

Obadiah

Authorship: Obadiah (1:1) Biographical details unknown.

Date: Perhaps around 590 B.C. however, dating is uncertain. Obadiah did not mention the name of his father or any king, and he left no personal traces in his prophecy. If the Babylonian invasions of Judah are indeed the context for Obadiah's ministry, he was a contemporary of Jeremiah. Scholars can only make a reasonable judgment about the date of composition. The year 590 would fit the evidence. This was the period after the first two Babylonian invasions, but before the final disaster of 586 B.C.

Background: The Edomites, descendants of Esau and therefore closely related to Israel, were nonetheless her longtime bitter foes (see Genesis 27; 2 Kings 14:7; 16:6; 2 Chronicles 28:17; Amos 1:6, 9). Obadiah predicted God's judgment against them. The Edomites lived in the high mountains southeast of Israel., and Obadiah saw in this geography a picture of Edom's pride and sense of self-sufficiency. The ancient city of Petra in Jordan, famous for its palaces carved into sandstone cliffs, is widely identified as the biblical Sela, in Edomite territory (see 2 Kings 14:7).

Recipients: The first hearers of Obadiah were evidently the descendants of Esau. Ultimately, however, this was a message for the descendants of Jacob (that is, the people living in and around Jerusalem). This book was preserved by the Israelites as part of their canon of Scripture at least partly because it contained a message relevant to them.

Purpose: This books preserves the divinely inspired prophecies Obadiah made during his (perhaps) brief ministry. These prophecies served a twofold purpose:

- (1) To warn the people of Edom of their coming doom;
- (2) An encouragement to the people of Judah to believe that God would punish one of their enemies for their sins against God's people.

Themes: "Judgment on Edom; triumph of God's kingdom"

Obadiah was the only prophet whose message focused extensively on Edom's coming judgment. Others, however, pronounced God's judgment against Edom as a secondary theme. Ultimately God will judge all his enemies and his kingdom will triumph. Thus, this book has an ongoing message for God's people when their enemies seem to be in control. In the end, "there shall be holiness" (17).

Unique Feature: Obadiah contains the Old Testament's most detailed prophecy about the relationship between the descendants of Esau and those of Jacob, a topic that appears repeatedly throughout the Old Testament.

Key Verse

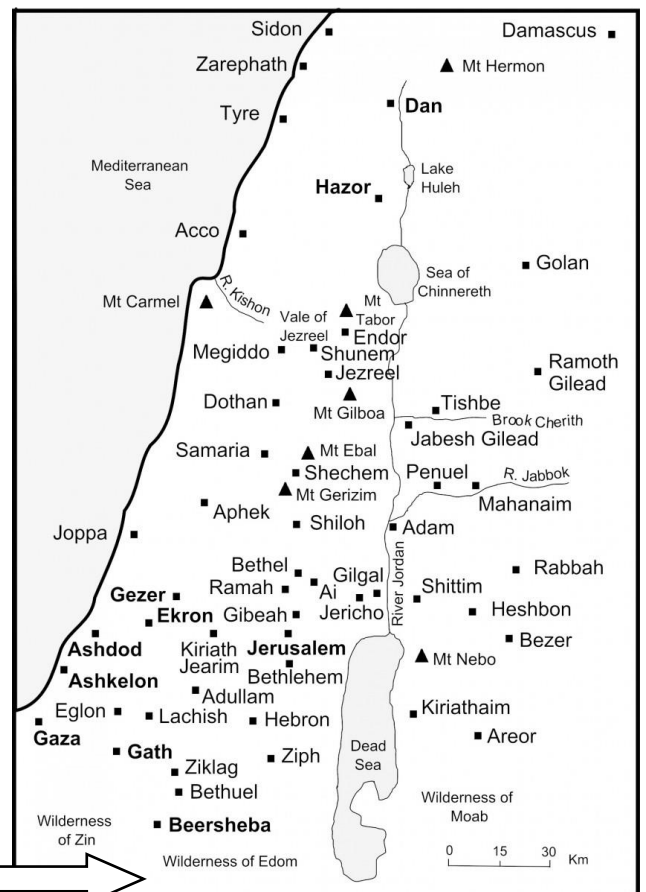
"For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations.
As you have done, it shall be done to you;
your deeds shall return on your own head."
(Obadiah 15 ESV).

Meaning of Name

Obadiah the sixth-century Israelite prophet against Edom, has given his name to this book as its composer. His name means:
"Servant of the LORD" in Hebrew.

Key Term: "Edom"

The people of Edom were descendants of Esau who lived southeast of Israel. God's wrath against Edom for its sins is the single concern of this book.



Outline:

- I. The Doom of Edom (1-16)
 - A. The Doom Declared (1-2)
 - 1. The Name of the Prophet (1a)
 - 2. The Nature of the Prophecy (1b-2)
 - a. Its Subject (1b)
 - b. Its Substance (1c-2)
 - i. Battle (1c)
 - ii. Belittlement (2)
 - B. The Doom Described (3-9)
 - 1. Edom's Territory Subdued (3-4)
 - a. The Hollowness of Edom's Pride (3b)
 - b. The Height of Edom's Pride (3b)
 - c. The Humbling of Edom's Pride (4)
 - 2. Edom's Treasures Stolen (5-6)
 - a. The Indolent Greed of the Common Thief (5)
 - b. The Insatiable Greed of the Coming Thief (6)
 - 3. Edom's Treaties Scorned (7)
 - a. The Treachery of Edom's Allies (7a)
 - b. The Triumph of Edom's Allies (7b)
 - 4. Edom's Troops Slaughtered (8-9)
 - a. The Death of Her Sages (8)
 - b. The Death of Her Soldiers (9)
 - C. The Doom Deserved (10-14)
 - 1. Edom Encouraged Judah's Foes (10-11)
 - a. Participating in the Spread of Violence (10)
 - b. Participating in the Spoils of Victory (11)
 - 2. Edom Enjoyed Judah's Fall (12-13)
 - a. Finding Pleasure in It (12)
 - b. Finding Profit in It (13)
 - 3. Edom Enslaved Judah's Fugitives (14)
 - D. The Doom Dated (15-16)
 - 1. A Fixed Day (15a)
 - 2. A Fearful Day (15b-16)
 - a. A Partial Fulfillment: The Downfall of the Edomite Nation (15b)
 - b. A Postponed Fulfillment: The Downfall of the End-Time Nations (16)
- II. The Deliverance of Zion (17-21)
 - A. The Character of the Deliverance (17)
 - 1. Rescue (17a)
 - 2. Regeneration (17b)
 - 3. Recovery (17c)
 - B. The Completeness of the Deliverance (18-20)
 - 1. Judah's Revenge (18)
 - 2. Judah's Revival (19-20)
 - C. The Consummation of Deliverance (21)
 - 1. Edom's Salvation (21a)
 - 2. Edom's Sovereign (21b)

Sources:

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