

# Introduction to Obadiah

**Author:** Obadiah

**Date:** 586 B.C. (or 848-841 B.C.)

**Author and Date:** Obadiah's name means "*servant of Yahweh*."<sup>1</sup> Obadiah was a common Hebrew name in Old Testament times. In fact, the name appears 20 times in the Old Testament referring to several different individuals (see 1 Kings 18; 1 Chron. 3; 7 – 9; 12; 27; 2 Chron. 17; 34; Ezra 8; Nehemiah 10; 12). Most scholars do not believe the Obadiah who wrote this little prophetic book is the same as any of the others named in the Old Testament. Nothing is known about the prophet Obadiah, however, other than what we glean from his prophecy: he lived and prophesied in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and that he prophesied against Edom.

The date of Obadiah's prophecy is uncertain. Some commentators and ancient Jewish tradition place the date around 848-841 B.C., describing the attack of Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabians during the reign of King Jehoram of Judah.<sup>2</sup> Other commentators place the book at the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 586 B.C. That date seems most likely.

**Theme:** Regardless of the date, the message is the same. Obadiah wrote a prophecy of judgment upon the nation of Edom. This judgment was brought about by the Edomites' violence against Jerusalem and aiding her attackers (Oba. 1:10-14).

Edom was located south of the Dead Sea (see the [Map of Israel and Judah](#)), making her Judah's neighbor to the southeast. The Edomites were the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau (Gen. 25:19-34; 36:1). As relatives of the Jews they should have been kind or helpful to Israel, but instead they proved to be enemies. When the Israelites left Egypt and journeyed to the Promised Land, Edom refused to grant them safe passage through their territory (Num. 20:14-21). This animosity continued for centuries. In fact, the Edomites rejoiced when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians (Ps. 137:7).

For other prophecies of judgment upon Edom see Isaiah 11:14; 63:1-6; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12; 9:12; Malachi 1:2-5.

**General Outline:** The little book of Obadiah may be divided into three sections:

1. The LORD's judgment upon Edom (Oba. 1:1-9)
2. Edom's wickedness toward the Jews (Oba. 1:10-14)
3. Edom's destruction in the Day of the LORD (Oba. 1:15-21).

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries: updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.