

OBADIAH

1. Who wrote this prophecy?

“The vision of Obadiah” (Obadiah 1). There is no further information to reveal which Obadiah this was. Scripture mentions twelve others with this name besides this writer (1st Kings 18:3; 1st Chronicles 3:21; 7:3; 8:38; 9:16; 12:9; 27:19; 2nd Chronicles 17:7; 34:12; Ezra 8:9; Nehemiah 10:5; 12:25).

2. Whom does the prophecy concern?

“Thus says the Lord Jehovah concerning Edom” (Obadiah 1). The Edomites were the descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:9), whose name was also Edom because of the red pottage he traded away his birthright to gain (Genesis 25:29-34), making him a profane and rejected man (Hebrews 12:15-17). Instead of regretting his own foolishness, he resented Jacob and sought his life (Genesis 27:41). They were brothers, but were estranged. Centuries later, in the time of Moses, Edom refused Israel passage through its land (Numbers 20:14-21).

3. What would befall Edom and what would be the outcome?

“(We have heard a report from Jehovah, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, ‘Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle’): ‘Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You shall be greatly despised’” (Obadiah 1-2). They would face nations, plural, in battle, resulting in them being rendered small and scorned.

4. What had pride done for Edom?

“The pride of your heart has deceived you” (Obadiah 3).

5. What was the source of Edom's pride?

"You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'" (Obadiah 3). Since the time of Edom himself, the Edomites were dwelling in Mount Seir (Genesis 36:8); indeed, Seir, metonymously, became an epithet for Edom just as Zion was for Judah. Possessing the high ground is always considered a strategic advantage.

6. Would their position on the high ground protect them?

No. *"Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down," says Jehovah*" (Obadiah 4). Pride, ironically, brings people low (Proverbs 16:18-19; 29:23). The Edomites ought not to have regarded their position as impregnable in that their ancestors had dislodged the previous occupants, the Horites (Deuteronomy 2:12).

7. How were Edom's "hidden treasures" compared?

"If thieves had come to you, If robbers by night — Oh, how you will be cut off! — would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings? Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after!" (Obadiah 5-6). In other situations of deprivation, total loss would not occur, even when the motive was malicious. Yet, God would ensure Edom's losses were devastating. Wealth is not reliable (Proverbs 23:5; Matthew 6:19-20).

8. Could the Edomites rely on their allies?

No! *“All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; the men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it”* (Obadiah 7). Alliances are not reliable (Psalm 108:12; 118:9).

9. Could they rely on their academics?

“‘Will I not in that day,’ says Jehovah, ‘Even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau?’” (Obadiah 8). Human wisdom is unreliable (1st Corinthians 3:18-20; Proverbs 3:5-6).

10. Could they rely on their military might?

“Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter” (Obadiah 9). Armed forces are unreliable (Ecclesiastes 9:11; Psalm 20:7).

11. Why was God planning Edom’s punishment?

“For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever” (Obadiah 10). God does not view violence lightly, having once destroyed the entire world because of it (Genesis 6:11-13). He still regards the violent as worthy of death (Romans 1:28-32).

12. How was that sin manifested?

“In the day that you stood on the other side — in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem — even you were as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the

day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress” (Obadiah 11-14). The Edomites did nothing to help their brethren the children of Israel when they were taken captive; they made a spectacle of what befell them and celebrated. They even looted Jerusalem along with the Babylonians. Worst, they assisted Judah’s enemy and helped them catch the fleeing Jews.

The book of Obadiah addresses God’s punishment of Edom for its treatment of Judah in their calamity, specifically, when they were taken captive (2nd Chronicles 36:17-20). This is a theme covered directly by other inspired writers in the Old Testament (Psalm 137; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Lamentations 4:21-22), with Jeremiah echoing Obadiah in precise detail (Jeremiah 49:7-22).

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“Against Edom. Thus says Jehovah of hosts: ‘Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?’” (7)	“‘Will I not in that day,’ says Jehovah, ‘Even destroy the wise men from Edom , and understanding from the mountains of Esau? Then your mighty men, O Teman , shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau May be cut off by slaughter’” (8-9).
“Flee, turn back, dwelt in the depths , O inhabitants of Dedan! For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will punish him.” (8)	“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwelt in the clefts of the rock , whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’ Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,’ says Jehovah” (3-4).

<p><i>"If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, would they not destroy until they have enough?"</i> (9)</p>	<p><i>"If thieves had come to you, if robbers by night — oh, how you will be cut off! — would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings"</i> (5).</p>
<p><i>"But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself. His descendants are plundered, his brethren and his neighbors, and he is no more"</i> (10)</p>	<p><i>"Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after!"</i> (6)</p>
<p><i>"For thus says Jehovah: 'Behold, those whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunk. And are you the one who will altogether go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you shall surely drink of it'"</i> (12).</p>	<p><i>"For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; Yes, they shall drink, and swallow"</i> (16_a).</p>
<p><i>"For I have sworn by Myself," says Jehovah, 'that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse. And all its cities shall be perpetual wastes'"</i> (13).</p>	<p><i>"and they shall be as though they had never been"</i> (16_b).</p>
<p><i>"I have heard a message from Jehovah, and an ambassador has been sent to the nations: 'Gather together, come against her, and rise up to battle!"</i> (14)</p>	<p><i>"The vision of Obadiah. Thus says Jehovah God concerning Edom (We have heard a report from Jehovah, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, 'Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle'"</i> (1).</p>
<p><i>"For indeed, I will make you small among nations, despised among men"</i> (15).</p>	<p><i>"Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised"</i> (2).</p>
<p><i>"Your fierceness has deceived you, the pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill! Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there," says Jehovah"</i> (16).</p>	<p><i>"The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'"</i> (3)</p>
<p><i>"Edom also shall be an astonishment; Everyone who goes by it will be astonished and will hiss at all its plagues"</i> (17).</p>	<p><i>"Shame shall cover you"</i> (10).</p>

<p><i>“‘As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors,’ says Jehovah, ‘No one shall remain there, nor shall a son of man dwell in it’” (18).</i></p>	<p><i>“‘The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,’ for Jehovah has spoken” (18).</i></p>
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The precise way in which the captivity-era books echo Obadiah points very strongly to its prophesied punishment upon Edom being a retribution for the Edomites’ behavior during the Babylonian conquest of Judah. Nothing else fits so well.

13. Summarize the *“reprisal”* upon Edom.

“For the day of Jehovah upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head. For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; Yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been” (Obadiah 15-16). They were going to get what they gave (Psalm 7:14-16; 9:15; Proverbs 26:27; James 2:13).

14. How would the house of Jacob be fire while the house of Esau would be stubble?

“‘But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,’ for Jehovah has spoken” (Obadiah 17-18). Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ’s kingdom point to the establishment of the church at Zion, that is Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-4), while all other kingdoms would be consumed (Daniel 2:44).

15. With whom would the house of Jacob burn the house of Esau?

“The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame” (Obadiah 18). The house of Joseph was composed of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. After the northern tribes seceded from Judah in the time of Rehoboam, that nation was sometimes called Ephraim, so there had been a long-lasting divide between the houses of Jacob and of Joseph. This verse indicates reunification (Zechariah 10:6). Particularly, this unity would happen in the church, through Christ. If even gentiles could join Jews in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-18), then, certainly, other Israelites could enter His kingdom.

16. In what sense would *“the mountains of Esau”* and many other lands be possessed?

“The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South” (Obadiah 19-20).

Compare Obadiah’s prophecy to Amos’s: *“On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” says Jehovah who does this thing” (Amos 9:11-12).* This, too, speaks of taking possession of Edom’s territory and does so with a connection to gentiles being called by God’s name, which would only happen in the gospel.

James drops the reference to Edom, but quotes this passage and applies it to the inclusion of the gentiles in Christ’s kingdom: *“And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it*

up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.’ Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God” (Acts 15:13-19).

This is simply another way of saying that God’s eternal kingdom would consume all others. This is quite true inasmuch as the Edomites, known also as Idumeans after the Hellenization of the Mediterranean, ceased to have any impact on history after the Herods. The last time they are mentioned in Scripture, they were coming to hear Jesus speak (Mark 3:7-8).

17. Identify the “saviors” who would ascend Zion.

“Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be Jehovah’s” (Obadiah 21).

“Saviors” or “deliverers” (NASB) is the same Hebrew word employed to describe the judges who delivered Israel cyclically for four centuries between Joshua’s death and the coronation of Saul (Judges 2:16, 18; Nehemiah 9:27). This word may be used here to refer to human agents of God’s will who provided deliverance in a material sense by punishing Edom. It could refer to historical events that transpired after the conclusion of the written Old Testament and before Christ came as recorded in uninspired history:

“When Gorgias became governor of the region, he employed foreign troops and used every opportunity to attack the Jews.

At the same time the Idumeans, who held some strategic strongholds, were harassing the Jews; they welcomed fugitives from Jerusalem and endeavored to continue the war.

Maccabeus and his companions, after public prayers asking God to be their ally, moved quickly against the strongholds of the Idumeans.

Attacking vigorously, they gained control of the places, drove back all who were fighting on the walls, and cut down those who opposed them, killing no fewer than twenty thousand.

When at least nine thousand took refuge in two very strong towers, well equipped to sustain a siege,

Maccabeus left Simon and Joseph, along with Zacchaeus and his forces, in sufficient numbers to besiege them, while he himself went off to places where he was more urgently needed.

But some of those in Simon's force who were lovers of money let themselves be bribed by some of those in the towers; on receiving seventy thousand drachmas, they allowed a number of them to escape.

When Maccabeus was told what had happened, he assembled the rulers of the people and accused those men of having sold their kindred for money by setting their enemies free to fight against them.

So he put them to death as traitors, and without delay captured the two towers.

As he was successful at arms in all his undertakings, he destroyed more than twenty thousand in the two strongholds" (2nd Maccabees 10:14-23).

Possibly, the reference to deliverers/saviors has dual fulfillment, first with the Maccabean campaign to overthrow the Idumeans, and second with the proclamation of the gospel since that is what truly fulfills the prophecy that "*the kingdom shall be Jehovah's*" (cf. Psalm 22:28 – a deeply Messianic prophecy; Zechariah 14:9; Luke 1:33).