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# HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, AND OBADIAH

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Lesson 34, Old Testament, Adult Religion Class, Tuesday, 8 May 2012

## Study Guide

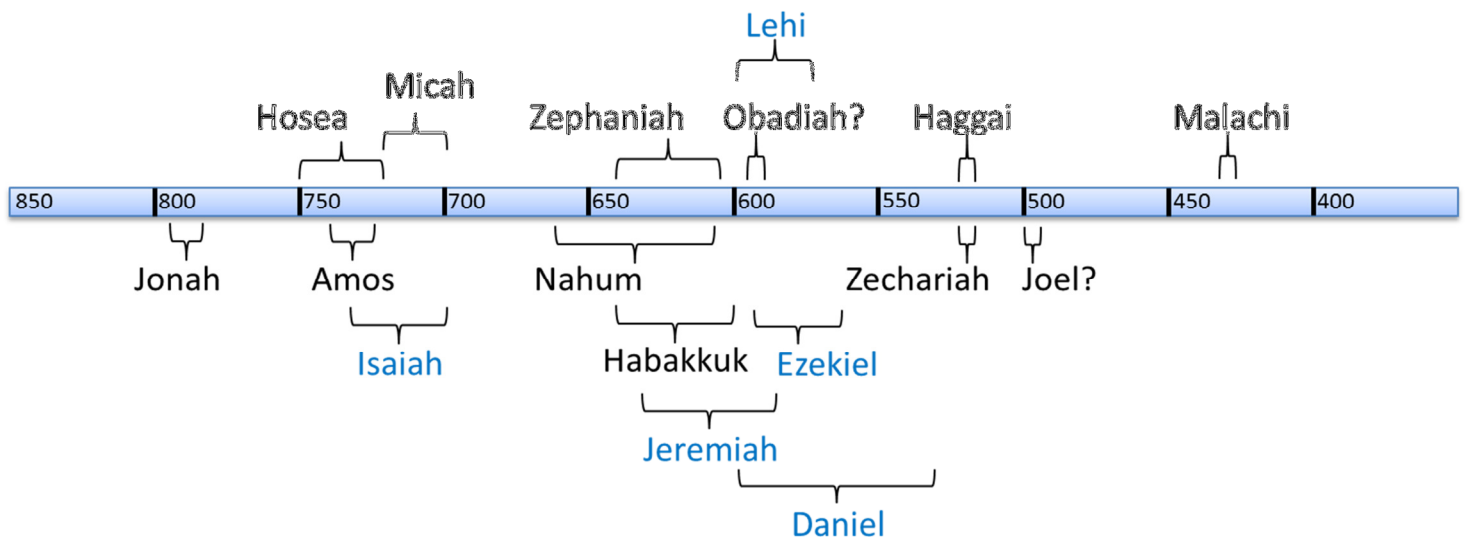
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## INTRODUCTION

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This lesson begins the last section of the Old Testament, the twelve books typically referred to as “The Minor Prophets.” This is not because their messages are not important but because their books are shorter than the prophetic books just preceding them. Jews call these books “The Twelve,” making them part of the “Latter Prophets” with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (the “Former Prophets” start with Joshua and conclude with 2 Kings). Anciently (probably starting in the second century BC), the Twelve were considered as one book and recorded on a single scroll, since their combined length roughly equaled one of the major prophets (62 pages in the LDS Bible for the twelve, compared to 80 pages for Isaiah). They were found on one scroll among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The length of the books varies from one to fourteen chapters, and the dates range from First Temple to late Persian periods. Some of the prophets are from the north; most are from the southern kingdom of Judah and target their messages to those kingdoms.

Below is a list of the Twelve prophets as they are in our scriptures, with proposed dates of their ministries (some are very uncertain; most broad to cover the possible range of the ministry based on what is known). The chart above shows their proposed dates on a timeline and includes the other four major prophetic books (in blue).

- Hosea (750-725 BC)
- Joel (post-exilic?)
- Amos (750-740 BC)
- Obadiah (after 596 BC)
- Jonah (790 BC?)
- Micah (728-698 BC)
- Nahum (660-606 BC)
- Habakkuk (630-600 BC?)
- Zephaniah (640-609 BC)
- Haggai (about 520 BC)
- Zechariah (520-518 BC)
- Malachi (about 430 BC)

## HOSEA

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Like Isaiah, Hosea's family was to be an object lesson to the people around him; unlike Isaiah, Hosea's family life was strained and challenging because he was commanded to marry a prostitute. This was to teach the people about enduring God's love for them, even though they betrayed him like an unfaithful bride.

Hosea's name means 'YHWH has caused salvation' and is related to the name Yeshua or Joshua and Isaiah. He was an Israelite prophet that spoke to

both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

Hosea taught the people during the days of Uzziah down to Hezekiah and during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. Thus Hosea's ministry straddled Amos and perhaps Jonah at the beginning and Isaiah and Micah at the end.

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### OUTLINE

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- 1) Israel Betrays the Lord (1-5)
  - a) Hosea and Gomer represent the Lord and Israel (1-2)
  - b) Israel shall return (3)
  - c) Israel chases false gods (4-5)
- 2) Israel Trusts in Other Nations (6-7)
  - a) Call to repentance (6)
  - b) Lament for Israel (7)
- 3) Broken Covenants (8-14)
  - a) The Lord forsaken (8)
  - b) Exile coming (9)
  - c) Seek the Lord (10)
  - d) Israel taken away (11)
  - e) Many years of sin (12-13)
  - f) Final plea (14)

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### ISRAEL BETRAYS THE LORD (1-5)

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Using the metaphor of his own marriage, Hosea taught that Israel had betrayed its covenant with the Lord and gone 'whoring' after other gods. But the condemnation didn't stop with the northern kingdom of Israel—it also extended to Judah, who was every bit as wicked but was able to stave off destruction for a while after Israel was taken away through the righteous efforts of some of its prophets and kings.

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#### HOSEA AND GOMER REPRESENT THE LORD AND ISRAEL (1-2)

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**1:1 in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.** This is the same introduction as Isaiah had (Isaiah 1:1), making the two of them contemporaries. The difference is that Hosea appears to have started sooner ("in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash") and was from the north, which Isaiah ministered in Jerusalem.

**1:2 *take unto thee a wife of whoredoms.***

"Whoredoms" can mean anything from adultery to prostitution. From the context, the most likely back for Gomer is that she was a widow (she already had children) who had turned to prostitution to support herself. Some commentators, including LDS scholar Sidney Sperry, conclude that this was not a real marriage because the Lord would not ask his prophet to do such a thing (see Student Manual 2:104-105 for the full argument). But Hosea's story is presented to us in great detail and with great emotion, which causes me to think it is likely that it is true. Hosea took the widow Gomer and her children to himself, hoping the financial stability and emotional support he could provide would cause her to remain faithful. But her behavior proved otherwise and provided the Lord and excellent example to all who knew the prophet—personally or through his writings—of the Lord's love for Israel, even as they betrayed him.

1:2 ***the land hath committed great whoredom.*** We were immediately led to the metaphor: Gomer is Israel which has left the Lord to go commit adultery with other gods.

1:4 ***Jezeel.*** Hosea named his children born from Gomer names that were used in his message to the people. The first son was called Jezeel, which means ‘God sows’ or ‘God scatters’ (because sowing was often done by scattering seed). The dual meaning deepened the message. More importantly, the name represented the valley where Jehu staged a coup against the armies of Joram, Jezebel, and Ahaziah (2 Kings 9-10).

1:6 ***Lo-ruhamah.*** Gomer’s daughter was named ‘no mercy,’ representing that the Lord’s mercy for Israel was at an end. The language of this verse and verse 8 (“she conceived”) compared to the first child in 1:3 (“he went and took Gomer . . . which conceived”) have led some to believe that these two children are not Hosea’s; in other words, Gomer is the mother but someone besides Hosea is the father.

1:9 ***Lo-ammi.*** The second son’s name means ‘not my people,’ showing the Lord no longer claimed Israel as his own.

1:10 ***Ye are the sons of the living God.*** Reversing the title of ‘you are not my people,’ the Lord promised that in a future day, he would not only make them his people but his children.

2:1 ***Ammi . . . Ruhamah.*** The opposite of the names given in the previous chapter, this is done to tie the message of restoration here to verses 1:10-11.

2:2 ***she is not my wife.*** This appears to be a statement of divorce, since saying these words in a public place connoted the termination of the marriage.

2:3 ***Lest I strip her naked.*** A person could be stoned for adultery. Like Joseph, when he learned Mary was pregnant and he was not the father, mercifully decided instead to “put her away privily” (Matthew 1:19), Hosea determined to exact the least punishment in the law on his errant former wife—making her walk around naked for a time.

2:4 ***I will not have mercy upon her children.*** Not the children they had together but the children from Gomer’s previous marriage (or prostitution).

2:5 ***that give me my bread.*** Gomer’s motivation for returning to her former craft relates to the goods she received in exchange for her services. Perhaps Hosea was not well off and she realized that she had more food when she was a harlot.

2:7 ***I will go and return to my first husband.*** “First” is better translated ‘former’ in this case, referring to Hosea. The Lord says once he intervenes, that Gomer will realize that returning to her life of sin was not providing the benefits she had imagined it would, and like the prodigal son, will desire to go back to the way her life was before.

2:14 ***bring her into the wilderness.*** The punishment for her sin concluded, the Lord shifted here to statements of blessing. However, before the blessings, he called her into the wilderness and expresses kindness and tenderness to her. This is often a pattern in the Lord’s dealings with Israel: they sin and distance themselves from him, but he brings them into the wilderness (the Exodus, Lehi and his family, the Jaredites, and more) for a time to speak to them and prepare them for the promised land.

2:16 ***thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali.*** “Ishi” means literally ‘my man’ and “Baali” ‘my master.’ Both terms can be used for ‘husband’ but with very different connotations. Ishi implies a close relationship, while Baali represents a position of servitude on the wife’s part. The Lord promised that after the wilderness experience, Israel would look at the Lord as a friend and companion not as a harsh task master. This is also a reversal of the divorce clause in 2:2 (“she is not my wife”).

2:19 ***I will betroth thee unto me for ever.*** The Lord used Hosea’s and Gomer’s marriage to represent how he would bind himself to Israel forever through a permanent covenant relationship. It is a relationship of righteousness, justice, love, kindness, and faithfulness (2:19-20).

2:23 ***sow . . . mercy . . . my people.*** The names of the three children are used again but in a positive sense:

Jezreel (sow), *ruhamah* (mercy), and *ammi* (my people).

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### ISRAEL SHALL RETURN (3)

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3:2 ***I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver.***

For half the price of a slave (plus some barley), Hosea purchased Gomer from her life of bondage to her sin. Some think this might not be Gomer but a reference to yet another wife, but chapter 2 implies reconciliation on their part, so this redemption by Hosea aligns with the story. It shows that Hosea was not a wealthy man since he paid less than the full amount and barley instead of wheat.

3:3 ***Thou shalt abide for me many days.*** Hosea took Gomer back and re-married her with a covenant that she would be faithful and so would he, but there was a period of patience before the full covenant could be realized.

3:4 ***without a king, and without a prince.*** Likewise, Israel would go through a time with no secular leadership or priesthood authority (ephod) but also without the gods they had been worshipping (teraphim).

3:5 ***seek the Lord.*** In the end, Israel would return, journey through their own wilderness, renew the covenant with the Lord, and enjoy “his goodness in the latter days.”

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### ISRAEL CHASES FALSE GODS (4-5)

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In these chapters, Hosea moved away from the metaphor or marriage to direct statements of Israel’s and Judah’s wickedness.

4:1 ***have a controversy.*** The term “controversy” here implies a legal complaint or grievance that the Lord has against Israel. In other words, he is making it clear that they have broken his law and that he therefore has grounds for the statements that follow.

4:1 ***no truth, nor mercy.*** The case against Israel hinges on the total lack of truth and mercy in the

land; the people are both dishonest and hard on each other.

4:3 ***shall the land mourn.*** Like Enoch’s vision of the earth crying out and groaning under the weight of the sin of those living on it (Moses 7:48-49), the image here is of the earth being saddened by the wickedness of its inhabitants.

4:6 ***destroyed for lack of knowledge.*** The people lack knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; the knowledge they have rejected comes from the Lord and from keeping the law (*torah*) of God.

4:12 ***ask counsel at their stocks.*** This refers to idol worship, with gods made of wood. They sacrifice to them on mountaintops and in groves of trees (4:13).

4:16 ***backsliding heifer.*** An animal which has dug in its heels and is stubbornly refusing to cooperate.

4:16 ***a lamb in a large place.*** A young lamb in a large, open field that is lost and at risk of being taken by a wild animal.

5:5 ***Judah also shall fall with them.*** Hosea wanted to be clear that his message was directed at Israel but pertained also to Judah, who would suffer the same fate if nothing changed. This chapter is addressed to both.

5:10 ***like them that remove the bound.*** Meaning boundary stones that mark the borders between properties. Moving them secretly would unfairly give one party more land and thus represents the sins of Judah’s leaders.

5:12 ***as a moth.*** Though the meaning might be unclear with this phrase isolated, the poetic parallel phrase following explains the meaning: “as rottenness.” In other words, the moth or the rottenness both destroy the garment; even so, shall the Lord destroy Ephraim and Judah.

5:13 ***king Jareb.*** There is no king known by that name. Rather, it is likely an Akkadian word that means ‘great,’ making this a title for the king of Assyria, not a name.

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### ISRAEL TRUSTS IN OTHER NATIONS (6-7)

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### CALL TO REPENTANCE (6)

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6:1 **let us return unto the Lord.** Hosea shifted from a catalog of sins to a call to repentance, to turn away from their sins and toward the Lord.

6:2 **in the third day he will raise us up.** A clear reference to resurrection and potentially to Jesus' pattern of lying in the tomb for three days (potentially because the first phrase indicates a resurrection after two days and a 'lifting up' on the third day, meaning exaltation). Here the final blessing is to "live in his [God's] sight."

6:4 **your goodness is as a morning cloud.** Meaning the righteousness of Israel and Judah doesn't last long.

6:5 **slain them by the words of my mouth.** John's imagery of the word of the Lord being "a sharp sword" coming out of the Lord's mouth matches Hosea's metaphor.

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### BROKEN COVENANTS (8-14)

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#### THE LORD FORSAKEN (8)

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8:5 **Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off.** Israel began worshipping calves after Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:32). Hosea says that they are so wicked that even their false gods are ignoring them. These same calves shall be broken in pieces (8:6).

8:7 **sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.** A famous phrase that illustrates in a fantastic metaphor that we reap what we sow. King Benjamin used similar language in Mosiah 7:30.

8:12 **I have written to him the great things of my law.** The Lord gave (at least partially written by his own hand) his law to Moses, but Israel treated it as something from another country.

8:13 **they shall return to Egypt.** Not literally but symbolic of going back into captivity (also 9:3).

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#### EXILE COMING (9)

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6:6 **I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.** "Mercy" here is better rendered 'faithfulness' or 'goodness,' and is linked to a covenant. Saul was taught a similar lesson by Samuel the prophet in 1 Samuel 15:22.

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#### LAMENT FOR ISRAEL (7)

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7:4 **as an oven heated by the baker.** "Like an oven heated by the baker who ceases to stir up *the fire* from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened" (NASB). In other words, the fires of their adultery were so hot that they burned all night without any need to stir the fire (see 7:6).

7:11 **like a silly dove.** Ephraim (Israel) acted like a naïve bird that flew back and forth between two locations (Egypt and Assyria), unable to make up its mind.

7:13 **I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies.** Though the Lord paid the price to get them out of prison and free them from bondage, they return the favor by speaking lies against him.

9:1 **loved a reward upon every cornfloor.** Israel was compared to a prostitute who went to the place where the men were threshing their wheat and offered herself to them in the middle of the work.

9:3 **They shall not dwell in the Lord's land.** Israel will be driven from the land and become "wanderers among the nations" (9:17).

9:10 **like grapes in the wilderness.** Grapes are challenging to grow; to find some in the wilderness would be miraculous and a real treasure. So the Lord considered Israel his great treasure, but instead they committed adultery ("went to Baal-peor") and went after other gods.

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#### SEEK THE LORD (10)

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10:4 **swearing falsely in making a covenant.** To falsely make covenant promises is a serious sin, one which elicits sure judgment.

10:9 **from the days of Gibeah.** See Judges 19:22-25; the story is the woman that was killed, then cut up

and sent to all the tribes to rally them against Benjamin. That episode represented the beginning of wickedness with Israel that continued to Hosea's day.

10:12 ***Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.*** In contrast to sowing the wind and reaping a whirlwind, being righteous is the key to receiving the Lord's mercy. It is always "time to seek the Lord."

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### ISRAEL TAKEN AWAY (11)

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11:1 ***then I loved him.*** Not that the Lord doesn't love us at all times, but metaphorically, Israel was just a child, loved by the Lord and called to a covenant relationship even as they were in bondage.

11:1 ***called my son out of Egypt.*** Matthew quoted this verse (Matthew 2:15) as fulfilled when Jesus came back from Egypt as a young child, following the death of Herod. Hosea, of course, if referring to the Exodus from Egypt under Moses' leadership.

11:3 ***they knew not that I healed them.*** Even as they worshipped other gods, the Lord healed Israel, loving them and giving them nourishment. But they were unaware of that blessing and grace, sacrificing to other gods instead.

11:8 ***Admah . . . Zeboim.*** These two cities are not often mentioned, but they were sister cities to Sodom and Gomorrah and were apparently destroyed at the same time (see Deuteronomy 29:23; also Genesis 14:8).

11:8 ***my repentings are kindled.*** Only two verses have JST changes in Hosea—11:8 and 11:9. This one is more substantial, as the footnote indicates: "mine heart is turned ~~within me~~ **toward thee, and my repentings mercies are kindled together extended to gather thee.**" This change goes along with many the Prophet made that remove the concept of the Lord repenting. In this case, it emphasizes the mercy of the Lord toward unrepentant Israel.

11:12 ***Judah yet ruleth with God.*** At the time of Hosea, Israel's punishment was sure, but Judah's was yet future and the king on the throne was still a descendent of David, letting the city be known as "faithful with the saints."

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### MANY YEARS OF SIN (12-13)

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12:2 ***a controversy with Judah.*** In 4:1, the Lord had a "controversy" (legal dispute) with Israel; now the dispute is with Judah as well.

12:4 ***he wept.*** Genesis does not record Jacob weeping in his encounter with the angel (Genesis 32); perhaps Hosea's account had this added information, or perhaps he is tying weeping into the supplication that is present.

12:7 ***He is a merchant.*** Because God was just mentioned in the previous verse, at first glance it might appear that this verse is speaking of the Lord. Instead, it refers to Israel who has become like a dishonest merchant using weighted balances to get transactions in his favor.

12:9 ***yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles.*** Tents ("tabernacles") are associated with the annual feast by that name in the fall, as well as the exodus journey itself. To dwell in them again implies a renewal of the covenant in the wilderness during the time of Moses (who is mentioned in 12:13).

13:3 ***smoke out of the chimney.*** The four images in this verse (a cloud, dew, chaff, and smoke) all disappear quickly; the Lord warned Ephraim that such shall be their lot.

13:4 ***there is no saviour beside me.*** This is the only time "savior" is used in Hosea, though it is found in Isaiah eight times and in other books in the Old Testament, sometimes having to do with a temporal rescue of some kind (a military leader, such as 2 Kings 13:5). It's in the New Testament that this term gets fully developed and applied to Jesus himself, as it is here and in Isaiah (see especially Isaiah 43:11, which could be from Hosea).

13:7 ***lion . . . leopard.*** Also 13:8, bear; the Lord would render severe judgment on Israel, like a wild animal tearing apart its prey.

13:9 ***in me is thine help.*** We bring many challenges in life on ourselves, often through sin. But no matter how bad things can be, the Lord is always there to help us, to support us, to help us through.

13:10 ***I will be thy king***. In their weakness, the Lord gave the people what they desired—a king. The office had remained intact until this time—and would in Judah for more than 100 additional years. But he invited them—as he does us—to set aside earthly concerns and let God be our divine king. He asks, “where is any other that may save three”

13:14 ***O death . . . O grave***. Another reference to the resurrection and the afterlife, but also language that Paul picked up on in his writings (see 1 Corinthians 15:55).

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#### FINAL PLEA (14)

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14:2 ***render the calves of our lips***. This phrase has two potential meanings. First, it could mean to offer

the fruit of the lips—speaking well of the Lord and his works. Second, it could refer to giving animals from their pens. Either way, it represents repentance and sincere seeking of the Lord’s forgiveness.

14:3 ***Asshur will not save us***. “Asshur” is Assyria; only the Lord can save them.

14:4 ***I will love them freely***. The Lord’s mercies are amazing and unrelenting—he loves us no matter what.

14:8 ***What have I to do any more with idols?*** The Lord’s love will eventually overcome Israel’s propensity to stray and worship other gods; in the end, they will reject their idols, wondering why they ever sought after them in the first place.

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## JOEL

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Joel means ‘YHWH is God,’ and his father’s name was Pethuel (‘vision of God’). We know little more about the author of this book. Though not as apocalyptic as Daniel, Joel nevertheless has apocalyptic tendencies, and is quoted several times in Revelation and in other New Testament books. People of that day believed that Joel was fulfilled in their time. True to the multiple-fulfillment attributes of many prophetic books, Moroni quoted from Joel 2:28-32 when he appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823, telling the young prophet that the prophecy in those verses was “not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be” (Joseph Smith—History 1:41).

Joel’s book doesn’t give a solid indication of when he lived. Amos and Hosea share similar language, and two passages in Isaiah 2:4 and 13:6) seem to be the same as in Joel (3:10 and 1:15, respectively), but it’s not possible to know who is quoting whom. In this study, I have decided to place Joel later and have him be the one quoting the others, but it could easily be the other way around. For example, the Student Manual places him just prior to Isaiah (2:83).

Though short—only three chapters—Joel’s book is full of insights into the events of the last days and merits our close study.

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## OUTLINE

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- 1) Unprecedented Tragedy (1:1-4)
- 2) The People Call to God (1:5 – 2:17)
  - a) The summons (1:5-14)
  - b) Devastation (1:15-20)
  - c) Invasion (2:1-11)
- 3) God Responds (2:18 – 3:17)
  - a) Restoration (2:18-27)
  - b) The Spirit (2:28-32)
  - c) Judgment (3:1-21)
- d) Mercy (2:12-17)

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### UNPRECEDENTED TRAGEDY (1:1-4)

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Joel’s prologue sets up the conversation between the people and the Lord by describing a tragedy that is unknown in the history of Israel—the invasion of a massive army that takes over the land.

1:2 ***Hath this been done in your days***. The prophet declares that what he is about to say is without precedent, such that it will be spoken of for generations to come (1:3).

1:4 *palmerworm . . . locust . . . cankerworm . . . caterpillar*. Joel describes a series of invasions by different types of locusts. Other ancient literature has similar descriptions, with up to twenty names for locusts in Akkadian, for example (Zondervan

5:45). In chapter 2, these locusts are compared to an invading army; here they might mean a similar thing or just be representative of the destruction that can come with lots of locusts.

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## THE PEOPLE CALL TO GOD (1:5 – 2:17)

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Faced with the tragedy described in 1:1-4, the people react by calling upon the Lord to save them from the invasion.

animals have no food because of the devastation, so they continue to groan and make noise.

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### THE SUMMONS (1:5-14)

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1:6 *the teeth of a lion*. A lion was the most powerful hunter in Israel, taking down animals much larger than itself for food. The main means of doing this was their teeth

1:20 *the fire hath devoured*. Invading armies often set fire to fields and forests in order to take away the food supply from the cities they were trying to conquer or to make the people weak and unwilling to fight. In Joel's destruction, the devastation is so complete that neither domesticated or wild animals can find adequate food.

1:6 *cheek teeth*. 'fangs'

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### INVASION (2:1-11)

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1:7 *branches thereof are made white*. Locusts won't usually eat bark unless their normal sources of food are depleted. Stripping the bark will often kill the tree.

The events in these verses are otherwise known as the Battle of Armageddon, so named because of Revelation 9:1-10 (see also Ezekiel 38:8-9). Joel's description focuses on the power of the invading army and their ability to overcome all obstacles.

1:12 *because joy is withered away*. The trees continue to be a metaphor of the people; as the trees wither away, so joy is lost to those who remain.

2:1 *the day of the Lord cometh*. Joel becomes decidedly eschatological here, putting the vision solidly in the last days.

1:14 *Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly*. The leaders were to gather the people together to worship and pray to the Lord at the temple.

2:2 *a great people and strong*. Joel compared the invasion of this great army to "darkness" and "gloominess" spreading across the mountains. It is an army unlike any before or after it.

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### DEVASTATION (1:15-20)

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1:17 *The seed is rotten under their clods*. Meaning, the plant is eaten off at the top (by the locusts) and so the remaining root has no nourishment and rots away underground.

2:3 *desolate wilderness*. The army marches forward, destroying everything in its path, leaving only a wilderness behind them.

1:17 *the garners are laid desolate*. With no crops to harvest, the barns and storage areas lie empty.

2:4 *the appearance of horses*. Joel describes the invaders as best he can; they are not riding horses but something with "the appearance of horses."

1:18 *How do the beasts groan!* Every night just before sunset, my cow Xylia ('wood dweller,' a great name for her as she likes to hide in the little forest in her pasture) begins to moo loudly, wanting to get her daily serving of hay. If we are gone or late getting to her, she just keeps mooing! Here the

2:6 *all faces shall gather blackness*. In our day, when we are sad, we say we are 'blue.' In ancient Israel, blackness represented sadness.

2:7 *run . . . climb . . . march*. The army has the ability to go fast, go over any obstacle, and march steadily forward without stopping or "breaking their ranks."



So relentless are they that if they encounter any resistance, they march right through it, and “they shall not be wounded” (2:8).

2:10 ***The earth shall quake.*** The greatness of the army is signified by their impact even on the earth and the heavens; the ground trembles before them, the sun and the moon are darkened by their presence, and even the stars hide themselves.

2:11 ***the day of the Lord is great and very terrible.*** It is “great” in intensity, size, and importance; it is “terrible” in awesomeness, fear, and respect.

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#### MERCY (2:12-17)

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2:13 ***rend your heart, and not your garments.*** Tearing a garment was an outward show of sorrow,

but the Lord wanted an inward change, so used the same concept applied to the heart.

2:13 ***repenteth him of the evil.*** See the footnote here and verse 14 for the two JST important changes in Joel (the other is 1:6, a minor change adding the word “**as** the teeth of a lion”).

2:15 ***sanctify a fast.*** Echoing back to 1:14, Joel directs the people to sanctify and prepare themselves, and plead with the Lord for his blessings.

2:17 ***weep between the porch and the altar.*** The priests were not just to make sacrifice but to weep for the sins of the people and plead with the Lord in their behalf that all might be spared from the enemy at the gates and not give the enemy cause to doubt the power of God.

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#### GOD RESPONDS (2:18 – 3:21)

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The enemy has come in mighty power; the people are humbled and pleading with the Lord for assistance. Now the Lord replies with words of hope, judgment, and promise.

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#### RESTORATION (2:18-27)

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2:19 ***the Lord will answer.*** He will speak to his people in their moment of humility and need.

2:20 ***I will remove far off.*** The attacking army will be swept away by the power of God, taken to “a land barren and desolate.”

2:21 ***the Lord will do great things.*** As if saving them from the attacking army was not great enough, even greater things are promised.

2:25 ***I will restore to you the years.*** All that was lost shall be restored; with abundant rains and peace, crops will “overflow” (2:24) storage areas.

2:27 ***my people shall never be ashamed.*** Under the Lord’s protection and care, Israel will never doubt their God and never look elsewhere for support or satisfaction.

2:28 ***pour out my spirit.*** After the events of the great battle and the Lord’s triumph over Israel’s enemies, in the period of peace, God will give his spirit to the faithful, resulting in prophesy, dreams, and visions. This represents being chosen by God.

2:29 ***upon the servants.*** So generous will be the blessing that even the slaves will enjoy an abundance of the Spirit, demonstrating the universality of his salvation.

2:30 ***wonders in the heavens and in the earth.*** Both the abode of man and that of God will display great signs of God’s power and control of the universe; blood representing God’s power over life and man’s sacrifices to him; fire and smoke representing God’s presence among men.

2:31 ***sun shall be turned into darkness.*** As with 2:10 when the heavenly bodies hid themselves because of the greatness of the invading army, now they hide themselves because of the greatness of the Lord. The sun being darkened and the moon turning blood-red perhaps both refer to eclipses which could be interpreted in the ancient world as both good or bad omens.

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#### THE SPIRIT (2:28-32)

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2:32 **deliverance**. Those who “call on the name of the Lord” will be delivered from these challenging times, as Paul explained in Romans 10:13.

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### JUDGMENT (3:1-21)

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3:2 **the valley of Jehoshaphat**. “Jehoshaphat” means ‘YHWH has judged’; the Lord is calling all the enemies of Israel to come to their final judgment. The name may be purely symbolic, though some have tied it to the Kidron Valley to the east of Jerusalem (see D&C 45:47-49; 133:19-21).

3:10 **Beat your plowshares into swords**. The opposite of Isaiah 2:4 as the army takes their peaceful implements and turns them into weapons.

3:17 **then shall Jerusalem be holy**. The city is made holy because God lives there and does not allow anyone outside of the covenant to enter.

3:18 **a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord**. Compare Ezekiel 47:1.

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## AMOS

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Amos (‘burden’) came from Tekoa, about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Though he was a shepherd from Judah, Amos was called to teach the northern kingdom of Israel in the period of Jeroboam II (who reigned from 791-753 BC).

Amos argues for justice in society, a theme Dr. Martin Luther King picked up on when he quoted Amos 5:24 in his “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963.

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### OUTLINE

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- 1) Preface (1:1-2)
- 2) Against Other Nations (1:3 – 2:16)
  - a) Surrounding nations (1:3 – 2:3)
  - b) Judah and Israel (2:4-16)
- 3) Israel’s Sins (3 – 6)
  - a) Ignore prophets (3)
  - b) Ignore warnings (4)
  - c) Moral decay (5-6)
- 4) Future Judgment and Restoration (7-9)
  - a) Nature at work (7:1-6)
  - b) Military defeat (7:7-9)
  - c) Bethel (7:10-17)
  - d) Fruit basket (8)
  - e) Altar (9:1-10)
  - f) Restoration (9:11-15)

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### PREFACE (1:1-2)

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1:1 **two years before the earthquake**. The date of the revelation is given as “two years before the earthquake.” The year of the quake is not known but it was clearly significant to his audience and remembered many years later (see Zechariah 14:5).

1:2 **And he said**. Verse two appears to be Amos’ words (mentioned in 1:1) and captures a sense of Amos’ overall message in just a few words—God shall speak and the wicked will mourn and be punished.

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### AGAINST OTHER NATIONS (1:3 – 2:16)

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Amos used an interesting strategy to get his audience’s attention. Being from Judah and a shepherd, he started by talking about other nations to ‘warm up’ his audience and then turns to and condemns his own nation of Judah, which would also please and surprise them. Finally, he talked about

their sins, but not until he has lured them to his side and after they are used to his other pronouncements.

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### SURROUNDING NATIONS (1:3 – 2:3)

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1:3 **For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four.** Using a common poetic device, often found in psalms and proverbs, of giving one number than incrementing it by one, Amos first emphasized the sins of Israel's neighbor to the north, Damascus or Syria.

1:4 **Hazael . . . Ben-hadad.** See 1 Kings 19-20. These are both kings of Syria; Ben-hadad was killed and replaced by Hazael.

1:6 **Gaza.** Next Amos turned his attention to the Philistines on the southwestern coastline, declaring that fire would devour their palaces. Mentions of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron also relate to the Philistines.

1:9 **Tyrus.** The next country is that of the Phoenicians, represented by Tyre on the northern coast.

1:11 **Edom.** Edom got the next mention, historically an enemy of the children of Israel.

1:13 **Ammon.** Moving north to south, Ammon was next one called to task.

2:1 **Moab.** Moab was next mentioned, a nation to be devoured by fire.

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### JUDAH AND ISRAEL (2:4-16)

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2:4 **Judah.** Amos concluded his 'tour' of the region by talking about his own nation of Judah, which must have been interesting to his audience. Amos said a fire would "devour the palaces of Jerusalem" (2:5).

2:6 **Israel.** Finally, Amos came to the core of his message—the sins of Israel. The rest of chapter and most of the next four chapters detailed those sins.

2:11 **raised up of your sons for prophets.** In spite of their sins, the Lord mercifully sent prophets to teach them the truth and try to bring Israel back to obedience. But the people rejected them and said, "Prophesy not" (2:12).

2:16 **he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee.** Representing the punishment that was coming, the prophet said that even the brave would run away naked (meaning they left quickly and in surprise) when the day of punishment came.

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### ISRAEL'S SINS (3 - 6)

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#### IGNORE PROPHETS (3)

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3:3 **Can two walk together.** Verses 3-6 offer questions with obvious 'yes' answers, which lead to the Lord's statements in verses 7-8.

3:6 **the Lord hath not done it.** The JST changes "done" to "known" (see footnote). All things are subscribed to God in the ancient Near East, blessings as well as punishments, but we don't attribute evil to the Lord, so the JST change aligns the language of verse 6 to a correct understanding of the Lord.

3:7 **the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret.** The culminating phrase of all the leading questions is an affirmation that the Lord will reveal to his prophets what is going to happen. The JST changes "but" to "until" (see footnote) to emphasize that the prophet's message of warning always precedes the event.

3:14 **the horns of the altar shall be cut off.** The horns on the four corners of the altar represented the power of the god to whom the altar was dedicated. Because Israel was worshipping false gods, cutting off the corners represented the powerless nature of those gods.

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#### IGNORE WARNINGS (4)

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4:1 **ye kine of Bashan.** A very uncomplimentary image, the cows of Bashan were renowned for their quality, but when speaking of the women of Israel, it was calling them spoiled, idle, and perhaps fat.

4:2 **take you away with hooks.** The Assyrians used to put hooks in their captives' mouths and take them away to a new home in a distant land.

4:6 **cleanness of teeth.** Not because they brush well but because they have nothing to eat ("want of bread" later in the verse).

4:7 **withholden the rain.** Here and in verses 8-10 (with wind, rotting crops, and pestilence), the Lord tried to get their attention through natural means, but they still didn't come to him.

4:11 **I have overthrown some of you.** He also tried to use small conquests to get them to listen, but that, too, didn't work.

4:12 **prepare to meet thy God.** Because they did not heed these warnings, Israel would be faced with destruction which would bring them to meet their Maker.

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### MORAL DECAY (5-6)

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5:4 **Seek ye me, and ye shall live.** Seek the Lord and live, Amos counsels first (here and again verses 6, 8, and 14). But Israel is like a man who flees from a lion, only to meet a bear, then runs to his house only to be bitten by a serpent—they can't escape the Lord (5:19).

6:1 **them that are at ease in Zion.** The people of Israel are at ease, trusting in their false gods, enjoying a life of luxury, good food, music, wine, etc. (6:1-6). But they will be smitten just the same (6:7-14).

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### FUTURE JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION (7-9)

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The Lord gave Amos five visions which are recorded in chapters 7 and 8.

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#### NATURE AT WORK (7:1-6)

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7:1 **he formed grasshoppers.** The first vision was of a swarm of locusts eating all the crops of the "latter growth," meaning the fall (or later summer) harvest. In this case, it was "after the king's mowings, meaning he had already taken his cut in taxes, so it was only the people who suffered.

7:3 **The Lord repented.** The JST makes important changes here and verse 6, so that the Lord does not repent (in the sense of having sinned or made a mistake) but the people repent, allowing the Lord to have mercy and not "utterly destroy" them.

7:4 **fire, and it devoured the great deep.** The second vision was of a huge fire that was so powerful that it caused the waters under the earth to evaporate. But the people again repented just in time, and the Lord relented on this destruction.

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#### MILITARY DEFEAT (7:7-9)

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7:7 **a wall made by a plumbline.** In the third vision, the Lord measured the wall of the city, representing the measuring of the sins of the people (7:8), thus bringing on their destruction (7:9).

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#### BETHEL (7:10-17)

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7:10 **Amaziah the priest.** Between the third and fourth visions is a historical interlude showing the persecutions Amos himself suffered during his mission. Amaziah, a priest of the false religion of the northern kingdom of Israel, appealed to the king because Amos' words were annoying him and the people. He even claimed that Amos said the king himself would die and the people led away (7:11).

7:12 **O thou seer, go, feel thee away.** Amaziah must have received the support of the king because he immediately gave Amos an order to leave Israel and go back to his home in Judah.

7:14 **I was no prophet.** Amos was a "herdman" and a harvester, with no training in prophecy or lineage to recommend him. Nevertheless, he was following the command of the Lord who said, "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (7:15), so he had to stay.

7:17 **Thy wife shall be an harlot.** Not only was he to stay, but he had a prophecy against Amaziah and his family when the siege of the land and the destruction by Assyria came.

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#### FRUIT BASKET (8)

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8:1 **A basket of summer fruit.** The fourth vision was of something that might seem wonderful—a basket full of fruit. But summer fruit doesn't last long; the vision meant that Israel's time was short.

8:9 **the sun to go down at noon.** The sun going down at noon was a sign of something happening

before its time; this represented the early end of Israel.

8:11 **a famine in the land.** With celebrations turned into times of mourning (8:10), the Lord declared a famine—not of food but “of hearing the words of the Lord.” The prophets would be withdrawn, having delivered their messages and sufficiently warned the people, and running “to and fro to seek the word of the Lord” (8:12) would do them no good.

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#### ALTAR (9:1-10)

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9:1 **I saw the Lord standing up the altar.** The fifth vision started with a view of the Lord standing on the altar. This is the altar at Bethel where the false religion of Israel was being practiced.

9:3 **though they hide themselves.** The message here is that you can’t hide from the Lord. The people would metaphorically try to hide in Sheol (the underworld) or climb up to heaven, like the people at the tower of Babel, but in both cases the Lord would bring them back. They cannot hide in the mountains or deep in the sea. They cannot even hid in captivity because the Lord still knows where they are.

9:8 **not utterly destroy.** Though Israel and Judah would both be destroyed, the Lord would save a

remnant of Jacob, and Israel would be sifted (mingled) among other nations (9:9), preserving both people in some way.

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#### RESTORATION (9:11-15)

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9:11 **In that day.** After all the other things are done; “that day” usually refers to the Day of the Lord or the last days near the end of the world.

9:11 **I will raise up the tabernacle of David.** Not the tabernacle built by Israel in the Exodus, but the tent of the house of David which was rent after Solomon’s death into two kingdoms. The Lord will repair the tear, close up the tent, and raise up the house again in the last days. This, of course, refers to the kingdom of Christ, who is of the house of David.

9:13 **the plowman shall overtake the reaper.** The kingdom will be so blessed with agricultural prosperity that it will be one continuous harvest.

9:14 **bring again the captivity of my people.** Or, cause the people to return from captivity.

9:15 **no more be pulled up out of their land.** An eternal heritage in the land of Israel, never again to be taken away.

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## OBADIAH

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The date of Obadiah is uncertain but it seems to fit after 586 BC because Edom helped Babylon in the attack on Judah. Obadiah’s name means ‘slave of

YHWH.’ He condemned Edom for their part in the destruction and promised reciprocity later.

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#### OUTLINE

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1) Prophecy Against Edom (1:1-14)

2) The Day of the Lord (1:15-21)

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#### PROPHECY AGAINST EDMOM (1:1-14)

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1:1 **The vision of Obadiah.** The prophet only recorded a short and focused message but it came from a vision he received from the Lord.

1:2 **I have made thee small.** Edom was never a big power, consistently being dominated by more powerful neighbors, including Judah.

1:3 **The pride of thine heart.** Edom’s great sin was pride that caused them to think of themselves as more powerful and important than they were.

1:5 **grapegatherers.** Those harvesting grapes were commanded by the Mosaic Law to leave some for the

poor, but in Edom's came, the thieves who steal and those harvesters of grapes leave them nothing.

1:7 **men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee.** The Babylonians with which the Edomites made an alliance were just using them and were going to turn on them.

1:11 **thou wast as one of them.** When Jerusalem was attacked and destroyed, Edom did not come to

its defense but joined the attacker's forces. They treated Judah not like a neighbor or brother but like a stranger, and even rejoiced in the destruction (1:12).

1:13 **laid hands on their substance.** Not only did they cheer the demise of Judah, but they participated in the plunder of the city that went on after the conquest.

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### THE DAY OF THE LORD (1:15-21)

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1:15 **the day of the Lord.** Jumping from the present day to the last days, Obadiah's vision concluded with events that would happen prior to and with the Second Coming.

1:17 **upon mount Zion shall be deliverance.** Though Jerusalem lay wasted at this time, the final outcome was that deliverance and "holiness" would be there.

1:18 **fire . . . flame . . . stubble.** Jacob and Israel were compared to fire and Edom to a field that was burned by the fire so that only stubble was left.

1:20 **the captivity of this host.** The people carried away would come back to possess the lands spoken of.

1:21 **saviours shall come up on mount Zion.** The deliverers, the liberators, the saviors from Judah and Israel chosen by the Lord will govern and judge Edom, ruling under the authority of the Lord himself.

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