

**MONDAY**

**22 FEBRUARY**  
**Leviticus 19:1-2. 11-18**  
**Psalm 19:7-end**  
**Matthew 25:31-end**

**TUESDAY**

**23 FEBRUARY**  
**Isaiah 55:10-11**  
**Psalm 34:4-6. 21-22**  
**Matthew 6:7-15**

**WEDNESDAY**

**24 FEBRUARY**  
**Jonah 3**  
**Psalm 51:1-5. 17-18**  
**Luke 11:29-32**

**THURSDAY**

**25 FEBRUARY**  
**Esther 14:1-5. 12-14**  
**or Isaiah 55:6-9**  
**Psalm 138**  
**Matthew 7:7-12**

**FRIDAY**

**26 FEBRUARY**  
**Ezekiel 18:21-28**  
**Psalm 130**  
**Matthew 5:20-26**

**SATURDAY**

**27 FEBRUARY**  
**Deuteronomy 26:16-end**  
**Psalm 119:1-8**  
**Matthew 5:43-end**

REFLECTION

**A**sylum seekers claiming to be Christians fleeing persecution are sometimes asked to recite the Ten Commandments to “prove” their claim.

Many of us might struggle, because there’s more than one list in the Bible.

Readings in this first full week of Lent mention laws, statutes, ordinances, commandments – but also contain important teachings of Jesus on the subject. Beginning on Monday with Leviticus, rather than the usual Exodus or Deuteronomy lists, one line stands out. Not an original commandment of Jesus, then, “love your neighbour as yourself” was already there. On Thursday he stresses the golden rule: “do to others as you would have them do to you”. On Friday and Saturday we learn this means not just not to kill anyone, but not to insult them; live in peace, love your enemies.

In his words about sheep and goats on Monday, Jesus explains that loving our neighbour in practical ways is tantamount to loving God. Lent is a time to examine our behaviour towards one another and towards God. On Tuesday the Lord’s Prayer reminds us to forgive others because, whatever our failings, God forgives us. No wonder that day’s psalm promises refuge – God grants us all asylum.



PRAYER

Almighty God,  
 we thank you for being our refuge and strength  
 in times of trouble.  
 Help us to be strong for others,  
 and to welcome those who seek a home in you.  
 May we serve you in our neighbours,  
 as you saved us in your Son.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXXI – OBADIAH – A BOOK OF FIERY PASSION

**R**ichard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

At a mere twenty-one verses, Obadiah is the Hebrew Bible’s shortest book. It flames fiercely with prophetic ire at Israel’s south-eastern neighbour, Edom, before concluding more positively by vindicating Judah and declaring that those exiled will return to their homeland to encourage a revived kingdom of the Lord to expand outwards into territories lost over previous centuries.

Nothing is known about the prophet – his name is variously translated as either “servant of” or “worshipper of” the Lord – but there is precedent for his preoccupation with Edom. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Joel and Malachi each pronounce judgement on Edom for its rebellion against God and God’s people. Indeed, some verses in Jeremiah (49:9. 14-16) seem to be closely repeated in Obadiah (1b-5), generating a scholarly debate over who is quoting from whom, although contemporary thinking suggests that both drew upon a pool of stock prophetic sayings.

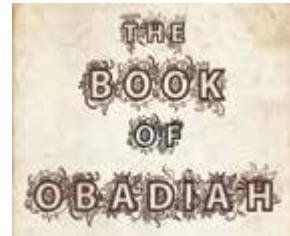
The passions of the prophets were seriously inflamed during the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 586 BC, when Edomites joined in the looting of Jerusalem, witnessing the exile of the chosen people. It is this event that most probably provides the context for Obadiah’s oracle. The relationship between the nations had been fraught for centuries, giving rise to Obadiah’s identification of Edom with Esau and Judah with Jacob, two brothers whose rivalry began in the womb and never let up. Much later the Edomites were driven into the Negeb, a large desert region, by Nabatean incursions, eventually settling in the area which became Idumea, a name derived from Edom. In Jesus’ day Herod the Great was known as an Idumean, reflecting continued animosity of the Israelite people towards him.

Obadiah’s prophesying reminds Edom that the judgement laid upon Israel and Judah for their sins against God would also fall on their own nation for the violence they perpetrated upon Jerusalem. While the chosen people would eventually be vindicated and their kingdom restored, the focus on Edom indicates that the Lord of history’s plans include all nations and every aspect of creation.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by  
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 and  
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First week of Lent

Monday 22 February to  
 Saturday 27 February  
 2021

WEEK

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