

Ezekiel 35: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] Ezekiel chapter 35 Ezekiel chapter 35 Ezekiel chapter 36

I have heard all the revilings that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour. And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me.

I heard it. Thus says the Lord God, While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate, as you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate.

So I will deal with you. You shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel chapters 35 and 36 continue the collection of prophecies of restoration and renewal, with which the book of Ezekiel concludes.

The two chapters likely belong together, directed to contrasting mountains. Mount Seir of Edom in chapter 35, and the mountains of Israel in chapter 36.

[2 : 23] The first will be desolated, and the others will be restored. Both Edom and Israel are addressed with a focus upon their respective lands and features of their terrain. Mountains, hills, valleys, and ravines are mentioned in both chapter 35 verse 8 and chapter 36 verse 6.

The prophecies seem to come under the same divine address, with the introduction of chapter 35 verse 1, functioning for both of the chapters. And Edom continues to be in view into chapter 36, for instance in verse 5 of that chapter.

Therefore thus says the Lord God, Surely I have spoken in my heart jealousy against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who gave my land to themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, that they might make its pasture lands a prey.

As Daniel Block notes, chapters 35 and 36 verses 1 to 15 can be read together as two panels, one speaking of removal of obstacles to restoration and former causes of devastation, and the other speaking of the renewal that the Lord will then accomplish.

A similar pattern can be seen in the preceding chapter concerning the Lord's judgment upon the unfaithful shepherds of Israel and his regathering of his flock. Mount Seir stood for the territory of Edom, of which it was a part.

[3 : 38] It was the mountainous region to the south-east of Judah, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, with the Araba on its east. Formerly occupied by the Horites, it had been taken over by Esau and his descendants.

Under the regional sway of Israel at several points in its history, the ancient twinning and rivalry between Esau and Jacob continued in the relations between these two nations. In Genesis chapter 36, for instance, we can see the descendants of Esau functioning in some respects as a mirror of those of his twin to the north.

In Deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 7, for instance, we see a continued remembrance in Israel of the fact that Edom was Israel's brother. Judgment against Edom was declared earlier in the book, in chapter 25 verses 12 to 14.

Thus says the Lord God, Edom had not come to the aid of Judah in his day of distress.

What was worse, however, was the fact that they had rejoiced in the day of Israel's calamity, taken advantage of its brother's weakness, and prayed upon it. As Psalm 137 verse 7 declares, This betrayal of the bond of brotherhood is spoken of on several occasions in the scriptures, most notably, perhaps, in the book of Obadiah.

[5 : 26] A similar message to Ezekiel chapter 35 and 6 is expressed in condensed form in Lamentations chapter 4 verses 21 to 22. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz.

