**I. OBADIAH (850-840 BC)**

A. The Authorship of Obadiah (“the servant of Jehovah”)

1. The author was an unknown prophet of Judah (1:1).

2. Some have suggested that part of Obadiah seemed to be cited by Jeremiah (Jer. 49:7 ff.; cf. with Obad. 1:1-9).

3. At least 12 different men in the OT received this name.

B. The Date of Obadiah

1. Pre-Exilic—during the reign of Jehoram (848-841 BC).[[1]](#footnote-1)

a. The Philistines and Arabians over-ran Judah during this time (II Chr. 21:16-17).

b. Edom cooperated with the Philistine/Arabian invasion and shared in the spoils, enjoying their hatred towards Judah (II Ki. 8:20).

c. Perhaps Amos and Jeremiah knew of Obadiah’s writing (cf. Obad. 1:4 with Amos 9:2 and Obad. 1:1 ff. with Jer. 49:7 ff.).

2. Exilic—based on the Jerusalem calamity of Obadiah 1:11-14, identifying it as the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem in 586 BC.[[2]](#footnote-2)

3. Post-Exilic—based on the Exile of the Edomites from their land (Obad. 1:7; cf. Mal. 1:3-4).

C. Occasion of Obadiah

1. Obadiah’s mission was to pronounce Jehovah’s judgment on the nation of Edom.

2. The Edomites came from Esau, who was the twin brother of Jacob (Gen. 25:23 ff.).

a. Edom became a great nation (Gen. 36:1 ff.).

b. Israel was to treat Edom as a brother (Dt. 23:7-8).

D. Outline of Obadiah

1. The Rumour about Edom’s judgment (1:1-9).

a. From the Lord (1:1)

b. To the Nations (1:1-2)

c. Against Edom (1:3-9)

2. The Reasons for Edom’s judgment (1:10-14).

a. Because of Violence (1:10-14)

b. Because of Pride (1:12-14)

3. The Realization of Edom’s judgment (1:15-21)

a. The Day of the LORD (1:15-20)

b. The Restoration of Israel (1:21)

E. The Summary of Obadiah

**Background**

The patriarch of the Edomites was Esau, brother to Jacob. The Hebrew word Edom means “red” as Scripture punned on Esau’s nickname Edom (cf. Gen. 25:25-30). The LORD had given to Esau Mount Seir, originally possessed by the Horites, as Scripture revealed, saying, *“The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them”* (Dt. 2:12), and *“Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom”* (Gen. 36:8). The land of Edom was south of the Dead Sea and may have taken her name from the red sandstone cliffs throughout the land. *Sela`*[[3]](#footnote-3)or *Petra* “the rose city,” was the capital enclosed by towering rocks with cliffs which gave good defense against enemies. The descendants were a perpetual problem for the children of Israel, denying Moses passage through their land (Num. 20:14-20), resisting King Saul (I Sam. 14:47), opposing Kings David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat (I Ki. 11:14-17; II Chr. 20:22), and revolting against the latter’s son Jehoram.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Three questions require some sort of explanation. First, when did Edom commit the sin to which the prophecy alluded? Second, when did the prophet write the book of Obadiah? Third, what is the time of the judgment on Edom? Concerning the first, when Jerusalem was invaded by the Philistines, Ethiopians, and Arabians, apparently Edom committed her first national sin against Israel by allying with these heathen and helping to facilitate the plunder with joy (II Ki. 8:20; II Chr. 21:16-19; Obad. 1:10-12).[[5]](#footnote-5) Subsequent to this atrocity, the prophet Obadiah (9th century BC) preached his message of doom to Edom.[[6]](#footnote-6) Babylon’s destruction on the surrounding nations pre-figured Jehovah’s Day of the LORD judgment. The LORD’s choice of Jacob over Esau manifested clearly in history (Mal. 1:2-5).

**Contents**

*Chapter One*

The LORD had sent a notice to Obadiah and the nations of His judgment on Edom (cf. Jer. 49:7-22). Because of her pride He was going to use the Assyrians and the Babylonians to bring about Edom’s ruin regardless of geographical advantage or worldly wisdom (1:1-9).[[7]](#footnote-7) The reasons for her need for divine judgment was violence towards Judah (1:10-11) and pride of advantage (1:12-14). Nevertheless, Jehovah would realize His judgment in history (cf. Jer. 25:21; Joel 3:19; Mal. 1:25) and in the *eschaton* of *“the Day of the LORD”*[[8]](#footnote-8) (1:15-20; cf Dan. 11:41). Furthermore, the LORD will restore Israel in the Millennium (1:21).[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. Jehoram was not only wicked but also weakened, no doubt by his wife Athaliah, and could not successfully stop Edom (II Ki. 8:16-22). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Edom had a history of animosity toward Jerusalem, as the psalmist averred, saying, *“Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof”* (Ps. 137:7). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Amaziah renamed *Sela`* or *Selah* (Isa. 16:1; II Ki. 14:7) as *Joktheel* (“blessedness of God”), and the *Vulgate* translated it as *Petra*. It was in the midst of Mt. Seir and the capital of Edom. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Evil King Jehoram of the Southern Kingdom (SK) married Athaliah, murdered his brethren, was unable to put down the Edomite revolt, received Jehovah’s plague and lost his wives, family, and life (through stomach problems), all of which were predicted by Elijah in his letter to the king (II Chr. 21:1-20). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This smallest OT book has caused great interpretive issues concerning date and background. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The LORD judges both the wicked object of His “rod” and the wicked “rod.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Their claim of an impregnable, invulnerable, invincible and unassailable place of security in *“the clefts of the rocks”* was a puny boast against the omnipotent Jehovah (v. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The expression the *“day of the LORD”* (hw"hoy>-~Ay *yom Jehovah*) occurs 15x in the OT, 13x found in the Minor Prophets. Compare its usage in Peter (Acts 2:20; II Pet. 3:10) and Paul (I Thes. 5:2). It refers to Jehovah’s dealing with Israel, first in judgment (Tribulation) and then in blessing (Millennium) for a 1007 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Exiled Jews will return and reclaim the Promised Land (vv. 19-20), coming from as far as *Sepharad* (e.g., Spain or Sardis [?]). The term *“saviours”* probably refers to the reinstatement of the office of judges (Isa. 1:26). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)