

Who was Obadiah in the Bible?

Thirteen different men are named Obadiah in the Bible, including the minor prophet who wrote the book of Obadiah. The name Obadiah was common in ancient Israel and Judah. It means “the Lord’s servant” or “worshiper of Yahweh.”

One of the twelve minor prophets: Other than what is disclosed through the book of Obadiah, nothing more is known about Obadiah the prophet. His book, the shortest of the Old Testament with only twenty-one verses, reveals that Obadiah probably lived in the harsh and bitter era after the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He was most likely a contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Obadiah’s prophecies focus on God’s judgment against the Edomites (a hostile neighbor of Israel) for their part in destroying Jerusalem. Obadiah’s message is that God will not forget His people even in their captivity but will accomplish His purpose through and beyond the appalling conditions they endure.

Some of Obadiah’s words are remarkably similar to a few verses in Jeremiah 49, leading some scholars to think that Jeremiah quoted or paraphrased some of Obadiah’s prophecy as he was writing his own oracle against Edom.

A governor: Although he served as overseer of the household of the evil King Ahab, this Obadiah remained a devoted servant of God. He is known for safeguarding 100 prophets of Yahweh from Ahab’s wife, the wicked Queen Jezebel, by secreting them in a cave and bringing them food and water. He also served as emissary between Ahab and the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:1-16).

A descendant of David: The son of Annan and father of Shecanian was named Obadiah. He was a descendant of King David through Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 3:21).

A descendant of Issachar: One of the sons of Izrahiah, a descendant of Issachar, was called Obadiah. He was one of the tribal leaders (1 Chronicles 7:3).

A descendant of Saul: A Benjamite named Obadiah was one of the six sons of Azel and a descendant of King Saul (1 Chronicles 8:38; 9:44).

The son of Shemaiah: A member of the tribe of Levi named Obadiah was part of the group of Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity. He was the son of Shemaiah (1 Chronicles 9:16).

One of David's mighty men: Obadiah was listed as the second of eleven experienced warriors from the tribe of Gad who joined David's army at Ziklag. These men were "fierce as lions and as swift as deer on the mountains. . . . The weakest among them could take on a hundred regular troops, and the strongest could take on a thousand!" (1 Chronicles 12:8-14).

The father of Ishmaiah: During King David's reign, Ishmaiah served as chief officer of the tribe of Zebulun. Ishmaiah's father was named Obadiah (1 Chronicles 27:19).

An official: One of King Jehoshaphat's officials sent to teach the law in the cities of Judah was called Obadiah (2 Chronicles 17:7).

An overseer: A Levite named Obadiah supervised the work of repairing and restoring the

temple during the reign of Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:12).

A descendant of Joab: This Obadiah was the son of Jehiel and a leader of the family of Joab. He led a group of 218 men who returned from exile with Ezra (Ezra 8:9).

A witness: During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, Obadiah was a priest and one of the leaders of the postexilic Jewish community who signed and sealed the written covenant to obey the laws of God (Nehemiah 10:1-27).

A gatekeeper: In the time of Nehemiah, one of the gatekeepers who stood guard at the storehouses was named Obadiah (Nehemiah 12:25).