

POSSESSING YOUR POSSESSION

OBADIAH 1:17

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*But in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape,
and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions*

The opening words to this verse are quoted in **Joel 2:32**, and the theme of the sacredness of Zion is expanded in **Joel 3:17** to include the promise that **foreigners will never conquer it again**.

But at the beginning of the verse contrasts sharply the fate of the nations at the end of verse 16 with the survival of the Lord's people.

The theme of the remnant of Israel surviving to begin afresh is a common one in the prophets (for example, **Isa 4:2-4; Amos 3:12; Mic 2:12; Zeph 2:7-9**). The reason why Israel's position would change for the better was that the Lord's punishment of her, though severe, was not final.

There were some who survived the fall of Jerusalem and became the nucleus of a new nation. It is suggested in the introduction, "*Translating the Book of Obadiah*," that the prophecy of Obadiah was written about 500 B.C. If that is true, then those who had returned from the exile were already in possession of Jerusalem, where they had first returned in 538 B.C. Already the Temple had been rebuilt (516 B.C.) and was in use for the worship of the Lord. Thus, the words **on Mount Zion** (which included the Temple area) **some will escape, and it will be a sacred place** had already been partially fulfilled in the prophet's own day.

This would encourage the people to believe in the more extensive restoration of territory promised in the second half of the verse. **Some will escape** is an echo of **those trying to escape** in *verse 14*. Many languages may find that the usual word for **escape** will not sound right in this context,

since the people of Jerusalem will not go anywhere else but will remain in Jerusalem. The meaning is that they will not be harmed in the troubles that accompany the punishment of the nations (**verses 15-16**), but will be able to go on living in their city. Mount Zion will be "holy" (RSV) at this time, or **a sacred place**.

As explained in the discussion of **verse 16**, this means a place that is connected with God in a special way. It may be necessary for some translators to say "truly

holy" in this verse. The idea may well be that only the true people of God will be able to live there, and no others will be able to come in.

In the second half of the verse, the words "house of Jacob" (RSV) means the **people of Jacob** and refer to the inhabitants of Judah, the remnant who had returned from exile. There are two possibilities for the interpretation of the Hebrew word translated as "their possessions" in RSV.

It may indeed mean "their possessions" and, if so, refers to **the land that is theirs by right**, as TEV puts it. However, the same Hebrew consonants were given different vowels by ancient translators and understood as "those who dispossessed them."

"This second understanding is preferred by some modern translators and is neatly expressed in NEB as "Jacob shall dispossess those that dispossessed them." This relates in a more detailed way with the description in verses 19-20. However, the difference between the two interpretations is more one of emphasis than of basic meaning, and both fit easily into the context. Either interpretation is fully acceptable.

"Possessions," if we take the meaning of RSV and TEV, refers to the land that traditionally belongs to a person's family, or in this case, to the people of Israel. Many languages may have a word or expression that has this meaning.

Most of this land had been taken by various other peoples and did not belong to the people of Israel when the book of Obadiah was written.

However, they still considered that in God's eyes it really belonged to them, so, if possible, the translation should say something more than "the land that they used to own." Possibilities for good translations might be "the land that is truly theirs," or **the land that is theirs by right**.

Since the area being referred to was all part of Israel before, it may be good in many languages to say that "they shall take back the land that is truly theirs," or "reoccupy it," or "once again live on it."

God will deliver you (Obad 17-18). God did deliver His people from Babylonian captivity, and He will again deliver them in the last days and establish His kingdom. Mount Zion will be consecrated to the Lord and all defilement removed. "Jacob" refers to the Southern Kingdom and "Joseph" the Northern Kingdom.

They will be united into one nation and enter the Messianic Kingdom together, possessing the inheritance promised to them. It appears from *Isa 11:10-16*, a parallel passage, that Moab and Edom will be restored as nations in the last days, but the Jews will burn them as stubble (see *Ex 15:7; Isa 10:17; Matt 3:12* for parallels).

LESSONS

1. TRUST GOD FOR IT- *PS 27:13*
2. LEAN ON HIM- *PROV 3:5-6*
3. ALLOW THE GOD FACTOR IN ALL SITUATION- *PROV 3:6*
4. OUR DAY OF DELIVERANCE IS AT HAND-*DANIEL 11:32, EXO 14:13*

CONCLUSION: *JESUS KNOW'S ALL ABOUT OUR STRUGGLE*