

# The Minor Prophets - Obadiah

- Introduction
  - At 21 verses, Obadiah is the shortest of all of the Old Testament books.
  - The Hebrew word for Obadiah is עֲבַדְיָהּ (obad-yah) which means “servant of YHWH”.
  - There are at least 12 men with the name Obadiah in the Old Testament [see 1 Chr 12:9; 1 Kings 18:3; 2 Chr 34:12; Ezra 8:9] although little is known about the author of this short but important prophetic book.
  - In the Babylonian Talmud the author of this book is identified as the steward of Ahab and Jezebel [1 Kings 18:3-16] and adds that he was an Edomite proselyte from his youth.
  - Edom, ruled by Ahab and his son Jehoram, had cooperated militarily with Judah under king Jehoshaphat’s reign.
  - However, when Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram reigned over Judah, Ahab’s son Jehoram called for Edom to revolt [2 Chr 21:8-11].
  - Other nations joined with Edom in going up against Judah [2 Chr 21:16-17].
  - Jehoshaphat had sown the seeds which were reaped in this discipline of Israel when he entered into an agreement with Edom instead of trusting God for military victory.
  - It was during this time of national discipline for Israel that God called Obadiah to proclaim the humiliating destruction of Edom.
- Observations from the Text
  - This book is a vision (חִזְוִן chaw-zone) with a message from the Lord concerning Edom [v1; Isa 1:1; Nah 1:1; Hab 2:2-3].
  - Edom are the descendants of Esau [Gen 25:30; 32:3ff] and throughout history have been enemies of Israel [Num 20:14-21; 1 Sam 14:47; 2 Sam 8:14; 1 Kings 11:14-22].
  - God has declared oracles against Edom [Isa 21:11-12; 34:5-6; Ezk 25:12-14; Amos 1:11-12].
  - One such oracle has a noticeable parallel with the book of Obadiah.
    - Obadiah 1 ← → Jer 49:14
    - Obadiah 2 ← → Jer 49:15
    - Obadiah 3-4 ← → Jer 49:16
    - Obadiah 5 ← → Jer 49:9
    - Obadiah 6 ← → Jer 49:10
    - Obadiah 8 ← → Jer 49:7
    - Obadiah 9 ← → Jer 49:22b
    - Obadiah 16 ← → Jer 49:12

- Some try to use this parallel to derive a later date for Obadiah, but Jeremiah often quoted from (or alluded to) other prophetic writings.
- Edom was a very proud nation [v3], but God would make Edom “small” and despised [v2] just as Esau despised his birthright [Gen 25:34; 1 Sam 2:30].
- The arrogance of Edom had deceived them into thinking they were invincible [v3].
- At least part of this pride stemmed from the geography of their land (they could build “secure” dwellings in the cliffs of Petra) [v3].
- God declared His intent to destroy Edom, bringing them down from the loftiness of their “nests” and the loftiness of their pride [v4-8].
- The “wisdom” and “understanding” of Edom will be destroyed (Teman was a hub of earthly wisdom – Job 2:11; Jer 49:7) [v9].
- God will bring shame and destruction upon Edom because of the way they have treated Israel [v10; Joel 3:19].
- Edom stood by and watched Israel’s enemies cast lots for the plunder of Jerusalem and even rejoiced in its destruction [v11-12].
- Edom then participated by looting and helping Israel’s enemies capture those who survived the devastation [v13-14].
- God’s dealings with Edom at this time are a type of His future dealings with all nations that oppose Israel [v15-16].
- While Edom faces utter destruction, God will deliver His people Israel and will establish them in their land [v17-20].
- The ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies will be in the establishment of the Millennial kingdom with Christ as King [v21].
- Applications for Today
  - God’s promise to punish any nation that goes up against Israel [Gen 12:3] is still valid today.
  - Just as God opposes nations that go against His people Israel, he will oppose us when we arrogantly go against Him by choosing to be a friend of the world [Jas 4:4, 6].
  - Passive participation in things which are opposed to God can eventually lead to active participation [Rom 13:14; Jas 1:14-15].