

## The Book of Obadiah

### The Title, Author, and Date of Obadiah

1. Title: “The Vision of Obadiah”
  - a. Hebrew – עֲבֹדְיָהוּ
  - b. Greek – Ὀρασις Αβδίου
2. Author: Obadiah
  - a. = “Servant of YHWH”
  - b. At least 12 Obadiah's in the Old Testament. (*BKC*)
3. Date: It is difficult to know for sure.
  - a. We are not helped with any statement of his lineage, nor who the reigning king was.
  - b. The book *does* seem to have been written following an assault on Jerusalem, in which Edom was in some way involved. *vv. 10-14*
  - c. Four possible dates for Obadiah. (The four major invasions of Jerusalem)
    - 1) 925 B.C. by Shishak of Egypt – during the reign of King Rehoboam (*1 Ki 14.25-26*)
    - 2) \*848-841 B.C. by A coalition of the Philistines and Arabs – During the reign of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat (*2 Ch 21.8-10*)
    - 3) 731-715 B.C. by Jehoash of Israel – During the reign of Ahaziah (*2 Ki 14.13-14; 2 Ch 21.8-10*)
    - 4) 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
  - d. The best date seems to be #2.
    - 1) This would make Obadiah the earliest writing prophet in the OT, being contemporary with Elisha, with Joel coming right behind him.
    - 2) #4 is a possibility, but Obadiah never mentions them in the book, and there is no mention of the total destruction of the temple, nor the deportation of the people. Also, the text of *vv. 12-14* indicates Edom is not to *re-do* what they have done. This would not make sense, since Jerusalem is entirely destroyed and the people captive in Babylon. So, #4 is unlikely.
4. The shortest book in the Old Testament. Not quoted in the New Testament.

### The Background and Setting of Obadiah.

1. The Edomites
  - a. These people rose from the line of Esau, Jacob's brother. cf. *Ge 25.22-26, 30*
  - b. Esau showed a contempt for God's covenant and plans. *Ge 25.30-34; He 12.16*.
  - c. He suffered for it later, and hated his brother Jacob, but got over it and the two brothers were reconciled.
  - d. His line, the Edomites, however, were a perpetual enemy/difficulty to the line of Jacob (Israel), opposing Moses (*Nu 20.14-21*), and causing trouble to Saul, David, etc. Ongoing enmity and strife; yet, Israel had been commanded by God to treat them well (*De 23.7-8*).
  - e. They cheered when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. *Ps 137.7*
  - f. Eventually, the Edomites became blended in with the Nabateans (who built Petra) and came to be called Idumeans (n.b. King Herod).
  - g. They fought side by side with the Jews during the attack on Jerusalem by Titus, in A.D. 70, and died with the Jews. After that, they were cut off, forever. cf. *Obadiah 10, 18*.
2. The Man
  - a. Nothing is known for certain about Obadiah. This book is the only reference to him (Unless he is the Obadiah of 1 Kings 18).
  - b. Likely from the southern kingdom of Judah (frequent mention of Jerusalem, Judah, Zion).

### The Purpose and Message of Obadiah

1. The **purpose** of the book is to **to condemn Edom for her arrogance and aggression towards Judah, God's covenant people**, and by this, **give Jacob hope and encouragement**.
  - a. There is no call to repentance, nor any invitation to turn to God and be blessed.

- b. It is significant that Edom is mentioned in the OT as the object of God's wrath more than any other nation. cp. *Ps 83.5-18; 137.7; Is 11.14; 21.11, 12; 34.5; 63.1-6; Je 49.7-22; La 4.21-22; Eze 25.12-14; 35.1-15; Joel 3.19; Am 1.11-12; 9.11-12; Mal 1.2-5*
  - c. Matthew Henry remarks that it is *almost* as if Edom is a *type* of all nations who will be judged for their treatment of Jerusalem. (Just as Esau. *He 12.16*)
2. The **message** of the book of Obadiah is: **“God will bring on Edom the harvest of her own arrogance and aggression toward Jerusalem.”**
    - a. Though the background of author and time of Obadiah may be unclear, the *source and content of the message is not!*
    - b. Edom is condemned to destruction because of her great arrogance. *vv.2-3, 10*
  3. “In a sense Obadiah is a miniature profile of the message of all the writing prophets. In his thumbnail sketch, the Prophet Obadiah spoke of God's judgment on unbelieving Gentiles who oppressed the nation Israel. He also wrote of God's grace to believing Israel. This double thread is woven throughout the Major and Minor Prophets.” Walt Baker, *BKC*, p. 1453

### The Themes of Obadiah

1. There really is just one theme: **Blessing and curse**
  - a. John MacArthur: “Obadiah is a case study of the curses / blessings in Ge 12:1-3, with two interrelated themes: 1) the judgment of Edom by God for cursing Israel . . . ; 2) Judah's restoration.” *MSB* p. 1261
  - b. Both are to give Judah reassurance that God is keeping His covenant love (*chesed*) to them.
2. Key Verses: *vv. 3-4, 10, 15, 18b, 21*

### The Outline of Obadiah

1. Preface – *v. 1*
2. God's Judgment on Edom *vv. 2-14*
  - a. Edom's Destruction Foretold *vv. 2-9*
  - b. Edom's Arrogance Retold *vv. 10-14*
3. God's Judgment on the Nations *vv. 15-21*
  - a. All Nations Remembered Before God *vv. 15-16*
  - b. All Israel Remembered Before God *vv. 17-21*

### Interpretive challenges

1. Q: Which invasion is in view in *vv. 10-14*?
2. Q: *Jeremiah 49.7-22* – Did Jeremiah quote from Obadiah, or vice versa?
  - a. Jeremiah includes, at length, part of Obadiah.
  - b. If Obadiah is written in the 9th century B.C., then Jeremiah quotes from Obadiah.

### Some helpful quotes from Matthew Henry

1. *vv. 2-3* “Note, (1.) Those that think well of themselves are apt to fancy that others think well of them too; but, when they come to make trial of them, they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their pride deceives them and by it slays them. (2.) God can easily lay those low that have magnified and exalted themselves, and will find out a way to do it, for he resists the proud; and we often see those small and greatly despised who once looked very big and were greatly caressed and admired.”
3. *vv. 2-3* – “Many forfeit their privileges, and yet boast of them.”
4. *v. 4* – “If men will dare to challenge Omnipotence, their challenge shall be taken up: *Who shall bring me down?* says Edom. *‘I will,’* says God.”
5. *v. 8* – “God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of danger that will not use their understanding to keep out of the way of sin.”
6. *vv. 11-14* – “Those have a great deal to answer for that are idle spectators of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers.”