

# Torat Imecha NACH YOMI B'IYUN



## Sefer Ovadya: Dr. Chassia Boczko

Here we will think about the following questions: Why was the prophet Ovadya not mentioned with identifiable information? How does the mystery of Ovadya strengthen the importance of this short sefer? What is the takeaway message to us within a seemingly enigmatic prophesy regarding the nation of Edom? What does it mean to be an oved Hashem?

### **רד"ק עובדיה א"א**

ועובדיה שמו, כי היה עובד את ה' ומסור לו כל לבו, אף על פי שהיה עבד בבית אחאב, והוא הציל את הנביאים שהיו באותה תקופה מפני איזבל הרעה. לכך נקרא שמו 'עובדיה', כי היה עובד את ה' בכל לבו.

Radak explains that Ovadya's name, which means "Servant of God," is fitting because of his devotion to God. Despite being a servant in the wicked King Achav's household, Ovadyah's loyalty was to Hashem. He exemplified this by his courageous actions in saving and providing for 100 prophets who were persecuted by Izevel.

Radak's interpretation emphasizes that even though Ovadya was in a position of servitude to a king who was not righteous, his true servitude was to Hashem, as demonstrated by his actions of kindness, staying on the path of torah and only sacrificing for Hashem and no other power. Therefore, his name "Ovadya" reflects his genuine service to God, people and his moral integrity, which transcended his PERSONAL circumstances.

## **Tze'edah Ure'edah, Mishpatim 37**

We find concerning Obadiah who was very rich and was the superintendent of the household of Ahab, king of Israel....A great famine came upon the land of Israel and Obadiah spent all of his money. Obadiah came to Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and borrowed money from him and promised to give him interest.

Thus, Ovadya showed self depreciation and reduction of personal wealth for the sake of Hashem and Israel.

חזון עבדיה. מאי שנא עבדיה לאדום ולא ניבא נבואה אחרת? אמרו חכמים: עבדיה גר אדומי היה. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: מהם ובהם אביא עליהם. יבא עבדיה שדר בין שני רשעים, אחאב ואיזבל, ולא למד ממעשיהם, ויפרע מעשו הרשע שדר בין שני צדיקים, יצחק ורבקה, ולא למד ממעשיהם:

The vision of Obadiah –Why is Obadiah different that he was chosen to prophesy concerning Edom and did not prophesy any other prophecy?...Our Sages of blessed memory stated: Obadiah was an Edomite proselyte. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: From them and in them will I bring upon them....Let Obadiah, who dwelt between two wicked people, Ahab and Jezebel, and did not learn from their deeds, come and impose retribution upon Esau, who dwelt between two righteous people, Isaac and Rebecca and did not learn from their deeds.

The name that the women of Beit Lechem give the son of Boaz and Rut: עובד (Rut 4:17).

Da'at Mikra explains that עובד is short for עבדיה, noting that we find shortened names elsewhere in Tanach, such as Chanan for Chananiah and Matan for Mataniah.

Malbim (to *pesukim* 16-17 s.v. "*Sheyulad Ben L'Naomi*") explains that they called him Oved since he would serve Hashem, for it is from him the Davidic dynasty will stem. However, if the Malbim's approach serves as a full answer, they would have called the child the more common name, עבדיה, which means *eved Hashem*.

We can add a dimension to the Malbim's explanation by noting the following two stories: In *Melachim I* 12:7, the advice of elders to the newly inaugurated Melech Rechavam to serve the people is that if you aim to serve the people, the people will reciprocate and accept your rule for many years. In *Horiyot* 10, after Rabban Gamliel appoints two of his *talmidim* as *roshei yeshiva*, he tells them, "I positioned you as servants." Perhaps Beit Lechem's women named Rut's child עובד (and not עבדיה) because it can imply both service of Hashem and service of Am Yisrael. A proper king serves both Hashem and Am Yisrael, as expressed in *Melachim II* 11:17.

The distinction between a proper king like David HaMelech and a failed king is that those who fail serve their own best interests. The successful king is a "servant-leader," one who serves Hashem and the people. The women of Beit Lechem named the child, עובד, because that is the type of king this child (or his descendent) would become.

This approach explains why the lineage of David HaMelech stems from עובד.

## Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l - *Devar Reshut*: All for the Sake of Heaven

Here we come to the question of *devar reshut*. On the one hand, we spoke of the “three things upon which the world stands” in terms of specific *mitzvot* and fulfillments. But on the other hand, there is also an ideal which is based on the verse, “*Bekhol derakhekha da’ehu*” – “In *all* your ways know Him” ([Mishlei 3:6](#)). A person should serve God in all walks of life; everything he does should be oriented ultimately towards *avodat Hashem*. This means that a person can be an *oved Hashem* in the broader sense of the term, not only by fulfilling *mitzvot* specifically defined as such, but also in the much larger area of *divrei reshut*. These too somehow must become part of the totality of one’s *avodat Hashem*.

The honor and distinction of being called an “Eved Hashem,” aligns with other significant figures like Moshe (משה עבדי) Avraham (אברהם עבדי) and Dovid’ (דוד עבדי)

Ovadya is called “*oved hashem*” (servant of hashem) because of his dedication to protecting the prophets, standing firm in his torah values and sacrificing for the sake of hashem.

Fundamentally living embodiment of the three pillars the world stands upon. Thus, it is he who strengthens the message within the short sefer.

In contrast to Edom who embodies the opposite as evidenced below.

### רמב"ן על במדבר כ"ד:י"ח

וטעם והיה אדום ירשה. מפלת אדום ביד המשיח תהיה כי גלותינו היום ביד רומה לאדום תחשב וכמו שנאמר בת עונך בת ציון לא יוסיף להגלותך פקד עונך בת אדום גלה על חטאתיך ולא יפקוד השם על אדום עם תום עונות ציון בעת שלא יוסיף להגלותם על כן הזכיר בלעם אדום כי הוא החולק על מלכותינו ובו נאמר ולאום מלאום יאמץ יתנבא כי לא תפול אדום לגמרי עד עת הקץ ביד הכוכב הדורך. וטעם והיה ירשה שער איביו שיהיה שער ירשה לאויביו או איביו הם אדום ושער הנזכרים שהם אויבי יעקב ויהיו ירשה:

Edom will be possession and Seir shall become the possession. The fall of Edom will be through the hands of the Moshiach; our current exile in the hands of Rome is considered to be Edom. Likewise, this idea is expressed in the verse (Eichah 4:22), Your iniquities shall be finished, daughter of Zion, He will no longer exile you; your iniquities will be recounted, daughter of Edom, you will be exiled for all your sins. For Hashem will not recount the iniquities of Edom until the iniquities of Zion are finished, which is the time when He will no longer exile them. Therefore Bil'am mentions Edom, for it is they who prevent our dominion

Ovadya 1:3 addresses the arrogance of Edom:

עובדיה א:ג

גְּבַהֲתָה גְּבַהֲתָה לִבְךָ שִׁכְנִית בְּסֻרוּחִים יַעֲמִדְךָ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ מִי יִסְלֵנִי אֶל פְּנֵי הָרִים

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, who hold the height of the hill, though you say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'

This verse highlights Edom's arrogance, boasting about their secure position in the mountains, and their belief that no one could defeat them. Their self-confidence and pride are what Ovadya rebukes, pointing out that this arrogance is ultimately misguided, as God's judgment will humble them.

### **Questions:**

1. How can we embody the qualities of Ovadya in our daily lives?
2. What qualities are we working on in our own paths of becoming a true "Servant of Hashem"?