

Overview of Obadiah

Author & Date: We know almost nothing about the prophet Obadiah. His name means, “Servant of the Lord.” A Jewish tradition links him with Obadiah, the servant of wicked King Ahab – but there are about a dozen other Obadiah’s in the OT. Scholars debate about whether the situation describes events around 845 B.C. or around 586 B.C. If he prophesied around 845 B.C., then we know that Obadiah, the servant of Ahab, was alive 22 years earlier. Perhaps he was a young man then (1 Kings 18:3-16) and survived past the taking of Elijah in 849 B.C. If so, he may have been both the officer to Ahab and to Ahab's son. A more likely possibility is that the prophecy was made after Babylon invaded destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The similarities between the book of Obadiah and Jeremiah 49:7-22 as well as Psalm 137:7 support this date. The Babylonians seem to have conquered the area inhabited by the Edomites in the mid 6th century B.C. and the Nabataeans moved into the area shortly thereafter. This is based strictly upon archaeological evidence supporting an Edomite community before the 6th century and the Nabateans (Petra 312 B.C.) afterwards.

Purpose: The book consists entirely of a prophecy against Edom. The Edomites are the descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew (Gen 25:29-34). Edom also refused to let Israel pass through their land on the way to the promised land (Num 20:14-21).

Outline for Obadiah¹

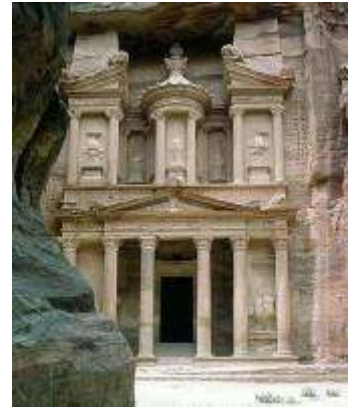
- I. The extent of Judgment 1-9
- II. The Reasons for Judgment 10- 14
- III. The Retribution of the Lord 15-16
- IV. The Exaltation of Israel 17-21

Key/Interesting Passages:

15 " For the day of the LORD upon all the nations *is* near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.

Food for Thought

1. In reading the book of Obadiah, one finds little to get excited about. How would you describe the judgment promised in the book of Obadiah?
2. Read v. 15. What reason does Obadiah give for the judgment that Edom is going to face? Why is this particularly applicable to Edom’s treatment of Israel?
3. What lesson does Obadiah teach concerning personal responsibility? Consider also: Jeremiah 50:29; Habbakuk 2:8; Matthew 26:52; Luke 6:38; James 2:13; Revelation 13:10.



Petra – in modern day Jordan

¹ Outline from a personal friend, Tim Binder www.TruthSaves.org