

# Outline of the Book of Obadiah

## Introduction

The book of Obadiah gives the historical record of Edom's wickedness and consequential fall to the all-seeing eyes of Jehovah God (Ezek. 35:13). Pride took hold of Edom and moved like a contagious disease throughout the nation (cf. Jer. 49:16). The source of Edom's "*pride of heart*" (Obad. 1:3) was to be found in the fortitude of their mountainous geographic location (Obad. 1:3), riches (Obad. 1:6), wise men (Obad. 1:8), and mighty men of war (Obad. 1:9). Edom's longstanding feelings of animosity toward Israel caused them to be "*angry, hateful, and envious*" toward God's people (Ezek. 35:11). A case point is delivered by Obadiah. Edom had rejoiced at the sight of Judah's calamity (Obad. 1:12). Furthermore, Edom exercised "*violence*" toward Judah in that they stood by idly and even rejoiced while enemies killed and plundered them. Edom, with a callous eye of hatred and envy, plundered, captured and sold as slaves, and even killed many of the remaining Jews in Judah (Obad. 1:10-14).

The theme of the book appears to be found at Obadiah 1:15, "*For the day of Jehovah is near upon all the nations: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head.*" One has aptly said, "what goes around comes around." When people exercise no care or concern for another's physical or emotional well-being, they generally get the same treatment in the end. The apostle John said, "*But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?*" (I Jn. 3:17). Pride is the very disposition of heart that kills all benevolence towards others. The heart of pride is so calloused in self-promotion that it is blinded to the real needs of self and others. The Proverb writer therefore states, "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Prov. 16:18). The first of six things, yea seven, that the Proverb writer says that God hates is "*Haughty eyes...*" (Prov. 6:16). The apostle Paul tells us that the mind of Christ is the mind that "*does nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting the other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others*" (Phil. 2:3-4).

All those throughout history that exhibit the spirit of Edom through pride and a lack of concern about their fellow man shall fall to the eternal kingdom of God in burning flames (Obadiah 1:18ff). Obadiah does not leave the wicked nations without hope. "*Saviors*" shall come from the kingdom of God and teach the saving grace of God to the nations (Obad. 1:21). Those who obey the gospel message of the apostles, preachers, and teachers shall be saved from the great Day of Judgment. At the conclusion of a study of Obadiah, one is left with a sense of the great and everlasting nature of the kingdom of God. Those who enter into it, through obedience, shall be victors with God throughout eternity. Those who reject the kingdom shall fall among the masses of humanity into the depths of despair and defeat in a place called hell (Rev. 20:10ff). God's kingdom is everlasting, all powerful, and shall never be defeated.

## Edom

To fully understand the prophecy of Obadiah, one must be familiar with Edom and the Edomites. The Edomites were descendants of Esau (twin brother of Jacob) (cf. Gen. 25:19-24, 30; 36:8-9). The conflict between Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom) began in their early days. Jacob supplanted Esau's birthright for bread, pottage, and lentils (Gen. 25:33-34) because Esau did not value the spiritual blessings of Jehovah God. The author of Hebrews tells us that Esau was a "*profane*" (impure) person (Heb. 12:16) as is indicated by his "*despising*" (to regard as trivial or worthless) his birthright (cf. Gen. 25:34). Esau's birthright included being a descendant of the Messiah. To trade this great spiritual right for a common meal was a great error of judgment and a lack of concern for the eternal existence of man. Esau continued his wicked ways by marrying Canaanite women (Gen. 26:34-35) even though he had been commanded not to do so by his grandfather Abraham (Gen. 24:1ff). Later, when Israel desired to pass through Edom on the way to Canaan, the king of Edom refused the request making them travel far out of their way to reach their destination (Numb. 20:14-21).

The sins of Edom, throughout history, are summed up in the words pride and arrogance (cf. Jer. 49:16). Edom had no real concern for the lives of their kinsmen of Israel and Judah (Ezek. 35:6), and they were both angry and filled with envy against their brethren (cf. Ezek. 35:10-12). Edom's corruption is depicted in their

rejoicing over the fall of Israel and Judah (cf. Ps. 137:7; Ezek. 35:13-15). When Jehovah brought upon Israel and Judah calamity from the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Edomites reasoned within that they would now possess the land of these two nations (cf. Ezek. 35:10). There could be nothing further from the truth. Edom had even gone as far as attacking God's people in their weakened state after doing battle with the Babylonians (cf. Ezek. 25:12; 35:4-6).

Throughout the scriptures, the name of Edom is used as a representative of all Jehovah's enemies (Isaiah 34:8ff; Obad. 1:21). Edom, and all those who set their face against Jehovah God, would be brought down off their high horse of pride (cf. Jer. 49:7-22). As a sick man continues to check the clock throughout the night, anxiously awaiting the end of his illness, so Edom would be as they sought for counsel from Jehovah's watchmen (cf. Isa. 21:11-12). There would be, however, no relief for the pride-stricken people of Edom. World empire after empire would continue to press them (i.e., Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, Grecians and then the Romans), and eventually they were non-existent (Mal. 1:2-4). "The archeological evidence also indicates the downfall of Edom by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Nomadic tribes infiltrated Edom, and it lost the power to control and profit from the trade between Arabia and the Mediterranean coast and Egypt. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, an Arabian tribe, the Nabateans, forced their way into Edom and replaced the Edomites, many of whom went westward to southern Judea (later to become Idumea; cf. I Macc. 5:3, 65), while others were absorbed into the newcomers. By 312 B. C. the area around Petra also was inhabited by the Nabateans" (ISBE, V. 2, pp. 20).

## Outline of the Book of Obadiah

### I. Edom to suffer destruction due to her Pride (1:1-9):

- A. *"The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning Edom: We have heard tidings from Jehovah, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, saying, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the nations: thou are greatly despised"* (1:1-2).
1. The identity of Obadiah is uncertain. The name "*Obadiah*" means "servant (or worshipper) of Jehovah" (ISBE, V. 3, pp. 574). There are a host of Obadiah's mentioned in the Bible (cf. I Kg. 18:3ff; I Chron. 3:31; 7:3; 8:38; 9:44; 12:9; 27:19; II Chron. 17:7-9; etc.).
  2. The prophet has experienced a "*vision*." The vision had a divine origin. God thereby revealed His mind to the prophets by directly speaking to them (Gen. 12:1; Ex. 12:1; etc.), moving some to speak through means of the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21), and sending "*visions*" to some (Dan. 1:1; Obad. 1:1) (see study # 1; Inspiration of the Scriptures).
  3. The "*we*" in the first verse indicates both Obadiah the prophet and the people of Israel. "*We*" have heard from Jehovah (by the mouth of His prophets) that God has purposed war against Edom that He may bring them down for their pride and lack of care for others.
- B. *"The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah"* (1:3-4).
1. These words are almost verbatim of Jeremiah 49:16. Some believe that Jeremiah must have quoted from Obadiah, however, this is an uncertainty.
  2. Edom was a land engulfed by the Seir mountain range. "Mount Seir is generally identified with modern Jebel esh-Shera', a range of mountains east of the Arabah, stretching from Wadi el-Hesa in the north to Wadi el-Hismah in the south, with peaks rising above 5000 ft.... Seir is generally used as a synonym of Edom (cf. Gen. 32:3; Numb. 24:18; Judges 5:4; II Chron. 25:11, 14; Ezek. 35:15)" (ISBE; vol. 4, pp. 383).
  3. The Edomites regarded their rocky dwellings as sure safety against any foes. The place of dwelling would not intimidate the all powerful Jehovah God. Though the Edomites "*should make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence.*" Sometimes we hear one say, "He needs to be brought down off his high horse." Jehovah God was going to bring the Edomites down in humiliation and shame (see study # 2; Pride).

- C. *“If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night (how art thou cut off!), would they not steal only till they had enough? If grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes?”* (1:5).
1. The wrath of Jehovah God against Edom will not stop as a thief or grape-gatherers. Such people take until they have had their fill, however, Jehovah will not stop till every leaf has been turned over and Edom completely devastated and destroyed.
  2. Both Malachi and Ezekiel prophesied of the extent of Edom’s destruction (cf. Mal. 1:1-5; Ezek. 25:13-14).
- D. *“How are the things of Esau searched! How are his hidden treasures sought out!”* (1:6).
1. Though Edom had the protection of the Mount Seir range and plenty of wealth they would be cast down from their high eagle’s nest.
  2. The enemy is depicted as defeating and plundering their treasures. The capital city of Edom, Petra, stored great treasures collected from their trade and commerce.
- E. *“All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee on thy way, even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread lay a snare under thee: there is no understanding in him”* (1:7).
1. Those nations such as Ammon, Moab, Tyre and others who at one time traded and gained wealth through Edom would now turn against them and plunder them.
  2. Edom is depicted as a foolish nation because they did not see their downfall coming. Like foolish children they continued to play with those who were truly their enemies. Edom’s pride and overconfidence blinded them to the deception that was taking place around them.
- F. *“Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one may be cut off from the mount of Esau by slaughter”* (1:8-9).
1. The source of Edom’s trust and pride is found in her geographic location, wealth, wise and mighty men.
  2. Ezekiel spoke of the extent of Edom’s destruction by mentioning the names of the two cities that lay to the extreme South (Teman) and North (Dedan) (cf. Ezek. 25:13-14). The Lord will certainly and thoroughly wipe out Edom for her sin.

## II. Why is Edom being Destroyed (1:10-16):

- A. *“For the violence done to thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever”* (1:10).
1. The extent of the Lord’s fierce wrath and judgment against Edom is now clearly stated. Edom would be *“cut off for ever.”*
  2. Obadiah reveals the reason for God’s wrath at verse 3; i.e., their pride, and now tells us that their sins of violence against Jacob have made them susceptible to God’s judgments. Pride (Prov. 16:18; 29:23) and a lack of concern over other’s well being (James 2:14-16; I Jn. 3:15ff) have never been admirable traits in the eyes of God (see study # 3; My Treatment of Others Reveals Who I Am).
  3. In what way was Edom *“violent”* toward Jacob? Edom had no care or concern about the lives of the people of Israel. Those who died at the hands of enemies were actually rejoiced over by Edom (cf. Ezek. 35:4-6). Furthermore, Edom attacked with sword the people of God as they were in a weakened state (Ezek. 35:4-6).
- B. *“In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them”* (1:11).
1. The time frame under consideration is simply unknown (it may be the II Chron. 21 period). The important thing to note is that Edom stood by idly while the enemies of God attacked and plundered the city of Jerusalem.
  2. The Edomites were so calloused to the event that they not only watched but participated in the killing, capturing, and plundering of Judah (see introduction).

- C. *“But look not thou on the day of thy brother in the day of his disaster, and rejoice not over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither speak proudly in the day of distress”* (1:12).
1. Edom looked at Judah in the day of their great distress and rejoiced over their hardships.
  2. The conversation of the Edomites was filled with pride when it came to talking about the distress of Judah. They likely said things like, “they got what they deserved...”
- D. *“Enter not into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, look not thou on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither lay ye hands on their substance in the day of their calamity and stand thou not in the crossway, to cut off those of his that escape; and deliver not up those of his that remain in the day of distress”* (1:13-14).
1. Edom entered into the gates of the city of Jerusalem when the city was at its most vulnerable state, saw their vulnerability, and laid hands upon their substance rather than trying to help them.
  2. Not only did Edom plunder the left over people that were physically and emotionally wounded but those who tried to escape from the war zone were murdered. The remaining peoples of the city were handed over to the enemies as captives. Edom came in and cleaned up the residue of God’s people to the point of near extinction.
- E. *“For the day of Jehovah is near upon all the nations: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yea, they shall drink, and swallow down, and shall be as though they had not been”* (1:15-16).
1. The *“day of Jehovah”* is a day of judgment against the enemies of God. Said day came on several occasions in the OT (during the days of Noah, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes, etc.) (see study # 4; The Day of Judgment).
  2. A timeless principle is delivered by Obadiah when he wrote, *“as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee...”* (see study # 3 and # 5; Personal Accountability). The apostle Paul said that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). God has not changed in his judgments. Those who live right and those who live condemned will all be judged by the word of God (cf. Jn. 12:44ff; Rev. 20:12).
  3. Those who have lived a godless life will drink the wine of God’s wrath to the full (cf. Jer. 25:15). Edom will have their fill of this wine.

### III. The Final Judgment upon Edom (1:17-21):

- A. *“But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it”* (1:17-18).
1. The prophet Zechariah reveals to us what *“mount Zion”* represents when he states, *“Thus saith Jehovah: I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts, the holy mountain”* (Zech. 8:3).
  2. Zion was the sight of David’s residence and was earlier known as *“the city of David”* (II Sam. 5:7). “Eventually the term ‘Zion’ was extended to include the entire city (Jerusalem), but this synecdoche usually occurs in poetic passages” (ISBE; Vol. 4, pg. 1198). The author of Hebrews gave us the NT meaning by saying that Zion was the *“general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect...”* (Heb. 12:22-23). It seems appropriate to say that Obadiah had the church of God in mind here but more immediately he intends the restoration of the remnant of God’s people (Cf. Heb.12:28) (see study # 6; The Church in Prophecy).
  3. Luke writes of the *“house of Jacob”* and identifies it as the everlasting Kingdom of God (i.e., the future church here on earth and the even further into the future heavenly kingdom of eternity) (cf. Lk. 1:31-33).
  4. The Edomites (again, Edom standing for the wicked of the entire world) will be consumed in the fires of destruction for their rebellion against Jehovah. Those who escape will be

assimilated, through obedience, into the kingdom of God. Those who reject God's eternal kingdom shall be destroyed.

- B.** *“And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau, and they of the lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captives of this host of the children of Israel, that are among the Canaanites, shall possess even unto Zarephath; and the captives of Jerusalem, that are in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South. And saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's”* (1:19-21).
1. Those of the *“South”* and the *“lowland”* represent Judah and Benjamin (the two remaining faithful tribes unto God at the time of Obadiah's writing). The enemies of God shall be possessed by God's people. The captives of God's people that had been taken as prisoners of war by their enemies (cf. Obadiah 1:11, 14) are now victors as members of God's eternal kingdom. These captives now rule in every direction (i.e., the whole world). God's kingdom has no geographical bounds and shall certainly never be defeated. To be in God's kingdom is to be a part of the greatest and most powerful kingdom ever known and ever will be known to mankind.
  2. *“Saviors”* i.e., those such as the apostles, preachers, elders, and teachers shall judge the ungodly world (i.e., the mount of Edom) by the words of Jehovah. Those of ungodly Edom who reject their inspired truths shall be forever consumed. Those sinners who repent and obey the gospel message are added to the kingdom of God (Acts 2:38ff).
  3. Obadiah delivers a picture of hopelessness for the wicked who opt out of obeying God's rule and desiring a place in the kingdom of God. The NT Christian is a part of a powerful kingdom that shall never fall. The apostle John writes, *“For whatsoever is begotten of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith”* (I Jn. 5:4).