

Obadiah 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

Analysis

Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? God rhetorically asks whether He will destroy Edom's wisdom (חֲכָמִים, chachamim) and understanding (תְּבוּנָה, tevunah). The implied answer: absolutely yes. "In that day" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, bayom hahu) points to the day of judgment. The prophetic formula "saith the LORD" (נְאֻם־יְהוָה, neum-YHWH) guarantees certainty.

Edom was renowned for wisdom—descended from Esau, connected to Job's friends (Eliphaz the Temanite was from Edom, Job 2:11), and praised for understanding (Jeremiah 49:7). Yet human wisdom apart from God is foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). When judgment comes, clever strategies, philosophical sophistication, and political cunning prove worthless. Isaiah 29:14 declares God will "destroy the wisdom of the wise." Proverbs 21:30 states: "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD." The fear of the Lord is wisdom's beginning (Proverbs 9:10); without it, supposed wisdom is mere folly that collapses under judgment.

Historical Context

Edom's reputation for wisdom made this prophecy particularly striking. Teman (verse 9) was especially famous for sages. Yet when crisis came, all this vaunted wisdom failed. They couldn't foresee betrayal by allies, prevent Nabatean

displacement, or secure their survival. Human wisdom, no matter how sophisticated, cannot overcome divine decree. The educated, intelligent, and strategically brilliant face the same judgment as others if they lack the wisdom of fearing God. This challenges modern confidence in human expertise, education, and intellectual achievement apart from divine revelation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does worldly wisdom (education, intelligence, strategic thinking) prove inadequate for ultimate questions of meaning, judgment, and salvation?
2. What's the difference between human wisdom and the fear of the Lord as wisdom's foundation?
3. In what ways does the gospel demonstrate God's wisdom confounding human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)?

Interlinear Text

הָלֹא	בַּיּוֹם	נֹאֵם	יְהוָה	וְהָאֱבֹדֶת י'
H3808	Shall I not in that day	H1931	saith	the LORD
	H3117	H5002	H3068	H6
חֲכָמִים	מֵאֶדֶם	וּתְבוּנָה	מִהַר	עֵשָׂו:
the wise	men out of Edom	and understanding	out of the mount	of Esau
H2450	H123	H8394	H2022	H6215

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 29:14 (Parallel theme): Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Psalms 33:10 (References Lord): The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

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