

Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Series #8: The Minor Prophets
Session #10: Obadiah & Jonah
Tuesday, March 21, 2017

Obadiah

Facts about Obadiah

- Name means “servant/slave of Yah(weh)”
- Events described in vv. 11-14 date the writing of Obadiah to after 587 BCE, sometime during the Babylonian exile.
- It is the shortest of all the Old Testament books.
- Little is known about the Prophet Obadiah.

Summary of Obadiah

The key personalities are the Edomites. Obadiah announces judgment on the nation of Edom for its sins against Judah and Jerusalem. Specifically, the prophet denounces Edom for gloating over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E., and accuses Edom of looting Jerusalem and handing over her fugitives. For these sins, says the prophet, Edom itself will be destroyed. This prophetic book, the shortest book in the Old Testament, ends by speaking of the “day of the LORD,” when the nations will be defeated, Israel will be restored, and “the kingdom shall be the LORD’s.” This is the fateful end of the nation of Edom. They had been in conflict with Israel since ancient times, in reality the Edomites are the descendants of Esau, Jacobs’s brother.

Outline of Obadiah

- A. Superscription (1a)
- B. An Oracle against Edom (1b-14)
 - 1. Edom’s pending destruction (1b-4)
 - 2. Edom at the hand of the nations (5-7)
 - 3. Edom at the hand of God (8-9)
 - 4. Edom as a treacherous brother (10-14)
- C. Israel’s final triumph (15-21)
 - 1. The Day of the Lord (15-18)
 - 2. Reclamation and expansion of territory (19-21)

Notes

- Edom was a tiny desert nation directly east of the Arabah. The Edomite language was so close to Hebrew that the people were considered “brothers” by biblical authors. (See Genesis 25:23-26; Amos 1:1; Obadiah v. 12)
- v. 3 – “the rock” can refer either to mountainous terrain of Edom or to a major Edomite city that may be synonymous with the city of Petra (which also means ‘rock.’)
- v. 9 – Teman was an important city in Edom.
- “Day of the LORD” was a common term in propetic writing, referring not to a 24-hour day, but a time when the Lord will finally set everything right, whether for punishment or reward.

Jonah

Facts about Jonah

- Jonah's name means 'dove, the son of truth'
- Different from all the other prophetic books in two ways:
 - The story is about the prophet himself, not his prophecies.
 - Jonah is sent and prophesies to the Assyrians in Nineveh, whereas the other prophets are concerned with Israel and Judah.
- His oracle consists of one verse. And the people listen!
- The dating of Jonah is unclear, but most scholars place it sometime in the post-exilic period, probably after the destruction of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh (612 BCE). Probably between 500 and 400 BCE, based on language in the text that deals with the topic of tensions between Jews and Gentiles.

Summary of Jonah

God calls Jonah to be a prophet to the wicked city Nineveh, but Jonah rebels and flees across the sea in the opposite direction toward Tarshish. When God sends a storm to stop Jonah, the prophet is thrown overboard because the crew surmises that he is the bad omen causing the storm. God sends a big fish to rescue Jonah, and in the fish's belly Jonah sings a song of thanks. The fish spits Jonah up on the shore near Nineveh and God calls Jonah a second time. Jonah goes to Nineveh, preaches a short sermon, and the whole city repents. Afterward, Jonah admits to God that the reason he had fled in the first place was that he had known that God would be merciful to the city--and Jonah had wanted the city destroyed. God is not happy that Jonah is so selfish, so God uses a plant to try to teach Jonah that God loves all creatures.

Outline of Jonah

- A. God's First Call to Jonah (Chapters 1-2)
 - a. Jonah's call and flight (1:1-16)
 - i. Commission & attempt to flee (1:1-3)
 - ii. You cannot flee from God! (1:4-16)
 - b. Jonah and the Big Fish (1:17 – 2:10)
 - i. Jonah is swallowed up (1:17)
 - ii. Jonah's song of thanksgiving (2:1-9)
 - iii. Jonah is spit out (2:10)
- B. God's Second Call to Jonah (Chapters 3-4)
 - a. Jonah's mission to Nineveh and its completion (3:1-10)
 - b. Jonah's complaint to God and God's lesson to Jonah (4:1-1-10)

Notes

- Jonah's call & flight
 - Tarshish – either Tarsus in Turkey or Tartessus in SW Spain.
 - Joppa = modern-day Jaffa (Yafo) just south of Tel Aviv.

- Jonah's flight by sea is ironic, because he knew that God made the sea, yet that's exactly where he went. God, ruler of the seas, caused a great storm.
- "The Lord, God of heaven" is a phrase used only in the 2nd Temple period (after 530 BCE)
- Jonah in the fish's belly
 - The Hebrew verb translated as *to swallow up* has a negative meaning; thus, the fish is at first presented as an instrument of divine judgment, rather than deliverance.
 - Ancient Canaanite and Mesopotamian texts depict the underworld as a walled city located under the waters and below the mountains, which supported the cosmos.
 - God responds to Jonah's prayer by having the fish *vomit* him out.
- Jonah in Nineveh
 - Nineveh was a great ancient city, the capital of Assyria.
 - Jonah proclaims his one-sentence prophecy and Nineveh obeys!
 - God was merciful to Nineveh, but Jonah was not happy.
 - The final lesson was the moral lesson that Jonah learned from God.

Major Theological Themes

- 1) God's mercy.
- 2) Following God.
- 3) God's Creation.
- 4) God's Justice.

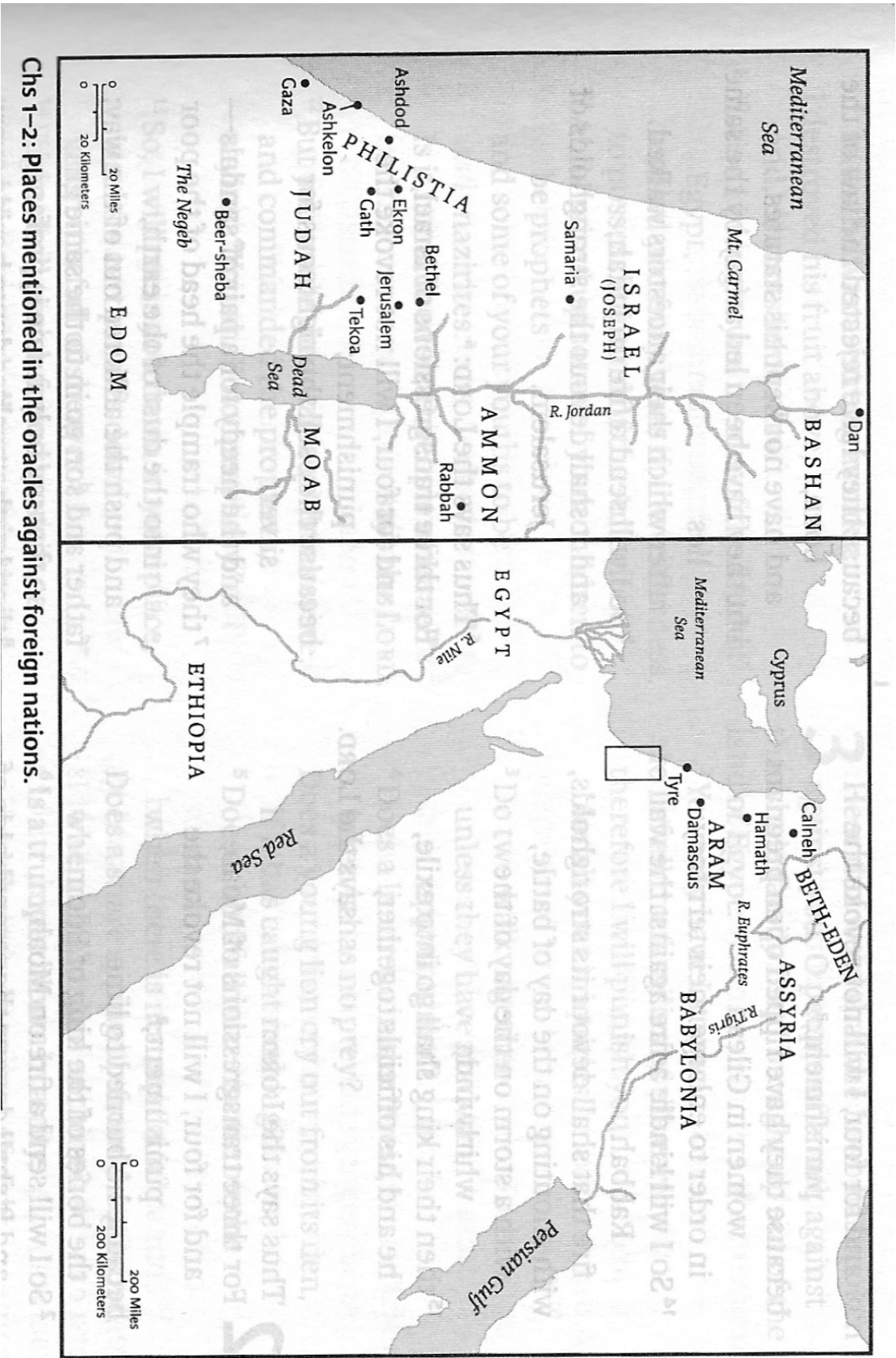
Resources

Notes on Obadiah & Jonah in www.enterthebible.org.

Notes from The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), 2010

Notes from HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), 1989

Notes from The CEB Women's Bible, 2016



Chs 1–2: Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations.