

OBADIAH, JONAH AND JOEL

Week 2

OBADIAH The betrayers are betrayed – a prophecy against Edom

Judah's control of Edom was largely maintained during the divided monarchy, though there were regular military confrontations over that control.¹

Edom was happy to see Jerusalem fall prey to the Babylonians (March 15-16, 597 BC and again in 587 BC)² and, in fact, assisted the Babylonians.³

By the late 500's or the early 400's the Edomites seem to have been entirely supplanted by Arabic nations.⁴

Dating - 854 or later

The date of this prophecy has been the subject of many disputes because of similarities between Obadiah and Jeremiah and because of historical problems concerning the fall of Jerusalem described in vv. 10-14.

So, some see it being written around or after the fall of Jerusalem in the late 500's BCE.

However, consider the following points:

- Obadiah is grouped with the pre-exilic prophets.
- While Jeremiah & Obadiah both describe a fall of Jerusalem, they don't seem to be describing the same fall and so they don't have to be dated together.
 - The fall of Jerusalem is a past event from Obadiah's perspective (Ob.1-9)
 - Jeremiah (49:7-22) also describes the fall of Jerusalem using the same language as Obadiah but it is a future event from Jeremiah's perspective.
 - Jeremiah is quoting Obadiah
 1. Jeremiah tended to cite other prophets⁵
 2. Jeremiah's version has linguistic features of Obadiah but the reverse is not true
 3. Jeremiah's version is interspersed with apparent elaboration and commentary,⁶ something more typical if Jeremiah borrowed from Obadiah.
- Given these points and the fact that the fall of Jerusalem was a future event to Jeremiah and a past event for Obadiah, the two prophets must not be describing the same fall.
- Additional points:
 - Only one campaign that fits the description found in vv. 10-14. Philistines & Arabs attacked Judah when Jehoram (2Chron.21:8-10) was king of Judah.⁷

¹ 2Sam.8:13f; 1Ki.11:14ff; 2Ki.14:22; 16:5f; 2Chron.20:1ff; 21:8ff

² Lam.4:21; Ezk.25:12

³ Ezk.35:10; 1Esd.4:50

⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca*, XIX, 94ff; the records of a war between Antigonus Cyclops against Petra indicate that by 312 BC the Nabataean Arabs were long established in Edomite territories; The Babylonian king Nabonidus (556-539 BC) is believed by many to have destroyed Edom in 552 BC according to Armerding, C. E. (1985) *Obadiah*, In: *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1985, vol. 7, pp.335-337, F. E. Gaebelein editor, Zondervan.

⁵ Isa.14:28-32 & Jer.47; Isa.15-16 & Jer.48; Isa.13-14:23 & Jer.50-51; Am.1:13-15 & Jer. 44:1-6; Am.1:3-5 & Jer.44:23-27

⁶ Jer. 49:7,9,10,14-16

- A comparison of 2Chr. 21:8-10, 17; Joel 3:3-6,19; Amos 1:6-9, 11 and Obadiah 10-14 shows many similarities suggesting that these prophets were describing the same event and Amos can be dated to 775-750 BC.
- Joel appears to draw from Obadiah (i.e. compare vv. 10-18 with Joel 2:32; Joel 3) and Joel can be dated to 875-750 BC

OBADIAH'S MESSAGE

On the "The Day of Yaweh," Edom will be judged because they are complicit in Judah's devastation⁸ and because they are arrogant.⁹

- A Warning to Edom (1-14)
 - Edom will Fall (1-4)
 - v.2 "I have made you small," a prophetic past tense - it was as good as done.¹⁰
 - The Edomites will be destroyed (5-9)
 - v.7 ironically, they would be destroyed by their allies just as they, as allies of Judah, were betrayers.
 - The Reasons for God's Judgment on Edom (10-14)
 - Three reasons are given for their judgment: *chamas* (unjust violence) against their brother Jacob; aloofness when they were destroyed and delight in their destruction.
 - Three warnings are issued: don't gloat over Jacob¹¹; don't plunder them; don't add trouble to their trouble.
- Universal Judgment (15-16)

⁷ Jerusalem was attacked by Philistines & Arabians (2Chr. 21:16f) and Joash (2Ki.14:13f; 2Chr.25:23f) but the conquest was by strangers and foreigners v.11 not Hebrews

Jerusalem was attacked by Shishak (1Ki.14:25f; 2Chr.12:2) but the Edomites were controlled by Judah at that time; Babylon (Chaldeans) attacked Jerusalem during Jehoiakim (2Ki.24; 2Chr.36:6f) and Chaldeans as second time under Jehoiachin (2Ki.24:10; 2Chr.36:10)

These last two are eliminated if the arguments against Jeremiah & Obadiah being contemporaries are sound.

This leaves the attack by the Philistines and Arabs as the one addressed by Obadiah.

⁸ They participated in three ways according to vv.10-14: *chamas* (unjust violence), aloofness & rejoicing in Judah's downfall.

⁹ They were arrogant because they thought their mountainous terrain was protection enough to insulate them from God's retribution for their behavior toward Judah according to vv.2-4.

¹⁰ In Romans 8:30 Christians are described as already glorified. Although it is a future event, it is as good as done.

¹¹ They stood aloof and gloated over Judah's troubles. Judah may have wronged them but that was not justification for their betrayal.

2 Peter 3:9 God doesn't want anyone to perish; Ro.5:9 we were enemies when Christ atoned; Ez.18:23; 33:11 God does not delight in the death of the wicked but would rather have them repent; Prov.17:5 indicates that whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished; Prov.24:17 explicitly forbids gloating over the fall of an enemy; Ez.25:1-11 God metes out punishment when the Ammonites & Moabites gloated over Israel's demise; 1Cor.13:6 makes it clear that *agapeo* never delights in evil (either moral evil or calamity). David was concerned for his enemies yet they gloated over his troubles. So, David calls on God to vindicate him before such people (Ps.35:11-26);

The Day of the Lord is near. Nations will drink from God's cup of wrath¹²

- Israel's Restoration (17-21)

APPLICATIONS

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¹² God's cup of wrath Ps.75:8; Isa.51:17; Jer.25:15f; 49:1f; Rev.16:19

JONAH God is merciful.

Jonah, son of Amittai, is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.

This book is an historical narrative¹³ not an allegory¹⁴ or parable¹⁵ as some have suggested.

Is Jonah mythological?

Three parts of the narrative bother proponents of the 'legend' theory: swallowed by a sea creature; shaded overnight by a plant & Nineveh's abrupt repentance.

- Possible conclusions
 - these events are legends
 - these rare natural events occurred & Jonah felt they had spiritual significance
 - these rare natural events occurred & God caused them for his own reasons.
 - these rare supernatural events occurred because God caused them for his own reasons.
- Surviving three days in a large sea creature (i.e. *ketos* - "great fish" = sea-monster).

In the great laryngeal pouch of a sperm whale?

In the stomach of a sperm whale or *Rhineodon*?¹⁶

- Overnight, a plant grew tall enough to provide shade
Kolokuntha (lit. son of the night) doesn't necessarily mean "grew up overnight"

There is an indigenous plant, a large leafed shrub that is known to grow over 1 foot/day (i.e. the castor-bean plant a.k.a. palm-christ; Lat. *Ricinus communis*).

- the people of Nineveh abruptly repented of their evil as a result of Jonah's ministry.

DATING (c. 800-750 BC)

Jeroboam II ruled from 790-750 BC.

¹³ Matthew 12:39-42...Christ assumed it was history.

¹⁴ In an allegory each element of the account represents a feature of the history or religion, in this case, of Israel. This story does not have the form of any known allegory (e.g. Ecc.12:3ff; Jer.25:15ff; Ezek.27:3ff; 19:2ff; 24:3ff).

¹⁵ Formal names are not part of parabolic writing; parables are, in all other places, short and followed by an explanation whereas Jonah is complex and lacks an explanation (see 2Sam.12:1ff; 14:6ff; 2Ki.14:9).

¹⁶ James Bartley was reportedly swallowed by a sperm whale he was attempting to harpoon in February 1891 off the coast of the Falkland Islands. The veracity of this account was investigated and confirmed by Sir Francis Fox and two French scientists (see Wilson, A. J. *The Sign of the Prophet Jonah and its Modern Confirmations*, Princeton Theological Review (1927) vol.25, pp.630-642. However, the widow of the captain of the whaling ship later claimed the story was false (see Allen, L. C. (1976) *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament. See, *Neue Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (1895), p.303 and A. J Wilson (1927) Princeton Theological Review, p.636, respectively.

This was a period of general decline in Assyria. There were 4 Assyrian kings during this period: Adadnirari III, Shalmaneser IV, Ashur-dan III and Ashur-nirari V.

Why do some say that an anonymous author seized on a name reference in 2 Kings and wrote 'Jonah' sometime after the fall of Ninevah.

- supernatural elements (dealt with earlier)
- Certain linguistic features like *mallah* (sailor), *s^epinah* (ship), *se* (which) and *ribbo* (ten thousand) were thought to be Aramaic and thus date the writing later than the 8th Century.

The plural word *goralot* (lots) suggests a post-exilic date to some

- The size of Nineveh and its population are thought to be exaggerated by some.

The length of the journey & the duration of the ministry.

'The great city of Nineveh' may mean "greater Ninevah" (c.f. Genesis 10:11-12)

- The title 'king of Nineveh' (3:6) never occurs in Assyrian annals.

Jonah is not an Assyrian document (e.g. 2Chron.24:23 of Damascus rather than Aram; 1Ki.21:1 of Samaria rather than Israel).

If the author wrote much later than these events, he would certainly have drawn data from 2 Kings 19-20, Isaiah 37-39 or even Nahum where the expression 'king of Nineveh' is never used.

- 'Nineveh **was** a very important city' is past tense.

The sentence literally says, 'a great city to God.'

- There is no archeological evidence that a Yaweh revival ever occurred in this city.

There is a record of religious reforms instituted by Adad-nirari III (803-782) that are monotheistic in flavor although focused on Nebo.

The conditions were right for reform during this period.

The Urartu, the Mannai & Madai had pushed to within 100 miles of Nineveh.

There was a total solar eclipse (June 15, 763) and a famine (765 - 759).

- The narrative records several customs typical of the Persian period (late sixth to fourth centuries) rather than of the Assyrian period:
 - A decree by the king and his nobles rather than by the king alone (3:7)
 - Participation of animals in mourning (3:7-8).

JONAH'S MESSAGE

- Jonah flees from God's task (1:1-17)
- Jonah repents (2:1-9)
- Jonah engages God's task and Nineveh repents (2:10-3:10)
- Jonah dislikes God's mercy (4:1-11)

APPLICATION

- Serving God is fruitful.

People change their minds – Nineveh repented.

- God is merciful

Jonah is used heavily in the Day of Atonement rituals (as well as the last few verses of Micah).

- To serve God is to have our viewpoints challenged.

Why was Jonah reluctant to go?

Is your compassion legalistic?

Why did Jonah feel bad about the shade plant?

Are your feelings rooted in your desires or their needs?

What were Jonah's good points?

JOEL The Day of Yahweh

Joel uses a lot of simile & metaphor (e.g. 1:6; 2:2-7,9,11,20,25; 3:13,16) and recapitulation (e.g. 1:4 & 2:25; 1:5 & 3:18; 1:6 & 2:2; etc.) as literary devices.

A devastating locust plague had descended on Judah.¹⁷ Joel called on Judah to repent (i.e. 2:12 1:9,13-14,16; 2:13-19,23,26-27,32; 3:21).

This foreshadowed God's future judgment of Judah and the rest of the nations (1:15).

'The Day of the Lord' is mark of God's sovereignty over the people of the earth (1:15; 2:1-4, 18,20,25-32; 3:1-21) but also of his mercy and grace (2:13,17).

DATING 875-750 BC

There are many views of the date of Joel that span nearly 500 years.¹⁸

There's no external evidence for its date so scholars depend on internal lines of evidence.

1. The book is grouped with the pre-exilic authors in the dodecapropheton section of the Torah;
2. A temple exists (1:9)¹⁹;
3. There is a reference to a scattering of the Hebrew people (3:1-8);²⁰
4. There is no mention of a king²¹;
5. There is no mention of idolatry²²;
6. Edom still exists (3:19);
7. The empires of Assyria & Babylon are not mentioned²³ and Philistia (3:4), Egypt (3:19), Phoenicia (3:4) & Edom (3:19) are described as enemies,²⁴
8. An enemy to the north is mentioned in 2:20;²⁵ and
9. Many other prophets appear to draw from Joel not vice versa.²⁶

¹⁷ B. P. Uvarov found Joel's description in remarkable accord with the actual events of a locust plague (*Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, p.33 (1944)), as did D. Whiting in *Jerusalem's Locust Plague*, National Geographic Magazine, vol.28, no.6, December, 1915, pp.511-50.

¹⁸ Archer, c.875-848; Kaiser, c. 800's; Gaebelien, c.792-740; Stuart, c.700's (In:WBC v.21); Harrison c.590's; Hubbard, c.500's (In: Wiseman's TOTC); Beyer, c.500's (lecture 27); Allen, c.520 (In: NICOT).

¹⁹ The temple was destroyed in 587 BC 10 years after it's capture by Babylon. It was rebuilt with a wall (2:7) after c.445 BC but the rebuilt temple cannot be in view because Edom did not substantially exist then, so the book must have been written prior to 597 BC. This eliminates Hubbard, Beyer, and Allen's positions.

²⁰ The people of Judah were scattered by the Philistine/Arab invaders (c.854); Israel was scattered by Assyria (c.721); Judah was scattered by the Babylonians (c.597), so this isn't helpful. Also, the scattering comments could be prophetic predictions making the information even less helpful.

²¹ Perhaps because Joel was written after the exile or perhaps it is a meaningless omission. Obediah, Jonah, Nahum, do not mention Israel or Judah kings either. Also, during the time of the boy-king Joash (835-796 BC) the priests & elders rather than the king would have ruled the land.

²² It may be significant since idolatry is not an issue after the exile but to make the omission meaningful is an argument from silence. However, if Joel wrote during the early reigns of Joash or Amaziah or during the reign of Uzziah then idolatry may not have been of major concern. Although the latter is less likely given Amaziah's attack on Edom before Uzziah and Assyria's renaissance during the times of Uzziah.

²³ This could suggest Joel was written early, during the time of Assyria's decline (782-745 BC) or late, after the exile (500's or later) but this latter possibility is reduced because of the Edom material and because of a failure to mention Persia. This could be a meaningless omission but not likely in light of the discussion of the judgment & scattering of Jews.

²⁴ Philistia, Edom, Phoenicia and Egypt are not relevant enemies after the Assyrian & Babylonian empires came to prominence. These countries are prominent in the 800's BC.

²⁵ This could be Aram or Israel. If it refers to Aram then the book falls in the period c.900-803. If it refers to Israel then the failure to name Israel is an odd omission. Perhaps the book is written from the perspective of Israel rather than from the perspective of Judah but that still limits the northern enemy to Aram. However, it might be a prophetic forecast of a future northern threat (e.g. Rosh, Tubal, Gomer, etc.).

²⁶ 27 of Joel's 72 verses have parallels in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Malachi; Few are willing to argue that half of Joel is taken from others, rather that they were alluding to Joel. In Joel 3:4-6 Tyre, Sidon and all regions of Philistia are condemned for looting Judah & Jerusalem and for enslaving the inhabitants - selling them to the

Taken together, it seems unlikely that Joel was post-exilic or exilic and while a precise date is impossible to determine, the evidence seems to point toward the 125 year span between 875-750 BC.

If the reference to the 'northern enemy' is a reference to Aram then it might narrow the date to 875-803 BC.

JOEL'S MESSAGE

- The Locust Plague 1:1-2:27
 - The current plague 1:1-4

The terms used for locust suggest different developmental stages:

Gazam is a cutting or shearing locust from the Semitic root meaning 'to shear' or 'cut.'

'Arbeh is a swarming locust from the Semitic root meaning, 'to multiply.'

Yeleg means leaper or hopper from the Arabic root meaning, 'to hasten' or 'to walk swiftly,' in Nahum 3:16 this form is said to fly away.

Hasil means 'destroyer' or 'finisher.'

There are actually 9 different terms used for locust in the OT.

- The response 1:5-2:27
 - Mourn because of the locust plague 1:5-20
 - 5-7 Vines and Figs were often grown in the same fields.
The description of the white branches is not hyperbolic.
 - 8-10 The libation and grain offerings cannot continue because there is no grain, wine or olive oil.²⁷
Joel writes in a very poetic style using words that are only found in Hebrew poetry,²⁸ using personification,²⁹ using alliteration and assonance.³⁰
 - 11-12 Lament you farmers
 - 13-14 The solemn assembly requires everyone to stop and focus on this issue before God.
 - 15-18 Botanical destruction leads to livestock devastation.
Verse 15 introduces the Day of the Lord, a day that has not yet come and so cannot be this particular judgment.
Keshod misshadai, destruction from the Almighty, is part of the Day of Yahweh (2:1,11,31). This expression is alliterative, like saying 'destruction from the Destroyer.'
 - 19-20 A drought seems to be part of this plague
 - Prepare, repent & pray for the coming judgment 2:1-27
 - 1. Some say this is an apocalyptic reiteration of the locust plague:
 - Many simile's are used (e.g. their appearance is like...horses;³¹ they run like mighty men, they climb like...soldiers).

Greeks; v.19 Edom will be a wasteland because of the violence done to the people of Judah. This passage sounds much like the Amos passage which is dated to c. 775-750 BC and so Joel must be c.875-750.

²⁷ According to Keil, *Israel could not suffer any greater calamity than the suspension of the daily sacrifice; for this was a practical suspension of the covenant relation - a sign that God had rejected His people*, In: Commentary on the Old Testament, vol.10 Minor Prophets, Keil & Delitzsch, p.184.

²⁸ v.2 *ha'azinu* is a synonym of 'hear' but is used almost entirely in poetry; v.6, *labi* - fangs is a word only used in poetry

²⁹ v.10 'the oil he fails, new wine he is dried up, grain he is destroyed, indeed the ground because of the barley & vines, he mourns; v.11-12 the fig tree she is dried up, the vine he is destroyed, the apple tree, palm and pomegranate she is withered'

³⁰ *suddad* & *sadeh* (ruined & mourns); *'ab'la* & *'adama* (mourn & the land), v.10; *hobisu* & *helilu* (be ashamed & wail); *Keshod misshaddai* destruction (*shod*) from the Almighty (*shaddai*), v. 15

- The devastation described is like that described by the locust plague in chapter 1 so they must be referring to the same event. Notice the destruction is of vegetation.

- 2. Some say that it is a prophecy of a future invasion:
 - Chapter 1 distinguishes between the locust plague & the Day of Yahweh, which had not come (1:15) but here the prophet describes the actual day of Yahweh (2:1b-2).
 - The reference in v.20 to the removal of a Northern Army is seen to be a description of the invading hordes of 2:1-11, not a description of locust invasion.³²
 - This interpretation best fits the restoration and judgment in the remainder of the book that is clearly more global than warranted by a plague.
 - It is the similarity of the locust plague with a future invasion that prompted Joel to describe the Day of Yahweh, so the similarity cannot be used to argue they are the same event.
 - The magnitude of the destruction (c.f. 2:10-11) exceeds a locust plague.
 - Joel and other prophets connect the Day of Yahweh with military invasion (c.f. 3:9-12 {Mt.4:9-12}, Amos 5:18-20; 6:14; Zephaniah 1:16; Ezekiel 13:5; Daniel 11:41; Zechariah 14:1-2).
 - The Day of Yahweh may itself be accompanied by a locust plague and thus 2:1-11 refers to both events as part of the same judgment. This would explain the use of simile to describe it.

- 3. Some say that Joel is referring to both the contemporary judgment as well as that coming at the end of time or that the contemporary judgment is a type & harbinger of the future judgment. This argument does justice to both the earlier arguments.

1-2 *Kesahar parus al-heharim* - 'like the dawn spread out upon the mountains', this probably refers to the quickness of the onset.

18 This is in the past tense suggesting that they had repented. Is this about the Jehoiada reforms during the time of King Joash (2Chron.24)?

19 The northern army will be removed - which army? Aram, Assyria, Babylon, Persia...Gomer/Gog?

23 Some believe this should read, "for he has given you the righteous teacher" not "for he has given you the early (autumn) rains in righteousness."
 The term used, *hammoreh*, is from *moreh*, which is translated in all ancient texts (Vulgate, Targum & the Greek translation of Symmachus) as 'teacher' everywhere it appears.³³
 The term *yoreh* is the usual term for early rain.
 While it is true *moreh* is used at the end of v.23, it appears to be used as a word play with the earlier *hammoreh*. The addition of the prefix *ham*, is a

³¹ The head of locusts looks like the head of a horse according to these interpreters. In fact the common German word for locust is Heupferde (i.e. hay horses). The Italian word is cavalette (i.e. little horse). An old Arabic proverb describes the locust as having a face like a mare.

³² Locust plagues blow in from the south not the north, in this region. Amos 5:18-20, 6:14 focus on an invading northern army.

³³ ...except in Ps.84:6 and in the latter part of this verse

definite article conveying the idea of a single person, "the righteous teacher"

- God's Sovereign Plan 2:28-3:21
 - God will provide for his people 2:28-32
Is this a gap prophecy?

Is this a single intent prophecy fulfilled around the time of Christ (i.e. vv.30-32 referring to the heavenly signs that accompanied Christ's death)?

Wolff shows that the word translated 'billows' derives from *tamar*, or the stone-pine form of the date-palm. Since this is unfamiliar to most western audiences Wolff uses a similar shaped structure, the mushroom and thus he translates v. 30b mushrooms of smoke.³⁴

- God will triumph 3:1-21
 - ⇓ The day of Yaweh 3:1-17
 - ⇓ The restoration of Israel 3:18-21

APPLICATION

- God is sovereign
- God is merciful
- God will judge the rebellious and bless his people.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read and annotate Amos and Hosea
 - Memorize Hosea 10:12
 - As you read through these three prophets, identify the principles that could apply to you. Which of these are the hardest to believe at this point in your life?
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- Prepare answers for the following based on your study:
 1. Identify the kings of Israel & Judah during the activity of these prophets. Were any commended? Were any condemned?
 2. What nations posed a threat to Israel & Judah during this time?
 3. Identify one major theme for each of two prophets.

³⁴ Wolff, H. W. (1977) *Joel & Amos*, Hermeneia, E.T., SCM, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, p.56.