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BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FROM OBADIAH AND PSALM 137 FOR AN EDOMITE TREATY BETRAYAL OF JUDAH IN THE SIXTH CENTURY B.C.E.*

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Summary: Biblical Evidence from Obadiah and Psalm 137 for an Edomite Treaty Betrayal of Judah in the Sixth Century B.C.E.

Focusing on Obadiah and Psalm 137, this article provides biblical evidence for an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah during the Babylonian crisis ca. 588–586 B.C.E. After setting a context that includes the use of treaties in the ancient Near East to establish expectations for political relationships and the likelihood that Edom could operate as a political entity in the Judahite Negev during the Babylonian assault, this article demonstrates that Obadiah’s poetics include a density of inverted form and content (a reversal motif) pointing to treaty betrayal. Obadiah’s modifications of Jeremiah 49, a text with close thematic and terminological parallels, evidence an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah. Moreover, the study shows that Obadiah is replete with treaty allusions. A study of Psalm 137 in comparison with Aramaic treaty texts from Sefire reveals that this difficult psalm also evidences a treaty betrayal by Edom and includes elements appropriate for treaty curses. The article closes with a discussion of piecemeal data from a few other biblical texts, a criticism of the view that Edom was innocent during the Babylonian crisis, and a suggestion that this treaty betrayal may have contributed to the production of some anti-Edom biblical material.

* This article is a revision of part of my dissertation. I wish to acknowledge and thank both my dissertation director, Joel S. Burnett, whose scrutiny has greatly aided my study of biblical Edom, and Juan M. Tebes, who encouraged the production of this article. I’m also especially grateful to my wife, Pamela, whose support and generous gifts of time (and office doors!) made the writing of this work possible.

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Resumen: Evidencias bíblicas de Abdí as y el Salmo 137 para un rompimiento de tratado edomita a Judá en el siglo VI a.C.

Centrándose en Abdías y el Salmo 137, este artículo proporciona evidencia bíblica de un rompimiento de tratado edomita a Judá durante la crisis babilónica de ca. 588–586 a.C. Después de establecer un contexto que incluye el uso de los tratados en el antiguo Cercano Oriente, para establecer las expectativas para las relaciones políticas, y la probabilidad de que Edom pueda operar como una entidad política en el Negev judaítas durante el ataque babilónico, este artículo demuestra que la poética de Abdías incluye una concentración de forma y contenido invertido (un motivo de reversión) que apunta a un rompimiento de tratados. Las modificaciones de Abdías a Jeremías 49, un texto con paralelismos temáticos y terminológicos cercanos, evidencia un rompimiento de tratado edomita a Judá. Por otra parte, el estudio muestra que Abdías está repleto de alusiones a tratados. Un estudio del Salmo 137, en comparación con los textos de tratados arameos de Sefire, revela que este Salmo complejo también evidencia un rompimiento de tratado por parte de Edom e incluye elementos apropiados para las maldiciones de los tratados. El artículo concluye con una discusión de los datos parciales de algunos otros textos bíblicos, una crítica de la opinión de que Edom era inocente durante la crisis babilónica, y la sugerencia de que este rompimiento de tratado puede haber contribuido a la producción de un material bíblico anti-edomita.

Palabras Clave: Edom – Judá – Babilonia – tratado – Abdías – Salmo 137

This article argues that Obadiah and Psalm 137 evidence an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah during the Babylonian assault on Judah ca. 588–586 B.C.E. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence for Edomite involvement in the fall of Judah is limited, yet the evidence we do have may be read as congruent with Edomite hostility at the time.1 The focus here is on biblical evidence, and some summary statements on the historical context of the

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1 Epigraphic evidence has been found for Edomite hostility during the last days of the kingdom of Judah, notably ostraca from Arad, a Judahite fortress in the Beersheba Valley. Arad 24 is suggestive of such an Edomite threat:

This is an order from the king—a life-and-death matter for you. I send (this message) to warn you now: The(se) men (must be) with Elisha lest (the) Edom (ites) (should) enter there. For this translation, see Pardee 2003: 85. Citing Arad 24, Obadiah, and Psalm 137, Herzog et al. (1984: 29) suggest that “it is most likely that Arad Stratum VI was destroyed by the Edomite invasion of the Negev at the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judah...”. For my attempt to coordinate epigraphic data with Edomite hostility and to reconstruct specifics of an Edomite campaign into southern Judah, see Dykehouse 2008: 135–208.

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Negev, where both Judah and Edom exerted some influence in the early sixth century B.C.E., is necessary given the state of affairs in the study of Edom. First, it appears that during the seventh century Edom and Judah (along with caravaneers and local pastoralists and agriculturalists) were in a mutually-beneficial economic cooperative of trade-route facilitation under Assyrian supervision.² It is questionable that Edom had been aggressively encroaching upon the Judahite Negev.³ Judahite fortifications along the Beersheba Valley might help deter an invasion, but their more regular function may have been to protect, administer, and benefit from international trade route commerce.⁴ In this view, whatever Edomite forces were in the Negev prior to the Babylonian assault on Judah were likely ones escorting trade caravans and protecting other local interests.

Second, the geopolitical problem of an Edomite-Judahite border during the Babylonian crisis boils down to a question of Edomite and Judahite geopolitical “domain” (control) and “range” (direct influence) in the Negev.⁵ Where did the southern Judahite domain terminate? What was Edom’s effective, political range? Was Edom in a geopolitical position to assist Babylon in Judah’s destruction? To what extent do “Edomite” artifactual remains found in the Negev and Beersheba Valley evidence an Edomite presence? In the context of a cultural milieu of various tribal subgroups and international trade in and around the Beersheba Valley, it has been argued that the Edomite wares would have functioned at least as status symbols to communicate (and socially protect) the ethnic identity of its users—groups with an Edomite cultural orientation.⁶ Given the distribution

⁵ Political “domain” may be defined as the territory under direct administrative and military control of a particular kingdom or people; political “range” may be defined as the limits of direct social, political, or military influence. In this sense, “range” is typically broader than domain, and a people’s range may overlap regions under the administrative control or rule (domain) of another kingdom. Indirect influence could, of course, be felt outside a range. “Domain” and “range” appear to be implicit in the problem of Edomite encroachment into Judah; cf. discussion related to the extent of an Edomite presence in the Beersheba Valley in Lipschits (2005: 141–146); cf. also Dearman 1995: 119–136, esp. 131.
⁶ See Thareani 2010: esp. 51–52. For another view, which more severely restricts the amount that so-called Edomite ware in the Negev reflects an “Edomite” ethnicity, see Tebes (2011a: 61–101), who concludes that cooking and serving wares of this type, however, were “explicitly used to draw an ethnic boundary” with Judah (92); note also Tebes 2006: 53–54.
of Edomite wares in contexts of international trade, it is likely that some of these groups had a history of cooperation (if not allegiance) to Edom.7 I see little reason to doubt that at least some of these groups would self-identify as Edomite. Accordingly, in a context of the Babylon assault threatening Judah militarily, Edom’s direct trade network experience and inter-tribal administrative, logistical, and military capabilities and allegiances could have allowed Edom the opportunity to assume greater operational control of the Beersheba Valley. It is not unreasonable that parts of the valley could have been be taken by force. Of course, any claim made on such control by Edom subsequent to the fall of Judah in 586 B.C.E. would likely require Babylonian approval, likely as part of a treaty relationship.

A general comment on treaties in the ancient Near East is necessary. For the purposes of this study, a treaty may be defined as “an agreement enacted between the leadership of two or more states in which one or more make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.”8 The number of allusions to treaties in historical and literary texts from a great number of places in the ancient Near East suggests that treaties were used in forming international relationships throughout much of the region’s history.9 The distribution of allusions to treaties suggests that states large and small would have engaged in treaty-making.10 Syro-Palestinian states would be no exception, but we do not know if the conference of envoys of Judah, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon under Zedekiah of Judah ca. 593 B.C.E. (Jer 27:1–15), which may have aimed at forming an anti-Babylonian coalition, resulted in an agreed-upon course of action against Babylonian rule.11 Was Edom among those revolting from Babylon?

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8 Mendenhall and Heiron 1992: 1179. Covenants manifest the perceived extension of blood ties, forming a basis for concomitant social obligations to ensure mutual wellbeing. Specifically, kinship created a social bond and a primary source of obligation; in terms of political relations, a covenant/treaty is an artificial brotherhood, a fictitious extension of kinship that establishes a quasi-familial relationship; see Kalluveettil 1982: 204–205, following Smith 1894: 318; see also Cross 1998: esp. 11–12. Answering the question of the specific origin and date of the perceived brotherhood of Edom and Judah is outside the bounds of the current study, particularly as definitive evidence is lacking. It is, however, reasonable (if not standard practice in biblical studies) to accept that an Edomite-Judahite kinship relationship predated the sixth century and that Edom would not have wholly denied that relationship. Of course, we have no data from Edom proper to support this view.
9 See McCarthy (1981: 8–9), which brings to the fore the connection between covenant and the formation of political relationships.
10 Treaty types of the ancient Near East include the parity treaty, the vassal treaty, and what may be called loyalty oaths; Parpola and Watanabe (1988: XV–XXIV) have discussed no fewer than seven types of treaties.
In his commentary on Obadiah, Marvin Sweeney has noted treaty connotations in much of Obadiah, and states that Edom and Judah were treaty partners (Jer 27:3) prior to the Babylonian assault and that Edom was eventually betrayed by Babylon. This article will expand on Sweeney’s work and takes the opportunity to detail more fully the biblical evidence for an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah in the sixth-century B.C.E.

**INVERSION OF FORM AND OF CONTENT: A REVERSAL MOTIF**

Forms of biblical parallelism, chiasmus, and wordplay in various biblical texts have been described as “inverted.” Biblical scholarship has also recognized a stylistic devise called the *inverted quotation*, whereby textual elements among intertextual parallels appear in reverse order. In an innovative study of this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, P. C. Beentjes has advanced the discussion by identifying five basic types of “inverted quotations”. Apart from the attention that the form of the “quotation” gives to an instance of inversion or reversal it is difficult to know how this stylistic device functions (what it “means”). Setting aside semantic differences between “inversion” and “reversal”, what Beentjes has demonstrated is that several types of reversals are perceivable among parallel quotations: *reversals* of content (e.g., negative theme or message...
positive theme or message; cf., e.g., reversal of fortune); reversals of word or phrase order; and, indeed, reversals of consonants. Hebrew poets evidently made use of a technique by which an expected or traditional order of textual elements is reversed.

Important for the discussion of Obadiah to follow, is Beentjes’ fourth type of inverted quotation, the “(selective) inverted quotation.” Beentjes discusses a density of inversions in Psa 83:14–16 and Isa 17:13–14. The first four roots of Psalm 83 that Beentjes discusses appear in exactly reversed order in the Isaian parallel; a fifth root remains in identical order; and a final parallel term (יְבָהָל, מַלְאָך), while in identical order in Isaiah, manifests a transposition (or reversal) of two radicals (מַלְאָך מִתָּל). Thus, this last word (“terror”; יְבָהָל [Psa 83:16] || מַלְאָך [Isa 17:14]) reflects an internal transposition (inversion) within a context of a larger inverted quotation.17 But how do we make sense of this inversion?

A comment might help. Psalm 83 is a petition that God might defend God’s people from an alliance of nations that are plotting destruction (vv. 1–6 [Eng. 1–5]). Nations head toward Israel and jeopardize its pastureland (vv. 3 [2], 13 [12]). Notably, the internal transposition in Isa 17:14 introduces the results of those activities of God predicted by Isaiah and for which the psalmist petitioned.18

At evening time, lo, terror!
Before morning, they are no more.
This is the fate of those who despoil us,
and the lot of those who plunder us.

After a series of terms in reverse order, “terror” appears with transposed consonants immediately preceding the enemies’ reversal of fortune. Enemies were once victorious (v. 12), yet they vanish in a moment (v. 14). In a context dense with inversion, wordplay with a verbal form of יֵבָהָל in the noun יְבָהָל introduces and reinforces a thematic reversal. Inversion of form introduces a role reversal.

This example of the inversion technique indicates that biblical poets had within their artistry a literary device whereby a density of inversions (form)

17 For discussion see Beentjes 1982: 33–35, 48. Beentjes does not pursue the significance of this density of inversion apart from the extra attention it draws.
18 Emphasis mine. The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

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occasionally functions to point to or reinforce an inverted condition (content). For convenience, this special inversion of both form and content may be called the “reversal motif”. Intertextually, the reversal motif may be found in some occurrences of “inverted quotations” (e.g., Psa 83:14–16 || Isa 17:13–14). Intratextually, the reversal motif can be seen in a particular manifestation of the inversion technique in contexts of reversal of fortune.19 Either intertextually or intratextually, the reversal motif is characterized by a certain density of the inversion technique (form) appearing within a context marked by an inverted state of being, condition, or fortune (content).

EXAMPLES OF INTRATEXTUAL AND INTERTEXTUAL INVERSION IN OBADIAH

Examples of intratextual and intertextual inversion in Obadiah will begin to evidence the book’s reversal motif. Obadiah 15b contains a thematic reversal of fortune.20

As you have done, it shall be done to you;
your deeds shall return on your own head.

In the context of the Edomite hostilities identified in Obad 11–14 (see below), verse 15b predicts a reversal of fortune for Edom, which shall be victimized in the manner of its victim. Obadiah prophesies that Edom will experience an inverted state of being (content), a component of the reversal motif.

Comparing Obadiah with its close parallel in Jeremiah 49 evidences intertextual inversion in several ways. These inverted quotations reveal Obadiah’s inversion of form.21 Table 1 provides obvious terminological

19 A good example is the artistry around וּשְׁפִּיָּה (“to be ashamed”) found in the chiasmus of Psa 6:11 (Eng. 10), which describes once-successful enemies (cf. v. 8) who “turn away” (וְשָׁפֶּֽית) in confusion; chiasmus (formal inversion) and wordplay (inversion of ו and ש) cooperate to draw attention to the enemies’ reversed state of being; see Watson 1984: 26, 245–249; note also the caution in Watson 1994: esp. 210–211, of reading the literary device into a text. The number of instances Obadiah evidences inversion should satisfy the caution.
20 The translation is that of the NRSV. For a helpful study on intertextual thematic inversion in terms of juxtaposed identities and futures of Edom/Esau and Judah/Jacob through a comparison of Obadiah with select texts from Genesis, see Anderson 2010: 247–255.
21 The inverted quotation is apparent if we compare the parallels that are primarily terminological rather than thematic (Jer 49:7a–b || Obad 8; Jer 49:12 || Obad 16; and Jer 49:22b || Obad 9a; cf. also Jer 49:10a || Obad 6). This article assumes a Jeremian priority; for discussion, see Dicou 1994: 58–62; cf. Raabe 1996: 22–31.
parallels between Jeremiah 49 and Obadiah organized according to the
Jeremian verse order.

Table 1
Parallels between Jeremiah 49 and Obadiah with Strong Terminological
Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 49</th>
<th>Obadiah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 7α</td>
<td>לָאוֹדָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 7β</td>
<td>כָּרָמְאַר בּוֹז</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 9α</td>
<td>אֲסָבֵרָה בוֹז</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 9β</td>
<td>אֲסָבֵרָה בוֹז</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 5α</td>
<td>אֲסָבֵרָה בוֹז</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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With a remarkably close and extended parallel with Jer 49:14–16, Obadiah 1c–4 (see below) serves as a signal identification of the inversion technique perceivable in much of Obadiah.22 This beginning section parallels a portion toward the end of the anti-Edom oracle of Jeremiah 49. While Obadiah 5 has nearly indistinguishable literal correspondence with Jer 49:9, the order of the correspondence is inverted (Obad 5a || Jer 49:9b; then Obad 5b || Jer 49:9a). In short, each time an extended terminological parallel appears in Obadiah, it parallels an earlier portion of Jeremiah. As will be shown, some paralleled verses also have components appearing in reverse order. Thus, Obad 1–5 is as an extended inverted quotation of Jeremiah 49. Attention to inversion in Obadiah will evidence treaty betrayal as part of the rhetorical situation of this difficult text.

22 Syntactic components of the oracles’ rather formulaic introductions (Jer 49:7 and Obad 1b) happen to appear in reverse order. The priority of the object of the oracle in Jer 49:7a, however, might be due to the oracle’s inclusion in a collection of oracles against the nations introduced as a whole with a messenger formula (46:1). No part of Jeremiah’s oracle against Edom subsequent to verse 16 has a strong terminological parallel in Obadiah (see, however, the thematic parallel of Jer 49:22b and Obad 16).
OBADIAH 1–6 AND ITS PARALLELS IN JEREMIAH 49

The title of Obadiah. Two words constitute the title, (חֹזֶה עֹבֶדיה, “Vision of Obadiah”). We do not know who this “Obadiah” is. Some commentators prefer to understand the work as anonymous and “Obadiah” (עֹבֶדיה) as a symbolic or representative title. In this view, the prophet is a “Servant of YH[WH]” (עבדיה). Symbolic or not, the label constituting the second word of the book happens to mirror typical designations of lesser parties in relationships established through ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. The first word might also evidence treaty terminology. The book is identified as Obadiah’s “vision” (וראות; usually understood from ההנה meaning “to see, perceive”). Important for the discussion is that within the “Vision of Isaiah” ([Isa 1:1]), two of the four occurrences of the root are clearly in a treaty context (28:15a, 18a): “an agreement (הנה) with Sheol” twice parallels “a treaty (حرفיה) with Death”. Additionally, no fewer than three linguistic possibilities show how a “treaty” might be connoted by this root. Accordingly, a reader attuned to the usage and connotations of ההנה might consider this “Vision of Obadiah” as referencing through allusion “The Agreement of the Servant of YH[WH].”

25 The two other occurrences of the root in Isaiah are also noteworthy in light of the present thesis: Isa 29:11 connects “vision” (וראות) with “sealed document” (سجلות), and Isa 21:1–2 connects a “vision” with the Negeb and betrayal (לראות).
26 מִקְרְא is congruent with treaty contexts by 1) prophetic ceremonies (such as augury) known from treaty ratification rituals; 2) by a fixed-vision of a determined future; or 3) by metonymy (the stipulations are the envisioned agreements of the parties); see Kalluveettil 1982: 31–32; Weinfeld 1973: 190–99, 196 n. 87. It is possible that the Isaian parallels with מִקְרְא provided above are derived instead from an entirely different root, perhaps that evidenced by S. Arabian mā‘ayr (“agreement”; מַיָּר); for this possibility, see Kalluveettil 1982: 31–32. Alternatively, Waston (1994: 213, with bibliography) has advocated repointing the word in 28:15 to hā‘ez (“breast”), which would result in a phrase “we will press the breast,” which corresponds to the Akkadian sībit talé (“touching the breast”) an idiom for “making a pact” and describing a treaty ratification gesture.

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Obadiah 1 and Jeremiah 49:14. Subsequent to the messenger formula, Obadiah references international politics. **Table 2** presents these verses divided by cola.28

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 49:14</th>
<th>Obadiah 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 14aα</td>
<td>Sảnawíq š’meyêq màa Haym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 1b</td>
<td>hârâmêr Haym l’lرادmom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 1c</td>
<td>š’meyêq š’meyêq màa Haym l’lראmom š’løh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 14bβ</td>
<td>š’løh n’mêkêtø Haym l’lראmom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 1c</td>
<td>š’løh n’mêkêtø Haym l’lראmom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jeremiah 49:14α references some report (“I have heard a report”; סְמַעְתֶּךָ). Obadiah 1cα updates Jeremiah with a first person plural verb (“We have heard a report”; שְמַעְתֶּךָ שְמַעְתֶּךָ). With one difference, the parallel continues: “from YHWH that an envoy unto the nations had been sent.” Obadiah’s use of “envoy” (שְׁמַעְתֶּךָ שְמַעְתֶּךָ) implies international diplomacy.30 Incidentally, the vowel pointing of Obadiah in the MT also modifies the temporally ambiguous qal passive participle (לַלעֵד) in Jeremiah with a Pual perfect (לַלעֵד), suggesting that the mission is fully underway. The mention of a report and of an envoy suggest a royal court context for Obad 1b–c, but whether that envoy is human or celestial (i.e., from the divine court) depends in part on how one understands the sender.31 If the envoy is human

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28 Discussion is facilitated by an analysis of cola as demarcated in the Masoretic text (MT) by heavy disjunctive accents. Detailed presentations of the cola of Obadiah are provided by Renkema (2003: 45–89) and Dick (2005: 1–32).


30 See Isa 18:2; 57:9; Jer 49:14; Obad 1; cf. Prov 13:17; 25:13. Isaiah 57:9 demonstrates connotations of “international” diplomacy, albeit to the netherworld (Sheol). As above, Isa 28:15 (cf. v. 18) references a “treaty with Death and an agreement with Sheol” (וְרָאָה אֱלֹהִים הָכֹלֶה לְפֹרָה שֶׁפֶלֶל). As these verses suggest, דָּע is at home in treaty contexts. Isaiah 28:18–19 also mentions “a report” (cf. Obad 1cα) associated with a rejected treaty (cf. Obad 7a with discussion, below).

rather than angelic and if the sender is a head of state, then additional international intrigue is perceivable: some political entity has completed a diplomatic mission among the nations. The text, however, provides too little information to determine both who the “we” of verse 1c represents and whether anything that follows is necessarily part of the report. Either on account of the report or because of some other situation, there is a command to “Rise up! And let us arise against it for battle!” (קָום אֶל הַלָּמֶד). Edom (v. 1b) is typically understood as the referent of the feminine singular prepositional phrase (עלילו) connected with קים. This root in the imperative occurs seventeen times in military contexts in the HB, including summons to war contexts, yet Obadiah’s double use of the root is peculiar, perhaps signaling preparations for an imminent and unexpected conflict. Verse 1 is difficult, yet it is rather clear that a theme of divulgence begins the prophecy properly: an envoy makes an international circuit as more persons become privy to some report coupled with a muster for battle. The situation somehow pertains to Edom (לארד) [v. 1b]; perhaps also Edom [v. 1c]]. What is Edom’s role in these affairs?

Obadiah 2 and Jeremiah 49:15. This parallel, demarcated by cola in Table 3, evidences the inversion technique and suggests a change of fortune for Edom.

33 The sole feminine singular noun in Obad 1 is לשון יב (“report”; cf. LXX). The masculine singular referent (i.e., אֲרִדְמָה [“Edom”]), however, is sound for no fewer than three reasons: a feminine singular head noun such as “land of…” (дарם) might have dropped from אֲרִדְמָה; toponyms are usually understood as feminine despite a masculine form (GKC §122h); and, intertextually, Obadiah retained the identical proposition and suffix of the Jeremiah parallel (49:14), the feminine singular referent of which is possibly in the preceding verse (“Bozrah”) (ברצון); cf. Renkema 2003: 121. For “land of Edom,” see, e.g., Gen 36:16, 17, 21, 31; Num 20:23; 21:4; 33:37; Judg 11:18; 1 Kgs 9:26; Isa 34:6; 1 Chr 1:43; 2 Chr 8:17. For discussion of the possibilities, see Raabe 1996: 118–119. Also possible is that a diplomatic mission calls to arms Edomite forces against Jerusalem (f. sing.; cf. discussion on Psa 137, below); the emphatic “Rise up! And let us arise against [Jerusalem/Judah]!” fits a context of an envoy calling for Edomite forces to arise against and surprise an erstwhile treaty partner.
34 Josh 8:1; Judg 4:14; 5:12; 7:9, 15; 9:32; 18:9; 1 Sam 23:4; Isa 21:5; Jer 6:4; 5; 49:14, 28, 31; Obad 1 (2x); Mic 4:13.
35 The use of two volitives from יָשָׁר in one verse is found only here; the root is commonly used as the first imperative (followed by a verb of motion) in calls to war (cf. Deut 2:24; Josh 8:1; Judg 7:9; 18:9; 1 Sam 23:4; Jer 6:5; 49:28, 31). Jeremiah reverses the tendency (cf. Jer 9:12; Obad 1:18; Jahweh reverses the root יָשָׁר); Obadiah’s peculiar repetition deviates from tradition and might signal Jeremiah’s peculiar use of וְיָשָׁר. Raabe (1996: 117) suggests that a surprise attack might be indicated.
The parallels assert that Edom is to be insignificant among the nations (כִּסֵּם הַמִּיתָן). Obadiah modifies Jeremiah, however, by proclaiming that Edom (here אֲנָתָה) shall be “despised utterly” (בְּעֵנֵי יָדוֹ), which modifies Jeremiah’s “humankind” (אָדָם) with the inverted position of the א, which appears last in Jeremiah’s אָדָם, yet occurs first in Obadiah’s אֲנָתָה. This inverted position also reinforces a change in status suggested by the content of the parallel—Edom will be made exceedingly despicable (נָפָל + בִּזֵּה is found nowhere else in the MT). Is the change an intensification of Jeremiah’s “despised among humanity” (בְּעֵנֵי יָדוֹ), which itself communicates that Edom is the most despised in the world? Given the context of hubris (e.g., Obad 3) and the deception attributed to Edom (see below), אֲנָתָה is a significant modification: exceptional (נָפָל) despicability has now befallen Edom, and YHWH will become involved in tearing Edom down (see discussion on v. 4c, below). What has Edom done to deserve this intensified status?

Obadiah 3–4 and Jeremiah 49:16. This parallel with much literal correspondence describes Edom’s hubris. 37

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36 On the superlative, cf. GKC §132c.

Antiguo Oriente, volumen 11, 2013, pp. 75–128.
Table 4

Obadiah 3–4 and Its Jeremian Parallel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 49:16</th>
<th>Obadiah 3–4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 16α</td>
<td>v. 3α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 16β</td>
<td>v. 3β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 16γ</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 4a</td>
<td>v. 3bα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 4b</td>
<td>v. 3bβ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 4c</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 16βα</td>
<td>v. 4a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 16βγ</td>
<td>v. 4b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 16βδ</td>
<td>v. 4c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At least four of Obadiah’s modifications are important for the thesis. First, in v. 3b, Obadiah adds to Jeremiah by presenting Edom as “one who says in his heart, ‘who shall bring me down to earth?’” (אמר בלע מ ירדה א empleado). The question presupposes that Edom thought its political affairs to be in good order. A second modification suggests one reason for Edom’s confidence: a secret element was part of its national security. Although Jer 49:16α parallels Obad 3α with the phrase (+0#$ (“the pride of your heart”), Obadiah elaborates with the addition of (אמר בלע (“the one who says in his heart”). The elaboration is important for the thesis. Although technically means to vocalize, the phrase is an example of a common idiom (אמר + בלע) for internal discourse meaning “thinking, believing, intending” (see, e.g., Psa 14:1; 27:8; 53:1; Isa 49:21; Ezek 28:2; Zech 12:5). The idiom has parallels in treaty texts. A similar idiom (√ + ילבע) occurs twice in the treaty text of Sefire III:14–17, which warns that secret plots show an unfaithfulness to the gods of a treaty, violate the treaty relationship, and make one deserving of death (38 cf. Obad 4c, with discussion on v. 2b, 38 Cf. also Sefire II B:5; for these texts and discussions, see Fitzmyer 1995: 122–3, 138–9, 154.)
above). In both Jeremiah and Obadiah, Edom’s hubristic statements reference the defensive qualities of Edom’s physical geography (Obad 3a\(b\) || Jer 49:16a\(b\)), but unlike the Jeremian parallel, Obadiah adds an internal (and perhaps secretive) discourse to Edom’s national security.

Obadiah’s development of a theme of secrecy is further seen in comparing the beginning of the verse (‘זוד לבלד השרא; “deceived you, has the pride of your heart.” [v. 3a\(a\)]) with its Jeremian parallel (‘השרא אנך ודלי לבלד; “…the pride of your heart has deceived you.” [Jer 49:16a\(a\)]). Obadiah’s inverted subject/verb order of ‘בגועיל, ‘deceive”) evidences the inversion technique and draws attention to verb. The second occurrence of ‘בגועיל in Obadiah is in an explicit treaty deception context (‘בגועיל, הרבריד\(\)). Obadiah’s modification to invert “deception” (Obad 3a\(a\)), both accentuates the interiority and secrecy of Edom’s words and foreshadows a context of explicit treaty betrayal. Is a secret treaty part of Edom’s national security plan? If so, with whom did Edom form a treaty?

The answer may be found in a fourth modification. Obadiah 4b adds a national-security location from which Edom could be torn down (v. 4c), namely, one among the stars:

\[\text{קז"כט בקיסנ סע קכ; “Even if among the stars your nest is established…”}\].

An astronomical hubris might be at play, but the phrase might also allude to a mundane ally. Babylonian iconography is replete with astral imagery, and worship of the stars in ancient Israel was particularly strong in times of Mesopotamian political influence.\(^{40}\) The thematic and terminological parallels with Isaiah 14:13—part of an oracle concerning Babylon’s fall—are noteworthy in this regard.

You had said in your heart, “I shall ascend the heavens. I shall lift up my throne above the stars of El, and I shall sit on the Mount of Assembly at the far-reaches of Zaphon.”

With the idiom לְלַבֵּךְ השמָּמִים + אָמַר. Babylon’s hubristic statement about its elevation includes a secretive quality (cf. Obad v. 3b\(a\), above). Babylon seeks to lift

\(^{39}\) See Barr 1991: 150–61; whether קָנָה literally means “abode” and is used metaphorically for a nest, or means “nest” and is used metaphorically for Edom’s abode might not alter the sense.


\(\text{Antiguo Oriente, volume 11, 2013, pp. 75–128.}\)
its throne above the “stars of El” (לוכדבייאל) only to be cast down ( ///ד [Isa 14:15; cf. Obad 4c]). Similarly, Obadiah has hypothesized that even if Edom is established in such a starry abode (וכוכב [v. 4b]) it would nevertheless be torn down. The divine abode, Zaphon (ץerah: “North”), upon which Babylon seeks an administrative position is also suggested by Obad 6b (ץerah: see below). No other biblical verse provides as many terminological and thematic parallels with Obad 3b–4 as does Isa 14:13. Obadiah’s modification (וכוכב) makes sense: Edom’s secretive rhetoric of national security (v. 3b) is connected to Babylon intertextually with Isaiah and through the use of astral imagery (v. 4b).

**Obadiah 5–6 and Jeremiah 49:9–10.** Obadiah’s propensity toward the inversion technique is seen in the final cluster of close parallels with Jeremiah 49 (Table 5).

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeremiah 49:9–10</th>
<th>Obadiah 5–6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 9α</td>
<td>אספרנביא בוא כל אספרנביא ללה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 9β</td>
<td>לא ישא워 עלולות</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 9γ</td>
<td>אספרנביא מילא השחרות טים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 10α</td>
<td>ירחי השחרית אאדיעש</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 10β</td>
<td>ולא ישאירה עלולות</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 10γ</td>
<td>אשר נפתиш נפש</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 10δ</td>
<td>זכר ורין והודית משכין</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 10ε</td>
<td>אגאני</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inversion of verse groups, phrases, and consonants are perceivable in the parallel. Several modifications of Jeremiah support the thesis. Obadiah introduces the *first colon* of verse 5 with an element that introduces the *last*
colon of Jer 49:9 ( ... מִסְחָמָה; “If thieves . . .”). Obadiah modifies Jeremiah by beginning the unit with theivery, accentuating the theme of secrecy suggested by verse 3bא (חֵרָם בָּלָה). A reference to the night (ليلת; connoting mystery and danger) appears in the introductory colon of Obad 5, yet its parallel (לילפת) appears in the last colon of Jer 49:9. Although Obadiah’s introduction to verse 5 is nearly identical to the introductory colon of Jer 49:9 (לְבָנָא רָאָה . . . מָסָא; with Obadiah substituting בַּנָּא for Jeremiah’s בְּנֵים), Obadiah has retained that introductory colon exactly and literally, yet has transposed it into the second to last colon of Obad 5 (ובַּנָּא מְסָא). Additionally, the second colon of Jeremiah (v. 9aא), has been transposed with some modification to the position of last colon of Obad 5. The modification includes an accentuation of the questioning implied by the syntax of Jer 49:9א by including an interrogative (ח) connected with a negative particle (לָא). Jeremiah includes only the negative particle (ל). The modification highlights the interrogative. Obadiah also inverts the order of defective41 spelling in a series of two otherwise identical words: the two in Jer 9aא read יָשָׁבוּ עָלָהּ, whereas the two in Obad 5bא read יִשְׁבְּבוּ עָלָהוֹת, highlighting the consonants י and א.42 Given the hypothesis of a Jeremian priority, Obadiah has surprised a reading audience familiar with the opening colon of Jer 49:9 in two ways. A literal parallel might be expected to begin immediately in verse 5 (לְבָנָא . . . מָסָא [Jer 49:9אא]), yet that literal parallel occurs later in the verse (5bא). In what is otherwise a parallel of literal agreement, Obadiah has opted to substitute Jeremiah’s “grape-gatherers” (גרֵיוֹת הָבָר, פָּרֵשׁ "to cut off, enclose") with a root denoting secretive thievery (נָגַב).43 Why this substitution in a context of so much inversion?

41 Reading יִשָּׁבוּ in Jer 49:9 with the MT as a hipil.
42 Nogalski (1993: 63) suggests that these orthographic changes “have little bearing upon either the meaning of the text or the intention of the redactor.” For Nogalski, the (other) reversals evidenced in a comparison of Jer 49:9 and Obad 5 may be understood as Obadiah’s inversion of the Jeremian order “so that the themes of destruction and remnant appear in the same order as Amos 9:8–10” (p. 66). Such might be the case (see also Nogalski’s explanation of the added interrogative ח), but given the frequency of inversion in Obadiah it is not clear that the reversed order of defective spellings are likely due to an “orthographical preference of the redactor” (p. 63) unless that preference had rhetorical significance.
43 The nominal form may designate a habitual or professional thief; see Hamp, TDOT 3: esp. 41.
Through rootplay with ובא, it is possible that Obadiah’s substitution for thievery produces a pun on the Edomite royal city of Bozrah (בצרה). The inverted order of defectively spelled words between the inverted occurrences of נבך ובצרא in the Jer 49:9 and Obad 5 parallel has highlighted defective spelling and the consonants ו and ת (see above). Obadiah’s negative particle (יהו) is spelled fully, unlike Jeremiah’s. Obadiah’s full spelling also directs our attention to the added interrogative (א). In a context heavy with inversion that draws attention to spelling, Obadiah’s extra א provides some textual support for a complex rootplay in Obad 5: “grape-gatherers” or more literally “those who shall cut off/enclose” (בצר) may be understood as a reference to Bozrah (בצרה = בצר + בצר).

The surprise44 interjection of Obad 5א (אכד: נמיתא; NRSV “how you have been destroyed!”) between the reversed occurrences of נבך ובצרא is informative. Obadiah 5 is typically understood as suggesting that plundering and destruction are closer and more damaging than Edom might suppose. The occurrence of הנמיתא, however, provides a challenging ambiguity.45 Should we read the phrase as “How you are similar!” (דמחא), “How you are destroyed/cut off!” (דמחא), or both? Is allusion being made to the root דמחא (i.e., “How you are silenced!”; cf., דמחא in Isa 21:11; Psa 94:17; 115:177). Reading with דמחא, we see that the complex rootplay likening Edom’s principle city with thievery is reinforced: Obadiah exclaims, “How you are similar [to a thief, to a destroyer in the night]!” The polysemous הנמיתא also suggests Edom’s destruction and that Edom’s hubristic and interior dialogue connected with Mesopotamian imagery (v. 3) will be silenced. Whichever position one takes, verse 5 evidences much inversion of form and a complex pun: Bozrah is likened to a devastating (נמיתא) and secretive thief (בצר) of the night. Themes of secrecy and international politics (established in vv. 1–4) continue, yet in verse 5 the

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44 Given a text heavy-laden with inversion, it is doubtful that the phrase is accidentally transposed from the end of the verse (contrast BHS).
45 The consonants are pointed as a nip'al perfect, second person singular (נמיתא).
Further evidence for the inversion technique and an Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah may be gleaned from Obad 6 in comparison with Jer 49:10a–b (see Table 5, above). Jeremiah 49:10 declares that YHWH has “stripped Esau, uncovered his enclosures” (מַקְפִּיר, hidden/enclosed place) has the explicit sense of a physical location. In Obadiah, however, Esau is not “stripped” (דִּשַּׁה), he is “searched out, uncovered” (דִּשֶּה), evidencing an intertextual inversion on the miniscule level through the reversed order of two consonants (פ > ש). The nip’al stem of חָפֵשׁ occurs only here. Translations such as “pillaged” are common, but the etymology of the root suggests not aggression but uncovering something hidden, mysterious, or requiring discernment. This connotation (if not denotation) is evident in the Ugaritic etymological equivalent found in the phrase bt ḫppt (“The House of Under”), which designates (part of) the netherworld through which Baal’s subordinates are to pass toward Mot. Accordingly, Obadiah has modified Jeremiah in order to connote not only a physical search, but also discernment of something hidden or secretive. Translations appear to have been influenced heavily—perhaps too heavily—by the Jeremian parallel (דִּשַּׁה; “stripped”). Thus, rather than “How Esau is pillaged!” the phrase might better suggest, with English wordplay, “How Esau is understood!”

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46 See also Ps 10:8; 17:12; 64:5; Isa 45:3; 53:3; Jer 13:17; 23:24; Lam 3:10; and Hab 3:14. Contrast מְסַת, which carries connotations both of physical concealment and of intellectual secrecy; see Wagner, TDOT 10:362–372, esp. 369–371. 47 On the root, see Mass, TDOT 5:112–114. 48 E.g., RSV/ NRSV: “ransacked”; NIV: “pillaged”; NJB: “looted”; JPS “thoroughly rifled”; contrast KJV: “searched out”; contrast also(?) Vulgate: quomodo scrutati sunt Esau; cf. the use of the root in 2 Chr 18:29 (ḥitpa’el, lit. “let myself be searched for”). 49 The context of Psa 64:7 [6] includes evil planning (וַיָּשָׂר וַיִּשָּׂרֵץ; v. 3 [2]) and deep/obscure interior thoughts of heart (וַיַּכֶּשׁ אֶת עַצְמָי; v. 8 [7]); compare the discernment suggested by מִמְשֶׁךְ in Prov 20:27; cf. also Amos 9:3 (in pi’el). 50 KTU 1.4 VIII:7; cf. 1.5 V:15; the root is used to describe things brought up from below (e.g. drawing water) or the affect of something from below (e.g. grain; things dug); cf. Maas, TDOT 5:112–14. The accentuating translation, “House of Under,” may be supported further as the phrase occurs in parallel both with the “thriver(?) of the earth/netherworld” (גֵּר אֲרָץ; cf. agricultural “thriving” in a possible etymological relationship between גֵּר and Arabic terms as suggested by Gordon [1965: 465]) and “those who go down into the earth/netherworld” (יָרְדָּן אֲרָץ [KTU 1.4 VIII:8–9]). For another view, related bibliography, and a different translation (i.e., “house of the couch”) based on a comparison with Heb. בֵּית הַכָּפָר [see 2 Kgs 15:5]), see Wyatt 1998: 113.
What has been discerned? What has “come up” about the brother, Esau? A secrecy theme continues.

Evidence for a secretive Edomite alliance may be observed in Obad 6b, where the prophet modifies Jeremiah’s “his hidden places” (מַסְתֵּרָיו) into “his hidden places/treasures” (מסתרים) from תַּמָּשָׁה, a hapax legomenon. Although לֶאָל is from a root meaning to hide or treasure up, the root came to be used to signify “north” (לָאָל), and there are a dozen or so times in the HB where “the north” designates a Mesopotamian power. Accordingly, Obadiah has modified a Jeremian term denoting a physical location with one that both denotes something hidden and connotes northernness. The reversal of expectations (if not reversal of state of being) is surprising: Obadiah communicates that Esau/Edom, a people from the south (cf. וַיֹּאמֶר [v. 9]), may now be understood (cf. תַּמָּשָׁה [v. 6a]) as having cached a secret northernness. Given the sixth-century context, an Edomite relationship with Babylon is most likely what Obadiah implies.

The verb used to divulge this revelation complements this context of Edom’s “hidden-northernness.” Whereas Jeremiah has “uncovered” (לָאָל), Obadiah provides a nip ‘al perfect from לָאָל. Representative translations of this term in Obad 6 include “searched out” and “ransacked,” which provide some distinction from Jeremiah’s יִתְנַשֶּׁה, yet appears (again) to be governed as much by the parallels (both לָאָל in Obadiah and נָבֹא in Jeremiah) as by semantics and etymology. The occurrence of לָאָל in Isa 21:12 suggests that the root in the hip ‘îl connotes the “inquiry” (not “searching”) of sentinels. In Isaiah 64:1 [2] the root (in qal)—if it is the same root—connotes the boiling effects of fire upon water. In Isa 30:13, the root (in nip ‘al) connotes the noticeable swelling out of a stressed and fractured wall. What, then, is bubbling up from biblical Edom? In Aramaic, the root in pe ‘al denotes asking, seeking, petitioning, and examining. An Ugaritic occurrence suggests “reveal,” which corresponds to the Targum of Obad 6.

In the MT of Obad 6, the verb is in the nip ‘al stem. Considering the

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52 For a direct connection between “South” (').'</p>?” and Esau/Edom, see Gen 36:9–11; Jer 49:7, 20; Amos 1:12; Obad 1:9.
various nuances of the root, secrecy is again a theme: “[Esau’s] hidden-northerness has swelled or bulged out.” Focusing on the connotations of inquiry and petitioning, the nip al suggests that Esau’s northerness “has become divulged,” (or, reciprocally, “divulged itself”)—quite different from traditional “has been searched or ransacked.” In sum, Obadiah 5–6 charges Edom (a land to the south of Judah) with hiding a secret northerness. It is an ironic reversal: south northerly is.

As is frequently noted, Obad 1–6 displays a literary cohesion around the theme of Edom’s doom.\textsuperscript{54} The poetic technique of inversion in these verses also provides cohesion, as inversion is evidenced at the verse, colon, phrase, and consonantal level. As stated above, a certain density of inversion of form can point to or reinforce a content-oriented reversal of fortune or reversal of state of being. Obadiah 6 alone reflects both inverted form (نشر), and inverted content (south northerly is), which accentuates the themes of Edom’s secrecy and a divulged relationship. Upon leaving Obad 1–6, one might ask to what does Obadiah’s rhetorical exercise of the reversal motif point?

**Obadiah 7 and the Language of Alliance**

Obadiah’s extended “inverted quotation” has ended.\textsuperscript{55} With verse 7, overt references to a broken international alliance begin.

\begin{align*}
&\text{נֵרִיחֲנוּ בִּלְבָּבֱּיָּנָּה יַעַיְשָׁאֲךָ צָחֲמָךְ יַלְכָּא לַעַיְשׁ שָלָּמְךָ;} \\
&\text{לַהֲפֹמֶשׁ יִשָּׁמְך מִנָּה תַּחֲתֵךְ;} \\
&\text{אֵינָא תַבְהֹנֶךְ בּ;} \\
&\text{v. 7a} \\
&\text{v. 7b} \\
&\text{v. 7cα} \\
&\text{v. 7cβ}
\end{align*}

reveal it in the center of my divine mountain, Zaphon [נֵרִיחֲנוּ בִּלְבָּבֱּיָּנָּה”; cf. the translation of Wyatt 1998: 78].

Coincidently, נֵרִיחֲנוּ here appears in the same context as נֵרְבָּבֵנִי.\textsuperscript{54} For Obad 1–6 (or 1–7 or 1/2–9) as displaying a unifying theme of “Edom’s doom” (or similar terminology), see, e.g., Allen 1976: 146; Stuart 1987: 414; Sweeney 2000: 289.

\textsuperscript{55} Thematic parallels do continue (Obad 8 || Jer 49:7b; Obad 9 || Jer 49:22b; and Ob 16 || Jer 49:12). Syntax and translation problems in Obad 7 have generated much discussion, particularly in relation to יַגְּבִּר הֹאֵר (v. 7ca). In isolation, יַגְּבִּר is most easily read as “wound” (cf. Jer 30:13; Hos 5:13 [2x]); for discussion, see Nogalski 1998: 67–71.

*Antiguo Oriente, volumen 11, 2013, pp. 75–128.*
Three terms likely synonymous with “treaty” are found in Obad 7a–cα: ל沱מ (‘men of your covenant’), אנשי שלמה (‘men of your peace’) and ‘your bread’ (‘your bread’). While the first two phrases are readily at home in treaty discourse, the same may be said of ‘your bread’ (v. 7cα). Eating in treaty contexts suggest the kinship relations, intimacy, security, and perhaps economic incentive of the established relationship. Additionally, ‘your bread’ (‘your bread’) in Obad 7 might reflect a specific treaty ratification meal. In either case, by synecdoche the term expresses the whole of the treaty. Accordingly, with אדום and a term referencing the intended result of mutual well-being (שלם), the supposed benefits of Edom’s formal treaty relationship is highlighted. In Obad 7, however, Edom’s peaceful co-operators shall deceive (נער עיז) Edom and engage in hostile actions (מלכ וק). Indeed, Edom was already deceived (נער עיז) in its secret statement of geopolitical security (v. 3). Thus, Obad 7 communicates a terrible reversal of fortune: Edom’s own treaty partners act to its detriment. The verse ends with a terse statement of Edom’s inability to comprehend or anticipate this reversal (ב; 7d, see below).

Attention to the consonant ג, which occurs nine times in Obad 7a–cα, is helpful. A second person singular pronominal suffix (ג) ends each of the three synonyms for treaty in the verse. In the HB, a pronominal suffix with ג most often designates the initiating party, although not necessarily the superior party, of the treaty/covenant. The verse suggests that Edom initiated the treaty relationship. The alliteration (and rhyme) of verse 7 due to the frequency of ג accordingly places a special emphasis on Edom’s relations with its allies. Evidently, this treaty was Edom’s choice. Given the operative historical context of the current study (see introduction), Obadiah’s allusion to an erstwhile hidden collusion between Edom in the

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56 For connotations of political intimacy, see Kalluveettil 1982: esp. 11, 34–35. For bread in Obad 7 as a reference to economy, see Renkema 2003: 145–147.
57 See, e.g., Gen 26:26–31; see also Kalluveettil 1982: 15–16, 212. An important text in this regard is Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty (6.153–56; cf. also 6.560–562); for texts and discussion, see Parpola and Watanabe 1988: 8–9, 11, 35, 52. See also the ratification ceremony in the treaty between KTK and [Mati’ ilu of] Arpad in Sefire IA:40.
59 שולחן עליים, הביא העריך האישה בלאה כל ... פסוק עליים. For end-rhyme, see Watson 1994: 122, 150–151, 172.
south and a divulged (Mesopotamian) “north” (Obad 4–6) provides sufficient information to identify Babylon as the political power with which Edom chose to form a new treaty relationship.

Attention to verbal forms in verse 7 and a consideration of “the border” (הַגְּבָרוֹל; v. 7a) to which Babylon sends Edom help reveal the story of this treaty relationship between Babylon and Edom. Apart from the context of verse 7b–c, there is no reason to conclude that this sending (שלח in פי' el) is hostile. Usage of the root elsewhere demonstrates that the form reflects a release of a treaty partner in peace subsequent to the ratification of a new treaty.60 The definite article (ה) suggests that Obadiah is referencing a particular border. Obadiah’s audience might have understood “the border” as the economically important Edomite-Judahite border. A biblical occurrence oflek הָנַח provides textual support for this possibility; Numbers 34:3–5 describes a border virtually identical to the arc of Judahite border fortifications of the early sixth century.61 With this textual support for a border fitting the context of Edomite-Judahite relations ca. 588–586 B.C.E., Obad 7a might reference Babylon’s release of Edom (and its forces) into a strategic position at the Edomite-Judahite border soon after the treaty was formalized. Whatever the case, the treaty relationship toward ensuring mutual wellbeing (שלח ν) described in Obad 7a did not last. Edom may have been sent or released (שלח ν) to a strategic border (הנַח; Obad 7a), but a trickery comes into play. The wellbeing (שלח ν) sought by the relationship comes to deceive (.Mutexed) and overpowers (לְחֶלְק) Edom (Obad 7b). With the action of the last verb, Babylon impairs (искו מזוך) Edom with the “bread” (לחם) of their relationship. If an economic incentive for cooperating with Babylon is implied by לחם, then Obadiah suggests that Edom’s new portion in the control of international trade passing through Edom and the Edomite-Judahite border became a primary

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60 On שלח in פי' el see especially 1 Kgs 20:34b (twice with Ahab as speaker). Compare also Gen 26:27–31. Translations of Obad 7a tend to suggest hostility (e.g., NRSV, NIV); cf. LXX ἐξακομίζεται, Vulgate emiserunt. šelah in Moab appears as the Edomite border with Moab in 2 Kgs 3:20–21.

61 Num 34:3–5 describes an arc stretching west from the southern end of the Dead Sea to Kadesh-Barnea; “the border” (הַגְּבָרוֹל) appears in v. 5; cf. also המָר in Josh 15:1–4).
cause of Babylon’s eventual assault on Edom. History evidently supports this factor. Edom’s fortune with Babylon has been turned on its head.

Obadiah 1–7 is a good example of how the inversion technique (re: form) can introduce reversal of fortune (re: content). The numerous instances of inverted form in Obad 1–6 and the reversal of fortune suggested by Obad 6–7 (cf. above on 15b) might leave a learned tradent, auditor or (re)reader wondering if a deeper reversal in Obadiah is at work at the point the inverted quotation ends. Why has there been so much inversion preceding the moment Obadiah begins new material? Why does Obadiah predict Edom’s fall at the hands of treaty partners? The answer may be found in the density of inversion itself. According to Obad 15b, just as Edom has done, such shall be done to Edom, whose dealings will return upon its own head.

Obadiah 8–14: National Intelligence and Activities Contrary to Expectation

Obadiah 8–10. Kinship language and a cluster of functional synonyms for Edom (e.g., Teman) are apparent in verses 8–10. Although treaty allusions

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62 In ca. 551 B.C.E., King Nabonidus of Babylon evidently critically weakened Edom, probably as part of a campaign aimed at imperial expansion and control of the region’s trade routes and the vast wealth of Arabia; see Crowell 2007: 75–88; note also Lindsey 1976: 23–39; for discussion of the motivations (which may have included control of the region’s trade routes and the vast wealth of Arabia) and for and historical problems related to Nabonidus’ imperial expansion and sojourn to Teima in Arabia, see Beaulieu 1989: esp. 165–166, 178–185.

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are unclear. Obadiah’s choice of terminology in much of verses 8–10 befits a treaty betrayal context.

Wisdom and understanding (סמה וТОיה [v. 8]) link these verses with the end of verse 7 (ויהיوابוב). At the bridge between themes of wisdom and of violence, three toponyms appear: the wise will perish from Edom (v. 8a); understanding will perish from Mount Esau (v. 8b); and broken will be the warriors of Teman (v. 9a). In the Jeremian parallel, Teman, “Southland,” is twice directly associated with counsel and planning that cannot survive (49:7, 20a). In Obadiah, the immediately preceding context is similar, but Obadiah places Teman (“Southland”) in direct connection with its terrified warriors (ויהי יפורכד יקדי [v. 9a]). Given the political overtones of Obadiah 1–7 and the emerging military overtones in vv. 9–14,
what are we to make of Temanite warriors at the cusp of wisdom and violence?

Some biblical evidence has been read as suggestive of a highly developed sapiental tradition in Edom, yet the evidence for a renowned Edomite wisdom is meager and a significant portion of the biblical evidence is comprised of Obad 8–9 and Jer 49:7. In Obadiah, “wisdom” language appears in a context of diplomacy/foreign policy, secrecy, failed treaties, and (with vv. 11–14) an international assault. It is interesting that Isaiah 29:13–15 attributes nearly identical “wisdom” language to Judah in a similar context of international invasion and siege (see vv. 3, 7–8).

The Lord said, “It is because these people draw near with their mouths and lips honoring me—yet their hearts are far from me, and their reverence of me is a commandment of popular instruction—

that I shall again amaze this people with shocking awe! I will destroy the wisdom of their wise-ones, while the discernment of their discerners becomes hidden.”

Woe to those who go to great depths to hide a plan from YHWH. Their workings are in darkness and they say, “Who shall see us?” and “Who shall know what we are up to?”

Both Isaiah 29:13 and Obad 3 reference an internal or secretive dialogue of the heart ([Isa 29:13b] || [Obad 3b]). Rhetorical questions of Judahites in Isa 29:15b ([Obad 3b]) parallels that of Edomites in Obad 3b. A triple verbal parallel appears in descriptions of lost wisdom ([Isa 29:13b] || [Obad 3b]).

64 Cf. Bar 3:14, 22, 23 (προφητής [prudence]; σύνωσις [understanding]; γνώσις [to know]; σοφία [wisdom]); see also Job 1:1; 2:11.
65 For a helpful review of the possible meanings of a wisdom tradition in Edom, relevant bibliography, and a cautious conclusion that Edom’s metallurgic knowhow was an element of the tradition, see Tebes 2009: 97–117.
Because a context of deficient national political strategies (not to mention secretive planning) evidently marks both Obadiah and Isaiah 29, it is not clear that Obadiah references an exceptional wisdom tradition in Edom as is sometimes advocated. More likely is that an ironic reversal of fortune is found: Obadiah states that Edom’s secretive court diplomacy seeking to guarantee its geopolitical security will ultimately fail.\(^{56}\)

**Obadiah 11-14.** These verses constitute the single most detailed biblical description of supposed Edomite hostility against Judah ca. 586 B.C.E.

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\(^{56}\) Cf. the discussion on Obad 8 with references to court counsel (rather than a general Edomite wisdom tradition) provided by Renkema (2003: 152).
1/8°; unique to 2 Sam 18:13, but is “stood aloof” an appropriate translation of Obadiah’s... an infinitive? An answer may be found in consideration of the apparent specialized use of the qal infinitive construct of עמד in biblical Hebrew. Setting Obadiah’s use aside, with one possible exception, every time the qal infinitive construct is used, an official legal, political, military, or cultic status is evident. This observation suggests that whateverimplies, it is likely a fulfillment of an official directive of the Edomite leadership. Whether or not the complex preposition denotes hostility, it does denote an obvious presence. This presence eventually turns hostile (vv. 13–14).

Other elements of Obadiah 11 support this understanding of עמד. The verse ends with “even you were like one of them” (משאראווה נאדו המים). Obadiah’s emphatic use of נאדו “even you” implies a reversal of expectation. The verse identifies “strangers” ( jäד) and “foreigners” (לאום) as those involved in the assault. The terms likely pertain to Babylonian forces and auxiliaries from tribute nations under Nebuchadnezzar’s authority. The description of their activities makes it rather clear that these peoples were hardly neutral, indifferent, or disinterested in their dealings with Judah. Edomites were like them; they were not aloof. Determined, hostile actions were taken. Opponents took Judah’s efficacy (ינני...; 11a), entered its gate[s] (ינני...; v. 11bα), and divvied up Jerusalem (לנני...; v. 11bβ). Taking together the official connotations of the qal infinitive construct of עמד and Obadiah’s statement of Edom’s similitude with foreign peoples engaged in military

68 Ezra 10:13; but, given the context, it would be difficult to designate as “unofficial” this use of עמד; cf. Ezek 1:21, 24, 25: 10–17.
69 Accepting the categorizations, for legal status, see Exod 18:23; Num 35:12; Josh 20:6; 9; Ezra 9:15; for military positioning, see Judg 2:14; 1 Sam 6:20; Is 10:32; Ezek 13:5; Esth 8:11; 9:16; Dan 8:7; Dan 11:15; for cultic status, see Exod 9:11, 28; Num 16:9; Dtr 10:8; 18:5; 1 Kgs 8:11; 1 Chr 23:30; 2 Chr 5:14; 29:11; 34:31; Jer 18:20; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65; for political status, see Gen 41:46; Jer 40:10; Ezek 17:14; Dan 1:4; 11:1, 4. For the root connoting official service, see Ringgren, TDOT 11:178–187; note also official connotations of infinitival occurrences of עמד.
70 Contrast Wolff 1986: 45, and, especially, Barton 2001: 145. The Edomite position at the crossroads (место перехрестия) would be an effective strategic deployment of troops; on ימד in an Edomite context, see Gen 27:40.

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operations, a more likely reading of (Obad 11α, by) is not “on the day of your standing aloof...even you were like one of them,” but rather “on the day of your [official] stationing in opposition...even you were like one of them.” The lack of aloofness is all too clear in the description that follows. In the gates (v. 13) and at the crossroads (v. 14a), Edomites are presented as braggarts (v. 12), relishing the aggressive manifestations of betrayed kinship expectations (vv. 12–14).

It is a surprise reversal of sorts;71 intimate kin and trade partners have officially taken their stand with the foreigners and strangers assaulting Judah and taking its wealth.

Three observations on Obadiah 12–14 support the thesis. First, each of the three verses contains terminology at home in treaty contexts: (12ασ; cf. 1 Kgs 20:32); (v. 14); and (v. 13).72 If this last form is related to the idiomatic expression שָלָה יִד בּ (“Do not look—even you—into [Judah’s] disaster!”). Only here does Obadiah repeat a vetitive (see v. 12ασ; note v. 1cβ). Obadiah 13 also repeats the emphatic (even you”; cf. v. 11). Why has Obadiah introduced this doubly repetitive “do not look—even you!” within this verse? It is rather interesting that what immediately follows this double repetition is a term with consonantal and phonemic similarity to (his covenant, treaty), namely (into his disaster”; v. 13αβ). Could this double repetition around a verb meaning to look coupled with a certain density of terminology at home in treaty contexts unveil as Judah’s “disastrous-

71 A chiastic pattern of A-B-C-B’-A’ seen in the five cola of Obad 11 supports the thesis. A reference to “foreigners entering his gates” occupies the center (v. 11ba). The verse begins and ends with descriptions of Edom’s disposition (v. 11ασ, by) in connection with the actions of those assaulting Jerusalem (v. 11αβ-ββ). As kin, Edomites may at times enter Judahite gates, but those of verse 11 did so in a manner inconsistent with kinship expectations; by v. 13ασ there is an ironic reversal of Edom’s status: Edom is implored to stop entering one such gate (לֹא יָבְדוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ). See Kalluveettil 1982: esp. 127–128, 199–201, 207.

72 See Kalluveettil 1982: 30–37, the idiom in Aramaic and Hebrew has at least two connotations: a) “to harm/smite”; b) “to plot, conspire, scheme” (less frequently). For possible examples of the expression כִּרְיָת (implying conspiracy, see Est 8:7 and Psa 55:21. כִּרְיָת is absent in Obad 13, prohibiting an easy conclusion of implied conspiracy; see also Kalluveettil 1982: 21, n. 24. On an elliptical hand, see 2 Sam 6:6 and Psa 18:16; see also, e.g., Barton 2001: 147–148. Energic understandings aside, making sense of כִּרְיָת, which is pointed as a feminine plural in the MT, remains a challenge.

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treaty” with Edom? A third observation is the comparison made by Marvin Sweeney between the content of Obad 12–14 and prohibitions known from ANE treaties. According to Sweeney, “This stylistic aspect... emphasizes that Edom grossly violated whatever treaty might have bound the two nations together.” Sweeney suggests in particular that the vetitive pertaining to the cutting down of fugitives (v. 14) “plays upon the stipulations of most treaties that call upon an ally to capture and return any enemy fugitives to the king with whom it is allied.” These observations collectively suggest that Obadiah accuses Edom of violating treaty expectations.

Obadiah, of course, objects to other Edomite actions. Edom ogled twice, boisterously cheered (v. 12a, b), entered the gate of “my people” (v. 13a), worked against Judah’s efficacy/wealth/army (v. 13b), took up a position so as to cut off fugitives (v. 14a) and delivered survivors to captivity (v. 14b). Conceptually similar expectations, both of word and deed, among parity treaty partners are seen in stipulations from “The Treaty of Šami-Adad V with Marduk-zakir-šumi, King of Babylon,” which was formulated in a time of significant political turmoil:

Šami-Adad shall not say (any) evil words about Marduk-rimanni [...] to the king, (viz): “Kill, blind, or seize him”, nor shall King Marduk-zakir-šumi listen to him (should he say such things). [He shall not ……] him, [nor …] to poi[nt] an eye, toe or finger [………, nor] … […… of his …] and his country. He shall not give back the captives [………]. The king shall indicate to him the fugitives [who] fled [from Assyria to Babylonia].

Military aggression, improper words, agreements regarding captives and fugitives and, perhaps, ogling (“to poi[nt] an eye” || √ ראש 2x [Obad 12, 13]) are addressed both in the treaty of Samši-Adad V with Marduk-zakiršumi and in Obad 12–14. We cannot know whether these verses reference specific language of an Edomite-Judahite treaty, but it seems clear enough that Obad 12–14 has much in common with the content and form of stipulations found in ANE treaties. If these verses do reflect specific language of an Edomite-Judahite treaty, then Edom acted in a manner inconsistent with the treaty.

**Obadiah 15–21: The Aftermath of Betrayal**

*Obadiah 15–16.* In the discussion of inversion and the reversal motif in Obadiah, verse 15 has already been noted as an example of *lex talionis* and applicable for the development of the reversal motif. Verse 16 might further allude to an Edomite-Judahite treaty relationship due to the language that it employs, yet it is clear that the verse poses difficulties for interpreters.

Nearly uniformly, commentators read verse 16 as pertaining to the “cup of wrath” metaphor of YHWH’s judgment. But there is a significant problem with the metaphor here. Who is the “you” who has been drinking (כִּי נָאַשְׁר

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80 Such an understanding appears warranted given the parallel in Jer 49:12. For a detailed excursus, see Raabe 1996: 206–243; on the cup as a metaphor for judgment, see, e.g., Psa 75:8 (contrast 116:13); Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15, 28; 49:12; Ezek 23:31–34; consider also 1 Cor 10:21; 11:27; Rev 14:10. For redaction-critical discussions, see Carroll 1986: 50–55; Nogalski 1993: 69–71.
[v. 16a(α)] from the cup of wrath(?) on YHWH’s(?) holy mountain? Judahites?81 Edomites?82 There is no consensus.83

A comparison with treaty ceremonies may help. The otherwise commonplace activity of drinking (Heb. לַעֲשֵׂה; Akk. sāṭu), often specified as from a cup (Heb. בָּשָׂר; Akk. kāṣū), was evidently a regular feature of treaty ratification ceremonies. Two examples should suffice.84 Genesis 26:28–31 references eating and drinking (לַעֲשֵׂה) in the context of concluding a treaty agreement (בֹּבח). This element in treaty ratification ceremonies may also be seen among the stipulations of the treaties of Esarhaddon, one of which forbids the treaty partner from concluding treaties with other political entities through “drinking from a cup”.85 If we consider the wealth of treaty references throughout Obadiah, we might suggest a third understanding of v. 16: Edom had once drank upon Mount Zion as part of a treaty ratification ceremony.86 But Edom is not alone in the drinking (כְּשָׂר in [v. 16a(α)]). As the form is a second person masculine plural (exceptional in Obadiah with Edom as subject), we must ask who else drank with Edom upon Mount Zion. Judah? Given the treaty allusions and the international context of Obad 1 and 15ff, perhaps the drinkers are representatives of two or more Palestinian states who met in Jerusalem and formed an anti-Babylonian league.87 Given the context, the drinkers include representatives

81 So most recent commentaries; see, e.g. Raabe 1996: 203–204.
82 So most ancient authorities; cf. discussion in Watts 1969: 61; Stuart 1987: 420. The future aspect of Edom’s punishment (e.g., Obad 8–10, 18–19, 21) makes it unlikely that Edom has already been a drinker of the cup of wrath.
83 If the drinker is Edom, the locale is odd, unless it refers not to the cup of wrath, but to a celebratory drinking bout in Jerusalem following the fall of Judah (see Renkema 2003: 191). If the drinker is Judah, why is the change of subject not specified? And how are we to understand Obadiah’s modification of the Jeremian parallel (גַּם אֱלֹהִים יִנְשָׂאָה יַתְּמוּנָה [49:12b])? If the drinking subject is Judah, then verse 16 might not reflect an application of the lex talionis of verse 15, but an argument from lesser to greater or an intensification of the punishment dished out to the nations compared to that dished out to Judah (e.g., Raabe 1996: 204–205). Effectively, this interpretation of the verse suggests that if Judah drank a cup of punishment, so too all the nations must drink—but unto oblivion. On Jewish and Christian interpretation of this difficult verse through the Reformation, see Elowsky 1992: esp. 114–124.
84 Sweeney (2000: 295) refers his readers also to such biblical texts as Exod 24:9–11 and Isa 25:6–10; see also LXX Gen 31:54.
87 Verse 16 could then be understood as follows. “Just as you [Edom and other league partners] drank [in order to conclude a covenant], so all the nations will drink continuously; they will drink and gulp down and they shall be as if they never were [a different kinship/covenant group].” Obadiah could
of Edom and Judah at least. With the history of interpretation that is
available to us for this verse,88 we know that Obad 16 provides a
considerable challenge. Safely and simply, we can state that Obadiah again
includes terminology known from treaty contexts.

Obadiah 17–21. These verses describe the anticipated restoration of an
exiled Israel to and from specific territories (vv. 17, 19–21). A brief
comment will show that these verses thematically parallel territorial
regulations (and related commercial clauses) known from ANE treaties.
Specific territorial regulations and commercial clauses are seen in 1 Kings
20:34, which pertains to a treaty between Ahab and Ben-hadad. The verse
communicates that unnamed and disputed cities under the control of the
Syrian king are returned to Israel as a stipulation of the agreement.89 Quite
similar is a territorial stipulation in a treaty between Zidanta I of Hatti and
Pilliya of Kizzuwatna, which addresses issues related to previous territorial
infractions.

The cities which Pilliya took will be given back to the Sun and
those of Pilliya which I took will be given back to Pilliya.90

These examples of territorial clauses show that treaties were often
concerned with political geography, which presupposes that economies and
populations were affected. The treaty of Abba-AN of Yamkhad and
Yarimlin of Alalakh reflects the economic value of transferred lands in a
territorial clause.

The city of Imar along with its fields, the city of....and the city of
Parre in exchange for the city of Uwiya; the city of Adrate in
exchange for the territory which is....91

then be seen as asserting that nations become engrafted into Israel’s fate through covenant; betrayal of
which has kinship-group consequences (cf.  patië + patronymics in Obad 18).
A fourth possibility is that Obadiah may be utilizing two different connotations of drinking (š šě). Edom (and others) drank from a [treaty] cup on YHWH’s holy mountain and on that holy mountain all nations will experience the cup of judgment that pertains to the day of YHWH (v. 15a). Understanding two connotations of š šě in this verse is not without precedent; see, e.g., John Calvin, summarized by Elowsky (1992: 121–122).
also Gen 31:44–52.
91 For this translation see McCarthy 1981: 307; cf. also the history of transference of Tal’ayim and its
villages in Sefire III:23–27.
This treaty specifies that surrounding agricultural areas (“fields”) of particular cities would be included in the transfer. In this regard, consider Obad 19–20.92

19 Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and those of the Shephelah the land of the Philistines; they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.

20 The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah shall possess Phoenicia as far as Zarephath; and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the towns of the Negeb.

Similar to the language of the Abba-AN treaty, Obad 19 makes reference to a transference of “fields” (שדה; NRSV “land”) associated with specific toponyms. The most frequently specified accusation against Edom in Ezekiel is tied to Edom’s desire for or possession of Judahite land.93 The references to Judahite/Israelite territory as an Edomite objective suggest that economic and territorial gain was a primary motivation for the supposed Edomite hostility against Judah in the sixth century. Obadiah 17–21 specifies a political geography of a restored Israel that is rather inverted from mid-sixth-century geopolitical reality. Given the treaty allusions provided by this study, it is evident that the rhetorical situation of Obadiah 17–21 fits a treaty context. In leaving Obadiah, a summary of this rhetorical situation might prove helpful.

92 Text-critical and translation problems are numerous in these verses. The translation provided is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

93 The land of Israel is a regular concern in Ezekiel, and accusations against Edom correspond with this general concern (Ezek 35:10, 12; 36:5b; see Block 1998: 322–34). Evidently, Judahites did not hear Edom’s (secretive) declarations (אכילתאשפתרה [35:10]) and “all the abusive speech” אכילהsetAttributeה [35:12]; cf. a treaty context in two of the three occurrences of יִקָּז in Jeremiah [14:21; 33:24–25]; cf. also the Ugaritic etymological equivalent in a context of political turmoil [KTU 1.17 II: 3, 18]. In sum, Edomite secrecy per Ezekiel pertains to its desire 1) to possess the two lands (perhaps Israel and Judah; cf. Ezek 37:22); 2) to have Israel’s mountains for its own devouring (ער…) in Jeremiah [33:24]; and 3) to have its pastureland for booty (ארץ טמור) in Jeremiah [36:5].
Evidence from Obadiah for Edomite Treaty Betrayal: A Summary

Obadiah constructs with artistic subtlety and nuance a text with numerous allusions to Edomite treaty betrayal. Themes of diplomacy, secrecy, deception, treaty relationships and betrayal, coupled with the reversal motif suggest that collusion between Edom and Babylon was effected at the expense of Judah. Given the distributions of these allusions, the theme of Edomite treaty betrayal appears to be part of Obadiah’s rhetorical situation and essential to its organization.

Both words in the title of Obadiah (בעדיה, v. 1a) reflect treaty terminology. Accordingly, the two-word title may provide a subtle clue that treaty relationships constitute a theme of the book. Verse 1c relates the dissemination of a report pertaining to an envoy’s international diplomatic mission. Although the purpose and content of that mission remain elusive, Obadiah communicates that the mission is fully underway and begins the oracle with a verse manifesting terminology found in treaty contexts as well as themes of international diplomacy and political intrigue in a context of battle. Somehow, Edom is bound up with this intrigue, which provides Edom an exceptional despicability (v. 2). A theme of secrecy emerges with verse 3. The inversion technique highlights Edom’s connection with deception (והנה), which foreshadows a deception of Edom (by Babylon) in an explicit treaty context (v. 7). With an idiomatic expression suggestive of secrecy (ומחה טעם), Edom communicates its supposed geopolitical security. This security may be connected to Babylon through the modifications Obadiah makes of the Jeremian parallel (e.g., המכבים, v. 4b), particularly as Edom, a kingdom to the south (cf. התמך, v. 9), has a “hidden northernness” (מדים; v. 6b). In the same context and in consideration of Obadiah’s modifications within an inverted quotation of Jeremiah, Edom’s capital city, Bozrah, is likened a secretive and destructive thief in the night (v. 5a–b). Through a modification of Jeremiah, Obadiah divulges this once-secret collusion (והנה בצרה, v. 6). Obadiah communicates that this revelation was unexpected and dangerous: south northerly is. In short, Obadiah’s rhetorical artistry in verses 1–6 subtly contains allusions to a Mesopotamian power, international diplomacy, secrecy, and discernment, and these rhetorical features may be subsumed under the theme of Edomite treaty betrayal, yet it is only at the point that Obadiah’s clear modifications
of the Jeremian parallel ceases that a theme of treaty betrayal becomes explicit. With a density of treaty terminology (shallוֹת, רָבִּיתָה, שלָם, תֹּמִךְ), verse 7 clearly communicates that Edom shall be deceived by its own treaty partner. Given the working inferences of the study, this partner is Babylon. In consideration of the reversal motif, whereby the density of inverted form accentuates a reversal of content, the reversal of Edom’s fortune anticipated by verse 7 may be much more precise: Edom previously deceived its own alliance partner, Judah. Usage of the consonant 햇 reinforces this precise reversal of fortune and suggests that Edom was the initiating party in its alliance with Babylon. That alliance was ultimately destructive for Edom, and the language of wisdom in verse 7b–8 communicates the reversal of Edom’s expectations in regard to its political counsel and plans for national survival.

Verse 11 begins the identification of specific violations of Judah on the part of its brother. Translations of עָזָה (11a) that present Edom having “stood aloof” might be inaccurate. Rather, Edom appears to have stationed itself in intimate opposition to Judah as a matter of official national policy. Significant similarity between the vetitives and content of verses 12–14 and stipulation sections of ANE treaties suggests a play on the form of treaty stipulations. Verses 17–21 describe a restored territory of Israel, and these verses show some similarity to territorial clauses in ANE treaties. All in all, Obadiah may be read as steeped both with treaty terminology and with allusions to an Edomite treaty betrayal. To be sure, nowhere does Obadiah overtly state that a treaty between Edom and Judah was violated; the theme, however, subtly permeates the work, perhaps as an organizing factor, and commends the following rhetorical situation. Edom initiated a clandestine treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom’s deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah. What remains is a study of other texts in light of this conclusion.

**Allusive Evidence: Psalm 137 and Other Biblical Texts**

This section is organized around a discussion of Psalm 137, which is generally considered a composition either of the late exile or a time shortly

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94 According to Gudas (1993: 1281–1282), New Critics “have found the term [i.e., ‘theme’] indispensable for pointing to the values and principal unity in a poem. However, they warn that the poem, or at least the good poem, is not a mere rhetorical device for ornamenting a prosaic [theme]...or making it more persuasive. The good poem does not assert [its theme].”

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thereafter. Tradition history challenges prohibit inclusion of other texts possibly pertaining to sixth-century Edomite-Judahite relations.95 For purposes of discussion, the psalm is divided into units according to the disjunctives 'atnāh and sīlluq. 96

By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
we hung up our harps.
For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
How could we sing the LORD’s song
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.
Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem’s fall,
how they said, “Tear it down! Tear it Down!”

95 E.g., the Jacob-Esau narratives of Genesis 25–28 and 32–33; Num 20; Deut 2; 23:17; Isaiah; Amos 1–2; Joel 4:19 (3:19); Mal 1:2–3 (cf. Rom 9:13); Psa 83; Psa 108.
96 The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version.

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Down to its foundations!

O daughter Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us!
Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!

Verse 7 focuses on Edomites, who are presented as reiteratively calling for some unknown entity to tear down (יהויה, pi’el of יִרְדֶּשׁ; lit. “lay bare, make naked, strip”) Jerusalem to its foundation (יהויה דֵּבָה בִּנְתִי; lit. “unto the foundations in her”). Apart from this aggressive language, verse 7 does not suggest that Edom was hostile against Jerusalem during the Babylonian campaign. A difficulty is whether verses 8–9 focus on Edom or Babylon. If Edom remains in focus in verses 8–9, then Edomite hostility is evidenced as are treaty allusions.97 Verse 8a is the fulcrum: מִקְסָלָה. Does this colon and what follows refer yet to Edom or does the focus return to Babylon? The limitation of the focus in Psa 137:7–9 to one upon the Edomites is defensible through terminological and thematic parallels. A terminological parallel (ידוּד) exists between verse 9 and Obad 3. The psalm ends with a proclamation that blessed-happiness is in store for the one who takes the little ones (of Edomites and/or Babylonians) and shatters them “upon the rock” (ידוּד; v.9). The definiteness of this rock suggests a specific location to be understood, and a few texts mention an Edomite “Rock” (“the Sela”: ידּוּד).98 Intertextual evidence may support a connection of the psalm’s ידּוּד with Edomite territory. The context suggests that the target of

97 A treaty allusion not otherwise addressed in this study is the correspondence between the withering of the right hand (ירידת יד; v. 5) and oath-making and punishment (see, e.g., Gen 14:22–23; Exod 6:8; Psa 144:8); on this correspondence, see Bar-Efrat, “Love of Zion,” 7–8, esp. note 13.
98 See 2 Kgs 14:7 (cf. 2 Chr 25:12; Jer 49:16). Two geographically appropriate formations have been suggested for this biblical, Edomite Sela: Umm el-Biyarah, and Khirbet es-Sela. See Hart 1986: 91–95. On Khirbet es-Sela, see Bartlett 1989: 51–52; Fanwar 1992: 1073–4; Crowell 2007: 75–88. The fact that יד is a common noun simply meaning “rock” prohibits an uncomplicated equation of either of these with the defensible “crevices of rock” where Edomites dwell according to Obad 3 (יִדּוּד; תָּכִין הָרָע). Obadiah attests “Sela” without the article (يسر). Poetic terseness aside, contrast the הָרָע (Jer 49:16).
the atrocities of verse 9 are the little ones (עָלְיוֹנֶיהָ) of an entire population (Babylonian and/or Edomite). What is being envisioned is the seizing and transportation of some thousands to the rock upon which their bodies would be dashed. Such horrific logistics are not without biblical precedent. According to 2 Kgs 14:7, Amaziah’s exploits included killing ten thousand Edomites and the taking-by-storm a stronghold named “Sela” (살). Gruesome detail of the same campaign is provided in 2 Chr 25:11–12, a text with semantic as well as thematic parallels with Psalm 137:9 and producing a similar vision of a large population associated with Edom that is apprehended and split upon the rock. The parallels provide an intertextual warrant for reading verses 7–9 with Edom yet in focus.

The psalm also reflects an etymological and thematic relationship to Obad 15b. We can compare (לְעָשַׁר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶדוֹם שִׁמְתֵּל) (“Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us”; Psa 137:8a–b) with (לְעָשַׁר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶדְמוֹן שִׁמְתֵּל) (“Just as you have done it shall be done to you. Your dealings will return upon your own head!”; Obad 15). Thematically, this parallel closely aligns with the concept of lex talionis and anticipates a reversal of fortune. The etymological parallel should be obvious: (לְעָשַׁר) (“your dealings” [Psa 137:8a]) parallels (לְעָשַׁר) (“your dealings” [Obad 15b]). The root is occasionally employed in economic contexts (e.g. 2 Sam 19:36; 2 Chr 20:11; 32:23–29 [v. 25]; Joel 4:4 [3:4]; cf. English “camel” and its etymology). Its occurrence in an Edomite context is noteworthy given the thesis of treaty betrayal and the economic advantage Edom would gain with control of southern Judah.

A primary obstacle in reading verses 8–9 as pertaining to Edom, however, is not a lack of literary affinity between the psalm and other anti-Edom texts, but whether verse 8a (בָּנוֹת בָּבֶל; “daughter-of-Babylon”) references Babylon or Edom. The colon is often taken as a literary intensification: Babylon as a capital city is personified. No fewer than three possibilities, however, have been proposed for understanding Edom rather than Babylon as the appropriate reference. The first two rely on a redactional assumption or a supposed textual error. Neither is warranted by

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99 Babylonian little ones (עָלְיוֹנֶיהָ) are the targets to be split apart according to Isa 13:16a; similar horrors are found elsewhere; see also Hos 14:1 [Eng. 13:16] and Nah 3:10.
101 According to Briggs (1902: 2:486), verses 8–9 demand that Edom remains in the context; colon 8aa is a misfortunate redactional gloss.
evidence available from ancient manuscripts. A third possibility is intriguing. In an article arguing that the anti-Edom oracles of Obadiah and Jeremiah 49 were post-exilic prophetic responses to Psalm 137, Graham S. Ogden suggests that the phrase מְנַחֶם may legitimately be understood as “the ally or confederate of Babylon.” Ogden can then understand Edom as the object of the imprecations of the remaining verses; Edom as a child of Babylon (cf. “son” as a vassal’s identification) becomes confused for its lord. In short, Edom may remain in focus, providing a warrant to examine elements in the psalm with treaty connotations corresponding to the theme of Edomite treaty betrayal.

Consider again verses 7–8, divided by cola and translated so as to accentuate treaty allusions discussed below.

Remember, YHWH, the Edomites, v. 7aα מַעֲרַת הַיָּמִים אֲדֹمֹת
the day of Jerusalem, the ones who said, “Strip [her]! Strip [her] v. 7aβ אֲמֵרִים עִז הָעִיש
down to the foundations in her! v. 7b דֵּע הָעִיש בָּה
O daughter of Babylon v. 8aα בָּבָל
—destroyed/destroyer—Happy are those who fulfill a covenant of peace with/repay you v. 8aβ שִׁיטַמְלְךָ אֲשֶׁר מְשַׁלְּמֵלָךְ
your own dealings v. 8bα אָתָנְמָלֵךְ
that you dealt to us! v. 8bβ שְׁנֵמֵלָל לָנוּ

Verse 8 declares that Edom’s destruction is justified. In a context of lex talionis, שִׁיטַמְלֵךְ occurs in the pi’el (“to complete, reward, make compensation, replace”; v. 8aβ). The root is at home in treaty contexts. We have seen that Obad 7 provides a relevant example, suggesting that Edom’s peace-covenant (שִׁיטַמְלֵךְ) partners will betray Edom (רֵיהוֹד) rather

102 Kellermann (1978: 48) emends to Más הָאָדֹם.
103 Ogden 1982: 89–97, 91. In support of his understanding of מְנַחֶם as pertaining to alliance, Ogden references his reader to the work of H. Haag, (“bath,” TDOT 2:336), who understands the figurative uses of מְנַחֶם (with a toponym) to include one in which villages and cities of a great city can be considered daughters. This well-attested figurative use suggests that מְנַחֶם at times specifically references a weaker or smaller political entity under the aegis or control of the genitive (in our case, בָּבָל). This use would befit Edom as a vassal of Babylon.
than “fulfill” (cf. עשת תרתי) the treaty. Is the psalm referencing a similar reversal of expectation—a similar payback?

This section will show that Psalm 137 reflects treaty curses and that violence such as described in verses 7–9 would be appropriate by ANE standards should betrayal occur. A treaty written in Aramaic and dating to the mid-eighth century is helpful. The curse section of Sefire I A (a vassal treaty between the suzerain Bar-Ga’yah of KTK and his vassal, Mati’el of Arpad) has themes and terminology that are strikingly similar to the psalm. Consider lines 29–30, 35, and 40–41.

29...Nor may the sound of the lyre be heard in Arpad; but among its people (let there rather be) the din of affliction and the noise of crying and lamentation! ... 35...Just as wax is burned by fire, so may Arpad be burned and her great daughter-cities! 40...[and just as] 41a [her] lot is stripped naked, so may the wives of Mati’el be stripped naked, and the wives of his offspring, and the wives of [his] nobles!

In a context of lamentation, an inter-dialectical etymological and semantic equivalence is apparent in the abandonment of music from the lyre (נוהי נברח) [Sefire I A:29] || [Psa 137:2b]). In both texts, a lesser polity under the governance of a greater polity may be implied by kinship language, namely the topographical mention of daughter-city/cities: one of Babylon, and those of Mati’el’s Arpad (ארמדת לֶבנה) [Sefire I A:35] || [Psa 137:8a]). Moreover, these daughter cities are found in a parallel context of destruction (“burned”; נכרך [Sefire I A:35, 37] || “destroy(ed)”; נכרך [Psa 137:8]). Jerusalem is personified and feminine, and about her are the only words in the psalm associated with the sons of Edom (בני ירדן [137:7]), who call for her to be stripped (נכרך). This sexual assault is paralleled

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105 The phrase “Fulfill the treaty” (עשה תרתי; Aram. עשת תרתי) appears to be a standard clause of declaring that a treaty is fully observed; see, e.g., Sefire I B:24 (presented and discussed in Fitzmyer 1995: 50, 51, and 108).

106 The translation is that of Fitzmyer 1995: 44–47.

107 For the restoration and the possibility that the great daughters of Arpad may pertain to subject cities or regions, see Fitzmyer 1995: 46–47, 91, 93.

108 For נכרך (“to strip”) with YHWH against Zion, see Isa 3:17, which is set in a context of the systematic stripping of the fineries of the daughters of Zion (נכרך) following the judgment of YHWH (vv. 13–24), perhaps for its own covenant violation leading to exile (cf. 2 Kgs 22:8–23:27).
etymologically and semantically in the Sefire treaty (“and just as a harlot is stripped”; [Sefire I A:40–41])109 “Strip [her]! Strip [her]!” [Psa 137:7a]). Should Mati’el betray the treaty, stately ladies suffer indignity (I A:41). Thus, in but a few lines of the curse section of Sefire I A, one finds numerous thematic, etymological, and (in the case of subject cities or regions as “daughters”) kinship and syntactical parallels with Psalm 137. One also finds lament and the end of lyre play as (allied) cities are conflagrated and female principals are vandalized. Although we do not have enough treaties from the Iron Age to make a defensible conclusion about the frequency with which these elements appeared together in treaty curse sections, we can say that the language of Psalm 137 is at home in known treaty curses.

Treaty curses and retributive justice might also be in the context of the invective in Psalm 137, where “blessed-happiness” (גְּדֹלָה) is in store for the one who pays Edom back (v. 8a) for its treaty violation of Judah (v. 8b). The mode of payback is horrific: Edomite “little ones” (עַלְפִּים) are to be shattered upon the Sela (Psa 137: 9). This horror further evidences the psalm’s treaty context; an etymological and thematic parallel is found in a treaty curse identifying a specific legal consequence of treaty infraction. Consider Sefire I A:14, 21–22, which precedes but by a few lines the excerpt cited above.

Now if Mati’el, the son of Attarsamak, the king of Arpad, should prove unfaithful [to Bar-Ga’yah… then] should seven nurses anoint [their breasts and] nurse a little one, may he not have his fill…110

Should the treaty be violated, nursing will not fend off starvation for the “little one” (עַלְפִּים [I A:22]; cf. Lam 2:11–12, 19–20; 4:4). A presumably quick(er) death-by-shattering is in store for the “little ones” (עַלְפִּים) of Psa 137:9. Oaths among partners during treaty formation made such horrors a mutually-approved, foreseen course of action in the event of treaty betrayal.


110 Emphases mine; the translation is that of Fitzmyer 1995: 45 with three changes. First, “[then]” has been added in order to clarify context. Second, “little one” has been substituted for “young boy,” accentuating the etymological parallel. Third, a redundant (?) bracket that followed “nurses” has been removed.

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A divine witness sanctioned the act (Sefire I A: 7–13; cf. Psa 137:7a[?]), and the treaty would have been communicated publically (cf. Sefire I B:8–10). The Judahite and Edomite leadership would have acknowledged that such retribution was sanctioned and that the one who would carry out such acts would be divinely favored (םש[?]). The “scandalous” statement that blessed-happiness is in store for the one who shatters little ones (Psa 137:8, 9). The “scandalous” statement that blessed-happiness is in store for the one who shatters little ones (Psa 137:8–9) simply reflects this fact.\footnote{On Psalm 137 as the “scandal” psalm, see Peterson 1989: 96. Through the mutually-accepted, divinely-witnessed Edomite-Judahite treaty curses, Edom accepted a threat of destruction. In an ANE worldview, the one who carried out a retributive justice sanctioned by the invectives of the treaty would be carrying out actions “blessed” by those divine witnesses. The psalmist, as a matter of course or of theology, seems either powerless or unwilling to carry out such actions.}

Psalm 137:7–9 is ironic: the sons of Edom are presented as vocalizing a curse wish that could have been applicable to themselves in their own broken treaty with Judah.

With the treaty curse language of Psa 137 in mind, consider the only direct reference to Edom in Lamentations (4:21–22).\footnote{The translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version.}

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter Edom, you that live in the land of Uz; but to you also the cup shall pass; you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.

22 The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter Zion, is accomplished, he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter Edom, he will punish, he will uncover your sins.

As verse 21 begins to anticipate a future punishment on the daughter of Edom,\footnote{Given the syntax וְנָטַע + toponym, Lamentations might be extending the referent to include an unnamed associate of Edom.} verse 22 interjects a declaration that the punishment of the daughter of Zion has reached completion (v. 22a). Given covenant infidelity as the overarching biblical (theological) context of Judah’s exile and given the current study of Edomite treaty betrayal, this shift of status in Lam 4:21–22 does not appear to be a transferring of Judah’s guilt onto the scapegoat, Edom, as some have seen in anti-Edom texts,\footnote{See, e.g., Gosse 1989: 511–517; see also discussion in Dicou 1994: 15–16.} but rather a shift in status relative to the timing of a retributive justice deserved by each for covenant (treaty) violation. The poet of Lamentations states that Judah is completing...
its punishment for covenant infidelity to YHWH (v. 22a) whereas Edom can anticipate the consequences of its own covenant infraction (v. 21b, 22b).

Psalm 137 and Lamentations 4:21–22 provide important data for the historical reconstruction. They might reflect a curses section in the Edomite-Judahite treaty, namely, lament, an end of lyre play, the stripping of principals, city destruction, and the wasting of little ones. These texts also evidence that the Edomite treaty betrayal of Judah took place in the sixth century B.C.E., reinforcing the pertinence of Obadiah to that date. Third, unlike Obadiah, the psalmist directly associates Edom with Babylon. Thus, Psalm 137 and Lamentations provide considerable historical weight to the argument already made: Edom conspired with Babylon against Judah in the sixth century B.C.E.

SYNTHESIZING PIECEMEAL DATA: EZEKIEL, A NORTH-SOUTH AXIS, AND THE DATE OF BETRAYAL

With Palestine in imperial disarray ca. 588 B.C.E., Nebuchadnezzar had to decide which kingdom to subdue first. After considering options for dealing with the Palestinian states persisting in rebellion, and for whatever reasons, Babylon undertook a “Judah-first” strategy. With Judah, Tyre, and Ammon in active revolt, why might Nebuchadnezzar first attack the rebel state at the center? Was it due to omens and extispicy (see below on Ezek 21:24–27 [Eng. 19–22])? A “divide and conquer” stratagem? This study has shown that sixth-century anti-Edom texts are replete with allusions to a secretive Babylonian-Edomite treaty divulged during the Babylonian assault on Judah. Attacking Judah first would make good sense if a turncoat (Edom) was poised to engage Judah from the south. The resulting north-south axis running from Riblah (2 Kgs 25:2, 6) through Judah to Edom would effectively overwhelm Zedekiah’s kingdom and would prohibit efficient communications necessary for joint military operations of Ammonite and Tyrian rebel forces, perhaps inclining them away from attempting to assist Judah (cf. Lam 4:17).

It appears, then, that Judah was caught in a surprise attack, whereby the Judahite front (north) and rear (south) were attacked simultaneously. Verses 5, 10, and 12 of Ezekiel 35 present Edom as engaged in geopolitical hostility. In this context, consider Ezek 36:1–4 (NRSV; emphasis mine),

115 Portions of Phoenicia may have been subdued early, yet Tyre was left in its rebellion until Jerusalem fell (cf. Ezek 29:17); see also Josephus, Ag. Ap. 1.156; Ant. 10.228; for an overview, see Katzenstein 1992: 686–690, esp. 690.

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which evidences a multi-national campaign against Judah (cf. also Jer 34:1, 7):

1 And you, mortal, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say: O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. 2 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy said of you, “Aha!” and, “The ancient heights have become our possession,” therefore prophesy, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they made you desolate indeed, and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became an object of gossip and slander among the people; therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, the watercourses and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted towns, which have become a source of plunder and an object of derision to the rest of the nations all around:

“From all sides” and “all around” (both מסכוב; see also Lam 1:17; 2:22; Ezek 23:22) suggest that the Babylonian assault from the north included military actions west (Lachish and Azekah?) and east of Jerusalem (e.g., 2 Kgs 25:4–5; Ezek 21:18–23[?]), and was accompanied by actions in the south. It is significant that “all of Edom” (כל אדום כלו / אדום כלו [35:15; 36:5]) appears in the verses immediately prior to and after Ezek 36:1–4. “Edom” literally brackets (surrounds) the verses about Judah being surrounded. This artistry in the context of a multi-national assault suggests again that military coordination occurred among Babylonian forces from the north and Edomite forces hostile in the Negev to the south.116

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, literary evidence suggests that as late as 593 B.C.E. (if not later) Edom was among the Palestinian states contemplating an anti-Babylonian league. It is not uncommon to date the beginning of Zedekiah’s rebellion to some five years latter (ca. 589 B.C.E.).117 Did Edom carry out diplomacy with Babylon early on in the revolt? Two years (ca. 589–Tevet 588/587 B.C.E.)118 is a rather long time to

116 For further support of the point, see Ezek 21:1–5 (Eng. 20:45–49), which immediately precedes a prophecy concerning a campaign against Jerusalem (21:6–12 [21:1–7]) and which prophesies an imminent campaign against the Negev (Ezek 21:2 [20:46]). Twice in the immediate context one finds “from the Negev/South to North” (Ezek 21:3, 9 [Eng 20:47; 21:4]).

117 The ascension of Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) in 589 B.C.E. and his activities in the eastern Mediterranean may have spurred rebellion. Alternatively, revolt may have occurred earlier, following Psammetichus’ parade through Palestine; see Ahlström 1993: 793–794; Lipschits 2005: 70–72.

118 This article follows the basic chronology for Zedekiah’s rule as presented by Hayim Tadmor (1979: 44–60). The general result of this chronology is that Zedekiah’s ascension took place.

19 Mortal, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them shall issue from the same land. And make a signpost, make it for a fork in the road leading to a city; 20 mark out the road for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites or to Judah and to Jerusalem the fortified. 21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the fork in the two roads, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim, he inspects the liver. 22 Into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to call out for slaughter, for raising the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build siege towers.

According to the passage, divination and extispacy rather than objective political and military strategy determines the course of action. For Ezekiel, diplomatic correspondence with representatives of an allied Palestinian state is not part of the decision-making process leading to a Judah-first policy. If this last point accurately corresponds to history, then an argument from Ezekiel’s silence is that Edom decided to collaborate with Babylon only subsequent to an intelligence report that Babylon was indeed moving toward Judah first (i.e., some moment after Nebuchadnezzar’s forces headed specifically for Judah yet before their arrival). This sudden shift in Edomite diplomacy would not require Edom to keep its formal relationship with Babylon clandestine for any great length of time. Even so, the paucity of evidence does not allow for a definitive date for the formation of Edom’s treaty with Babylon against its deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah. This study does not determine whether Edom chose to betray its erstwhile ally after a prolonged deception of Judah or only subsequent to Babylon’s advance upon central Palestine in order to suppress rebel states. More work on this point is called for. What does seem clear from the biblical evidence is that by the time of the Babylonian assault on Judah in the tenth month (Tevet) of Zedekiah’s ninth year (December 588/January 587 B.C.E.), Edom...

sometime shortly after 1 Nisan 597, yet his first regnal year would have been reckoned from Nisan 596 through Adar 595 B.C.E. According to 2 Kgs 25:1 (cf. Jer 52:4; Ezek 24:1), the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began on the tenth day of the tenth month (Tevet) of Zedekiah’s ninth year (which ran from Nisan 588 to Nisan 587 B.C.E.). In a conversion to the Gregorian calendar, Tevet of Zedekiah’s ninth year corresponds to December 588/January 587 B.C.E. On 9 Tammuz of Zedekiah’s eleventh year (mid July 586 B.C.E.), after a siege lasting about eighteen months, the walls of Jerusalem were breached and the city fell (2 Kgs 25:3; cf. Jer 52:6).
had initiated and acted upon a clandestine treaty with Babylon to the detriment of Edom’s deceived and treaty-based ally, Judah.

**CONCLUSION**

Through an analysis of biblical evidence, this article has provided a rather specific reconstruction, one that contrasts reconstructions that minimize Edomite hostilities against Judah during the events of 588–586 B.C.E. John R. Bartlett has produced requisite work in the study of Edom and has advocated Edom’s innocence during the fall of Jerusalem and Judah.\(^\text{119}\) Obadiah 11–14 accuses Edom of specific actions against Judah, yet for Bartlett these accusations are not a “historian’s description” but are derived from Obadiah’s “imagination.”\(^\text{120}\) Bartlett holds that Jer 40:11 is “[p]erhaps the most reliable piece of evidence” for Edomite behavior during the Babylonian attack and siege of Jerusalem.\(^\text{121}\) Consider Jer 40:11–12 (NRSV), set in a context sometime after the fall of Jerusalem and communicating that Judahites were residing in Edom:

\[
\text{Likewise, when all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan as governor over them, then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been scattered and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah; and they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance.}
\]

Bartlett understands these verses as evidencing the peaceful treatment that Judahites returning from Edom had received there during the attack and siege.\(^\text{122}\) In this view, because Edom appeared willing to harbor Judahite refugees, Edom was not the enemy Obadiah envisioned. Setting aside the point that the official political relationships of a nation do not always reflect the behavior of every sub-group of and individual in that nation, I would offer that it is unclear whether Jer 40:11–12 evidences peaceful treatment of Judahites by Edom during the siege of Jerusalem. A comment on the context of Jeremiah 40 is in order. Subsequent to a protracted Babylonian siege, Jerusalem fell and Gedaliah, a pro-Babylonian governor, was appointed by


\(^{120}\) Bartlett 1989: 155–156.

\(^{121}\) Bartlett 1989: 151.

\(^{122}\) Bartlett 1989: 151, 154, 157. The verse and Bartlett’s position have proven influential and cited for reconstructions that minimize Edomite aggression against Judah at the time; see, e.g., Dicou 1994: esp. 184; see also Tebes 2011b: 224 with 232.

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Nebuchadnezzar and watched over by a Babylonian garrison (cf. Jer 41:2–32; Kgs 25:22–24). Judahite political prisoners and exiles had evidently already been taken by Babylon, and a rebellious faction and its leaders had been executed (2 Kgs 25:19–21). What is clear is that Jer 40:11–12 speaks of a time when political conditions in Judah had changed.\textsuperscript{123} Judah was no longer in revolt. Indeed, “When all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in all the lands (בכרハウראשו)…all these Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been scattered (נדיהים)…” is also suggestive of an imperial allowance or policy toward the return of Judahites (captured, hiding, or harbored) once hostilities ceased. It does not specify how Judahites came to be in Edom. With a pro-Babylon leadership functioning in Judah, and with Edom an ally of Babylon, Edom and Judah would have returned to a rather equal footing—albeit as subjects of Babylon. As has been noted in this article, how allies are to treat captives and fugitives is a regular component of ancient Near Eastern treaties, and Edom and Judah’s common loyalty to Babylon could signal the release of any Judahite captives Edom may have taken during the crisis. In short, Jer 40:11–12 speaks of a return of Judahites from several lands sometime after the revolt was quelled and after Babylon appointed Gedaliah as governor of Judah; accordingly, these verses may have little bearing on Edom’s political relations with and treatment of Judahites during the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem and Judah ca. 588–586 B.C.E.

This article has argued that Edom kept clandestine from Judah a treaty relationship with Babylon and surprised Judah during the Babylonian assault. A literary-critical question arises. Why would Obadiah present a prophecy of such subtle allusion to betrayal? Why not just say “Edom betrayed Judah”? What makes sense to me is that Obadiah’s artistry reflects the hiddenness of Edom’s eventually manifested political relationships and aggressive actions during the Babylonian crisis. In this regard, a comment is also in order pertaining to biblical Edom. Foundational ancestral stories had kept Esau/Edom at the closest fringe of Jacob/Israel (Gen 25, 27, 32–33, 35:29). Given the sociological function of treaties to extend kinship, which was a basis for ethical responsibility, not only did the biblical descendants of Esau fail to act as kin of Jacob during the Babylonian crisis, they had rejected that kinship for one with Babylon, which provided them some

\textsuperscript{123} It remains uncertain how much time past between the fall of Jerusalem and the return of the fruitful growing season mentioned in v. 12; two months or as many as five years may have past (cf. Jer 52:28–30). For discussion of the political context, for notes on textual issues in Jeremiah 40:11–12, and for relevant bibliographic references, see Keown, Scalise, and Smothers 1995: 232–238.
territorial gain. It appears, then, that after generations of tension (e.g., 1 Sam 14:47; 2 Kings 3; 8:20–22; 14:7; 16:6) Edom chose against Israel/Judah and became through treaty betrayal a people akin to the nations. Perhaps it was this sixth-century violation of a mutually-perceived kinship and treaty relationship binding Edom to Judah that made Edom’s political actions dreadfully painful (cf. Lam 1:2, 19; 4:21–22) and contributed to the production of other anti-Edom texts.

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124 Edomite encroachment into southern Judah could have led to a mid-sixth-century sociological exigency among some Judahites: was Esau—rather than Jacob—the true inheritor of the blessings of Abraham? See Assis 2006: 1–20. Assis, however, minimizes the importance of Edomite involvement in the destruction of Judah for the development of the exceptional attitude toward Edom in biblical sources (2006: 3, 15–17).

125 Arguably, no other nation apart from Israel receives more biblical attacks than Edom. Stuart (1987: 405–406) provides a convenient table of prophetic oracles against the nations, and states in regard to Edom that “more sheer space” is devoted to oracles against Tyre and Moab. Such is the case if Isaiah 34 is counted as an oracle against the nations in general (as Stuart counts), rather than one principally against Edom. Stuart acknowledges that mention of Edom has a “somewhat wider distribution.”

*Antiguo Oriente, volumen 11, 2013, pp. 75–128.*


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