



## PROBING

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## THE PROPHETS

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Although this morning's parasha describes the long-awaited reunion and rapprochement between Eisav and Ya'akov, it also indicates that there seems to have been very little subsequent relations between the two. They part amicably, but they part. Except for the cooperative burial of their father Yitzchak we never read any experience that they shared. It is this very point that leads to the prophecy of Ovadya, the shortest book of nevu'ah in the Tanach, that makes up today's haftarah. By the time of Ovadya, Eisav's nation of Edom had no positive relations and exhibited no brotherly love toward Jacob's descendants. In truth, they had become an enemy of the Israelite people and the navi's prediction of the harsh punishments that would befall Edom are, in no small part, due to the fact that Edom WAS a brother and should have reflected that relationship in their behavior toward Israel.

Indeed, the enmity displayed by Edom to Yisrael was so intense that they became the very symbol of every enemy of Israel, something to which Ovad'ya hints when, while speaking of Edom, he includes the punishments awaiting "all the nations" who opposed Hashem's chosen people. In fact, when we study the prophecies of Yirmiyahu, Amos and Yechezkel, we find that the name "Edom" is often used as a general term for the foes of Israel-even

those who, according to some commentaries, tormented Israel during the second Temple when the nation of Edom no longer existed!

Yet, when we take a glance at the parasha itself, we realize that this division between the nations was not at all surprising, for when Yitzchak blessed Eisav, he stated that the two future nations, that of Ya'akov and that of Eisav, would never rule at the same time but would, rather, dominate or be dominated by the other. In light of this, we better understand the reason why Edom became the symbol of all Israel's enemies - for the success of Yisrael would only come upon the weakening, and eventual destruction, of Edom.

Interestingly, Chazal are adamant in insisting that this threatened destruction of Edom could be avoided if she would but change her ways and treat Israel with kindness and compassion - as a brother should. The words of our Rabbis remind us that repentance is not limited to the Jewish nation alone. A return to a noble and moral lifestyle is a goal for all nations which, if reached, would bring blessing to all who embrace it.

This is the challenge that Hashem presents to all and one that we must remember at all times. ■