

Obadiah

MEANING “Worshiper of Yahweh.”

AUTHOR: Obadiah

TIME WRITTEN: Unknown

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 31st Book in the Bible
- 31st book in the Old Testament
- 9th of 17 books of Prophecy
- 4th of 12 Minor Prophet Books
- 30 have preceded it. 35 to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 1

VERSES: 21

WORDS: 670

KEY WORD: The Judgment of Edom

TWO KEY PASSAGES:

1. **Verse 10** - “For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.”
2. **Verse 21** - “And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT OBADIAH:

1. Obadiah was an obscure prophet who probably lived in the southern kingdom of Judah.
 - a. Nothing is known of his hometown or family.
 - b. Because his father is not mentioned, it is not likely that he came out of a kingly or priestly line.
2. There are thirteen Obadiah’s in the Old Testament. As to which one this is, four of the better possibilities are:
 - a. The officer in Ahab’s palace who hid God’s prophets in a cave. 1 Kings 18:3
 - b. One of the officials sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach the law in the cities of Judah. 2 Chronicles 17:7
 - c. One of the overseers who took part in repairing the temple under Josiah. 2 Chronicles 34:12
 - d. A priest in the time of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 10:5
3. A struggle that began in the womb between twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, eventuates in a struggle between their respective descendants, the Edomites and the Israelites. For the Edomites’ stubborn refusal to aid Israel:
 - a. First, during the time of the wilderness wandering. (Numbers 20:14-21)
 - b. Second, later during a time of invasion they are roundly condemned by Obadiah.

Note: This little-known prophet describes their crimes, tries their case, and pronounces their judgment—total destruction.
4. Since Obadiah mentions no kings, verses 10-14 provide the only historical reference point to aid in determining the book’s time and setting. Bible scholars disagree about which invasion of Jerusalem Obadiah was talking about. There are four possibilities:
 - a. Possibility #1. In 926 B.C. Shishak of Egypt plundered the temple and palace of Jerusalem in the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:25-26). At this time, Edom was still

- subject to Judah. However, this possibility does not fit Obadiah 10-14, which indicates that Edom was independent of Judah.
- b. **Possibility #2.** According to 2 Chronicles 21:16-17, during the reign of Jehoram (848-841 B.C), the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah and looted the palace. According to 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8-20, Edom revolted during the reign of Jehoram and became a bitter antagonist. This fits the description of Obadiah.
 - c. **Possibility #3.** According to 2 Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 25, In 790 B.C. King Jehoash of Israel invaded Judah. However, verse 11 of Obadiah calls the invaders, "strangers." This would be an inappropriate term for describing the army of the northern kingdom.
 - d. **Possibility #4.** In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated and destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kings 24 and 25)
5. The best possibilities are 2 and 4.
 - a. Obadiah 10-14 seems to fit the 2nd possibility better because it does not indicate the total destruction of Jerusalem which in fact did occur in possibility #4 when
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar burned the palace and temple and destroyed the walls. And Nebuchadnezzar certainly would not have "cast lots for Jerusalem" (11) with anyone.
 - c. Also, all of the other prophets who speak of the destruction of 58 B.C. identify Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians as the agents.
 - d. Obadiah leaves the enemy unidentified.
 6. For these and other reasons, it appears likely that the plundering of Jerusalem written of in Obadiah was by the Philistines and the Arabians between 848 and 841 B.C.
 7. If this be true, this would make the prophet Obadiah:
 - a. A contemporary of Elisha.
 - b. The earlier of the writing prophets, predating Jonah by a few years.
 8. History of Edom. This is interesting. Bear with me and you will see why.
 - a. Began with Esau who was given the name of "Edom" ("Red") because of the stew for which he traded his birthright.
 - b. Esau moved to the mountainous area of Seir and absorbed the Horites, the original inhabitants.
 - c. Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through their land on the way to Canaan.
 - d. The Edomites opposed Saul but were subdued under David and Solomon.
 - e. They fought against Jehoshaphat and successfully rebelled against Jehoam.
 - f. They were again conquered by Judah under Amaziah, but they regained their freedom during the reign of Ahaz.
 - g. Edom was later controlled by Assyria and Babylon.
 - h. In the 5th century B.C. the Edomites were forced by the Nabateans to leave their territory.
 - i. Thus, they moved to the area of southern Palestine and became known as Idumeans.
 - J. Think for a moment about the Idumeans.
 1. Herod the Great, an Idumean, became king of Judea under Rome in 37 B.C.
 2. In a sense, the enmity between Esau and Jacob was continued in Herod's attempt to murder the infant Jesus.
 3. The Idumeans participated in the rebellion of Jerusalem against Rome and were defeated along with the Jews by Titus in A.D. 33.

4. Ironically, the Edomites applauded the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. but died trying to defend it in A.D. 70. **Psalm 137:7** - "Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, "Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!"
 5. After that time, they were never heard of again. As Obadiah predicted, they would be "cut off forever" (10): "and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau" (18).
- k. Thus, the key idea or theme of Obadiah is a declaration of Edom's coming doom because of her arrogance and cruelty to Judah. Seven statements convey this thought.
- a. Verse **2** - "I will make you small among the nations."
 - b. Verse **5** - "The pride of your heart has deceived you."
 - c. Verse **6** - "How Esau shall be searched out."
 - d. Verse **9** - "Your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed."
 - e. Verse **10** - "Shame shall cover you."
 - f. Verse **10** - "You shall be cut off forever."
 - h. Verse **15** - "As you have done, it shall be done to you."

SUMMARY OF OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Although Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament (21 verses), it carries one of the strongest messages of judgment in the Old Testament.
1. For Edom there is:
 - a. No pleas to return.
 - b. No words of consolation.
 - c. No words of hope.
 2. Edom's fate is sealed, and there are no conditions for possible deliverance.
 3. God will bring total destruction upon Edom, and there be no remnant.
 4. Obadiah is Edom's day in court, complete with Edom's arraignment, indictment, and sentence.
 5. The prophet of poetic justice describes how the Judge of the earth will overthrow the pride of Edom and restore the house of Jacob.
- B. The two sections of Obadiah are:
1. The Judgment of Edom. Verses 1-18
 2. The Restoration of Israel. Verses 19-21

THE JUDGMENT OF EDOM. (1-18)

- A. The first section of Obadiah makes it clear that the coming overthrow of Obadiah makes it a certainty, not a condition.
- B. Edom is arrogant (verse 3) because of its secure position in Mount Seir, a mountainous region south of the Dead Sea.
1. Its capital city of Sela (Petra) is protected by a narrow canyon that prevents invasion by an army. Describe the entrance to Petra.
 2. But God says it will make no difference.
 - a. Even a thief does not take everything, but when God destroys Edom it will be totally ransacked.

- b. Nothing will survive and nothing will avert God's complete judgment.
- C. Verses 10-11 describe Edom's major crime of gloating over the invasion of Jerusalem.
 - 1. Edom rejoiced when foreigners plundered Jerusalem, and became as one of them.
 - 2. On the day when she should have been allies with Judah, she instead became an aggressor against Judah.
 - 3. The judgment is strong and the judgment is final. Edom will eventually be judged during the coming day of the Lord when Israel "shall be a fire . . . but the house of Esau shall be stubble" (18).

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (19-21)

- A. The closing verses give hope to God's people that they will possess not only their own land, but also that of Edom and Philistia.
- B. Obadiah is indeed a powerful book with a powerful message.