAVE DECEIVED THEE . . . THEY THAT EAT THY BREAD LAY A SNARE: Edom's allies (probably the Arabians with whom Edom joined in the plundering of Judah—see II Chron. 22:16ff—) secretly plotted her downfall all the while they were banqueting with her around the peace tables. Edom's neighbors, the Arabians, made commercial treaties with her but betrayed her to her enemies at the same time. Keil says, "Edom was a great emporium of the Syrio-Arabian trade, where many valuables were stored, and because of the loss of these riches the prosperity and power of Edom were destroyed."

v. 8 DESTROY THE WISE MEN OUT OF EDMOM: We, with Keil, do not believe Obadiah means that the wise men of Edom will be slain but that the Lord will take away their discernment, making them to become fools, so that they will be of no help to Edom. That Edom was known for its "wise men" is evident from Jer. 49:7; Isa. 19:11; 29:14 and especially from the fact that Eliphaz, the "wise man" who was the "friend" of Job was from Teman (Job 2:1, etc.). Romans 1:18-32 serves to explain how and why God gave these Gentiles up to their own foolishness. When any people refuses to have God in their knowledge and exchange the truth of God for lies, God gives them up and sends them a strong delusion so that they may believe a lie (cf. II Thess. 2:11-12). This is what happened to Edom. Proud in her own conceit she became a fool!

v. 9 AND THY MIGHTY MEN . . . SHALL BE DISMAYED . . . Teman is another name for the southern district of Idumea, named after Teman a son of Eliphaz and a grandson of Esau (cf. Gen. 36:11, 15). With the destruction of wisdom and discernment by the Lord (cf. Isa. 29:14-16; I Cor. 1:18-31) even the mighty warriors and men of valor lost hope and the nation was cut off. As we have mentioned earlier in our Introduction to Obadiah, the Edomites were betrayed by their allies and lost their high, rocky fortress in Petra delivered to the borders of their enemies and forced to live in the wastelands of the deserts of southern Palestine, there to become known as Idumeans. The Idumeans perished from the earth, as a nation, about 70 A.D. The Nabateans, from the nomadic Arabian tribes, inhabited the cliffs of Petra but not for long for God's doom had been pronounced against this place. God was to speak through other prophets that this territory would become so desolate it would become home only for the hawk, porcupine and owl: Isaiah said that thorns would grow over its strongholds, and it would be the haunt of jackals and other kinds of wild beasts (Isa. 34).

Many words of doom rang out against this seemingly impregnable rock fortress and its inhabitants. But for years it seemed that whoever occupied the cliffs would be safe and secure for no enemy could get in to attack the city. Even in the time of Rome's power and dominion, Petra and her inhabitants were still rich and powerful. But God said the proud city would be brought down, that it would be left deserted. How could this possibly happen when it was in such an important position and so well protected? For centuries the long, rich caravans laden with precious, costly treasures for trade from the East made Petra one of the most important stopping and trading places along the one and only trade route from the East to the West. But without warning and almost without reason a new caravan route opened up far to the north of Petra making Palmyra its chief stopping place. No longer did the camel caravans pass through the mountains of Seir with their precious cargoes. The great trade center Petra was suddenly cut off from the main highway, the city was left alone in its rocky wilderness. Soon the people left the cliff side homes that had taken years of patient labor to build. Their fortress wasn't strong enough to hide them from God's judgment. No great battles, no mighty armies, were needed to make God's sure word of prophecy come true. No, only the changing of a trade route and Petra, the city which had been powerful and rich, became a hollow shell, emptied of all life except the owl and the jackal. You can go there this very day and see the prophecy fulfilled before

your very eyes. In 150 A.D. the Roman emperor Trajan all but obliterated the Nabatean people from the face of the earth.

QUIZ

1. How complete will be God's judgment against Edom?
2. How was Edom's downfall finally brought about?
3. How does God destroy the wisdom of Edom's wise men?
4. Why would the mighty men of Teman be dismayed?
5. How was God's Word, that Petra would become the habitat for wild beasts, finally fulfilled?

THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON EDM

TEXT: v. 10-16

- 10 For the violence done to thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.
- 11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.
- 12 But look not thou on the day of thy brother in the day of his disaster, and rejoice not over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither speak proudly in the day of distress.
- 13 Enter not into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, look not thou on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither lay ye hands on their substance in the day of their calamity.
- 14 And stand thou not in the crossway, to cut off those of his that escape; and deliver not up those of his that remain in the day of distress.
- 15 For the day of Jehovah is near upon all the nations: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall turn upon thine own head.
- 16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yea, they shall drink, and swallow down, and shall be as though they had not been.

QUERIES

- a. How were the Edomites and the descendants of Jacob brothers?
- b. When did the Edomites do violence to the people of Judah?
- c. Why does Obadiah write of the day of Jehovah upon all nations?