

## Obadiah

The book of Obadiah is the shortest book of the bible. The first verse of the book tells us it is a vision of Obadiah. No other information is given about the author, such as the name of his father or even where he was from. The name Obadiah means "servant of Yahweh". While this could have really been his name, it is also possible, given the lack of any other information, that this name was chosen in order for the author to remain anonymous. Verse 1 also says "we have heard a message from the Lord". Therefore, it may even be possible there was a group of prophets who heard from God and, to place the focus on God's message instead of themselves, wrote it all under the one chosen name. The book appears to have been written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred in 587 BC.

Rather than being a call to return to the Lord or judgement against the Israelites, this word from God is speaking out against other nations. This book serves two purposes. First, it is a warning to the other nations of what is to come & that they should treat their neighbors better. Second, it serves to comfort & reassure the Israelites of God's love & justice. Though they may feel abused & forgotten now, God is going to restore them & make everyone, even other nations, answer for their sins.

Verse 1 follows a messenger formula, a practice common in Israel at the time. Due to the majority of people being illiterate, when messages were sent to a town, the messenger would have to read the message aloud for all to hear. Using this formula indicated that the messenger did not speak on his own authority, but on the authority of the one who sent him. In this case, God is bringing judgement on Edom, the brothers of the Israelites.

God begins by telling the Edomites He will bring them down &



make them insignificant (Oba 1:2-4). The Edomites lived in difficult mountain terrain with a virtually inaccessible capital. Dwelling atop this natural fortress seems to have made them prideful & believe they were safe from outside ~~attacks~~ attacks. Jesus warned us against living our lives this way (Mat 23:12).

The punishment Edom is going to receive will be severe (Oba 1:5-7). These are rhetorical questions, posed to reveal how thorough God is going to be. When thieves come in the night, they do not take every item, just the ones they want. In the same way, grape pickers leave grapes here & there on the vine. These examples stand in opposition to the devastation God will impose on the Edomites. The Edomites have broken their covenant of brotherhood with the Israelites, so now the Edomites' allies ~~will~~ will break their covenants with Edom. Jeremiah gives a very similar judgement against Edom (Jer 49:7-10).

Edom was known for their wisdom. Even one of Job's counselors was from Teman, an Edomite city (Job 2:11). Yet, with all their wisdom, they relied on themselves & turned away from God. Their combined wisdom will not spare them from God's judgement (Oba 1:8-10). Verse 10 reveals the importance God places on family relationships. God had given orders for the Israelites to treat Edomites well also (Deut 23:7).

The next charge against Edom goes one step further (Oba 1:11). Resisting violence against one another is not enough to satisfy God. When a brother is in trouble, we have a responsibility to come to his aid. By standing by and allowing it to happen, we share in the guilt.

The last charge against Edom concerns their gloating

over the Israelites (Oba 1:12-14). Their gloating violates their relationship of kinship. Furthermore, the Edomites have joined with the Babylonians in entering Jerusalem & stealing their possessions.

Beginning in verse 17, God transitions from the promise of judgement for Esau to the promise of restoration for Jacob. The Israelites lost their possessions through disobedience, but regain them through grace. Obadiah then lists, in verse 20, which group of exiles will possess the northern & southern regions of the land upon their return.