

### NAME

The word "Obadiah" means "servant of Jehovah." It was a very common name in the Old Testament - much like John, Joe, or Harry in our culture. There were 13 men in the Old Testament named Obadiah.

### AUTHOR

We actually know nothing about the personal life of Obadiah. Because he writes in pure Hebrew, it is assumed that he had a good education.

### DATE

There is a difference of opinion concerning the dated of this prophecy. The issue revolves around the invasion and sack of Jerusalem alluded to in verses 11-13.

Halley (page 421):

Obadiah's prophecy was occasioned by the plundering of Jerusalem in which the Edomites participated.

There were four such plundering:

1. In the reign of Jehoram (853-841). Many feel that the verses refer to an earlier invasion by the Philistines and Arabians during the days of Jehoram, King of Judah (853-841); see 2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-20; Amos 1:6. In this case Obadiah would be a contemporary of Elisha (848-797). They thus date the book around 845 B.C.
1. In the reign of Amaziah (806-767) (2 Chronicles 25:11,12,23,24)
1. In the reign of Ahaz (735-716) (2 Chronicles 28:16-21)
1. In the reign of Zedekiah (597-586). If this is the Babylonian assault (605-586) (see 2 Chronicles 36:11-21; Psalm 137:7) it would date the book around 585 B.C. Obadiah would then be a contemporary of Jeremiah (626-585). This alternative has good support. The parallels between Obadiah 1-9 and Jeremiah 49:7-22 have caused many to suggest some kind of interdependence between Obadiah and Jeremiah, but it may be that both prophets were drawing on a common source not otherwise known to us.

There are various opinions as to which of these four raids was the reason for Obadiah's prophecy. Inasmuch as the destruction of Judah is mentioned (verses 11,12), the prophecy is generally assigned to the reign of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem was burnt by the Babylonians (586 B.C.).

### THEME

Type of Literature: Prophecy / Minor Prophet

Halley (page 43): *"Destruction of Edom"*

Anonymous: *"Leave My people alone."*

Mitchell: *"God's retributive judgment against Edom"*

The writer scrutinizes Edom and predicts judgment against her. The prophecy was delivered in Judah to encourage the Jews that their long standing antagonist would eventually be dealt with in kind. The Edomites were descendants of Esau. Jacob and Esau were antagonists from the womb (Genesis 25:23; 27:41). They were bitter enemies of the Hebrews. They had rejected the request of Moses to allow the Hebrews passage through their lands (Numbers 20:14-21) and were always ready to aid an attacking enemy. The Edomites were for anyone who was against the Hebrews.

Halley (page 421):

The Edomites had settled in an arid rocky range of mountains south and east of the Dead Sea stretching about 100 miles north and south and about 20 miles east and west. It is sufficiently watered with abundant pasturage. It is a red sandstone area. They were notorious as raiders on their neighbors and on passing caravans. Following the raids they would retreat to their rocky fortresses. Petra (also known as Sela [es-Sela]), cared high in a perpendicular cliff far back in the mountain canyons overlooking a valley of marvelous beauty (i.e. Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade), was their capital, and was considered impregnable. The Edomites would go out on raiding expeditions and then retreat to their stronghold high up in the rocky gorges.

The beginning of the end for Edom may have come when the Neo-Babylonian ruler Nabonidus took over Edom's territory sometime after 522 B.C. In 126 B.C. they were subdued by the Maccabean ruler John Hyrcanus and absorbed into the Jewish state. When Palestine was conquered by the Romans in 63 B.C., the Herods were placed in charge of Judah. In the New Testament the Edomites are called Idumeans. Herod the Great was an Idumean. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. the Edomites disappeared from history.

Key Word (Nelson's): The Judgment of Edom - The major theme of Obadiah is a declaration of Edom's coming doom because of its arrogance and cruelty to Judah.

Other Scriptures that focus on Edom's doom: Isaiah 34:5-15; Jeremiah 19:7; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Amos 1:11,12

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever"* (Obadiah 10).

*"Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's"* (Obadiah 21).

Outline:

I. Edom's Doom 1-16

Edom's doom is certain despite her location. She will be destroyed because she has been hostile towards her brother (Israel), made alliances with and assisted Israel's enemies, rejoiced over Israel's calamity, plundered her brother's cities, and prevented her brother from escaping. Basically, *"As you have done, it will be done to you"* (v. 15)

II. Israel's Deliverance 17-19

### RECIPIENTS

While the major focus of the prophecy is against Edom (Edomites pay attention!) the audience would probably have been God's people in exile. Given the prophecies we should also be paying attention to what God spoke through Obadiah.

## **CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

Mitchell:

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It is never quoted in the New Testament and few sermons have ever been preached from its pages. It has been referred to as the “forgotten” book of the Old Testament. Yet, some marvelous spiritual truths are contained in this very small literary package if one has the patience to search them out.

1. God’s covenant faithfulness - God will judge all nations and restore His people as per the Abrahamic Covenant. Note the “I will” statements which emphasize the sovereignty of God and “the Lord’s Day”. God will do what God chooses to do. We must do what God commands us to do.
2. God will judge pride / violence - Edom is representative of all ungodly nations / peoples.
3. Spiritual encouragement to God’s people when we have thorns in the flesh - no matter how long standing - God will deal with it (even retributively) and restore us. The remnant finds fulfillment in the land. The Kingdom Theme is extended.

## **RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson’s Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I’ve relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

In general Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.