

# SPIRITUAL CAT SCANS

## OBADIAH

*Family feuds* – history is full of examples...

From *European kings* to *Oriental emperors* – families have squared off with families, and fought each other for generations. They're often called "[vendettas](#)" – an Italian word that means "[blood feud](#)."

If you've read Shakespeare's classic, "[Romeo and Juliet](#)," you know of the fictional feud between the [Capulets](#) and the [Montagues](#)...

American folklore made famous the Appalachian border war between two families - the [Hatfields of West Virginia](#) and the [McCoys of Kentucky](#).

This weekend college football showcased its [border wars](#)... It was a weekend for interstate rivalries - family feuds - [Florida v Florida State](#) - [Texas v Texas A&M](#) - [Auburn v Alabama](#) - [Georgia v Georgia Tech](#).

In fact, for the last 30 years, families have square off each night on the TV show, "[Family Feud...](#)" The American version is in its sixth edition.

The book of Obadiah is also all about a long-running family feud.

In Genesis 25 a *vendetta*, or *blood feud*, erupted in the family of Isaac - a feud between two brothers, Jacob and Esau. The younger kid, Jacob, bought his brother's birthright; then deceived his dad to make it stand.

Esau was *a manly man*. Jacob was *a mama's boy*. Esau had been out hunting all morning. He was hungry... *no, he was famished*.

And Jacob had a stew cooking on the fire.

Jacob should've offered his brother the chili for free - *but he didn't*.

If Esau had valued spiritual and future blessings as much as he did a full belly he would've never offered Jake his birthright for that chili.

Perhaps Esau never thought his kid brother would take him seriously. *He could bully little Jacob – eat the stew AND keep the birthright*.

Esau never imagined Jacob had the hutzpah to impersonate him, and deceive his dad. Esau had Jacob pegged wrong. The kid velcroed hair to his arms and legs – pretended to be the older, more mature, hairier Esau.

Jacob bit, and blessed the younger son over his older sibling.

And even when Jacob realized the ruse, he refused to reverse the blessing. Jacob saw the hand of God at work in the outcome.

In this family feud both brothers were at fault... Jacob deceived. Esau was carnal and short-sighted. Later, Jacob admitted his error, but Esau never did. He was a proud man. He became bitter... very, very bitter.

Hebrews 12:17 says bitterness took such a hold on Esau's heart, "that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."

Esau was sorry for his loss, but he was too bitter over his brother's double-cross to admit his own fault in the matter. Esau never found *repentance* because he could never shake his *resentment*.

And here was the tragedy - the feud didn't end with the two brothers.

It continued among their descendants. The Edomites, or the offspring of Esau - and the children of Jacob, or the Israelites, fought and feuded for centuries. This family feud became a border war – a blood feud – a vendetta that carried on for several thousand years.

Obadiah was the prophet of God sent to confront the nation Edom.

God was the person who could settle this feud – and settle it He would.

He sends Obadiah to run Edom through the Spiritual Cat Scan and X-ray their condition. In a short, succinct message, Obadiah reveals the underlying sin of Edom – and the sinful behavior it produced.

God will *conclude this feud*. He'll judge the offspring of Esau.

Here's a great example of why we call these last twelve books of the OT the "Minor Prophets." Obadiah is *minor* only in the sense of its length. It is 21 verses, the shortest book in the OT, yet it carries a strategic message.

"*Minor*" is a label that denotes *size* not *significance*.

Each of the Major Prophets averages 46 chapters - the Minor Prophets just 6. Yet Amos and Obadiah are just as inspired by God, and vital to us, as Isaiah Jeremiah, Ezekiel. "The minor prophets pack a major message."

The book begins in verse 1, "The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom..." And the prophet begins with a startling report...

God is rallying the armies of the world to rise up and fight against Edom.

Apparently, God had a bone to pick with the Edomites... and Obadiah cut right to the chase... verse 2, "Behold I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised..." Edom had gotten a fathead!

And I'm not talking about the extra-large posters you put on your wall – *they had the bighead*. Pride and arrogance had filled their hearts. Edom thought he was *larger than life*, but God was about to shrink him "small."

Let me introduce you to the neighborhood in Obadiah's day...

The Philistines, west of the Judah, worshipped Dagon, the fish god. The northern Canaanites bowed to Ba'al the bull – and he was just that, *a lot of bull*. Ammon to

the east, sacrificed children to Molech - and Moab worshipped a false god named Chemosh... *everybody had their idol.*

*Except for two nations...* the descendents of Jacob and Esau...

**All the other nations** in the neighborhood worshipped a false god.

Jacob - the nation **Israel** - worshipped Jehovah, the one true God.

But **Edom** worshipped no god at all. They were unbelievers - atheists.

Rather than trust in a god, they relied on themselves. Instead of a deity they were *do-it-yourselfers*. The Edomites wanted to be their own god.

In some ways the Edomites were like modern-day Americans - they were guilty of idolizing their own initiative, ingenuity, and technology.

They were a "*can-do people*." They were industrious and innovative.

The Edomites carved cities out of the rocks and cliffs around the Dead Sea. Edom figured *they could defend themselves* – God was irrelevant...

Just like their forefather, Esau, who saw more nutrition in a bowl of stew than in God's blessing – the Edomites failed to recognize their need for God's power and presence... In Obadiah's day, Edom put their trust in

fortresses and fortifications. They didn't recognize their need for God.

Obadiah says to Edom in verses 3-4, **"The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'**

**Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the LORD.**" Edom thought he was high and mighty. But God tells him, *"You're going down!"*

Edom saw himself as *a soaring eagle*. God saw him as *a dying duck*.

Edom acted as if he were his own god. He'd grown cocky, and arrogant, and fiercely independent... **Edom was like the guy who called dial-a-prayer to check his messages - and God is about to whittle him down to size.**

It reminds me of the conversation heard one night in the insane asylum.

One of the patients shouted, ***"I am Napoleon Bonaparte."*** The attendant asked, ***"How do you know you're Napoleon?"*** He responded, ***"God told me."*** Suddenly, another voice from down the hall shouted, ***"I did not!"***

The Bible tells us any person who acts like he's his own god is crazy. Psalm 14:1 declares, **"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"** Independence from God, self-sufficiency, is sheer insanity.

The notion I can fend for myself is an illusion. There is no such thing as *a self-made man* or *a self-made woman*. We stand on shoulders of folks who have gone before us. We're what we are by the grace of God.

I don't care *who you are*, or *where you've been*, or *what you've done* – you and I need God for the air we breathe and to take our next breath.

If you haven't noticed, we live in a world of amazing order and complex symmetry. Our planet is perfectly positioned to sustain and support life.

The third rock is 93 million miles from the sun. If it were 10% closer we'd burn to a crisp. If it were 10% further away we'd turn into an ice cube.

Air pressure at sea level is 14.7 pounds per square inch. If it were 25 pound the air would crush your body. At 5 pounds you would explode.

Everywhere you look in nature you see the evidence of design. It makes no sense to chalk up our existence to chance occurrences of random events. In a world of intricate design there has to be a Designer.

Here's a cartoon, entitled, "[Agnostic Fleas.](#)" Two fleas stand on the back of a canine. One asks the other, "[You mean you actually believe in dog?](#)"

The flea has a limited, narrow perspective. He can't see the obvious. And this was the problem with Edom - *they were flea-minded folks.*

Listen to the jingle, “[Earth houses atheists many. Hell is not occupied by any.](#)” Ultimately, all men admit the obvious - *they really do need God.*

And this is the message Obadiah was given to wake up the Edomites. The territory of Edom was a swath of land southeast of the Dead Sea. It was an area about 30 miles wide by 100 miles long. The people of Esau made their homes in the cliffs and caves of the rocky highlands.

Edom’s capitol city was Petra - perched 5000 feet above the Dead Sea.

If you saw the movie “*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*” you’ve seen the city of Petra. In the movie, the rock façade of a temple at Petra was used as the entrance to the cave that contained the Holy Grail.

To invade Petra an army had to pass through a long, deep gorge.

The path was 15 feet wide - hundreds of feet high – and over a mile long. Most chariots were too broad to navigate the narrowness.

The city’s entrance was so narrow invading soldiers had to align single file. It made it easy for the Edomites to pick off the invaders and defend their city. It was said as few as a dozen Edomites could defend Petra.

Petra was considered impregnable to attack.

Edom’s boast reminds me of Muhammad Ali in his boxing hey-day.



Once he boarded a plane, and was asked by the flight attendant to buckle his seat belt. Ali replied, “**Superman, don’t need no seat belt.**”

That’s when the lady answered, “*Superman, don’t need no airplane.*”

A humbler Ali buckled his seat belt. Edom also thought he was *superman*. Obadiah says God will prove he’s *super chicken*.

In verse 5 Obadiah says when thieves ransack a house they at least they leave behind the dog, and your junk... Grape-gathers don’t pick the vines bare. They leave a few gleanings for the poor and the wild foxes...

Yet the nations who’ll invade Edom will take everything. Edom will be *cut off*. Their hidden treasures will be *ripped off*. Verse 7 describes how the Edomites will be betrayed by their so-called allies.

*And here’s why...* Here’s God’s beef with Edom... Just as Edom was betrayed by his posse, Israel had been betrayed by his brother, Edom.

Verse 10, “**For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever...**” Esau never got over his bitterness toward Jacob. Even his descendents perpetuated his hatred. Edom was a persistent stumbling block to Israel – *a constant rock in Israel’s shoe*.

One commentator said of Edom’s attitude toward his neighbors, Judah and Israel, “**The only thing about Edom**

that bordered on religious fervor was their concentrated, persistent, bitter hatred against the Hebrews.”

When Israel came out of Egypt and headed for the Promised Land, it was Edom who refused to allow Moses to pass through their borders.

Throughout their history, Edom was an archenemy to Israel. King Saul, David, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Amaziah, Ahaz, and Zedekiah - all fought Esau. The conflict with Edom was constant - always under the surface.

This was a long running family feud. *It even spills over into Christmas.*

Today of course, is the Sunday after Thanksgiving – the traditional start-up to the Christmas season. *How many of you endured the shopping wars yesterday?* Well, the conflict Obadiah addresses is in the Christmas story.

The first Christmas was a feud between two kings... The king of Israel, Jesus our Messiah, was born in Bethlehem. But another king tried to kill him the moment He was born, King Herod. *And who was this Herod?*

He claimed to be a Jew, but he was a convert to Judaism.

His birth certificate read “**Edomite.**” King Herod was part of Esau’s bitter bloodline. The family feud of Obadiah is a backdrop to the first Christmas.

Yet in verse 11, Obadiah refers to another *episode in this family feud...*

**“In the day that you stood on the other side - in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem – even you were as one of them.”** Though Obadiah doesn’t provide a historical context, he certainly has a particular incident in mind.

There are different possibilities, but I lean toward Babylon’s invasion of Judah in 586 BC. Babylon conquered Jerusalem... *and Edom rejoiced!*

Psalm 137:7 records Edom’s reaction, **“Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, ‘Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!’”** The Edomites became Babylonian cheerleaders.

Their neighbor – their brother, Israel – was being slaughtered. The walls of Jerusalem were toppled - the Temple was burned – yet Edom stood on the sidelines and egged on the Babylonians. They cried out for more and more carnage. They wanted to run up the score - pour it on Jacob.

There’s a verse in the Apocrypha, 1Esdras 4:45.

Understand, the Apocrypha is not inspired Scripture, but it is interesting history. 1Esdras flashes forward to after the fall of Jerusalem. Jews are about to end their captivity. The Persians have conquered Babylon.

A Jew named, *Zerubbabel*, reminds the King of Persia. “You also vowed to build the temple, which the Edomites burned when Judea was laid waste by the Chaldeans.”

Notice, Edom helped Babylon destroy the Temple.

To topple the Temple goes to show the depth of Edom’s bitterness.

Next, Obadiah peppers the Edomites with a series of **“should not’s.”**

Verse 12 **“But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people... nor laid hands on their substance...”**

The Edomites even patrolled the caravan route leading south out of Jerusalem for Egypt to arrest any Jews who were trying to escape.

When Judah was down, his own brother kicked him in the ribs.

Edom’s sin was rubbing in. They took pleasure in their brother’s demise. They enjoyed seeing the Jews squirm, and sweat, and suffer. Edom did nothing to help, but applauded as the Jews were led away in chains.

And here’s a word to all Tech fans... Beware of the sin of rubbing it in.

As God said to Edom in verse 12... *“Don’t rejoice... in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress...”*

Here’s another way to say it, *be nice to a downcast Dawg.*

I once had a supervisor named Ralph. We worked together at a Dupont Distribution Center. One Friday afternoon I was locking up, and heading home - when I found a hobo – a bum - who’d come in on a railcar.

He was lying in a drunken stupor on the dock of the warehouse.

According to company policy, Ralph should’ve run him off the property. Instead, he and I made the hobo a bed out of foam packing material.

I went to the break room and bought him crackers and a soft drink. I laid them by the foam mat so he’d have something to eat when he woke up.

I’ll never forget what Ralph told me before we left *“Sandy, never kick a man when he’s down. You never know when you might be that man.”*

Edom should’ve had mercy on his fallen brother.

Instead the nation poured salt in the wound - kicked Judah while he was down. *Seven times in three verses, 12-14, God says to Edom, “You should not have...”* God was angry at Edom, and would bring down punishment.

Notice, verse 15, "For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head." Here's God's message to Edom - **what goes around comes around!** Since Edom kicked Israel, Edom will also get booted.

History tells us **the Babylonians** eventually turned on the Edomites.

Two hundred years later around 300 BC - between the OT and NT - Edom was conquered by the **Greek armies** of Alexander the Great.

Eventually the Jews gained their independence from the Greeks.

That's when **Israel, and their Maccabean kings**, conquered and scattered the Edomites among the nations... By the third century AD, Edom was spoken of as a people who no longer existed.

From the time Edom kicked a downtrodden Israel, onward – they became a nation "*small and despised*" just as Obadiah 2 predicted.

But Obadiah's prophecy isn't over...

What about the target of Esau's hatred and resentment? Israel was the victim... God promises to bless and deliver the Hebrews. Edom's hidden riches were *ripped off*, but Israel's treasure is *recovered and restored*.

I love verse 17, “On Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”

To me verse 17 is one of the most provocative verses in the Bible.

What does God mean by *possessing your possessions*? If something is your *possession* don't you already possess it? *Not necessarily...*

William Randolph Hearst was a wealthy tycoon. He made his money in the newspaper business. He was also an avid art collector. A couple of years ago Kathy and I visited his castle and saw some of his collection.

One day Hearst was thumbing through a magazine and saw a beautiful painting. He called in an assistant and sent him on a mission to find and purchase the painting. After weeks of combing galleries all over the world he returned and reported the results of his failed search.

Hearst was angry. He wouldn't take no for an answer. He sent him out again, and told him not to return without the coveted addition.

Finally, the painting was located... *in one of Hearst's own warehouses.*

Mr. Hearst had owned the painting the whole time, but he had failed to possess his possession. And there are Christians in the same boat...

All that you need, Jesus has already provided. Ephesians 1:3 tells us, by His death on the cross Jesus purchased for us all spiritual blessings.

Sitting in God's warehouse is *unlimited power, unquenchable love, inexpressible joy, unexplainable peace, and heavenly wisdom.*

And your name is on exactly what you need... It was purchased with you – and now - in mind. You need to grab it - snatch it off the shelf.

Faith is the tentacle – the suction cup – that can reach spiritual treasures and take hold. It's faith that makes *the spiritual tangible* – and *the heavenly touchable* – and *the eternal timely.*

Don't be content to come to church - *and sing about, and read about, and hear about, and talk about* – the advantages of the Christian life.

If you believe it's true, then possess your possessions.

Rise up in faith, and seize what God has for you. Treat the fruits, and gifts, and graces of the Holy Spirit as your own personal possessions.

Why are you allowing the *skepticism of other people* - and your own *feelings of unworthiness* - and *demonic doubts* – to rob you of enjoying all that Jesus blood bought in your name? ***Possess your possessions.***

The rest of Obadiah describes how Judah will burn brightly, while Edom dies out. Verse 21 is probably prophetic of the last days on planet Earth.



Judges will come to execute a final punishment on Edom.

Isaiah 16 is an interesting prophecy concerning Petra. Outcasts from Judah will take refuge in the rock city prior to Messiah's coming. Ironically, in God's final judgment on planet earth the cliffs and caves Edom trusted to save them, *but did not* - will be used by their rivals as a place of safety.

In the end Edom will be no more, but Israel will govern God's land.

Listen to the last line of Obadiah! It's an important message, **"And the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."** In the end, who wins this family feud?

You might assume Israel did, and in sense that's correct - but Obadiah clarifies, ***"The kingdom shall be the LORD'S – It's God who wins every time, and since Israel lined up on His side they shared in His reward."***

Edom learned the hard way what's true in every conflict – neither you nor I are the winning side. Victory belongs to the Lord. The question is never, ***"Is God on your side?"*** – but ***"Are you and I on God's side?"***

When you think about Esau and Jacob and their long running feud, it's amazing how what starts out a fuss between two brothers over a bowl of stew, can boil over into the slaughter of all Bethlehem's male babies.

They say the feud between the Hatfields and McCoys started when McCoy's hog wandered onto Hatfield land.

Hatfield claimed ownership - but McCoy said it was his pig. The family conflict started to escalate.

Thirteen years and twelve killings later both families called for a cease fire. Sadly, family feuds spill over... they compound... they intensify...

Perhaps you've been feuding with a brother, or sister, or parent, or child. In recent days it's escalated... It could be hostility between you and your spouse. *Unity and harmony* has degenerated into *rivalry*.

Maybe you're in a border war with a neighbor or co-worker.

Even churches aren't immune from vendettas and blood feuds. People get so upset with people, they break community and go across the street to start the **Second Baptist Church**. Even Christians can stop fellowshiping and start feuding. In all relationships a simmering hostility can boil over.

Here's the thought I want to leave with you this morning. It's the big idea in Obadiah. We'll annoy each other - have differences - be inconsiderate – have misunderstandings – engage in squabbles - slight one another...

But simple stuff – like a bowl of chili – tends to escalate into a major breach – or hostility – *into a family feud... for one reason... pride!*

*Pride divides!* It causes small fissures to become gaping chasms.

Obadiah promises Edom if he insists on thinking he's big stuff, God will make him small. He'll be *big* alright - a *big whoop-de-do* – he'll end up despised not esteemed. *And God will do the same to you and me...*

Humble yourself. Stop focusing on how you've *been wronged* and realize that you've *done wrong*. Deal with your own sin. God will right the wrongs that need to be righted, if you'll get your own heart right.

Today, do you need to swallow your pride? Is there a friend, or a family member, or co-worker to whom you should apologize or make amends?

Always remember, “You never get heartburn eating humble pie.”

Don't ever forget what comes *after pride*? **A fall.** Pride sets you up for a humble tumble. Proverbs 16:18 says it best, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Just ask Edom.

I like this quote, “A man who acts too big for his britches will be exposed in the end.” Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 23:12, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

In 1971, “The Fight of the Century,” took place in NY's Madison Square Garden. *Muhammed Ali* squared off with the champ, *Smoking Joe Frazier*.

Life Magazine quoted the boast Ali made prior to the fight. “We're going to decide once and for all who is the

king... There's not a man alive who can whup me. I'm too smart. I'm too pretty. I'm the greatest. I'm the king. I should be a postage stamp. That's the only way I could get licked."

But that night Ali got licked. Frazier knocked him down. 1Corinthians 10:12 rings true "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Here's the problem with pride... Pride puts you first... first in your family, first at work, first at church, first in life, first with your friends, first before God - and when you put anything before God that's called worship.

The reason God hates pride is that He wants our worship.

It's time for some of us, to shed our pride and bow our knees to God.

Acknowledge your neediness... Call on Jesus... By faith possess your possessions. Pride is the great divider. Trust Jesus, and you can end the feud between you and your brother – and between you and God...

J. Vernon McGee said it so well, "Pride is the attitude of life that declares its ability to live without God.

Man without God has tried to produce Eden, instead we're like Edom.

*Take also the human body...* Your bloodstream is the accumulation of 100,000 miles of tubes – enough to wrap around the earth five times.

Your heart is a 10 ounce muscle that contracts 100,000 times a day.

In your lifetime your heart will pump 60 million gallons of blood without pausing to rest... Your lungs take 23,000 breaths a day... As the psalmist prayed, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works."

It makes no sense to chalk up our existence to chance occurrences of random events. In a world of intricate design there has to be a Designer.

NASA scientist, Dr John O'Keefe, writes, "We are by astronomical standards, a pampered... group of creatures: our Darwinian claim to have done it all ourselves is as ridiculous and as charming as a baby's brave efforts to stand on his own feet and refuse his mother's hand.

If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the Universe was created for man to live in."

Early Friday morning I woke up to strange noises at my house. I didn't even notice my wife wasn't in bed. I walked down the hall to inspect.

And there she was – all dressed up – at 3:45 AM. She was going Black Friday Christmas shopping with Jessica. I couldn't believe my eyes. Kathy is not a morning person! *Shopping at 3:45 AM... you got to be kidding...*

When she got home I asked her how it went... She confessed that 3:45 AM attracts some strange shoppers, who have some really strange antics.

I asked her if she witnessed any shopping feuds, or bargain duels. You hear stories of waiting crowds storming the doors - and buggy collisions – and shoppers pulling hair to grab the last discounted item. Kathy said she stayed far enough away from the crazies to protect herself.

Isn't it interesting how Christmas tends to intensify our feelings? We're more joyous than usual. We're often more unselfish at Christmas. But we can also become more aggressive, or edgy, or greedy this time of year.