

## *Obadiah*

Obadiah is the shortest of the messages of The Twelve. The name was a common one, meaning "one who serves" or "one who worships the Lord." Nothing is known about Obadiah's life history.

Apparently the book results from events that took place in 587-586 BCE, making the earliest possible dates for the writing of the book between 586-500 BCE.

Edom has not dealt properly with its brother (*v. 12*) and will suffer a 'tit for tat' punishment.

The book falls into two parts: Verses 1-15 and 16-21. Verses 10-14 apparently are a reference to Edomite involvement in the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Some scholars feel verses 16-21 were written by a different hand and could be much later than the first part of the prophesy.

In our Bibles the book is found following Amos. In the Septuagint (LXX) the order is Hosea, Micah, Amos, Joel, Obadiah. Other orders place the book as the 7th among The Twelve.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have provided portions of Obadiah. Manuscript 4Q82 has verses 1-5; 8-12 and 14-15. Joel quotes verse 17 in 2:32. Verses 1-7 parallel Jeremiah 49:7-16. Scholars have struggled with attempts to determine who copied from whom. More recently scholars seem to have accepted the concept that Joel, Jeremiah and Obadiah possibly drew from an even earlier source that no longer exists.

# Obadiah

1 *Edom's judgment and the reasons therefore 1-14*

*A Title 1a*

1 The Vision of Obadiah.<sup>1</sup>

*B Warning of Edom's fall 1b-4*

This is what the Lord God says about the nation of Edom:

We have heard a message<sup>2</sup> directly from the Lord, in which an envoy was being sent among the nations: "Get ready! Let us wage war against Edom."<sup>3</sup>

2 "Take note! I have made<sup>4</sup> you the smallest among the nations,

You will be greatly<sup>5</sup> despised.<sup>6</sup>

3 Your pride (*or, insolence*) has deceived you,

you who live in the clefts of the rock (*or, Sela*)<sup>7</sup>

whose lofty abode is high.<sup>8</sup>

In your mind you think

'No one can pull me down.'<sup>9</sup>

4 Though you soar as high as the eagle;

though you set your abode<sup>10</sup> among the stars,

I will even bring you down from there."<sup>11</sup>

That is what the Lord declares!

*C Completeness of Edom's destruction 5-9*

5 "When thieves come to you,

or marauders (*or, plunderers*)<sup>12</sup> by night ---

you will have been ravaged (*or, destroyed*) ---

wouldn't they merely steal enough for themselves

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1 The name means 'worshipper of the Lord' or 'one who serves.' Obadiah considers himself as a representative of his people. God's message is not for his ears alone.

2 The Hebrew words for "heard" and "message" are alliterative words in Hebrew, both based on the same root.

3 Edom was the eastern neighbor of Judah and a long-standing rival. Cf. v. 12-14 which possibly refer to events in 587 BCE.

4 Much of Obadiah should be read in the prophetic perfect. An attempt has been made to take this into account in the translation. The concept is that something has been determined in the counsel of God but has not yet taken place.

5 Hebrew: *mhr*.

6 Some scholars add an emendation: *mhaB* "among (or, by) men."

7 *Sela* *behnwi slai* making it easy to get *Sela* from the Hebrew word. It is not necessarily a geographic location, though a city named *Sela* was the Edomite capital at one time. The city of *Sela* is now *Amm el-Bayyarah*, an ancient citadel. The city of *Petra* (meaning rock) is an example of living in the clefts of the rock.

8 Literally: "the height of his seat." LXX & Vulgate: "to make high (or, exalt) your dwelling "giving better sense and better parallelism.

9 Note the arrogance of Edom throughout verse 3.

10 Hebrew literally: "nest."

11 From the prophetic point of view of Obadiah Edom's fate is sealed.

12 Literally: "devastators of the night."

(or, won't they take as much as is sufficient)?<sup>13</sup>

When grape vintagers come to you,  
they will only leave gleanings behind.<sup>14</sup>

6 How thoroughly Esau<sup>15</sup> will have been pillaged (or, looted):  
his treasuries ransacked!

7 All your former allies<sup>16</sup> have deceived you.  
(or, Those who were your allies (or, confederates) have duped you.)  
They have driven you from your country  
(or, back to your frontier).<sup>17</sup>  
Your trusted friends<sup>18</sup> have set a trap."<sup>19</sup>

8 The oracle of the Lord says:  
"I intend, on that day  
to destroy the wise men of Edom,  
and wipe out knowledge from Mount Esau.  
9 O Teman,<sup>20</sup> your warriors will be shattered.<sup>21</sup>  
so that every man will be cut off from Mount Esau by slaughter."<sup>22</sup>

#### *D Reasons for Edom's judgment 10-14*

10 "Because of the slaughter (or, violence) done to your brother Jacob,<sup>23</sup>  
disgrace (or, shame)<sup>24</sup> will engulf you,  
and you will be permanently destroyed.  
11 On that day you stood aside,<sup>25</sup>  
on that day that aliens carried off his wealth,<sup>26</sup>  
and foreigners entered his gates  
and cast lots (or, divided) Jerusalem.  
You also behaved like one of them.

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13 The assumption is that thieves would only take what they want. Esau, however is to be thoroughly looted.

14 The prophet implies that thieves and vintagers leave something behind but when this prophecy is fulfilled nothing will be left behind. Or: do those words bode ill for Edom's wealth?

15 Esau and Edom are words used to describe one tribal group. Cf. Genesis 36:1, 8, 19.

16 Literally: "of your covenant."

17 Hebrew unclear. MT: "Even to the border they have driven you."

18 Literally: "those who ate with you" Treaties usually held to be sacrosanct are ignored by the allies of Edom. Cf. Psalm 41:9 [H 10]

19 Hebrew: usually meaning "snare." LXX" εὐεδρα "ambush." BHS recommends an emendation: aning "siege."

20 Teman was the major Edomite city, 5 miles east of Petra. Modern Tawilan. Some scholars feel the reference is to a region rather than to a single community. Since it was an important market town on a cross road, knowledge would come from all directions, brought by merchants. Thus the town, in verse 8, is described as having much knowledge.

21 I. e. loose their esprit de corps.

22 A hapax legomenon. No doubt originally the word meant "killing." Later it came to mean "violent crime." LXX has this phrase as the beginning of verse 10.

23 Israelites were descended from Jacob who was the brother of Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites. Genesis 25-29. Some scholars insert a line: "because you have robbed and killed." No major manuscript evidence supports this though the thought may be clear. Several emendations are offered by scholars.

24 Literally: "shame will cover you."

25 Hebrew: *aimr mngd*. [They have become like one of those who sacked the city.]

26 A possible reference to the Babylonian invasion in 587 BCE.

12 But you should not have <sup>27</sup> gloated <sup>28</sup> over your brother, <sup>29</sup>  
in the day of his trouble (*or, misfortune*).<sup>30</sup>  
you should not have gloated over the people of Judah  
on the day of their ruin.  
You should not have jeered loudly (*or, spoken overbearingly*)<sup>31</sup>  
on the day of anguish (*or, distress*).  
13 You should not have entered into the city <sup>32</sup> of my people  
on the day of their disaster. <sup>33</sup>  
You should not have reached out to take their goods, <sup>34</sup>  
on the day of their calamity.  
14 You should not have stood at the cross roads, <sup>35</sup>  
to intercept (*or, capture*) the escapees.  
You should not have handed over their survivors, <sup>36</sup>  
on the day of anguish (*or, distress*)."

## *II The day of the Lord 15-21*

### *A The universal judgment 15-16*

15 "The day of the Lord has drawn near  
for judgment against all the nations. <sup>37</sup>  
As you have done, so it will be done to you;  
your deeds will recoil on your heads  
(*or, You will get back what you have done*).<sup>38</sup>  
16 As you have drunk (*the bitter cup of punishment*)  
on my sacred hill (*or, Mount Zion*),  
additionally, all the nations in the region <sup>39</sup> will drink; <sup>40</sup>  
they will drink and stagger, <sup>41</sup>  
and will be as though they had vanished (*or, never existed*).<sup>42</sup>

### *B The restoration of Israel 17-21*

17 "On Mount Zion there will be a remnant who will escape,

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27 Note the same form is used through verse 14.

28 Literally: "look on."

29 The attitude of arrogant superiority. Hebrew adds: "on that day."

30 In Hebrew the word for "foreigners" in verse 11 is very similar to the word for "trouble" or "misfortune" in verse 12. It becomes a play on words.

31 Literally: "make your mouth large."

32 Literally: "the gate."

33 This Hebrew word, translated disaster ~*dya* is a play on the word for Edom *w~da*

34 Hebrew uncertain. So: BHS emendation. JB: "not lay a finger on." An alternate reading is: "to stretch out your hand."

35 The Hebrew word is used only here and in Nahum 3:1 where it means "plunder." LXX: διεκβολας.

36 Some scholars place 15b at this point, following Wellhausen. "as you have....on your hand."

37 Hebrew emphatic.

38 The prophet holds to the conviction of Lex Talionis.

39 Literally: "round about" in a few manuscripts. MT: "continually."

40 Literally: "gulp" or "swallow down." Numerous emendations have been suggested. One has a degree of acceptance: "will drink at my hand."

41 So: emended and suggested by BHS. The Hebrew word is a hapax legomenon possibly meaning "swallow" or "gulp down."

42 During the OT time there was always a longing for a time when God would intervene in human affairs and set the wicked right and that the righteous might be vindicated.

and it will be a sacred place (*or, sacrosanct, inviolate*).  
The house of Jacob will regain its own possessions  
(*or, the land that is rightfully theirs*).<sup>43</sup>

18 "The house of Jacob will be like a fire;  
the house of Joseph a flame,  
and the house of Esau stubble.  
They will set ablaze consuming the house of Edom.  
There will be no survivors of the house of Edom,  
because the Lord has declared it.

19<sup>44</sup> "Those of the Negeb<sup>45</sup> will regain Mount Esau  
as well as the Sephelah,<sup>46</sup> the land of the Philistines,  
also regaining the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria,  
along with Benjamin<sup>47</sup> as well as regaining Gilead.  
20 The exiles who are the people of Israel in Halah<sup>48</sup>  
will possess Phoenicia as far as Zarephath;<sup>49</sup>  
and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad<sup>50</sup>  
will regain the towns of the Negeb.<sup>51</sup>  
21 Those who have been saved (*or, the victorious*)<sup>52</sup>  
will govern Mount Esau,<sup>53</sup>  
and the kingdom (*or, the sovereignty*) will be the Lords!"

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43 Hebrew uncertain. "The possessions of those who were dispossessed" might be a possible solution. LXX, Vulgate Targums: "those of the house of Jacob will possess the property of the peoples who dispossessed them." The prophet's aspiration is akin to I Peter 5:10f. Obadiah is looking forward to a day when Jerusalem will be free and the holy land a unity. He feels the time is ripe for that to be accomplished. Some scholars feel verse 21 should be inserted at this point.

44 Some scholars feel verses 19-21 are poetry, others that this is prose.

45 Southern Judea.

46 The low hill country that is now known as the Gaza strip. Some scholars feel it is a Hebrew word meaning: "will capture."

47 Some scholars emend to have the line read "the land of the Ammorites." The Hebrew of this verse is difficult. Are Negeb and Sephelah the subjects of the line or are they objects.

48 So: emended. MT: "this army." Halah is an area in northern Mesopotamia. Cf. II Kings 17:4.

49 The location is in southern Lebanon.

50 Very likely Sardis in Asia Minor. It was the capital of Lydia, having a large Jewish community in New Testament times. Cf. W. Kornfeld: *Die Juedische Diaspora* ab. 20.

51 Cf. I Maccabees 5:65.

52 MT: "savior." BHS emends to a passive. "Those who are saved will march up in victoriousness." So also LXX.

53 This is located in the territory of Edom. Obadiah is saying the exiles will return not only to the Negeb but also to occupy the territory held by Edom, producing a kind of greater Israel. This expansion would again restore the kingdom to a size much like that of the time of Solomon.