

## 31 – Obadiah: Destruction for Edom, Restoration for Israel

- Obadiah is the **shortest book in the Old Testament**—one chapter, 21 verses. The name “Obadiah” was a common name in Israel, and means “**servant of Jehovah.**” We don’t know anything about this prophet, except that he wrote this very short book. One commentator said it was a little book, but an example of an “**atomic bomb**” in scripture. A small thing with a potent message.
- Obadiah's prophecy is of **devastating judgment against the little kingdom of Edom.** Edom was the nation that emerged from the descendants of Esau, Jacob’s twin brother. Israel is the nation from Jacob. God addresses these “twin brothers” in this little book.
- The **story of Jacob and Esau** in scripture is found in Genesis 25-36. Even in the womb these two struggled, and they did throughout life. It is also the struggle of flesh and spirit. While most of Jacob’s life was “less than perfect” (that’s a nice way of saying it!), he eventually was more open to the move of God and the Spirit in his life. He is the one who even “wrestled with God.” Obviously when we do that, God will win every time. Jacob’s life was riddled with struggle, defiance, sin and flesh. But he was open to God’s move, and he turned his heart toward God in the end. Esau, however, was a closed vessel to God. He had no interest in God and His ways from the beginning, as we saw him selling his birthright for a pot of stew. The story of Jacob and Esau is the story of each of us. God wants to have HIS way with us. We may struggle with the flesh and the spirit, but the heart is the mirror of the soul. Jacob turned to God. Esau turned away. His end, and the end of his descendants and all those who do the same, is ultimate destruction. The book of Obadiah is an ancient message to Edom, but a current message to all those who turn against God, and turn against His people.
- The Edomites were cited for **turning against their brothers, the Israelites.** The Jews are the “apple of God’s eye” as stated in Zechariah 2:8. Also in Zechariah God states that all those who come against Israel and attempt to crush her, will be crushed themselves. This warning is as appropriate today as it was when first written. God, and His word, is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.
- The only real difficulty in understanding this book comes in the attempt to date it, or place it somewhere on the timeline of Israel’s history. There has been all sorts of speculation about this, including around 887 BC, which puts it in the reign of Jehoram and Athaliah (2 Kings 8:16-26). Some put it in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:7). Others say it was much later, near the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (587 BC), making Obadiah a contemporary of Jeremiah. This seems the most likely placement, based on verse 11: ***“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.”*** It is part of the historical record that Edom actively worked against Israel, and sided with the Babylonian forces for Israel’s destruction. That is her chief sin against God, because she was against Israel. It would seem likely the dating, then, would be at this time.
- The words “Edom” and “Esau” are alternately used to represent the same nation of descendants of Esau.



### Highlights

Destruction for Edom 1:1-16	Restoration for Israel 1:17-21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Charge against Edom, 1:1-9</li> <li>▪ Crime of Edom, 1:10-14</li> <li>▪ Catastrophe to Edom 1:15-16</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deliverance and Restoration will come to Israel, 1:17</li> <li>▪ Conflagration of the House of Esau, 1:18</li> <li>▪ Israel will possess Edom, ultimately God will possess it all, 1:19-21</li> </ul>

- ***“...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?’”*** (v. 3) The Edomites were prideful, arrogant, and self-deceived. Edom prided herself in her great wealth (obtained by trading, looting, and by iron and copper mining in the region) and

also in her nearly impregnable position geographically. However, God said He would bring her down, cause her to be made “small” as a contrast to her pride and self-exaltation. She would also be despised among the other nations.

- Obadiah predicts the coming destruction of Edom, which included thieves stealing as much as they wanted, and a comparison to those who glean for what is left in the fields. In Edom’s disaster, however, NOTHING would be left. The invaders will find treasure and plunder all of it, leaving Edom empty and desolate. Even Edom’s “peaceful” neighbors and allies would turn against her. Even the “wise” in Edom would not see this coming.
- Verse 10 provides the reason for this destruction of Edom: ***"For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, And you shall be cut off forever."*** Edom turned against her brothers, Israel. This led to her destruction. The same destruction that caused Edom’s demise is reserved for all nations, even those today, who turn against Israel. This book may be thousands of years old, but the message and the warning is the same today.
- Verses 11-16 are a message from God about what they did wrong. It went far beyond just siding against Israel. God relates the **things they should NOT have done**: Sided and planned with the enemy; Cast lots over the parts of Jerusalem that would be taken; Laughed at the perils of Judah; Rejoiced over their destruction; Mocked and spoke proudly in their destruction; Entered the city during the siege and reveled in the destruction; Plundered their goods; Cut off the escape of those who tried to get away from Babylonians; Betrayed those that hid from the Babylonians.
- While Obadiah is completely dedicated to the promise of destruction of Edom and the restoration of Israel, **other prophetic books also contain prophecies against Edom** (Ezekiel 25:12-13, Ezekiel 35:1-8, Jeremiah 49:15-18, Isaiah 34:10-15 are a few). God means what He says, and says what He means. Around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC the Edomites were conquered by other Arab groups, which were eventually overthrown by the Nabataeans, who built up the area in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The Nabataeans are the ones who carved out the temples and other structures in the “red rocks” of Edom (Petra, *right*). Edom was almost totally uninhabited from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. It was revived slightly when the crusaders built a castle there, but was soon forgotten again, and rediscovered in 1812 by Swiss explorers. It was a desolate place, full of wild animals, screaming eagles and scorpions. Since then the Jordanian government has turned Petra into a tourist attraction. There are some who believe that God is holding Petra (in ancient Edom) as the place of refuge for Jews during the Tribulation. What we need to know here, however, is that God has already completely fulfilled the prophecies against Edom:
  - Edom was overthrown as a nation.
  - The nation and city have become a desolation, as Ezekiel 25:13; Ezekiel 35:4,7 and Isaiah 34:11-13 predicted.
  - It has never been populated again as Jeremiah 49:18 predicted.
  - It has had bloody history as Ezekiel 25:13 and 35:6, 8 predicted.
  - Edom became populated with wild animals and birds (instead of people) as Isaiah 34:11, 13-15 predicted.
- The remaining verses (17-21) not only underscore Edom’s destruction, but almost like “rubbing it in” God pledges restoration for Israel: ***"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 the LORD has spoken. ***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. Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the LORD's."*** Not only will Israel be restored, but she will also inherit the former territory of her brother, Esau (Edom).

