

# The Book of Obadiah

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If you don't know me, my name is Rachel, and these are my scripture notes on the Book of Obadiah. The verses are presented sequentially in English and Hebrew, followed by my commentary. Think of it as a living midrash: whenever I learn something new, I add a note. My notes draw from an eclectic range of ancient sources, both Jewish and Gentile. These include rabbinical commentaries, classical sources, and even the holy texts of other religions. See my [about page](#) for more.

## Obadiah 1

עֲבֹדְיָה א

<sup>1</sup> THE VISION of Obadiah. Thus saith the L-rd GOD concerning Edom: We have heard a message from HaShem, and an ambassador is sent among the nations: 'Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.'

<sup>1</sup> חֲזוֹן, עֲבֹדְיָה: כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה לְאֶדוֹם, שְׁמוּעָה שִׁמְעֵנוּ מֵאֵת יְהוָה וְצִיר בְּגוֹיִם שְׁלַח--קוֹמוּ וְנִקְוֶמָה עָלֶיהָ. לְמַלְחָמָה.

- Edom, the nation of Esau to the southeast of Judah.

**Genesis 25:30** – <sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob: 'Let me swallow, I pray thee, some of this red, red pottage; for I am faint.' Therefore was his name called Edom.

<sup>30</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר עֲשׂו אֶל-יַעֲקֹב, הֲלִיעִיטְנִי נָא מִן-הָאֵדָם הָאֵדָם הִזֶּה--כִּי עֵיַף, אָנֹכִי; עַל-כֵּן קָרָא-שְׁמוֹ, אֶדוֹם.

- The name Obadiah also appears in the Book of Kings. Scholars doubt it's the same Obadiah as our sages contend, though the consensus agrees Micah, Haggai, and Zechariah are indeed the same historical figures.

**Sanhedrin 39b** – Rabbi Yitzhak says: For what reason did Obadiah merit prophecy? It is because he concealed one hundred prophets in a cave, as it is stated: "It was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took one hundred prophets, and hid them, fifty men in a cave, and fed them with bread and water" (I Kings 18:4).

אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: מַפְנֵי מָה זָכָה עֲבֹדְיָהוּ לְנִבִּיאוֹת? מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַחֲבִיא מֵאָה נְבִיאִים בְּמַעְרָה, שְׁנָאֲמַר: "וַיְהִי בְּהַכְרִית אֵיזֶבֶל אֶת נְבִיאֵי ה' וַיִּקַּח עֲבֹדְיָהוּ מֵאָה נְבִיאִים וַיַּחֲבִיאֵם חֲמִשִּׁים אִישׁ בְּמַעְרָה וַיֹּגֵד".

- Isaiah and Nahum also open with the vision of, חֲזוֹן their prophet.

**Isaiah 1:1** – <sup>1</sup> The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

<sup>1</sup> חֲזוֹן, וְשַׁעֲרֵהוּ בֶן-אֲמוּזָן, אֲשֶׁר רָוָה, עַל-יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם--בְּיָמֵי עֲזַחְיָהוּ יוֹתָם אֲחָז וְחִזְקִיָּהוּ, מְלָכֵי יְהוּדָה.

**Nahum 1:1** – <sup>1</sup> The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

<sup>1</sup> מִשָּׂא, נִינְוָה--סֵפֶר חֲזוֹן נַחֻם, הָאֶלְקוֹשִׁי.

- Verses 1-3 parallel Jeremiah 49:14-16 nearly verbatim. Scholars debate which text reformulates the other.

**Jeremiah 49:14** – <sup>14</sup> I have heard a message from HaShem, and an ambassador is sent among the nations: 'Gather yourselves together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.'

<sup>14</sup> שְׁמוּעָה שִׁמְעֵתִי מֵאֵת יְהוָה, וְצִיר בְּגוֹיִם שְׁלַח; הִתְקַבְּצוּ וּבֹאוּ עָלֶיהָ, וְקוּמוּ לְמַלְחָמָה.

- Obadiah's vision is directed against Edom. According to the Gemara, Obadiah was an Edomite convert. Rashi (1040–1105) repeats this tradition.

**Sanhedrin 39b** – Efrayim Miksha'a, a student of Rabbi Meir, said in the name of Rabbi Meir: Obadiah was an Edomite convert. Consequently, he prophesied with regard to Edom. And this is as people say: From and within the forest comes the ax to it, as the handle for the ax that chops the tree is from the forest itself.

אָמַר אֶפְרַיִם מִקְּשָׁאָה תַלְמִידוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי מֵאִיר מְשׁוּם רַבִּי מֵאִיר: עֲבֹדְיָה גֵר אֶדוֹמִי הָיָה. וְהֵינָנוּ דֹאֲמְרֵי אֵינָשִׁי: מִנִּיהַ בִּבְיָה אֲבָא נִיזִיל בִּיהַ נִרְנָא.

**Rashi on Obadiah 1:1** – The vision of Obadiah—Why is Obadiah different that he was chosen to prophesy concerning Edom and did not prophesy any other prophecy? Our Sages of blessed memory stated: Obadiah was an Edomite proselyte. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: From them and in them will I bring upon them. Let Obadiah, who dwelt between two wicked people, Ahab and Jezebel, and did not learn from their deeds, come and impose retribution upon Esau, who dwelt between two righteous people, Isaac and Rebecca, and did not learn from their deeds.

חֲזוֹן עֲבֹדְיָה. מֵאִי שָׁנָא עֲבֹדְיָה לְאֶדוֹם וְלֹא נִבְּאָה אַחֶרָה? אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים: עֲבֹדְיָה גֵר אֶדוֹמִי הָיָה. אָמַר הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: מִהֵם וּבֵהֶם אָבִיא עָלֵיהֶם. וְבֹא עֲבֹדְיָה שְׂדֵר בֵּין שְׁנֵי רָשָׁעִים, אַחָאב וְאִזְבֵּל, וְלֹא לָמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם, וַיִּפְרַע מַעֲשֵׂי הַרְשָׁע שְׂדֵר בֵּין שְׁנֵי צַדִּיקִים, יִצְחָק וְרֵבֶקָה, וְלֹא לָמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם:

- Sanhedrin's axe metaphor reminds me of apostates. The axe that cuts down a forest has a handle whose wood comes from a tree in that same forest. So too are religious communities destroyed by their wayward children. It's the apostate of a religion who most enthusiastically opposes it.

- I know this personally. Who spends all their time consuming atheist counter-apologetic content and arguing with Christians online? Those who grew up Evangelical and left it. When I apostasized, I was insufferable. I never stopped talking about it. I read all the New Atheism books: Sam Harris (1967–), Richard Dawkins (1941–) – I watched countless hours of Christopher Hitchens (1949–2011) delivering “Hitch-slaps” on YouTube. And I was successful: I deconverted many of my college peers. I had studied the Bible, Christianity, and theology so well from my upbringing that I knew it like the back of my hand: all the arguments, all the problematic verses, all the historicity issues – I rarely lost a debate, and I helped others grow in their anti-theism. If you had met me just a few years ago, you'd be talking to a completely different person. Blessed are You, Adonai, who softens the heart and desires repentance.
- Sadly, our people have suffered from this same apostatic zeal. Nachmanides (1194–1270) famously debated a Jewish apostate, Pablo Christiani, during the Barcelona Disputation (1263). While Nachmanides shares he was promised protection by King James I of Aragon (1208–1276) and won the argument, the ensuing fallout ultimately led to his banishment four years later and Talmudic censorship.

**Nachmanides, Disputation of Barcelona** – Our lord the king commanded me to dispute with Friar Paul in his palace, in his presence and before his counselors, in Barcelona. I answered and said: I will do as my lord the king commands, if you give me permission to speak as I wish. I ask for this the permission of the king and the permission of Friar Raymond de Peñafort and his companions who are here. Friar Raymond answered: Provided that you do not speak insults. I said to them: I do not wish to be subject to your judgment on that, but to say all I wish in the matter of the disputation, as you say all you wish; I have the sense to speak with decorum, but it shall be as I please. And they all gave me permission to speak as I wished.

צוּוּה אוֹתִי אֲדוֹנִנוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ לַהֲתוּכָה עִם פְּרָאִי פוֹל בְּהִיכּוּלוֹ בִּפְנֵי (וּבְפָנֵי וַיַּעֲצוּ) בִּבְרַצְלוֹנָה. וְאֵנָּה וְאֹמַר: אַעֲשֶׂה כְּמִצְוֹת אֲדוֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אִם תִּתְּנוּ לִי רְשׁוֹת לְדַבֵּר כְּרִצּוֹנִי. וְאִנִּי מִבְּקֵשׁ (בוֹה) רְשׁוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְרְשׁוֹת פְּרָאִי רִמּוֹן דְּפִינָא פּוֹרֵט (דְּפִינִיא פּוֹאִירֵט) וְחִבְרִיו אֲשֶׁר בִּכְאָן. עֲנָה פְּרָאִי רִמּוֹן (דִּי פִינִיא פּוֹאִירֵט): וּבִלְבָד שְׁלֹא תְּדַבֵּר בִּזְיוּנוֹת. אֲמַרְתִּי לָהֶם: אִינִי רּוֹצֵה לַהֲיִית בְּדִינְכֶם עַל זֶה, אֲבָל שְׂאוּמֵר כָּל רִצּוֹנִי בַּעֲנִיין הוֹיכּוּה כֹּאשֶׁר אַתֶּם אוֹמְרִים כָּל רִצּוֹנְכֶם, וְאִנִּי יֵשׁ לִי דַעַת לְדַבֵּר בְּדֶרֶךְ מוֹסֵר (בַּעֲנִיין הוֹיכּוּה כֹּאשֶׁר אַתֶּם אוֹמְרִים) אֲבָל בְּרִצּוֹן נַפְשִׁי יִהְיֶה. וְנִתְּנוּ לִי כּוֹלֵם לְדַבֵּר כְּרִצּוֹנִי.

**Nachmanides, Disputation of Barcelona** – On the next day I stood before our lord the king, and he said to me: Return to your city, to life and to peace. And he gave me three hundred dinars, and I took leave of him with great affection. May G-d grant me the life of the world to come. Amen.

וּלְמַחֵר עֲמַדְתִּי לִפְנֵי אֲדוֹנִנוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֹמַר לִי: שׁוּב לַעִירְךָ לַחַיִּים לְשָׁלוֹם. וְנָתַן לִי שְׁלוֹשׁ מֵאוֹת דִּינָרִים, וּנְפַשְׁתִּרִי מִמֶּנּוּ בְּאַהֲבָה רַבָּה. הָאֵל יוֹכֵנִי לַחַיִּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא אִמֵּן.

- The same happened after the Paris Disputation (1240) two decades earlier. Nicholas Donin, a Jewish apostate and Franciscan friar, presented arguments to Pope Gregory IX (c. 1145–1241) that the Talmud polemicized Jesus and his mother Mary. The Pope ordered all Talmuds be seized, and the Jews of France were compelled to surrender their Talmuds for inspection. The Talmuds were publicly burnt in 1242, twenty-something cartloads of manuscripts total.

**Gregory IX, Si vera sunt (1239)** – If what is asserted about the Jews living in the kingdom of France and in other provinces is true, no punishment for them would be sufficient or fitting ... that on the first Sabbath of the coming Lent, in the morning, when the Jews gather in their synagogues, you have all the books of the Jews of your province seized by our authority and faithfully kept in the custody of the Friars Preachers or Minors.

Si vera sunt, que de judeis in regno Francie, et aliis provinciis commorantibus asseruntur, nulla de ipsis esset poena sufficiens, sive digna; ... quatenus primo sabbato quadragesime proximo venture, mane, quando judei in synagogis conveniunt, universos libros judeorum vestre provincie actoritate nostra capti, et apud fratres Predicatores, vel Minores faciat is fideliter conservari.

**Innocent IV, Impia judeorum perfidia (1244)** – And although our beloved son the chancellor of Paris and the masters teaching at Paris in sacred scripture, by the mandate of Pope Gregory our predecessor of happy memory, after reading through and examining the aforesaid book of abuses and certain others with all their glosses, in order to confound the perfidy of the Jews, publicly burned them in fire before the clergy and the people ... that both the aforesaid books of abuses condemned by those masters, and in general all books with their glosses that have been examined and condemned by them, you order to be burned in fire throughout your whole kingdom, wherever they can be found.

Et licet dilectus filius cancellarius Parisiensis et doctores regentes Parisii in sacra pagina, de mandato felicis recordationis Gregorii pape predecessoris nostri, tam predictum abusione librum, quam alios quosdam omnium glossis suis perlectos in potestate, ac examinatos ad confusione perfidie Judeorum, publice coram clero et populo incendio concremarint. ... tam predictos abusorum libros, reprobatos per doctores eosdem, quam generaliter omnes cum glossis suis, qui per ipsos examinati et reprobati fuerint, mandes per totum regnum tuum, ubicumque reperiri poterunt igni cremari.

**Magen Avraham, Orach Chayim 580:9** – The Tanya writes: on the Friday of parashat Hukkat individuals have the custom to fast, because on that day twenty wagons full of books were burned in France; and they did not fix it by the day of the month because through a dream-inquiry it was made known to them that the Torah portion itself causes the decree, for 'This is the statute [hukkat] of the Torah' is rendered in the Targum 'this is the decree of the Torah.'

כַּתֵּב הַתַּנְיָא בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי פ' חֻקַּת נִהְגוּ יְהוּדִים לַהֲתַעֲנוּ שְׁבֹאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם נִשְׂרַפּוּ כ' קְרוֹנוֹת מְלָאִים סְפָרִים בְּצִרְפָּה וְלֹא קִבְּעוּ אוֹתוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַחֲדָשׁ מִפְּנֵי שִׁמְתוֹךְ שְׁאֵלַת חֲלוֹם נוֹדַע לָהֶם שִׁיּוֹם הַפְּרָשָׁה גִּיר' הַתּוֹרָה זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה מִתְּרַגְּמִי דֹא גִירַת אֲרִיִּיתָא.

- Our Tisha B'Av kinah shares a lament written by Meir of Rothenburg (c. 1215–1293), who was present at the burning.

**Meir of Rothenburg, Sha'ali Serufah** – Ask, you who were burned in fire, after the welfare of your mourners, who long to dwell in the court of your dwelling; who gasp upon the dust of the earth and grieve, who are stunned at the burning of your scrolls; who walk in darkness without brightness, hoping for the light of day that will shine upon them and upon you; and after the welfare of the man who sighs, weeping with a broken heart, forever lamenting the pangs of your travail; who moans like jackals and ostriches and calls a bitter mourning on your account. How can you, given over to a devouring fire, be consumed by a fire of flesh, while strangers were not scorched by your coals?

שְׂאֵלִי שְׂרוּפָה כֹּאשׁ לְשָׁלוֹם אֲבִלְיָד הַמִּתְאֲוִים שְׁכֵן בְּחֶצֶר וְבִלְיָד: הַשְׁוֹאֲפִים עַל עֶפֶר אֶרֶץ וְהַפּוֹאֲבִים הַמִּשְׁתוֹמְמִים עָלֵי מוֹקֵד גְּלִילֵיךְ: הוֹלִכִים חֲשָׁכִים וְאֵין נֹגַהּ, וְקוֹרִים לְאוֹר יוֹמָם, עָלֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר יִזְרַח וְעָלִיד: וְשָׁלוֹם אֲנוֹשׁ לְאָנָּה, בּוֹכָה בְּלֵב נִשְׁבֵּר תָּמִיד מִקּוֹנֵן עָלֵי צִירֵי תְּבִלְיָד: וַיִּתְּאוּנֵן כְּתָנִים וּבְגוֹת יַעֲנָה וַיִּקְרָא מִסְּפַד מֵר בְּגִלְיָד: אֵיכָה נִתּוּנָה כֹּאשׁ אוֹכֵלָה תֹּאכַל כֹּאשׁ בָּשָׂר וְלֹא נִכּוּוּ יָרִים בְּגִתְּלִיד:

- The most censored line in our liturgy comes from Aleinu and caught Catholic attention after Pesach Peter, another Jewish apostate, argued that the gematria for vanity and emptiness, נִרְיק, secretly encoded Jesus, ישו, since both equal 316. This was totally baseless, given the line comes from Isaiah and predates the birth of Jesus. Yet Prussia banned it by royal edict in 1703.

**Aleinu** – For they bow to vanity and emptiness, and pray to a god who cannot save.

שְׁהֵם מִשְׁתַּחֲוִּים לְהֶבֶל וְנִרְיק וּמִתְפַּלְלִים לֵאלֹהִים אֵל לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ

**Isaiah 45:20** – <sup>20</sup> Assemble yourselves and come, draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations; they have no knowledge that carry the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

<sup>20</sup> הִקְבְּצוּ וּבֹאוּ הִתְנַשְּׁבוּ יַחְדָּו, פְּלִישֵׁי הַגּוֹיִם; לֹא יָדְעוּ, הַנִּשְׂאִים אֶת-עֵץ פְּסֵלָם, וּמִתְפַּלְלִים, אֶל-אֵל לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ.

**Isaiah 30:7** – <sup>7</sup> For Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I called her arrogancy that sitteth still.

<sup>7</sup> וּמִצְרַיִם, הִבֵּל וְרִיק יַעֲזוֹר; לָכֵן קָרָאתִי לְזֹאת, רִהַב הֵם שֹׁבֶת.

## Faith Symbols

- Christian✝.
- Dharmic☸.
- Jewish✡.
- Muslim: Shia☞, Sunni☞.
- Pagan: Apollo☼, Hermes☿.
- Atheist☪.