

OBADIAH

MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Obadiah is one of the Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. We call some of the Old Testament books, “Minor Prophets” not because they lack importance, but because their writings are shorter than those known as “Major Prophets.” Obadiah, in fact is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

Obadiah was a common name in the Old Testament with at least 12 men mentioned by that name. It is unlikely that any of the other men, in Scripture, which bore this name is the prophet Obadiah. Actually we know nothing about this Obadiah beyond this writing. It is even impossible to firmly date the writing or to know exactly when Obadiah lived. The name Obadiah means “servant of Yahweh.”

Though we cannot precisely date the writing we can see that it came after a sack of Jerusalem. Since this happened on more than one occasion we cannot definitively settle on a date, but the dates most commonly suggested are 845 B.C. and 586 B.C. Smith thinks the destruction in 586 B.C. is more catastrophic than seems to be indicated in Obadiah, so the earlier date is more likely.¹



1. How did Obadiah receive the message contained in his book and what was its source? (v. 1)

The Hebrew word translated as “vision” refers to “visual and audio-visual revelations. Thus the word really means that Obadiah had a revelation. Two words provide the name or title of the one sending the message. The word “Lord” is the Hebrew word *adonay* which comes from the word meaning master, ruler, or Lord. The word translated as “God” is the word *Yahweh* meaning “the one who is.” This recognises God as the pre-existent Creator.² The Edomites were descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau. In Obadiah the nation is referred to by both the term “Edomites” and “Esau.”

2. To whom was the prophecy directed?

3. Who was going to rise up against Edom?

¹ Smith, James E. “Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Micah: A Christian Interpretation.” (James E. Smith, 2011), 9-10.

² Ibid., 13-14.

The Humbling of Edom

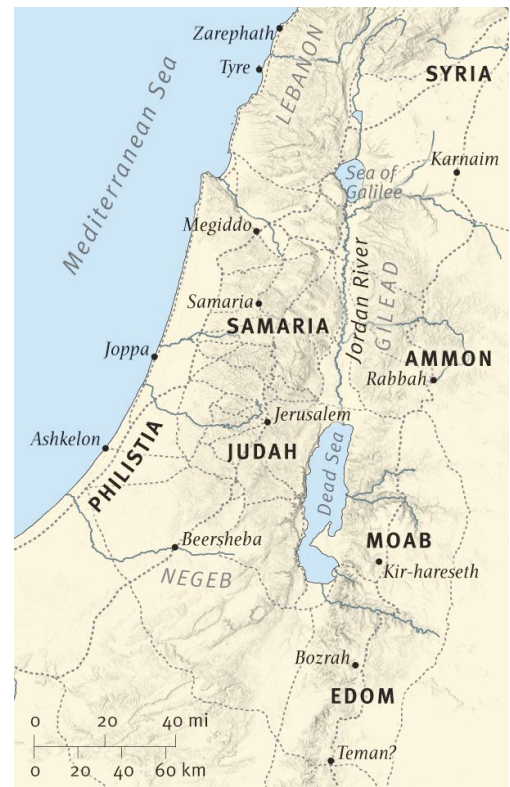
The Edomites lived in a mountainous region with elevations up to 1500 metres. The remote and treacherous terrain made the Edomites feel invincible.

4. What did God promise to make Edom in verse 2?

The fulfilment of prophecy against Edom is confirmed by Malachi 1:3 where God speaks of Esau's land and says, *"I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."* (ESV) The Nabateans came to possess the land of Edom.

5. According to verse 3, what does pride do?

6. What is pride and what is its origin?



SOURCE: John D. Currid and David P. Barrett, *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010)



7. In verse 3, what made the Edomites feel invincible?

The photo at the left (from Pictorial Library of Bible Lands) is Sela or "the cleft of the rock." Not only was the area filled with caves and natural crevices, the Edomites had created fortresses throughout the land.

8. How does God respond to the Edomites feeling of invincibility? (v. 4)

9. What Biblical truth about pride is found in Matthew 23:12?

The destruction of Edom would be complete. Thieves usually only take what they can carry. Those who harvest grapes miss some of the fruit, but Edom will be completely pillaged with all their treasures taken away; nothing will be missed.

Edom's allies will be of no assistance. All the other nations would despise them (v. 1) and now they will receive no help from the nations who border them; in fact they will not even be allowed to enter as fugitives (v. 7). Even though they had peace treaties, they would be violated or ignored. Those who seemed to be allies would deceive them, and prevail against them.

The phrase *"those who eat your bread have set a trap beneath you"* (ESV) is somewhat difficult to understand. It may refer to the covenants that are sealed by eating a meal together. In this case the meaning is that those who made the covenants now ignore them. Others think eating bread together refers to friends of Edom.

9. What made it possible for Edom to be so thoroughly deceived by their allies? (v. 7)

In the prophecy of verse 8, the wise men of Edom are destroyed. Their understanding will not save them. In ancient times the Edomites were thought to be wise, but when the day of the Lord's judgment comes upon Edom they will be destroyed. Note that Obadiah refers to Edom as Mount Esau in verse 8. Four times in his short writing he will use this term. This is in contrast to the people of God referred to as Mount Zion.

In verse 9 we learn that the "mighty men" will be "dismayed." Teman is the name of a grandson of Esau. The prophecy is that the nation and their powerful military will be slaughtered.

Areas of Edom's Pride

1. Location
2. Wealth
3. Friends/Allies
4. Wisdom/Knowledge
5. Military Power

10. Describe people in today's world can take pride in some of the same areas in which Edom demonstrated arrogance.

11. Why didn't Edom's location, wealth, friends, wisdom, and military provide sufficient protection?

12. What lessons can we take from God's prophecy against Edom?