Obadiah 1:21

Context, Text, Interpretation, and Application

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Latter-day Saints have frequently used the phrase "saviors on mount Zion" in relation to proxy temple work for the dead. This phrase comes from the twenty-first, and last, verse of Obadiah, a prophetic book in the Old Testament. But many people have little awareness of or experience with the previous twenty verses in the book, nor with the intriguing contextual questions those verses raise for understanding verse 21, with its phrase "saviours shall come up on mount Zion" (KJV[1]; note the British spelling with a *u*; used herein only in quotations). Furthermore, there has been little Latter-day Saint discussion of the whole of verse 21 itself, especially regarding how the passive grammar in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) should be dealt with—"those who have been saved/rescued"—as opposed to the active grammar in the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT)—those who function as saviors on mount Zion—and how the corollary "mount of Esau" impacts our understanding of "mount Zion." Thus, the brief book of Obadiah provides wonderful opportunities to discuss matters of context *and* text in relation to verse 21.[2]

The first portion of this essay provides a brief exegetical examination of Obadiah, highlighting the various challenges to understanding this shortest book in the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament), with particular focus on verse 21 in its context. This is followed by a review of how Latter-day Saints from Joseph Smith to the present have employed Obadiah 1:21 and by an analysis of how this use interfaces with that verse in its biblical context.

This study attempts to model a responsible interpretive approach to scripture and to illustrate with Obadiah 1:21 how Latter-day Saints bring something distinctive to the interpretation of this passage that is not inherently obvious in the Old Testament. I propose that this latter approach is often more about the *application* of Restoration insights to important biblical phrases and passages than it is about finding something hiding in the Old Testament that only becomes clear with Restoration insights.[3] This seems to best describe the case of Obadiah 1:21.

Introducing Obadiah[4]

After a passage of scripture has been identified for analysis, a good interpretive approach typically includes situating the passage in question in its historical, cultural, literary, and canonical context. Canonically, the book of Obadiah is found in the "Book of the Twelve," which designates the collection of twelve so-called minor prophets (minor due to the shortness of the books). Obadiah contains a prophecy of judgment against Edom, which was located south of Judah and the Dead Sea. It thus shares similarities with portions of other biblical books—such as Isaiah 13–24, Jeremiah 46–51, Ezekiel 25–32, and Amos 1–2—that also preserve Israelite prophecies against various foreign nations, including some specifically against Edom.[5] In the Hebrew Bible and most English translations, Obadiah follows the book of Amos, perhaps due to the thematic connection with Edom it shares with Amos 9:12.[6]

Broadly outlined, the book of Obadiah falls into two major sections (different scholars divide the book somewhat differently). First, the Lord's messenger announces the Lord's judgment to humble and destroy Edom, which action is presented as justifiably deserved due to Edom's violence against Judah (1–14). Second, shifting perspectives, Jerusalem and Judah will be restored at some future time and have power over Edom and their other enemies, and "the kingdom will be the Lord's" (15–21). Thus, the ultimate justice and power of the Lord are emphasized.

The brevity of the book of Obadiah combines with its lack of specific contextualizing information to make dating Obadiah's prophetic mission and the book a challenge. The introduction includes only the prophet's name, ʿbdyh, which means "servant (or worshipper) of YHWH / the Lord." "YHWH" represents the four Hebrew letters that spell the divine name of the God of Israel, for which English translators have traditionally substituted "the Lord." The name is usually now pronounced Yahweh. "Jehovah" is a hybrid form composed of the consonants yhwh and the vowels from the Hebrew word ʾadonay, "lord."[7] "YHWH" will be used in this paper, except in quotations.[8] There are thirteen different people named Obadiah in the Old Testament, as well as several others who are so named in Israelite inscriptions and seal impressions.

Due to the lack of historical information about Obadiah, various suggestions have been made to date the prophet and his book, ranging from the mid-ninth to the mid-fourth centuries BC (all dates that follow are BC).[9] However, it is now common to view the backdrop of the events for which Edom is judged as the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and his Neo-Babylonian army in 586 BC. The Babylonians fully terminated the kingdom of Judah in 586, deporting its last king, Zedekiah, and destroying the temple and much of the city (see 2 Kings 24:15–25:21). Obadiah 1:11–13 contains phrases that suggest this background, referring to "the day that the strangers carried away captive his [Judah's] forces, and foreigners entered into his

gates," "the day of their [Judah's] destruction," and "the day of their [Judah's] calamity." Given this assessment, Obadiah's ministry and message fits best in the 580s. So the book as we have it likely dates to the Babylonian (lasting to 539 BC) or subsequent Persian period.[10]

Examining Obadiah

The book of Obadiah opens with the phrase "The vision of Obadiah." The Hebrew term *ḥāzon*, "vision," also occurs in Isaiah 1:1 and Nahum 1:1 (and Habakkuk 1:1 includes the verbal form *ḥāzâ*, "to envision"). It is perhaps better understood here as "revelation," since in these similar contexts it appears to convey the idea of revelation more broadly; none of these particular prophetic books are *just* vision reports, although some of the prophecies they contain may be understood to have come through visionary experiences.

Verses 1–14

Following this opening phrase identifying Obadiah as the prophetic messenger or intermediary for what follows, the phrase "Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom," establishes the authority for and identifies the recipient or target of the divine pronouncement that occupies much of this short book.[11] The recurring use of prophetic formulas—"saith the Lord" in verses 4 and 8, and "for the Lord has spoken" in verse 18—reinforces the origin and authority of Obadiah's message. Whether or not this prophecy was ever actually communicated to the Edomites themselves, it had real value for the Judahites among whom Obadiah lived, as discussed below.

The latter portion of verse 1 contains the curious statement that "We have heard a rumour [or report] from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her [i.e., Edom] in battle." It is not entirely clear who the "we" is. Furthermore, the Greek Septuagint (LXX) reads "I" instead of "we" in

this verse,[12] as does the essentially same text in Jeremiah 49:14. In fact, much of the content of Obadiah 1–7 is also found in a prophecy against Edom in Jeremiah 49:7–22. It is usually presumed that one of these prophets was dependent on the other for these statements or that they both utilized an earlier source no longer extant (there are also a number of similarities between the books of Joel and Obadiah, some of which will be noted hereafter). The "ambassador" or envoy in Obadiah 1:1 is presumably a heavenly messenger (although the Hebrew term *ṣîr* can also refer to a human messenger, as in Proverbs 13:7; 25:13).

Verses 2–7 relate YHWH's words against the Edomites, as delivered through Obadiah. This portrays the biblical concept that YHWH is God of all nations and peoples, and judges them according to his expectations. Much of the message is presented in the prophetic past tense, as if these judgments have already happened—so for example, the KJV renders verse 2a as "I have made thee small among the heathen." Many modern translations render these forms in the future tense to capture the sense of what is prophesied to happen to Edom; thus, "I will surely make you least among the nations" (NRSV).

The pride and boasting of the Edomites is described and linked to their downfall: "I [will] bring thee down, saith the LORD" (v. 4). The imagery of the high "clefts of the rock" (v. 3) and of the eagle and its high nest (v. 4) is intended to illustrate the Edomites' presumed remoteness and security, which will avail them nothing, as verse 6 indicates.

Verse 6 introduces the use of Esau in Obadiah's prophecy: "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" The name Esau is used here and seven more times in Obadiah as an alternate designation for Edom. Biblical tradition depicts Edom as the home of Esau, who was Isaac's son, and Jacob's brother, and it depicts Esau's descendants as Edomites (e.g., Genesis 33:16; 36:1, 6–9; Deuteronomy 2:12). Obadiah's use of Esau presumably evoked in the minds of his Israelite hearers and readers the struggles between Jacob and Esau recounted in Genesis 25 and 27, struggles that began in

Rebekah's womb (25:22–24), even though Genesis 33:1–16 and 35:29 suggest some reconciliation in their later years.[13] Note the familial connection emphasized by the use of the phrases "thy brother Jacob" (v. 10) and "thy brother" (v. 12). Historically, the united kingdom of Israel and then the kingdom of Judah were rivals with the Edomites, often contesting control of lucrative trade routes in the Negev region (e.g., 1 Kings 11:14–16; 2 Kings 8:20–22). The Bible does not view this tension-filled relationship as a struggle just between two political entities, but between kin. Thus, Obadiah's use of the name Esau in conjunction with Edom draws on biblical traditions about family connections as well as historical experiences to create an image of Edom, Judah's relative and enemy and the target of YHWH's judgment.

Verse 7 continues the judgment on Edom, indicating that it has been or will be "deceived" and "prevailed against" by its former allies. Verses 8–9 couple the prophesied destruction of both the "wise men" of Edom, a designation for political and military advisers in this context, and its "mighty men," or warriors, thus leaving Edom easy prey for its destruction in spite of the fact that it has "wise" and "mighty men." Teman was an important city in Edom. Here Teman functions as a synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a part (Teman, v. 8) is employed to represent the whole (Edom, v. 7).

YHWH's pronouncement of judgment on Edom concludes in verse 10. But, in reverse of the order that might be expected, verse 10 also transitions into the charge or indictment against Edom (in verses 10–14), the *reason for* the judgment just announced. As indicated previously, the particular historical backdrop for Obadiah's prophecy is best understood as the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, and Edom's ancillary but consensual role in those events: Edom is charged with participating in "violence against thy brother Jacob" (v. 10). The Babylonians were "the [primary] strangers [who] carried away captive his [Judah's] forces, and foreigners entered into his gates" (v. 11). But YHWH charges that the Edomites participated as well: "Even thou wast as one of them"

(v 11). Specific charges continue through verse 14, including Edom's rejoicing over Judah's destruction (v. 12); entering into Jerusalem, "the gate of my people," to participate in looting (v. 13); and apprehending those Judahites fleeing the area and those remaining as survivors (v. 14). This assessment finds support from Psalm 137:7: "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof" (cf. Joel 3:19 [Heb. 4:19]).

Verses 15–21

As with verses 1–14, there are various subunits in this second major block of text in Obadiah's prophecy. Conceptually, verse 15 marks a distinct shift in the text, introducing the concept of "the day of the Lord," a concept not fully explained in Obadiah. As depicted in the greater Old Testament, this "day" is fear-filled, dark, and destructive, a time when YHWH unleashes his power against the pride and wickedness of the world, against the enemies of faithful Israelites (e.g., Isaiah 13:6–9; Zephaniah 2:1–5), and against Israelites who have been faithless (e.g., Amos 5:18–20; Ezekiel 7:1–27, especially 19; Joel 1:1–2:11). Although these biblical depictions are generally accepted as eschatological in orientation (the end of the fallen world as we know it), there are occasional applications of this concept to past historical destructions (e.g., Amos 5:18–20; Lamentations 2:2, in reference to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem; and Alma 45:14).[14]

Obadiah's use of the Hebrew word yōm, "day," as a theme word is readily apparent in verses 11–14, where it occurs ten times. In that context, the "day" was the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, the "day" in which the Edomites participated in despoiling and exploiting the Judahites. That was the "day" in which Judahites suffered, due to the widespread wickedness in their own society (e.g., Jeremiah 2; 7; 1 Nephi 1:4, 18–20).

However, verse 15 pivots to highlight a new and different day, the future "day of the Lord." In harmony with the law of retribution,

the wicked—specifically Edom in this prophecy—will be destroyed in that "near" (a relative term[15]) future day, since they themselves had previously been destructive: "Thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (v. 15). This accords with the biblical *lex talionis*, the law of equivalent reciprocation, a "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Exodus 21:23–25). Historically, the kingdom of Edom was destroyed by the Babylonians in 553.[16] However, the complete destruction of Edom *and* the subsequent rise of the Israelites and Jerusalem never happened in antiquity as prophesied in Obadiah.

Verse 15 also introduces an additional dimension. Obadiah prophesies that not just Edom will be destroyed, but rather that YHWH's power will impact "all the heathen," the non-Israelite "nations" (Heb. *gôyîm*), *including* the Edomites. This theme continues into verse 16, but with a challenge. The second-person pronouns in verse 15 are singular, and the "you" is Edom/Esau collectively. However, the second-person pronoun in verse 16 is plural: "For as ye [pl.] have drunk on my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually." One approach assumes the "you/ye" in verse 16 is the Edomites or the Babylonians or both, and it contrasts their celebratory drinking after destroying Jerusalem and the temple, "upon my [YHWH's] holy mountain," with the future "heathen" or nations (*gôyîm*) drinking the cup of YHWH's judgment and being destroyed: "They shall be as though they had not been." But the approach more generally accepted takes the plural "you/ye" in verse 16 as referencing the Judahites. Just as they had drunk from the cup of YHWH's judgment in the recent past, resulting in destruction and exile at the hands of the Babylonians and other tag-alongs like the Edomites, so shall the nations drink "continually" or fully in the future until they are themselves destroyed. Either way, this theme of drinking down the wrath and judgments of YHWH is a powerful metaphor that occurs here and elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 51:17–23; Jeremiah 25:15–29; Psalm 75:8 [Heb. 9]).[17]

Based on the universalizing perspective in this portion of Obadiah's prophecy, Edom is part of but also comes to symbolically represent all nations. This function is also evident in Isaiah 34:1–6 (where the KJV inexplicably uses the later Greek form Idumea to render the Hebrew ʾĕdōm, "Edom"), with YHWH's pronouncements against the "nations" (gôyîm) juxtaposed with pronouncements against Edom. It further plays out with the Greek form of the name, Idumea, in various later texts, including this Restoration passage: "And also the Lord . . . shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world" (D&C 1:36).

By contrast, Obadiah 1:17–18 promises "deliverance" and "holiness" for the righteous on mount Zion, which is the equivalent of "my holy mountain" in verse 16. "Mount Zion" in Obadiah most readily represents Jerusalem, especially the Temple Mount (compare Joel 3:17–20 [Heb. 4:17–20]; Psalm 78:68; 97:8; 135:21; Isaiah 2:3; 10:12; 24:23). In Old Testament prophetic texts, this phrase often designates the future righteous status of Zion or Jerusalem after the Israelites have been cleansed and restored to their lands by YHWH and the powers of the world have been defeated (e.g., Isaiah 4:5; 24:23; Joel 2:32 [Heb. 3:5]; Micah 4:7). Thus, the future holy city of Jerusalem will be populated by then-holy people worshipping and ruled by the Holy One of Israel.

Using the term "house" (descendants) and family names (Jacob and Esau) instead of just political designations, Obadiah indicates the "house of Jacob," all Israelites (not just Judah), will repossess their land and will help turn "the house of Esau" into "stubble"; there will "not be any remaining," or there will be no survivor (śārîd). This portion of the prophecy concludes with another expression of divine affirmation, "for the Lord hath spoken it" (v. 18).

Verses 19–20 further emphasize the reversal of the then-current historical situation, in that Israelites will possess the land of the Edomites and will repossess Israelite regions in all directions (see, somewhat similarly, Isaiah 11:14). The Hebrew yāraš, "to possess, to dispossess," is a key word here, emphasizing this reversal. This prophesied

restoration of Israel is all made possible, of course, by "the day of the Lord," introduced in verse 15, with the destruction of the wicked.

Focusing on Obadiah 1:21

The last verse of Obadiah neatly draws several thematic threads together to conclude this prophecy. Those future faithful Israelites gathered together in mount Zion will "judge" those in mount Esau, representing here the Edomites as well as all the nations of the earth. The Hebrew verb *šāpaṭ*, "to judge," denotes passing judgment in legal decisions but also having authority over, governing. It functions with this latter sense in Obadiah 1:21 and elsewhere (e.g., Judges 10:2; 16:31; 1 Samuel 7:15; compare Isaiah 2:3, "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"). Of course, YHWH is the ultimate judge and ruler in the Hebrew scriptures (e.g., Judges 11:27; Psalm 7:8). The content of Obadiah 1:21, depicting Israelites on mount Zion governing mount Esau, must be reconciled with that of verse 18—"the house of Esau" being turned into "stubble. . . . There shall not be any remaining." Most likely, the kingdom of Edom is more particularly intended in verse 18, while verse 21 construes mount Esau more broadly as the nations of the world.

The final phrase is the capstone of Obadiah's prophecy: "The kingdom [*mĕlûkâ*] shall be the Lord's." The Hebrew word *mĕlûkâ* can be translated as "kingship" or "dominion" as well as "kingdom" (compare, for example, 1 Kings 21:7 and Psalm 22:29 in the KJV and NRSV). Obadiah 1:21 presents YHWH, exercising his kingship, as the ultimate ruler over all.[18] The hope for this eventuality is also expressed in Psalm 10:16: "The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land" (see also, for example, Zechariah 14:8–9; Psalm 47:2–3; 7–8; 145:10–13).

Significantly, verse 21, with its focus on an ideal time period yet to be realized, contains an important interpretive challenge. Those who

will "come up on mount Zion to judge [or govern] the mount of Esau" are described in the traditional Hebrew Bible, known as the Masoretic Text, as *mōšiʿîm*, "deliverers" or "saviors," as translated in the KJV. However, the consonants of this Hebrew term, *m(w)šʿym* (from the lexical root *y-š-ʿ*, "to help, save"), can also be vocalized *mūšāʿîm*, a passive form meaning "those who have been saved." The Jews who produced the early Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures known as the Septuagint so understood this word, rendering Obadiah 1:21 as "the men who are rescued [or delivered] from Mount Sion shall go up to punish Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's."[19] This passive reading of the word *m(w)šʿym* also occurs in the Syriac translation, is preferred by some modern commentators, and is found in some modern English translations, such as the NRSV and the NET Bible.[20]

Two factors help explain this difference in interpretation and translation. One is textual. Since the written Hebrew text of the Bible consisted only of consonants until the mid-first millennium AD, when the Masoretes added a vocalization system to preserve their traditional reading of the text, it is impossible to determine based on the text alone whether the earliest sense of *m(w)šʿym* was active or passive. As noted above, the Septuagint and the Syriac text traditions support the passive reading, while the Masoretic Text tradition supports the active reading.[21] The *w* in *m(w)šʿym* was often employed to help readers know to pronounce an *o* or *u* sound, so its presence does not solve this problem.

The second reason for differences in how *m(w)šʿym* is interpreted is thematic. Obadiah 1:17 begins with the phrase translated in the KJV as "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance [*pĕlēyṭâ*]" (compare Joel 2:32). The word *pĕlēyṭâ* can also indicate a "survivor," one who has escaped or been delivered (so translated in NRSV, NET). Thus, the notion of those who escaped the destruction mentioned in verse 17 is carried, by some interpreters, into verse 21: "Those who have been saved shall go up to Mount Zion" (NRSV).[22]

Despite these factors, many commentators and some modern translations (e.g., NIV, NASB, ESV) prefer to follow the Hebrew Masoretic vocalization and read *mōšiʿîm* in verse 21 as, "deliverers" or "saviours," the way the KJV renders it. The singular form of this participle occurs several times in reference to humans in the Hebrew Bible, including Judges 3:9, "The Lord raised up a deliverer [*mōšiaʿ*] to the children of Israel, who delivered them" (see also, Judges 3:15; 2 Kings 13:5), and in reference to YHWH, who declared, "For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour [*mōšiaʿ*]" (Isaiah 43:3). The plural form *mōšiʿîm* occurs only in Obadiah 1:21 and in Nehemiah 9:27, which reads, "According to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours [*mōšiʿîm*], who saved them [*yōšîʿûm*] out of the hand of their enemies." This verse is part of a public prayer in Nehemiah 9:6–37 that reviews Israelite history, including this reference to judges who are recounted in the book of Judges, who were essentially chieftains moved upon by YHWH's spirit to militarily deliver the Israelites from their neighboring enemies.

Given the emphasis in the Hebrew MT on "saviours" (v. 21); on "the day of the Lord" (v. 15), with its divine judgment and doom, and on the Israelites acting as "fire" and "flame" that would "devour" their enemies (v. 18; cf. Malachi 4:1) and who would repossess their own territories formerly controlled by their enemies (vv. 19–20), commentators often suggest a parallel between the military-oriented language in Judges (and elsewhere in the Bible) and with the final verses of Obadiah.[23] The saviors in Obadiah 1:21 are thus often viewed as Israelites who, moved upon by YHWH's spirit and power, deliver their people from their enemies and then judge or govern "mount Esau" under the supreme kingship of YHWH. Thus, the determination to translate *m(w)šʿym* with an active or passive sense is based on interpretive considerations, not on unambiguous textual evidence.

The conclusion to Obadiah's prophecy has two further challenges. They both involve the question of how prophecy is interpreted, what one thinks prophets knew about the future, and how prophets knew

it. The first challenge is knowing whether this military-sounding imagery of deliverers (following the Hebrew MT) is intended as literal, as symbolic of spiritual struggles, or both.[24] Obadiah is not clear on this issue, but as reviewed in the previous paragraph, the concepts and terminology in verses 15–21 sound more physically and militarily oriented (see likewise Jeremiah 10:10: "But the Lord is . . . an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation"). There is nothing explicit in these verses about personal righteousness or spirituality, although the prophesied destructive outcome could conceivably be understood as arising from an absence of that among the Edomites or nations. How this first challenge is dealt with depends, at least in part, on one's answer to the second challenge, which is deciding what "the day of the Lord" and "saviours on mount Zion" represent in Obadiah.

This second challenge lies at the heart of what this prophecy "means." Having just reviewed the contents of Obadiah, it is clear that the words in this biblical book take readers only so far. As Jensen has observed, "The brevity and ambiguity of the verse [21] provides the opportunity for very different interpretations."[25] What readers bring to the text—by way of perspectives, beliefs, and expectations—has a large impact on what meaning they perceive in Obadiah's words, including whether, for example, they even consider the book to be a divinely inspired prophecy. This issue highlights the tension between exegesis, or what is read out of the text in its context (i.e., what a close reading of the text leads one to understand), and eisegesis, what is read into the text (i.e., what one brings to, applies to, and expects to find in the text). Furthermore, it exemplifies the understandable desire to make greater sense of passages that seem less than complete and explicit on their own.

Various commentators have expressed a range of interpretive preferences on the latter portion of Obadiah. For example, Paul R. Raabe points out that commentators are divided on whether "the day of the Lord" was meant eschatologically (the end of "regular" human

time) or not, partly because of differing views on how to interpret the modifying clause "is near" (v. 15; see also Joel 1:15). Raabe himself states that as different as the prophesied time period will be, Obadiah "remains congruent with the historical and geographical realities of his own time; . . . he has not moved into the realm of apocalyptic."[26] Similarly, John Barton claims that the latter portion of Obadiah was "conceived as a genuine and specific hope, not as kind of 'utopian' dream" and depicts a "wholly concrete, this-worldly, political Israel that would govern the surrounding areas."[27]

Alternatively, Douglas Stuart finds the prophecy depicting a somewhat vaguely defined "new age," where "pure acknowledgement of Yahweh as God alone will prevail (cf. Isaiah 49:26; 54:10)." He further claims Obadiah, like other Old Testament prophecies about "the new age, has a Christian implication," in that this is not *just* a prophecy about events in the historical world but also about the "ultimate victory of God's people" throughout all the kingdoms of the earth.[28] And Block understands Obadiah as foreseeing a time when Zion "will become a place of everlasting joy," when Obadiah's prophecy is fulfilled in Christ.[29] Whether Daniel I. Block means through an outpouring of God's spirit or the personal presence of Christ is not clear.

Neither Stuart nor Block specifically mention Jesus's Second Coming (a doctrine that many Christians no longer literally believe), thus differentiating themselves from other commentators who, taking a Christian canonical perspective (i.e., reading the whole Bible together from a Christian perspective), see Obadiah 1:15–21—with its references to "the day of the Lord" and to "mount Zion," when "the kingdom shall be the Lord's"—as a prophecy about Jesus's Second Coming in power and glory and the establishment of his millennial kingdom on earth. The current academic trend is to read the Old Testament as a pre-Christian and usually a non-Christian anthology, so this Christ connection is no longer typically addressed by commentators. One obvious reason for this is that neither Obadiah nor any

other Old Testament prophet explicitly mention the Second Coming of YHWH/Jehovah/Jesus, although several prophets do emphasize a dramatically different ideal future, including a Davidic, messianic ruler (e.g., Ezekiel 34:23–24; 37:24–25) and wonderfully productive changes in the earth (Amos 9:11–15; Joel 3:18). Obadiah's prophecy, however, lacks these features. Nonetheless, some earlier Christian commentators did connect Obadiah's prophecy with Jesus's Second Coming, such as Carl F. Keil, who wrote, "The fulfillment of [Obadiah] vers. 17–21 can only belong to the Messianic times . . . at the second coming of our Lord."[30] Many commentators would label this conviction an example of *sensus plenior*, the idea that there is a fuller meaning to a text that was intended by God, whether or not the earlier prophet understood the concept.

Surveying Obadiah 1:15–21 in the context of other eschatologically oriented prophecies in the Old Testament, my reading of the latter verses of Obadiah resonates with Keil's perspective, in accepting that Obadiah was a prophet of God, that he prophesied something that has not yet fully come to pass (Israel prevailing over all its enemies, mount Zion being holy, and YHWH's kingdom being established on earth), and that what he prophesied will only fully occur with Jesus's Second Coming and the advent of the Millennium. But I also recognize that this is not specifically in Obadiah. I have brought a set of perspectives to the content of verses 15–21 that go beyond what this prophecy explicitly says.

This analysis of the book of Obadiah, with its emphasis on verse 21, sets the stage for examining how Latter-day Saints have used this verse, with its phrase "saviours . . . on mount Zion."

Reading Obadiah 21 with Latter-day Saints

As noted at the beginning of this paper, Latter-day Saints have regularly used the phrase "saviors on mount Zion" in connection with

proxy temple work for the dead in this latter-day dispensation. The notion of humans participating as "saviors" in someone else's spiritual progression is an interesting concept.

There are no passages in the Bible (excluding Obadiah 1:21) or the Book of Mormon that refer to someone other than YHWH/Jehovah/Jesus as "savior" in a *theological* sense, but there are two of them in the Doctrine and Covenants. The first is in D&C 86:11—part of a revelation given to Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, dated 6 December 1832—and is an expansion on Jesus's parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24–32). This passage clearly suggests Latter-day Saint priesthood holders can collectively function as a "savior" to "my people Israel." The phrase "my people" is consistently employed in the Old Testament and other scriptures to refer to covenant Israelites and seems to do so here as well.[31] So D&C 86:11 does not mention other peoples being saved by this collective "savior."

The second reference to someone other than YHWH/Jesus as a savior in uniquely Latter-day Saint scripture occurs in D&C 103:9–10, part of a revelation given to Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, dated 24 February 1834. This passage expands on Jesus's commission to his disciples in Matthew 5:14 to be "the light of the world" and is spoken to and about "my people." Here, it does appear that covenant Church members in general can function as "saviors" representing Jesus and his gospel to the rest of the world. Obviously, this notion of some people participating as "saviors" to others extends, but does not replace, the great saving power of Jesus's atoning sacrifice.

Set beside this early Restoration theological use of "saviors" plural, the phrase "mount Zion" occurs five times in the book of Psalms, seven times in Isaiah, twice in Obadiah, and once each in Joel and Micah. It also occurs three times in 2 Nephi, in chapters that quote Isaiah. And the form "mount Sion" occurs in the KJV of Hebrews 12:22 and Revelation 14:1. Thus, Joseph Smith encountered this phrase multiple times in his Book of Mormon translation and JST efforts.

The phrase "mount Zion" also occurs in D&C 133:18 and 56 in a revelation given through Joseph Smith on 3 November 1831.[32] The context of these two occurrences in D&C 133 is clearly Jesus's Second Coming. This phrase again occurs in D&C 76:66, in the vision given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on 16 February 1832, which draws upon the language of Hebrews 12:22 and which occurs in the description of those inheriting a celestial glory. And the phrase "mount Zion" occurs at least sporadically in subsequent remarks from Joseph Smith.[33]

These two threads—"saviors" and "mount Zion"—come together in a sermon by Joseph Smith on 16 May 1841: "The election of the promised seed still continues, and in the last days, they shall have the priesthood restored unto them, and they shall be the 'Saviors on mount Zion' [Obadiah 1:21] the 'ministers of our God' [Isaiah 61:6], if it were not for the remnant which was left, then might we be as Sodom and as Gomorrah [paraphrasing Isaiah 1:9]."[34] Although Joseph Smith did not mention Obadiah or Isaiah by name in this statement, he clearly quoted a phrase from each prophetic book. Neither did he explicitly connect either of these passages to temple ordinances, although he did several months later. The report of a discourse on 3 October 1841 describes, "President Joseph Smith, by request of some of the Twelve, gave instructions on the doctrine of Baptism for the Dead; which was listened to with intense interest by the large assembly. The speaker presented 'Baptism for the Dead' as the only way that men can appear as saviors on mount Zion."[35]

The phrase "saviors on mount Zion" and the temple ordinances come most fully together in the 15 April 1842 edition of the *Times and Seasons*, in which Joseph Smith taught the following:

> And now as the great purposes of God are hastening to their accomplishment and the things spoken of in the prophets are fulfilling, as the kingdom of God is established on the earth, and the ancient order of things restored, the Lord has

manifested to us this duty and privilege, and we are com-
manded to be baptized for our dead thus fulfilling the words
of Obadiah when speaking of the glory of the Latter Day.
"And saviours shall come up upon mount Zion to judge the
remnant of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lords." A view
of these things reconciles the scriptures of truth, justifies the
ways of God to man; places the human family upon an equal
footing, and harmonizes with every principle of righteous-
ness, justice, and truth.[36]

Here, Joseph Smith specifically cited Obadiah 1:21 and connected
the phrase "saviours . . . on mount Zion" with Latter-day Saints who
perform proxy temple baptisms for their ancestors. He reiterated this
concept on 21 January 1844, asking, "But how are they [the Saints]
to become Saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples" and
performing all the requisite temple ordinances for their ancestors.[37]
Thus, it appears that the more Joseph Smith learned and taught
about proxy temple ordinances, the more focused his use of "saviors
on mount Zion" became.

A number of subsequent latter-day prophets and apostles have
reiterated this connection in general conference addresses and else-
where. Due to space limitations, only a few examples are provided
here for illustration. On 31 July 1859, Brigham Young is reported to
have preached the following in Salt Lake City:

It is recorded in the Bible that in the last days the God of heaven
will set up a kingdom [Daniel 2:44]. . . . It will save every person
that will and can be saved. The doctrines of the Saviour reveal
and place the believers in possession of principles whereby sav-
iours will come upon Mount Zion to save the house of Esau,
which is the Gentile nations, from sin and death. . . . Men and
women will enter into the temples of God, . . . and officiate year
after year for those who have slept thousands of years.[38]

Although Brigham Young did not specifically mention Obadiah, he clearly drew upon Obadiah 1:21. And he transformed Obadiah's "saviours . . . to judge the mount Esau" to "saviours . . . to save the house of Esau," identifying this "house of Esau" as "the Gentile nations" of the earth, thereby specifically linking Obadiah 1:21 with missionary and temple work.

In the April 1943 general conference, Elder John A. Widtsoe taught, "The Lord came upon earth and, in our behalf, in behalf of the whole race of God's children, did work which will bring us eternal life and joy and blessings. So, in a humbler manner may we, each one of us, do work for the dead that will bless them eternally, if they accept our service. We, also, may become saviors —'saviors on Mount Zion' (Obad. 1:21). That is a glorious thought."[39] President Gordon B. Hinckley taught at the October 2004 general conference that we can

> go to the house of the Lord and there serve in a vicarious relationship in behalf of those who are beyond the veil of death. . . . We literally become saviors on Mount Zion [Obadiah 1:21]. What does this mean? Just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in the temple, become as saviors to those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth.[40]

And in April 2016, Quentin L. Cook similarly taught this principle, citing Obadiah 1:21.[41]

Furthermore, Church-produced materials and commentators have generally followed suit, connecting Obadiah 1:21 with vicarious temple work. For example, the 2014 *Old Testament Seminary Teacher Manual* encourages a discussion of temple work in relation to Obadiah 1:17–21.[42]

The beauty of this connection—"saviours . . . on mount Zion" and vicarious temple ordinances—first expressed by Joseph Smith,

is immediately evident. This Restoration-based view aligns with the Lord's statement in D&C 103:9–10, that his people can function as "saviors" under his direction and power. This spiritually oriented understanding of the contents of Obadiah 1:21 emphasizes "saviors" who represent the Lord in extending ordinance opportunities to those in need of such assistance. This view seems to also draw on verse 17—"But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness"—to suggest a temple-based connection for these saviors. Understood this way, it is obvious that the active rendition of *mōšiʿîm* in Obadiah 1:21 in the traditional Hebrew Bible and in the KJV (as opposed to the passive reading, "those who are saved") has had a significant impact on how Latter-day Saints have utilized the language of that verse.[43]

However, reading Obadiah 1:15–21 with a text-based and contextualized interpretive approach yields a different outcome and raises questions about connecting Obadiah 1:21 with temple ordinances. For example, neither the temple nor its ordinances—for the dead or the living—are specifically mentioned in the book of Obadiah, although, as indicated above, "mount Zion" can reference the temple mount as well as the city of Jerusalem (and Latter-day Saints sometimes use "mount Zion" to designate the American New Jerusalem; see, for example, D&C 84:2–3; 133:56). Also, living in the Mosaic dispensation, the ancient Israelites did not perform vicarious ordinances for the dead, a practice that began only after Jesus's resurrection, about six hundred years after Obadiah.[44] There is no evidence that Obadiah's audience understood such a concept, even if one were to assume that Obadiah, as a prophet, was aware of the future prospects of "work for the dead."

Furthermore, it is not entirely clear in verse 21 how the "saviours . . . on mount Zion" who are to "judge" or govern "mount Esau" equate with Latter-day Saints performing temple ordinances for the dead,[45] especially given the more military and administrative

depiction in Obadiah 1:15–21, with the implicit connections to past Israelite judges.[46] And although contrasted with "mount Esau," "mount Zion" in verse 21 seems intended, in context, to reference Jerusalem or just its temple mount, not multiple latter-day temples. Finally, in the quotations included above, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young both applied Obadiah 1:21 to the temple activity of Latter-day Saints in *this* time period, not to a future time following "the day of the Lord." This is especially true if that is understood as the destruction of the wicked prior to the initiation of a new era at Christ's return (D&C 43:17–29 and 45:39 use the phrase "the great day of the Lord" in reference to Jesus's Second Coming).

So the question arises: Was Obadiah *primarily* prophesying about "saviors on Mount Zion" in connection with issues that would arise through the course of centuries, just in our latter-day dispensation, or in the Millennium? This is a classic illustration of how interpretive decisions are influenced by the preconceptions and beliefs that one brings to the text when interpreting a passage of scripture. As outlined previously, multiple interpretations have been given of what is intended by Obadiah 1:21 and its context, including the following:

+ A hopeful but primarily "this-worldy" historical perspective

+ A vague future fulfillment when Israelites will triumph over their enemies and live God's law

+ A more general Christian reading of some future day of greater spirituality and righteousness brought about by Christ

+ The specific view of many members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about performing temple ordinances for the dead in any dedicated latter-day temple

+ A specific Christian reading of Jesus's Second Coming and the early Millennium

Given the content and tone of Obadiah 1:15–21, and in the context of other scriptural passages, I think the latter option is more likely (allowing that this prophecy can mean various things to various people), and so do a few other Latter-day Saint commentators. For example, Victor Ludlow has connected Obadiah's "holy mountain of Zion ([Obadiah] verses 16, 17, 21)" with "John's new Jerusalem . . . (Rev. 21:7, 27)," and Obadiah 1:21 with Revelation 11:15, passages that are regularly understood as millennial by Latter-day Saints.[47] In this millennial context, we may see YHWH's appointed "saviors" governing those who survived the destructive "day of the Lord" but who are not yet fully part of his kingdom, politically or spiritually. In this setting, they may help administer saving ordinances for the living and the dead.[48]

As a Latter-day Saint, there appear to me to be two possible approaches to understanding the commonly expressed Latter-day Saint perspective on this verse. One is that Obadiah 1:21 was intended to primarily portray the Church's premillennial vicarious temple work and related activities, that it took the Restoration and latter-day prophets to reveal and make this clear, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God mentioned by Obadiah.[49] This may be the assumption, thought through or not, of many Latter-day Saints.

The more likely option, in my opinion, is that Obadiah prophesied something that made sense to his contemporary audience in the sixth century BC, something about the Lord helping them regain their land in an undefined but different future and, in a reversal of their then-current fortunes, something about their ruling over the peoples around them with the aid of and under the ultimate kingship of YHWH. Promises of future deliverance, restoration, and righteousness no doubt provided hope to sixth-century Israelites, even if Obadiah's prophecy of the future was fairly vague as to specifics. It thus could have been intended to convey an eschatological message,

something yet to be fulfilled, which for many Christians connects with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So whether one assumes Obadiah himself understood future vicarious temple ordinances, he does not appear to have been teaching his contemporaries about them.

If one takes this second approach (as I do), then it follows that Joseph Smith and those who succeeded him were *applying* Restoration knowledge to Obadiah's ancient prophecy rather than announcing the interpretation of the prophecy *per se* in its biblical context. In this particular case, Joseph Smith appears to me to have done with Obadiah 1:21 what Peter did with Joel 2:28–32, as recounted in Acts 2:17–21, only weeks after Jesus's resurrection. Referring to events at Pentecost, with its multiple manifestations of the Holy Spirit, Peter declared that "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (v. 16), who, among other things, prophesied that YHWH would "pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." However, about 1,800 years later, Moroni told Joseph Smith that this same prophecy of Joel "was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be" (JS—H 1:41). Thus, Peter *applied* an Old Testament prophecy to events in his day because of certain connections and overlaps that were evident to him, even though the primary focus of the prophecy was really something still in his future (as is readily evident from Joel 2:30–31; Acts 2:19–20). This models what Joseph Smith and other Latter-day Saints have done with Obadiah 1:21, because of its powerful and pliable imagery, by applying to our latter-day dispensation a prophecy that seems to focus primarily on the Second Coming of Jesus and his early millennial reign on earth ("the kingdom will be the Lord's").

This process of application is different from a prophet giving a definitive interpretation of all aspects of a prophecy in its context. The value in recognizing and appreciating both approaches for what they are—an interpretation of a passage in its literary, historical, and canonical context, *and* a particular application of a passage that does not necessarily employ or conform to its scriptural context—is important to

ensuring that one option does not come to obscure the other. There is real value in understanding Obadiah 1:21 in its own context, just as there is value in understanding how latter-day prophets have employed the evocative language of verse 21 to teach relevant truths in this dispensation. Thus, just as we can appreciate what Peter was doing with Joel's prophecy in Acts, so we can also appreciate what latter-day Church leaders have done, in my opinion, with Obadiah 1:21, without claiming their use is the only or final way to interpret that verse.

Understanding this situation is important in part because Latter-day Saints have made other applications of the phrase "saviors on mount Zion" that extend the vision of this phrase to additional activities in this latter-day time period besides temple work but which again are not likely the primary fulfillment of the phrase as found in its context in Obadiah. For example, Gary Gillum, after sharing stories of family abuse, observed that "in likening the scriptures to ourselves, Latter-day Saints can be saviors on Mount Zion not only for the dead but also for the living . . . by helping the world overcome and eliminate the barbarisms of abuse, war, torture, force, genocide, poverty, ignorance, exclusion, bigotry, and hatred."[50] Elders Matthias Cowley, Charles Penrose, and Mark E. Petersen applied this phrase to teaching family members the restored gospel.[51] Henry Moyle applied the phrase to missionary work in general.[52] And Elder Jeffrey R. Holland applied this phrase to the nurturing love and service rendered to children by their mothers.[53] All of these illustrate the power of employing beautiful poetic language to express important concepts. They also illustrate the practice of applying a scriptural phrase to various situations that are different from the one primarily represented by the particular phrase's context itself.

Concluding Thoughts

This study has discussed how one phrase from Obadiah 1:21 fits within the context of the verse in which it occurs and within that

verse's greater context, especially verses 15–21, as well as how Latter-day Saints have applied this phrase to temple work and other gospel-related activities. Wrestling with the text of prophetic statements, old or new, in their contexts, often proves to be quite challenging. However, it can be very fruitful as well, by demonstrating what a text says in its own right and in its own context and by delineating what subsequent uses and applications have been made of that text so that each can be appreciated and utilized for what it is. Whether or not one agrees with the perspective I have presented here, Obadiah's teaching about the "day of the Lᴏʀᴅ" and the establishment of his kingdom that will follow the destruction of the wicked is a significant doctrinal concept, as is the vicarious temple work that Latter-day Saints perform for the dead.

Notes

1. I thank my student assistant Austin Metcalf for helping with some of the research for this paper. I also thank my wife, Jane Allis-Pike, my colleague Kent P. Jackson, and two unnamed peer reviewers for their helpful feedback.

    The Bible translations cited in this study are known by the following abbreviations: KJV, King James Version (1611/1769); NRSV, New Revised Standard Version (1989); NASB, New American Standard Bible (1971/1995); NET, New English Translation (2005); ESV, English Standard Version (2001/2011); and NIV, New International Version (1978/2011).

2. There is only one chapter in Obadiah. Some publications simply omit a chapter designation, e.g., Obadiah 21, while others include a chapter designation, e.g., Obadiah 1:21. I follow this latter practice, since it represents the style generally used by the LDS Church.

3. See my paper on Ecclesiastes 12:7 and a forthcoming paper on the breath of life for other illustrations of this practice of Latter-day Saints *applying* meaning to a biblical passage. Dana M. Pike, "The 'Spirit' That Returns to God in Ecclesiastes 12:7," in *Let Us Reason Together: Reflections on Study*

and Faith, Essays in Honor of Robert L. Millet, ed. J. Spencer Fluhman and Brent L. Top (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016), 189–204.

4. A number of non-LDS and LDS commentaries have been produced on the book of Obadiah. For convenience, I cite here some of the more recent ones, which may be consulted for further discussion of Obadiah than is possible in this paper.

    Recent non-LDS commentaries: Daniel I. Block, *Obadiah: The Kingship Belongs to YHWH* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013); Philip Peter Jensen, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2008); Johan Renkema, *Obadiah* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2003); John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah* (BZAW 242; New York: de Gruyter, 1996); Paul R. Raabe, *Obadiah, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (ABD24; New York: Doubleday, 1996). Although somewhat dated in parts, see also Diana Vikander Edelman, ed., *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

    LDS publications generally provide fewer comments on Obadiah. They include D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse, The Old Testament*, vol. 2, *1 Kings through Malachi* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 338–40; Darrell L. Matthews, "The Book of Obadiah," in *1 Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson, vol. 4 of *Studies in Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 264–66; Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 651–52; Monte S. Nyman and Farres H. Nyman, *The Words of the Twelve Prophets: Messages to the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 61–69; and Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel's Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 317–25.

5. See portions of Isaiah 34, Jeremiah 49, and Ezekiel 25 and 35. For a recent examination of these and related passages, see Else K. Holt, Hyun Chul

Paul Kim, and Andrew Mein, eds., *Concerning the Nations: Essays on the Oracles Against the Nations in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

6. For an overview of pertinent issues, such as whether the Book of the Twelve was intentionally arranged and redacted based on specific literary and theological factors, see for example, the pros and cons cited in Ehud Ben Zvi and James D. Nogalski, *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve / the Twelve Prophetic Books* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009). See also the discussion in Jensen, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 7.

7. For further discussion, see Dana M. Pike, "The Name and Titles of God in the Old Testament," *Religious Educator* 11, no. 1 (2010): 17–31, especially 19–21; and Dana M. Pike, "Biblical Hebrew Words You Already Know, and Why They Are Important," *Religious Educator* 7, no. 3 (2006): 97–114, especially 106–9.

8. Obadiah / ʿbdyh, elsewhere alternatively written as ʿbdyhw, is a common form of personal names in Israel and the rest of the ancient Near East, consisting of a title compounded with a divine name. Compare, for example, the Israelite name ʿbdʾl / Abdiel, "servant of El/God," and the Phoenician name ʿbdbʿl, "servant of Baal." For further discussion of such theophoric personal names, see Dana M. Pike, "Names, Theophoric," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1018–19.

9. For a summary overview of positions on dating Obadiah, see Block, *Obadiah*, 23–24.

10. See, for example, Block, *Obadiah*, 23, 27; and Ehud Ben Zvi, "Obadiah," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, vol. 2., ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford, 2011), 124.

11. On the interesting form "Lord God," with "God" in small caps, see Pike, "The Name and Titles of God in the Old Testament," 25, available at https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/name-and-titles-god-old-testament.

12. The Septuagint is the early Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures produced by Jews living in Egypt in the third through second centuries BC.

See, for example, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford, 2009).

13. It is worth noting that Genesis 36 relates many of Esau's descendants. And Edom may be the setting for Job and his experiences; see Job 1:1–3 and Lamentations 4:21. For a recent analysis of biblical passages dealing with Esau and Edomites, see Elie Assis, *Identity in Conflict: The Struggle Between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

14. See, for example, the helpful overview by Richard H. Hiers, "Day of the Lord," in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:82–83.

15. Compare Nephi's use of "the time cometh speedily" and "must shortly come" in reference to the last days and Millennium; 1 Nephi 22:15, 18.

16. The evidence for this claim, during year three of the reign of Nabonidus, is fragmentary but fairly certain; see Mordechai Cogan, *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 214.

17. See the extended excursus on this biblical motif by Raabe, *Obadiah*, 206–42.

18. A number of biblical passages, such as 1 Samuel 12:12, Psalm 98:6, Isaiah 6:5, and Jeremiah 51:57, refer to YHWH as "king."

19. So translated by George E. Hubbard in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 804. Darrell Matthews, "The Book of Obadiah," 266n3, is the only LDS commentator I am aware of who even cites the Septuagint reading when discussing Obadiah 1:21.

20. For commentators who favor this passive reading, see Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 154; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), 413; and citations in Renkema, *Obadiah*, 216n393–94.

21. Based on the Septuagint reading, some scholars have posited seeing Hebrew *mūšāʾîm*, a form that does not otherwise occur in the Masoretic Text, as a corrupted form of the passive *nōšāʾîm*, "the ones who were helped" (compare the singular form in Isaiah 45:17: "Israel shall be saved [*nōšaʿ*] in the Lord"), but this seems unlikely.

22. For further discussion of the active versus the passive interpretation of *m(w)š˘ym*, see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 268–69; and Renkema, *Obadiah*, 215–17.

23. See Raabe, *Obadiah*, 269, 272; Block, *Obadiah*, 102–3; and Renkema, *Obadiah*, 216–17.

24. See also the language in an eschatological context in Zechariah 10, in which future Judahites are referred to as a "goodly horse in the battle" (v. 3) and "as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them" (v. 5).

25. Jensen, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 26.

26. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 272, and see the comments on 192.

27. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 157.

28. Stuart, *Hoshea–Jonah*, 421–22.

29. Block, *Obadiah*, 108.

30. Carl Friedrich Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 1 in C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949; originally pub. 1878), 378. See also, to some extent, John A. Thompson, "The Book of Obadiah," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 6:867. Victor L. Ludlow, *Unlocking the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 211, is the only LDS commentator I am aware of who emphasizes this view of Obadiah 15–21.

31. There are multiple examples of this expression in the Old Testament as part of a covenant formula. See, for example, Exodus 6:7, Jeremiah 24:7, and for further citations and discussion, Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula, an Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, trans. Margaret Khol (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

32. "Revelations printed in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, June 1832–June 1833," [1], http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelations-printed-in-the-evening-and-the-morning-star-june-1832-june-1833/19.

33. See a 7 July 1834 proclamation in which Joseph Smith reportedly referenced Joel 2:32, in History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 517, The Joseph Smith Papers, http://www.josephsmith

papers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december
-1805-30-august-1834/523.

34. Discourse, 16 May 1841, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*, 430, The
Joseph Smith Papers, http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary
/discourse-16-may-1841-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/2.

35. Discourse, 3 October 1841, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*, 577, The
Joseph Smith Papers, http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary
/discourse-3-october-1841-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/1.

36. *Times and Seasons*, 15 April 1842, 761, The Joseph Smith Papers, http://
www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-15-april
-1842/11. This editorial is signed "Ed.," which is presumably Joseph Smith,
since he functioned as the editor of *Times and Seasons* at this time.

37. History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], 1866, The
Joseph Smith Papers, http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary
/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/238.

38. Journal of Discourses (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1859), 6:344,
http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/JournalOfDiscourses
3/id/9602. There are challenges in utilizing the sermons in the *Journal of
Discourses* as a source for specific wording, since they are based on short-
hand transcriptions of what was verbally presented over the pulpit. See,
more fully, Gerrit Dirkmaat and LaJean Purcell Carruth, "The Prophets
Have Spoken, but What Did They Say? Examining the Differences between
George D. Watt's Original Shorthand Notes and the Sermons Published in
the *Journal of Discourses*," in *BYU Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2015): 25–118.

39. John A. Widtsoe, "The Way of Salvation," in Conference Report, April
1943, 37–39.

40. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, November 2004, 105.

41. Quentin L. Cook, "See Yourself in the Temple," *Ensign*, May 2016, 98.

42. *Old Testament Seminary Teacher Manual*, https://www.lds.org/manual/old
-testament-seminary-teacher-manual/introduction-to-the-book-of-obadiah
/lesson-151-obadiah?lang=eng. See also, for example, Daniel H. Ludlow, *A
Companion to Your Study of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,

1981), 373–74; and Ogden and Skinner, *Verse by Verse, The Old Testament*, vol. 2, *1 Kings through Malachi*, 339–40.

43. So also, presumably, has the KJV translation of Hebrew *mōšiʿîm* as "saviours," as opposed to the less theologically oriented "deliverers," which is also a legitimate rendition.

44. Furthermore, D&C 84:25–27 and Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2 indicate to Latter-day Saints that Israelites living in the land of Canaan before Christ's mortal ministry did not generally have access to Melchizedek Priesthood–based ordinances but only Aaronic Priesthood ones. Therefore, ancient Israelites as a group did not experience a full temple endowment themselves (if they had *any* endowment experience), making it difficult for them to understand Obadiah's prophecy if what he was specifically referring to was latter-day temple ordinances.

45. Victor Ludlow's explanation (*Unlocking the Old Testament*, 211) that "Latter-day Saints can easily associate 'saviors on Mount Zion' (verse 21) with such record keeping and righteousness (as demonstrated through books of remembrance and temple work)" is not self-evident in Obadiah 1:21, and neither is Sperry's claim (*The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, 325) that "those who hold the [priesthood] keys of this work shall judge the wicked world represented by the 'Mount of Esau.'"

46. D&C 64:37–38 does mention the restored Church as a "judge," but it goes on to indicate that the "inhabitants of Zion shall judge all things pertaining to Zion," thus contextualizing the judging as related to Church members (borne out further in verses 39–40), not the judging of Edom or the world.

47. Ludlow, *Unlocking the Old Testament*, 210–11. See also Ogden and Skinner, *Verse by Verse, The Old Testament*, vol. 2, *1 Kings through Malachi*, 339, who sound like they favor a millennial interpretation of Obadiah 1:15–21, even though they do not use that word: "The prophet makes a sudden transition [in verse 15] from the immediate to ultimate things. . . . In contrast to those who choose to remain outside the kingdom of God (the 'heathen'), those within it will inherit the earth after it is cleansed by fire. Certain helpers, saviors, will 'come up on mount Zion' in the day of the Lord."

48. For a brief discussion of these matters, see Robert L. Millet, "Millennium," in *LDS Beliefs: A Doctrinal Reference*, ed. Robert L. Millet, Camille Fronk Olson, Andrew C. Skinner, and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 425–31, especially 428–30.

49. See "Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven," in *The Guide to the Scriptures*, https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/kingdom-of-god-or-kingdom-of-heaven?lang=eng.

50. Gary P. Gillum, "Obadiah's Vision of Saviors on Mount Zion," in *Voices of Old Testament Prophets*, 26th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 129–30.

51. Matthias Cowley, in Conference Report, October 1903, 55; Charles W. Penrose, in Conference Report, April 1918, 22; and Mark E. Petersen, "Going Steady," in Conference Report, October 1959, 14.

52. Henry D. Moyle, "The Saints in Europe," in Conference Report, October 1958, 34.

53. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Behold Thy Mother," *Ensign*, November 2015, 50.