

Obadiah

Chapter 1

1 The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom— We have heard a message from the LORD: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, “Rise, and let us go against her for battle”— 2 “See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised. 3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ 4 Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD. 5 “If thieves came to you, if robbers in the night— Oh, what a disaster awaits you— would they not steal only as much as they wanted? If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? 6 But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged! 7 All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it. 8 “In that day,” declares the LORD, “will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau? 9 Your warriors, O Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau’s mountains will be cut down in the slaughter. 10 Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. 11 On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. 12 You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. 13 You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor look down on them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. 14 You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. 15 “The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. 16 Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been. and be as if they had never been. 17 But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. 18 The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. There will be no survivors from the house of Esau.” The LORD has spoken. 19 People from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau, and people from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead. 20 This company of Israelite exiles who are in Canaan will possess the land as far as Zarephath; the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the towns of the Negev. 21 Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau.

And the kingdom will be the LORD's.

Of the author of this book, the shortest in the Old Testament, very little is known. It appears from his book that Obadiah ("servant of Jehovah") was a member of the southern kingdom, and it may be right to identify him with the man of the same name who lived under Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. This would place him in the first half of the ninth century before Christ, an assumption which receives some further support by the fact that both Joel (chap. 2, 32; 3, 2. 3. 7. 14. 17) and Jeremiah (chap. 49, 7-16) evidently refer to the prophecy of Obadiah. (Kretzmann)

The vision of Obadiah contains a severe arraignment of the Edomites for their traditional enmity against the people of God, on account of which he announces the divine judgment upon Idumea. After a further paragraph, in which the justice of this punishment upon Edom is established, the book closes with a promise of the restoration of Judah, a prediction which finds its complete fulfillment in the victories of the Church of Christ in the Messianic period. It is clear that the judgment upon Edom is intended as a type of the punishment upon all the enemies of the Lord, and that the fulfillment of the kingdom of the Messiah are the basic thoughts of the vision. 1) (Kretzmann)

1. vision. Commonly used in the OT to designate a revelation from God. (CSB)

From Hbr *chazah*, "to see." Occurs elsewhere in titles of prophetic writings as a technical term for divine revelation (Is 1:1; Na 1:1). (TLSB)

Obadiah. "Servant (or worshiper) of the Lord." A dozen different men in the OT were so named. Oddly, there is no additional information about this particular prophet who delivered God's message in the years following the fall of Jerusalem (587 BC). (TLSB)

Thus says the Lord GOD. This message against an enemy of Israel carried God's authority and was not a matter of Obadiah's wishful thinking. (TLSB)

ABOUT EDOM – It was located in and around the Seir mountain range south of the Salt Sea and east of the Great Rift Valley, it was 110 miles long and 30 miles wide, SE of Judah. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. God gave Jacob a new name, Israel, and his descendants because the nation of Israel. Edom had been hostile toward Israel for centuries. (TLSB)

We. Either (1) the editorial "we," or (2) the prophet's association of Israel with himself, or (3) other prophets' pronouncements against Edom. In any case, the rest of the verse sets the stage for Obadiah's prophetic message, which begins with v. 2. (CSB)

Obadiah and perhaps other prophets of the Lord and their audience. *messenger.* To achieve His purpose as ruler of history, God used an unidentified messenger to urge nations to attack Edom. (TLSB)

message. Or “report.” An envoy had been sent to the nations, calling them to battle against Edom. Perhaps a conspiracy was under way between some of Edom’s allies (v. 7). Although Edom feels secure (trusting in her mountain fortresses and her wise men, vv. 2–4, 8–9), Obadiah announces God’s judgment on her for her hostility to Israel. (CSB)

2 *I will make you small.* Cf. the colloquial expression, “cut one down to size.” (CSB)

God is about to cut Edom down to size (cf Is 34:5–15; Jer 49:7–22 for a description of the severity of God’s judgment against Edom). (TLSB)

3 PRIDE OF HEART...DECEIVED – The Hebrew text making this very emphatic: “Betrayed hath thee the pride of thine heart,” upon which Edom depended. (Kretzmann)

rocks. See NIV text note. Sela was the capital of Edom. Perhaps the later Petra (both Sela and Petra mean “rock” or “cliff”), this rugged site is located some 50 miles south of the southern end of the Dead Sea. See note on 2Ki 14:7. (CSB)

Hbr *sela*’, “rock,” also the name of one of Edom’s two principal cities. Edom was a rugged, mountainous territory that any invading army would find difficult to attack. This led to complacency and a false sense of security. (TLSB)

4 *eagle.* A proud and regal bird, noted for strength, keenness of vision and power of flight. *stars.* Hyperbole for high, inaccessible places in the mountains. (CSB)

Suggests Edom’s pride at her apparent power and invincibility. *set among the stars.* Some of Edom’s fortresses and military defenses were set in high, inaccessible places, yet still within God’s reach. (TLSB)

I will bring you down. Blunt statement answered Edom’s rhetorical question in v 3. The Lord asked His own rhetorical questions in v 5. (TLSB)

5 *If thieves ... If grape pickers.* For a similar oracle against Edom see Jer 49:9. (CSB)

In contrast to what thieves might take, Edom’s destruction would be complete despite her supposed security in mountain strongholds (Jer 49:9–10). (TLSB)

steal only enough for themselves? Plunderers by night would not take everything out of a house, but only what they wanted most. (TLSB)

leave gleanings? Grape gatherers did not harvest the entire crop but left some grapes behind for the poor to glean. However, nothing would be left behind after Edom’s destruction. (TLSB)

6 *Esau*. Ancestral father of Edomites (v 1). By using Esau's name as a synonym for Edom, Obadiah recalled the history of strife and contention between Esau and Jacob (Gn 25:19–34; 27) and between the nations of Edom and Israel, which descended from them. (TLSB)

hidden treasures. The ancient Greek historian Diodorus Siculus indicates that the Edomites put their wealth—accumulated from trade—in vaults in the rocks. (CSB)

So that not one of its hiding-places would be unexplored by the foe. (Kretzmann)

7 *allies*. Nearby nations, esp Babylon, with whom Edom collaborated in the attack on Jerusalem in 587 BC. These former friends will now turn against Edom. This prophecy was fulfilled when King Nabonidus of Babylon laid waste to Edom in 553/2 BC (cf Mal 1:4). (TLSB)

TO THE BORDER – or, "To the border have they escorted thee, all thy confederates," that is, the allies, to whom Idumea sent for assistance, sent these ambassadors back, not wishing to be involved in the downfall of that nation. (Kretzmann)

who eat your bread. Not true allies but mere “companions” (Lat *cum*, “with,” and *panis*, “bread”). Eating together implied a covenant of friendship, making an attack by former allies even more stunning. (TLSB)

set a trap for you. However the Hebrew for this expression is understood (see NIV text note), it must indicate some act of treachery on the part of previously trusted close friends. Those who “eat bread with” are one's com-panions (Latin *cum*, “with,” and *panis*, “bread”). See note on Ps 41:9. (CSB)

literally, "Thy bread have they placed as a snare," or "wound," under thee, that is, they broke their pledge of alliance to hospitality, treacherously leaving them in the lurch when they needed help most. (Kretzmann)

8 *In that day*. The day of Edom's destruction; but the words also have an eschatological ring. Since in OT prophecy Edom was often emblematic of all the world powers hostile to God and his kingdom, her judgment anticipates God's complete removal of all such opposition in that day. wise men. In whom Edom put so much confidence for her security (see Jer 49:7). Eliphaz, one of Job's three friends, was a Temanite (see next note). (CSB)

wise men. Military counselors. Rhetorical question indicates Edom would look in vain to her wise men for understanding. (TLSB)

Esau. Another name for Edom (see Ge 36:1). (CSB)

Mount Esau? Likely, the Seir Mountains of Edom. (TLSB)

9 Neither Edom's wise men nor her mighty men could save her from God's hand. (TLSB)

Teman. A reference to all Edom, as in Jer 49:7, 20 (see also Am 1:12). Teman means “south,” and the name probably refers to Edom as the southland. Some, however, identify Teman with Tawilan, a site about three miles east of Petra. (CSB)

Possibly a village in Edom, though the name might refer to Edom as a whole. (TLSB)

CUT DOWN IN THE SLAUGHTER – It was the object of the Lord in taking away from them their wisdom and the use of their former power. When God decides to punish a nation, then all the cleverness of its most learned men, all the strength of its mightiest men, will be of no avail. (Kretzmann)

1–9 Esau and his descendants have been arrogant and worldly since Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. The nation has a long record of hostility toward God’s people Israel and, by extension, toward God. Obadiah announces God’s judgment on Edom’s behavior. Yet it is easy to forget that God, in His mercy, has given Edom a long time to repent and come to Him. The centuries that have passed demonstrate God’s patience with Edom. God continues patiently to offer our world His grace and postpones judgment so that more people may repent (2Pt 3:9). “Now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Co 6:2) • Lord, Your grace is a treasure. May I never test Your patience by unrepentance. Amen. (TLSB)

10 *your brother Jacob.* Edom’s violent crimes are all the more reprehensible because they were committed against the brother nation. (CSB)

Edom had violated what should have been a brotherly relationship with (Israel) Jacob. (TLSB)

covered with shame. A striking expression since shame is usually associated with nakedness. (CSB)

11 *On the day.* Probably refers to when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem in 587 BC. *his.* Jacob’s (v 10). (TLSB)

strangers ... foreigners. These terms put in relief the sin of Edom: He did not act like a brother (v. 12) but was like one of the strangers. (CSB)

foreigners entered ... one of them. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and finally broke through the gates, burned the temple, and tore down the walls (2Ki 25:1–10). Ps 137:7 implicates Edom in this attack, making her as guilty as Babylon. (TLSB)

12–14 A rebuke of Edom’s hostile actions. The eight rebukes in this section proceed from the general to the particular. See Eze 35:13 and Ps 137 for examples of Edom’s reactions to Judah’s misfortunes. (CSB)

do not. Eight times Edom is warned not to gloat over or take advantage of Judah’s downfall. (TLSB)

12 *over the day*. Edom had rejoiced over Judah's day of judgment without realizing that her day of reckoning was also coming, a day all nations will face. Cf Is 13–24. Ambr: "Grant that so often as the sin of any one who has fallen is made known to me I may suffer with him, and not chide him proudly, but mourn and weep" (*NPNF* 2 10:354). (TLSB)

13 Edom apparently followed the Babylonian army into Jerusalem to help loot the city. (TLSB)

14 *fugitives ... survivors*. After first standing by and gloating over Jerusalem's downfall and then plundering the city, Edom helped Babylon locate and capture the survivors who tried to escape. (TLSB)

10–14 After years of indifference punctuated by hostility, Edom faces a choice when God sends Babylon to punish Israel. Edom could show the compassion Jesus later described in Mt 25:34–40. Instead, Edom chooses destructive, self-serving action. The underlying spiritual hostility that led to such a choice seals Edom's fate. God gives us similar opportunities today (Eph 2:10) either to participate in His good work of compassion or turn our backs on those in need. He has already extended His compassion toward us in the sacrifice and blessing of Jesus. • Dear Jesus, use me as Your agent to help those who are hurting and have suffered misfortune. Relieve their distress, and give them hope. Amen. (TLSB)

15 *The day of the Lord is near for all nations*. If there was an eschatological glimmering in "in that day" (v. 8), it here becomes a strong ray. The day of the Lord brings judgment for the nations (including, but not limited to, Edom) and salvation for the house of Jacob. (CSB)

Edom's brother Jacob had experienced the day of judgment (v 12). The Lord's great day of judgment would finally dawn for all nations (Zep 1:14–16). (TLSB)

upon your own head. The situation will be reversed in retribution for Edom's hostility against God's people detailed in vv. 11–14. Ezekiel's denunciation of Edom (ch. 35) reflects a similar punishment-fits-the-crime principle. (CSB)

The hurt that Edom inflicted would now be inflicted on her, by the justice of "an eye for an eye" (Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21). This reversal theme runs through all of Ob (7, 15–21). (TLSB)

16 *Just as you drank*. As the Edomites profaned the holy mountain by carousing, so the nations will drink and drink. Their drinking, however, is that of the bitter potion of God's judgment—which they will be compelled to keep on drinking. For drinking as punishment see Jer 25:15–16; 49:12. (CSB)

Jerusalem invaders drank a cup of triumph as they gloated over their victory. God would soon serve them His cup of wrath. (TLSB)

All enemies of the Lord and of His holy Church will eventually feel the heavy hand of His wrath on account of their hostility against that which He has ordained. (Kretzmann)

as though they had never been. God's wrath will destroy nations so that they will no longer exist. For a nation to lose its place in history is much worse than a military defeat. (TLSB)

17 *But on Mount Zion will be deliverance.* Beginning with this verse the blessings on the house of Jacob are mentioned. Eschatological references are twofold: judgment on God's enemies, blessing on God's people. (CSB)

In contrast to the devastation wreaked on Edom and the nations, God provides a place of refuge for His people. (TLSB)

escape. Obadiah anticipated the faithful remnant God saved from destruction. See "remnant." (TLSB)

holy. God's judgment against Edom and other nations will cleanse the land, and His presence with His people will make it holy. In the largest sense, Obadiah looked forward to God purifying and restoring all things at the end of history. These prophecies describe God's saving intentions rather than setting a timetable for events to happen. (TLSB)

their own possessions. Israel will once again enjoy the covenantal blessings God had promised as the inheritance to Jacob. (TLSB)

18 *Jacob ... Joseph.* Previously it was stated that the Lord would destroy Edom, using other nations (v. 7); now it is to be done by God's people. (CSB)

Language of reversal continues God will use His faithful people, descended from Jacob, to consume the descendants of Esau. (TLSB)

no survivors. The final word to Esau is that his house (or nation) will be totally destroyed; there will be no Edomite survivors. Yet compare Am 9:12 with Ac 15:17 and see note on Am 9:12. (CSB)

for the LORD has spoken. Although Obadiah's message must have seemed unlikely at the time, the closing statement puts God's stamp of certainty on it. (TLSB)

15–18 People are interested in spiritual things, but many remain confused about God's judgment and mercy. Obadiah cuts through the fog to paint a stark picture in these four verses. God will judge nations and individuals according to their deeds, and all will come up short (Rm 3:9–20). However, God in Christ provided the righteousness needed to stand in His holy presence. All who believe His saving promise will receive refuge and deliverance from sin, death, and the power of the devil. • Heavenly Father, my only refuge, strengthen my faith and lead me to show compassion, especially to those who need to hear the Gospel of forgiveness. Amen. (TLSB)

19 *People ... will occupy.* With Edom annihilated, others will occupy Edomite territory. Although not expressly identified, these are most likely the remnant of Israel referred to in the lines immediately following. (CSB)

This verb is repeated six times, emphasizing the reversal of fortunes for God's people, who will again possess territory they had lost. (TLSB)

Negev. (The dry wasteland stretching southward from Beersheba.) (CSB)

Mount Esau. Mountainous area southeast of Salt Sea. (TLSB)

Shephelah. Low foothill area between Judah and Philistia. (TLSB)

Philistines. (The Philistines themselves were a vigorous Indo-European maritime people who invaded Egypt early in the 12th century b.c. After being driven out, they migrated in large numbers to southwest Canaan, later extending their influence over most of the land. The Philistines of the patriarchal period (see 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8, 14–15, 18) no doubt had earlier settled in Canaan more peacefully and in smaller numbers.) (CSB)

Coastal plain along the Great Sea. (TLSB)

Ephraim. Major territory of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel, later called Samaria. (TLSB)

Benjamin. Tribe centered just north of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Gilead. A fertile region southeast of the Sea of Galilee.) (CSB)

Upland area east of Jordan River. (TLSB)

20 *exiles.* Faithful remnant of God's people who returned from the Babylonian captivity. (TLSB)

Zarephath. A coastal town located between Tyre and Sidon in the territory ruled by Jezebel's father Ethbaal (16:31. Elijah is commanded to go and reside in the heart of the very land from which the Baal worship now being promoted in Israel had come.) (CSB)

City on the coast of the Great Sea, northwest of the Sea of Chinnereth. (TLSB)

Sepharad. Usually taken to refer to Sardis in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), though some think that Sparta (the city in Greece) might be meant. (CSB)

Possibly Sardis in Asia Minor or a site in Assyria. (TLSB)

21 *Deliverers.* Having developed the theme of possessing lands around Zion, the prophet now turns to the center. The "deliverers" come from Mount Zion and rule over the mountains of Esau. Mount Zion is exalted over the mountains of Esau. The Messiah, the Deliverer par excellence, may ultimately be in view. (CSB)

Saviors. Hbr *moshi'im*. Cf Jgs 3:9. God will give His people security from their enemies by providing them with good rulers. Greater fulfillment is in the new covenant, when ministers of the Word give believers security against spiritual foes. Luth: "He calls leaders 'saviors,' as we find in the Book of Judges (Judg. 3:9), where He sent them many saviors, that is, leaders to lead them and take charge of them, to be in the lead if they ever had to fight with enemies. So here the apostles and other disciples are called 'saviors,' men who by preaching that joyful Gospel message have certainly freed them from all the assaults of Satan and from the gates of hell; men who have judged them in faith, who have ruled them with just judgment, and thus have prepared the eternal kingdom for the Lord" (AE 18:204). (TLSB)

the kingdom will be the Lord's. The conclusion of the prophecy—and the final outcome of history. The last book of the Bible echoes this theme (Rev 11:15). (CSB)

In the end, God will rule all, and His people will serve and worship Him in perfect peace. (TLSB)

The entire paragraph evidently sets forth the marvelous deliverance of the people of the Lord from the oppression of all their enemies and their preservation in the Church of the Messiah, which, from being the Church Militant here in time, will merge into the Church Triumphant in eternity. (Kretzmann)

19–21 Throughout history, God has used people such as Obadiah to speak His words, and He has used nations such as Edom and Israel as object lessons. Edom paid the price for spiritual arrogance and indifference; Israel was punished for unfaithfulness. However, God remained faithful to His people. He kept His promises and preserved a faithful remnant. There are times when we also are spiritually arrogant and deserve punishment. But God keeps calling us to repentance and to believe His promise of salvation. To all who listen to His Word, He has given the privilege of serving as witnesses to point others to His grace in the one Savior, Jesus Christ. • Lord of the Church, the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours. Move me to be Your witness and so direct others to Your kingdom. Amen. (TLSB)