

OBADIAH

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BACKGROUND

The Edomites, descendants of Esau and therefore closely related to Israel, were nonetheless her longtime bitter foes (see [Genesis 27](#); [2 Kings 14:7](#); [2 Kings 16:6](#); [2 Chron. 28:17](#); [Amos 1:6, 9](#); and exposition on the following passages: [§Numbers 20:14-21](#); [§Jeremiah 49:7-22](#); [§Ezekiel 35:1-15](#); [§Malachi 1:2-5](#)). Obadiah predicted God's judgment against them. The Edomites lived in the high mountains southeast of Israel, and Obadiah saw in this geography a picture of Edom's pride and sense of self-sufficiency. The ancient city of Petra in Jordan, famous for its palaces carved into sandstone cliffs, is widely identified as the biblical Sela, in Edomite territory (see [2 Kings 14:7](#)).

AUTHOR

Obadiah ([Obadiah 1:1](#)). Biographical details unknown.

DATE

Since no Israelite kings are mentioned, dating is uncertain. Obadiah spoke of the invasion of Jerusalem by pagan nations, including Edom ([Obadiah 1:11-14](#)). Though this may refer to Jerusalem's final fall in 586 B.C., it more likely refers to the sack of Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabs in the ninth century B.C. ([2 Chron. 21:16-17](#)), placing Obadiah at about 850-840 and making him the earliest writing prophet of the OT, just before Joel (see [Introduction to the Prophets](#)).

One support for this early date is Jeremiah's apparent quote from Obadiah (compare [Obadiah 1:1-9](#) and [Jeremiah 49:7-22](#)). Jeremiah applied Obadiah's words to events surrounding Judah's fall in 586, more than a century after Obadiah's time.

PURPOSE

- To predict the fall of Edom.
- In a larger sense, to predict judgment against any person or nation consumed with pride.
- To show that God, who will restore Israel, is the ultimate sovereign of the world.

UNIQUE FEATURE

- Obadiah contains the OT's most detailed prophecy about the relationship between the descendants of Esau and those of Jacob, a topic that appears repeatedly throughout the OT (see [Background](#)).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Jeremiah:

- [Obadiah 1:1-9](#) is virtually identical to [Jeremiah 49:7-22](#) (see [Date](#)).

Joel:

- Writing a short while later, Joel, like Obadiah, spoke of Edom's violence against Judah ([Obadiah 1:10](#); [Joel 3:19](#)).
- Both speak of pagan nations "casting lots" for God's chosen people and city ([Obadiah 1:11](#); [Joel 3:3](#)).
- Both speak of pagan nations receiving their just deserts for mistreating Israel ([Obadiah 1:15](#); [Joel 3:4, 7](#)).
- Both speak of the "day of the LORD" ([Obadiah 1:15](#); [Joel 1:15](#); [Joel 2:1](#); [Joel 3:14](#)).
- Both speak of people on Mount Zion escaping destruction ([Obadiah 1:17](#); [Joel 2:32](#)).

OUTLINE

I. EDOM: REMOVED BY GOD ([Obadiah 1:1-16](#))

1. Their proud heart ([Obadiah 1:1-9](#))
2. Their treacherous hand ([Obadiah 1:10-14](#))
- C. Their punished head ([Obadiah 1:15-16](#))

II. JACOB: RESTORED BY GOD ([Obadiah 1:17-21](#))

TIMELINE

931 B.C.:	Kingdom divides, Israel, Judah
874 B.C.:	Ahab, Elijah
c. 850 B.C.:	Obadiah predicts Edom's fall
740 B.C.:	Isaiah begins ministry
722 B.C.:	Fall of Israel
586 B.C.:	Fall of Judah, Edom

[Obadiah 1:1-4](#) *"Put her down for her pride."* The proud nation of Edom would be destroyed ([Obadiah 1:1-4](#)). All the surrounding nations would be invited to take part in its destruction ([Obadiah 1:1](#)). Edom was smug and secure in its mountain fortress ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), which could be reached by only one donkey rider at a time through a narrow pass. In their pride, the Edomites had overlooked their most worthy opponent—the Lord ([Obadiah 1:4](#)).

Obadiah 1:5-7 *Their enemy: God. Their allies: None.* If thieves or grape gatherers had invaded Edom, they would only have taken as much as they could carry out ([Obadiah 1:5](#)). But the invaders directed by God would leave nothing ([Obadiah 1:6](#)). Edom would be dumbfounded when even their allies turned against them ([Obadiah 1:7](#)).

Obadiah 1:8-9 *Stupid wise men, helpless mighty men.* Edom, noted for its wise men, would be no match for God's wrath ([Obadiah 1:8](#)). The defection of Edom's allies would take the wise men by surprise ([Obadiah 1:7](#)). Nor would mighty warriors be able to save Edom ([Obadiah 1:9](#)).

Obadiah 1:10-14 *"Here's why: You betrayed your brothers."* Edom was to be "destroyed completely" for betraying its brother, Jacob ([Obadiah 1:10](#)). Edom had failed to help the Israelites when their land was invaded ([Obadiah 1:11](#)). Edom had even rejoiced at Judah's calamity ([Obadiah 1:12](#)) and joined in the looting following its defeat ([Obadiah 1:13](#)). Worse still, Edom took captive those survivors of Judah who sought refuge in its territory ([Obadiah 1:14](#)).

The cruel betrayal that Obadiah described would be repeated by Edom more than a century later when Judah fell to Babylon, prompting Jeremiah's apparent application of Obadiah's words to that later event (see [Date](#)).

Obadiah 1:15-16 *"Now it's your turn!"* Edom's treachery against Judah would be returned in full measure "on your own heads." They had drunk in celebration during Jerusalem's destruction, but soon they would drink of God's wrath, as would all of Judah's enemies on the day of the Lord ([Obadiah 1:15](#); see [Isaiah: Background](#) and exposition on [Isaiah 2:5-4:1](#)). Edom would be defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at about the same time he defeated Judah, in 586 B.C.; but while Judah would be restored after 70 years, Edom would never return to its homeland—a fate confirmed 400 years after Obadiah's time by the prophet Malachi (see [Malachi 1:2-5](#)) and by subsequent secular history.

Obadiah 1:17-21 *"They'll have the whole land."* Obadiah's dark words of destruction for Edom concluded with bright words of promise for Israel. The land from which Edom was evicted will not remain uninhabited: It, along with Judah's other enemies, will be occupied by a reunited Israel in the Millennium. The nation of Israel will be restored completely. Regardless of how widely they may be dispersed ([Obadiah 1:19-20](#)), God's plan for the restoration of his people will not be frustrated.

OBADIAH

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM OBADIAH)

Key Facts: Prophet, predicted destruction of Edom

Total Bible References: 1

Obadiah Speaks

It's difficult to understand and even more difficult not to become bitter. We were treated like dogs, not by some foreign pagan enemy, but by our own blood relatives. There they were, descendants of Isaac

through Esau, inflicting great suffering on us, the children of Isaac through Jacob! ([Obadiah 1:10](#); [Genesis 25:25-26](#))

Why did the Edomites desert us in our time of need, standing aloof, refusing to lift a finger to help? And as if that were not enough, they actually mocked us and even helped our enemies loot our cities! Then they stood at the crossroads, both killing and enslaving those of us who tried to escape! ([Obadiah 1:11-14](#))

No, in spite of all this, I must not become bitter! In fact, there is no need for me to be angry, for God himself has vowed to severely punish these proud cliff dwellers and to gloriously restore our nation. ([Obadiah 1:3-4](#), [17-21](#))

Spiritual Lesson from Obadiah

- "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall" ([Proverbs 16:18](#)). Edom serves as a classic example of this proverb ([Obadiah 1:3-4](#)). Because of its pride, Edom would "fall," never to rise again ([Obadiah 1:15-16](#); see exposition on [Isaiah 14:1-23](#) and on [Ezekiel 28:11-19](#)).

Key Verses

"Everyone on the mountains of Edom will be cut down in the slaughter. And why? Because of the violence you did to your close relatives in Israel. Now you will be destroyed completely and filled with shame forever. For you deserted your relatives in Israel during their time of greatest need. You stood aloof, refusing to lift a finger to help when foreign invaders carried off their wealth and cast lots to divide up Jerusalem. You acted as though you were one of Israel's enemies" ([Obadiah 1:9-11](#)).