

## Who was Obed-Edom in the Bible?

Obed-Edom was a man from the tribe of Levi. We first read about Obed-Edom in 2 Samuel 6:10 when David was bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem for a more permanent resting place.

The ark had been in the home of Abinadab and his sons Eleazar, Uzzah, and Ahio for many years since being captured by the Philistines and returned to Israel (1 Samuel 5:1; 7:1-2). David and thirty thousand men arrived at Abinadab's house to escort the ark to Jerusalem. The problems began when they placed the ark on a cart drawn by oxen instead of transporting it on the shoulders of the Levites as God had instructed in Numbers 7:9. It may have been that in the excitement David forgot the instruction about its transport. But, whatever the reason, Uzzah, Ahio and all David's men were joyfully transporting the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem on a cart when the oxen stumbled.

Fearing the ark was about to slide off, Uzzah reached out to steady it. When his hand touched the ark, the "the Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:7). While this punishment may seem extreme to us, the Israelites had been warned for centuries that the ark of the covenant was holy to the Lord. Only Levites could carry it, only high priests could minister before it, and no one was to look inside it (Exodus 40:20-21; Numbers 4:15; 1 Samuel 6:19). David was angry over this incident and became afraid of the Lord, refusing to take the ark to Jerusalem himself. Instead of completing the journey to Jerusalem with the ark, David placed the ark in the home of a man named Obed-Edom the Gittite, and it remained there for three months (2 Samuel 6:10-11).

During the three months that the ark was in the possession of Obed-Edom, the Lord

blessed Obed-Edom and his entire household (1 Chronicles 13:13-14). We can infer from this that Obed-Edom was a God-fearing man and showed proper reverence for the ark, unlike Uzzah who may have become overly familiar with it while it remained in his father's house for twenty years. Despite knowing about Uzzah's fate, Obed-Edom welcomed the ark and seemed to have no misgivings. Indeed, as a godly man, Obed-Edom had nothing to fear: "The righteous are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). It could be that he viewed having the ark in his home as a high honor rather than a nuisance, and God rewarded his attitude.

When King David saw that God had blessed rather than cursed Obed-Edom, his fear of transporting the ark dissipated and he went once again to retrieve the ark (1 Chronicles 15:25). This time he did according to God's law and brought Levites to carry the ark on their shoulders. He also showed utmost respect for the ark: "When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf" (2 Samuel 6:13).

One of the ways God blessed Obed-Edom was in giving him many sons—eight to be exact. First Chronicles 26:4-6 lists them and their own sons, along with their father, as gatekeepers in God's temple. Obed-Edom named each of his sons in honor of God's blessing on his household. For example, he named one son Jehozabad ("The Lord Has Given") and another Issachar ("Reward"). Obed-Edom had sixty-two strong male heirs, and it appears that all were faithful to the Lord. Although his was a minor role in Scripture, Obed-Edom is an example to us that God is fully aware of those whose hearts are wholly His (2 Chronicles 16:9), and He delights to bless those who honor Him (see 1 Samuel 2:30).